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LIFE IS A JOURNEY: SOURCE-PATH-GOAL IN VIDEOGAMES

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ABSTRACT

The debate between narrativists and ludologists has long enlivened discussions among game theorists. Should videogames be seen as an offshoot of (film) stories, and thus be studied primarily from the perspective of narratology? Or do they represent a truly different phenomenon, and thus require an analytic approach that has nothing to gain from narratology? In this paper we intend not so much to solve this conundrum as suggest how it has arisen in the first place by showing what journey stories and videogames that involve the movement of the player's avatar have in common. Our central claim is that both journey stories and such games involve physical movement and quests, and moreover are based on some sort of "story," but that only the stories allow for rich mappings of the conceptual metaphor PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT TOWARD A DESTINATION. If our explanations make sense, they can contribute both to the classification and theorization of videogames and to the expansion of conceptual metaphor theory into the realm of videogames.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor; source-path-goal schema; LIFE IS A JOURNEY; narratology; videogames.

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1. Introduction

Human beings are essentially goal-directed creatures. Everything we do contributes directly or indirectly to the goals we want to achieve. These can range from macro-goals such as physically surviving, finding shelter against heat/cold/predators, and having a happy life, to micro-goals such as going out to buy groceries, or even reaching out for a glass of milk on the table. Precisely because, as a species, we have become so good at these things we have ended up so high in the evolutionary pyramid.

Goals, and developing strategies how to achieve them, thus dominate our thoughts, emotions, and actions, and therefore we need ways to conceptualize goals. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), fathered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and still in full swing (see e.g., Gibbs 2008, Kövecses 2010), claims that human beings typically come to grips with abstract and complex phenomena by understanding them metaphorically in terms of physical, concrete phenomena. These latter are the phenomena we have knowledge and experience of thanks to sensory perception (touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting) and thanks to our movement through physical space. For this reason, Johnson (1987) claims, one of the most important metaphors we make use of in our lives is the metaphor that can be phrased as PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS MOVING FORWARD TOWARD A DESTINATION, and whose more popular formulation is LIFE IS A JOURNEY (for more discussion how conceptual metaphors should be *labelled*, see Forceville 2006a: 390). This metaphor is particularly productive in stories that involve *literal* journeys that the protagonist undertakes (Forceville 2006b, 2011, Forceville & Jeulink 2011), since they allow for a rich mapping structure from MOVEMENT TOWARD A DESTINATION to PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY. Journey-stories thus constitute a subtype of stories that has much in common with a subtype of games, namely games that involve an avatar's movement toward a destination. They share yet other specific similarities (both are representations pertaining to a virtual reality, are indulged in for pleasure, have protagonists inviting identification, etc.), so it is unsurprising that some theorists have considered

games as basically a kind of stories; in CMT terms, both are rooted in the "Source-Path-Goal" (SPG) schema. However, there are also important differences between them. We believe that comparing journey-stories and games involving an avatar's movement in light of SPG will (i) help theorize similarities and differences between stories and games in general; and (ii) show the pertinence of SPG for the theorization of games involving an avatar's movement (i.e., first-person shooters and adventure games).

We will first briefly summarize the debate between the narrativists and the ludologists (section 2), and then present the SPG schema in more detail with reference to "road movies" (section 3), the subtype of story that allows for the most useful comparison to first-person shooters and adventure games because a protagonist's/avatar's movement is central to both. Subsequently we will discuss the SPG schema's applicability to three videogames (section 4) in order to chart, and evaluate the similarities and differences between the journey stories and the games. We will end with some conclusions and further thoughts (section 5).

2. Games, gameplay and narrative

The participants of the "videogame debate" can be placed in two camps. One is the "narrativist," the other the "ludological" camp. Frasca (2003) argues the debate is mostly the result of a series of misunderstandings. However, it touches upon a number of interesting issues that we intend to discuss productively in this paper. The narrativist approach is characterized by the application of theory used in the analysis of stories, that is, in narratology. Very few narratologists dare commit themselves to a definition of "narrative" or "story." In this paper we subscribe to the following characterization:

A *narrative text* is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee […] a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. A

story is the content of that text, and produces a particular manifestation, inflection, and "colouring" of a fabula; the fabula is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors (Bal 2009: 5, emphases in original).

In the videogame debate, narrativists see games as a new type of story-telling. For instance, Janet Murray's interest in games manifests itself in researching them as "cyberdrama" (Murray 1997: 9). In a later study she elucidates, "some such term is needed to mark the change we are experiencing, the invention of a new genre altogether, which is narrative in shape and that includes elements we associate with games" (Murray 2004: s.n.). In order to illustrate her point, Murray analyses a game as a "puzzle story" (Ibid.).

The term "ludologist" (from Latin "ludere" – "to play") was first used in 1982 (Frasca 2003: 2). Juul offers the following definition of games: "a game is a rule-based system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are negotiable" (Juul 2005: 36). While most ludologists do not deny that many games involve story-elements, they feel something essential is lost when games are studied primarily as narratives. Aarseth, usually associated with the ludologist camp, discusses adventure games in terms of "story-game hybrids" (Aarseth 2004a: s.n.).[1] Their narrative is revealed slowly over the course of the game if and when the player completes a specific set of actions, usually in the form of puzzles and conversations that can be solved in one way only. However, by focusing on games in this genre an incomplete picture of the "gaming situation" arises, as Aarseth notices in a response to Murray:

That the problematic, largely unreplayable, story-game hybrid will dominate the future of

digital entertainment seems no more likely than a future with only one kind of sport. [...] the largest potential seems to be in new types of games, forms that blend the social and the aesthetic in creative ways and on an unprecedented scale. As a new generation of gamers grows up, the word "game" will no longer be as tainted as it is today. Then euphemisms such as "story-puzzles" and "interactors" will no longer be necessary (Aarseth 2004a: s.n.).

This observation reveals both Aarseth's impatience with viewing games primarily as narratives, and his warning that the videogame medium is incredibly broad and encompasses more than just games with an emphasis on story.

Ludologists view the videogame medium, at its core, as something truly new. Both Aarseth and Eskelinen provide approximations of this core. According to Aarseth, retaining the link with written fiction, videogames are a form of "ergodic" literature: they require "nontrivial effort" to progress in the text. This nontrivial effort consists of various forms of user input registered by the platform on which the videogame is played (Aarseth 1997: 2). Apart from interpretative effort – required for *all* literature – ergodic literature requires physical action to empower the text, usually by manipulating a controller, and this contrasts with the reading of literature, which does not require physical action beyond the turning of pages (and not even that with e-readers ...). Eskelinen explains:

> The dominant user function in literature, theater and film is interpretative, but in games it is the configurative one. To generalize: in art we might have to configure in order to be able to interpret, whereas in games we have to interpret in order to be able to configure (Eskelinen 2004: 38).

Unlike in stories, in games configuration is the goal instead of the means. This seems to be the point

where most of the disagreement between narrativists and ludologists originates.

3. The Source-Path-Goal schema in narrative

Pursuing the central CMT idea that human beings make sense of abstract and complex phenomena in terms of concrete, embodied phenomena, Mark Johnson (1987) investigated how in (for Johnson: mainly verbal) representations the characteristics of the human body are exploited metaphorically to make sense of abstract and complex phenomena. Some of these characteristics (which include both things you *can* and things you *cannot* do with it) are the following: The human body sports two legs, and typically moves forward rather than backward or sideways. The head on top of that body has two eyes that can cover a range of some 180°. In combination with the fact that the human neck can turn some 180°, too, we visually cover an area of, say, 290° – but we cannot look behind us without turning around. We have one mouth and one nose, both located on the front of our face, which further makes whatever is before us more accessible than what happens behind us. We also cannot just burrow ourselves into the ground (as some insects can), and while we can jump up a little, we cannot fly (as most birds can). All these bodily facts of life mean that the front-back orientation is crucial for us – indeed they explain that we *have* a front-back orientation in the first place. After all, if like some spiders we could see all around us and could walk as easily in all directions – even on the ceiling (which among humans only Fred Astaire and Lionel Ritchie are capable of) – we would presumably not only lack a front-back orientation, but an up-down one as well. If we had been no more than thinking mushrooms, we would have little sense of either movement or direction. Given our human bodily characteristics, we are naturally inclined to favour movement in a forward direction on a horizontal plane, forward being the space in front of us when we are standing with our legs in a neutral position. Movement is crucial for our species. Our ancestors had to hunt, gather fruits, and get water to survive physically, and although our goals have become more sophisticated, physical movement is necessary: people who have problems with it

were in politically incorrect times called "disabled."

Easy progress forward is thus what human beings are typically conditioned to perform. Johnson draws attention to the importance of the "forces" that play a role in helping or hindering such physical progress, and by metaphorical extension in helping or hindering our pursuit of goals:

> In order to survive as organisms, we must interact with our environment. All such causal interaction requires the exertion of *force*, either as we act upon objects, or as we are acted upon by them. Therefore, in our efforts at comprehending our experience, structures of force come to play a central role (Johnson 1987: 42, emphasis in original).

Johnson lists seven pertinent aspects of physical force: *compulsion*, *blockage*, *counterforce*, *removal of restraint*, *diversion, attraction*, and *enablement.* We experience compulsion for instance when, cycling, we are blown forward. A fence is a type of blockage, as is a ravine. A counterforce may be a storm against which we may have problems keeping our balance. The restraint disappears when the storm stops, or when we open the fence. Diversion occurs for instance when a seeing person guides a blind person around various obstacles. We are subject to attraction if, swimming, we are drawn into a maelstrom. We experience enablement if somebody helps by pushing us forward, or if we hoist a sail that helps our boat move forward.

This elaborate HUMAN MOVEMENT schema is used to conceptualize other, more abstract and complex goals. For this reason, we use the concept MOVEMENT TOWARDS A DESTINATION to talk about our goals in relationships ('it was all *smooth sailing* with her'; 'our marriage has been a *rocky path*'; 'the friendship *derailed*') as well as careers ('I *got stuck* at the middle-management level'; 'his talents will ensure he'll *end up high* on the academic ladder'; 'after winning the Nobel Prize, her career really *took off*'). In short, it is these mechanisms that underlie the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. A more precise formulation of this conceptual metaphor is PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT TOWARD

A DESTINATION. As human beings we can in principle deploy *anything* that either helps self-propelled physical movement toward a destination, or hampers it, as a semantic domain for metaphorically structuring *any* purposive activity (see also Katz & Taylor 2008, Ritchie 2008).

It is thus by no means a coincidence that heroes and mythical figures almost always at some moment in their lives undertake a physical journey to achieve some goal (think of Jesus, Buddha, Odysseus, Gandhi). Similarly, from this perspective, it makes sense that people undertake pilgrimages. That is, undertaking a physical journey from starting point A to destination B is easily mapped onto the metaphorical "journey" from a problem, a lack, or a need "toward" a solution, a fulfillment, a remedy: the relatively simple mappings from MOVEMENT FORWARD to PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY, or QUEST, are based on an underlying, shared SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

One very special type of PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY is story-telling. A story structure, with its beginning, middle and end thus is also modelled on the SPG schema. A story 'moves forward,' it can 'slow down,' 'speed up,' 'digress,' or 'meander' – all descriptions mapped from the JOURNEY domain. Stories, moreover, typically are about QUESTS: they have a protagonist pursuing a goal – whether winning the contest, saving the princess, finding the treasure, or beating the monster. If not, the audience wouldn't be interested to read or watch the story. Although all stories, or so we claim, are about questing protagonists, it would be a mistake to conflate quests and stories:

> … a story […] is by definition *shared*. If somebody has embarked upon a quest, but fails to share the pursuit of whatever it is she pursues with anybody else, this quest does not make it to the story level. As such, this still excludes few situations: we usually tell stories about our quests to beloveds, friends, family, colleagues. Stories about quests that are the subject of this chapter, however, differ from such homely ones in at least one important dimension: *they are created to be shared with a mass audience*. This means that, far more so than private stories, they need to have a certain *form* […] Public stories […] need to give value for […] money in

terms of intrinsic interest or entertainment (Forceville 2011: 284, emphases in original).

There is another, related reason to justify considering STORY separately from QUEST. Although the teller of a story can simultaneously be its main, "questing" protagonist, the narrating takes place at a higher level – ultimately that of the (implied) author. The PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY of the (implied) author is thus by definition always a different one than that of the questing protagonist, namely the telling of a coherent, moving, aesthetically pleasing story. This has consequences for what is potentially mappable from JOURNEY to STORY. Whereas in the structuring of the QUEST, Johnson's "forces" from the JOURNEY domain play a central role, we submit that in the structuring of the STORY, the JOURNEY's constitutive *parts* (their order, possibly repeated trajectories, tempi) also provide potential mappings. We can chart the (potential) interrelations between JOURNEY, QUEST and STORY as follows (see table 1):

INSERT TABLE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE

While the SPG schema very often functions in the conceptualization of PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY, it makes sense that in stories that pertain to literal journeys the opportunities for metaphorical mappings increase. Within the medium of film, the "road movie" gene (see e.g., Cohan & Hark 1997) optimally exploits this opportunity. One of us has analyzed journey documentaries and animation films in light of the SPG schema (Forceville 2006b, 2011, forthc.; Forceville & Jeulink 2011; see also Simons 1995, Strack 2004). Let us first summarize some of these findings, since this will facilitate comparison with the games we discuss in the next section.

(i)   Both in the documentaries and the animation films examined, there is a fairly rich potential of mappings from source to target in the QUEST IS JOURNEY metaphor: felicitous progress and obstacles in the JOURNEY domain are used to comment metaphorically on the QUEST domain.

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For instance, in one of the animation films analysed, *Father and Daughter* (Dudok de Wit 2000), a daughter spends her life looking for her lost father. At the end of the film we see her (now an old woman) struggling on a creaking bicycle against the wind. The visible effort required to make literal progress in the JOURNEY domain is mapped onto the diminishing chances, given her nearing death, for success of the old woman's QUEST (Forceville & Jeulink 2011: 44-46).

(ii)   Similarly, in several of the films, the "stages" of the JOURNEY are mapped upon the segments of the STORY, creating "chapters." For instance, in *Life Without Death* (Cole 1999), the animated maps about Cole's crossing the Sahara from West to East that are intermittently shown, indicate not only how far he has progressed with his JOURNEY and QUEST, but also with his STORY: when he reaches the East, all three will have been completed (Forceville 2006b).

(iii)   The story-telling domain presupposes a difference between questing protagonist and story-telling narrator – even in the autobiographical journey documentaries, where these roles are fulfilled by the same person. The story-teller uses the protagonist's quest-as-journey to create aesthetically pleasing coherence, for instance via recurring motifs, intertextual references to other stories, and ensuring that the journey somehow ends where it began – but with a twist. Narratologists would point out that it is precisely such "colouring" that turns a "fabula" into a "story," to refer to Bal (2009: 5) again. An example from Agnès Varda's *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse* is the "hand-motif" and the fact that the film begins and ends with a painting of "gleaning" (Forceville 2011).

(iv)   The quests-as-journeys are intimately linked with the identities and/or survival of the protagonists, both the fictional ones (in the animations) and the non-fictional ones (in the documentaries). For instance, the Sandman's search for water, in Stellmacher & Montgomery's *Quest* (1996) needs to be successful for him to survive (Forceville & Jeulink 2011).

To summarize: stories that portray literal movement can metaphorically map physical forces from the JOURNEY domain onto the QUEST domain, and elements such as "laps"/ordering-of-subparts onto the STORY domain in a particularly resonant manner. In addition, the narrator of the story imposes aesthetic coherence on the story by the creation of motifs, contrasts, connections, and intertextual references. In the next section we will discuss how the SPG schema functions in three videogames.

4. The SPG schema in videogames: three case studies

4.1 *Half-Life 2* (USA: Valve Corporation, 2004)

The overarching QUEST of *Half-Life 2* is to repel alien invaders from planet earth. Like many other videogames, *Half-Life 2* consists of a JOURNEY and a QUEST domain. *Half-Life 2*'s JOURNEY domain is the most perceptible and obvious one. On the macro-level the player completes a long physical path through the game-world, while on the micro-level movement allows the player to progress through the various subspaces of the game. Chief among these are overcoming *obstacles* (e.g., locked doors and other barriers) or *counterforces* (in the form of hostile non-player characters [NPCs]). Negotiating each obstacle/counterforce may involve solving a little puzzle, such as finding an appropriate tool or weapon – which thus becomes an embedded mini-quest. The SPG schema for encountering an enemy would thus be: an *obstacle* (problem/source) appears, exertion of force is needed to deal with it, perhaps involving an *enabling* gun or other weapon or tool (strategy/path), which results in neutralizing the *obstacle* or *counterforce* (solution/goal).

Successfully navigating *Half-life 2*'s levels through physical movement is the player's primary task. In terms of Johnson's forces it is *compulsion,* in the form of self-propelled motion, that best describes the player's basic actions such as walking, running and jumping. Little more is involved for the player than being in command of the avatar's basic motor skills for carrying out these activities. Gameplay arises when the two elements of movement forward and overcoming impediments are successfully combined. This makes it difficult to separate JOURNEY and QUEST

domains, since movement is directly involved in solving QUESTs and solving these QUESTs allows for the movement to be continued. However, if we are to make a strict distinction, *Half-Life 2*'s JOURNEY domain is restricted to all the literal movement that is necessary to move from one QUEST to another and from beginning to end in each of the game's levels and locations. The primary force in the JOURNEY domain is *compulsion* as the player moves through the world. The other forces start to feature prominently when the game's QUEST domain is considered.

Can we also identify a STORY domain in *Half-Life 2*, that is, a domain that – as was argued happens in the films – functions separately from the QUEST domain? A story crucially involves characterization of protagonists and elements of a plot. As a matter of fact, there are indeed elements in the game that could be considered to belong to a STORY. A key design philosophy for the developer (the Valve Corporation) is never to take control forcefully away from the player; his/her attention must be earned, for instance by NPC's verbal utterances and sometimes by gestures. An NPC talking to the player will undoubtedly attract his or her attention and by revealing something about his personal situation will simultaneously reveal something about that NPC's motives and goal. If players wish, they may thus learn certain things about the STORY-world by paying attention to the NPCs in the environment.

Whereas the SPG schema thus structures *Half-Life 2* no less than the film stories, there are important differences in its use. In the road movie film stories, elements of the JOURNEY domain can be metaphorically mapped onto the QUEST domain, so that success or failure in the JOURNEY domain enriches our understanding of a protagonist's success or failure in the QUEST domain. By contrast, in this game the two domains basically *coincide*: there is no metaphorical mapping of features from JOURNEY to QUEST. Moreover, the STORY domain remains restricted to very basic elements of characterization and information about NPC's goals. There is nothing similar to the empathy that the animations' and documentaries' protagonists afford their viewers. Moreover, there are also seem to be no metaphorical mappings from JOURNEY to STORY. The game's QUEST remains a linear

movement towards the highest level. In *Half-Life 2* a large variety and proper pacing of mini-QUESTs enhances the player's sense of achievement when another one is dealt with. Indeed, that is precisely why good videogames are so enjoyable: they have a clear set of goals and a variety of ways for players to achieve these themselves, which is in stark contrast with "real life," where control over goal-achievement is much smaller. The control enabled by *Half-Life 2* thus contrasts both with the messiness of real life and with good journey movies, where viewers are invited to empathize with characters' quests, and to admire how a director has woven a delicate web of interlinking motifs in the service of arriving at a more-or-less well-formed ending.

4.2 *Heavy Rain* (FR: Quantic Dream, 2010)

[SUMMARY, IN ONE/TWO LINES, OF THE "STORY" OF THE GAME, BY RK]

Heavy Rain fits into the "story-hybrid" genre as Aarseth describes it. The JOURNEY, QUEST, and STORY domains are all present in *Heavy Rain*. But while in *Half-Life 2* the STORY is a dispensable "extra," completely separate from the ergodic part of the game, in *Heavy Rain* it is more integrated with JOURNEY and QUEST. As a result, *Heavy Rain* manages to somewhat close the gap between STORY and gameplay that is typical for classic adventure games. It succeeds in this by creatively exploiting the so-called "cutscene." A cutscene is "a non-interactive sequence of a game that typically provides backstory or informs the player of the task to be undertaken" (Juul 2005: 135). In most games, there is no gameplay during a cutscene. *Heavy Rain* is unusual in offering semi-interactive cutscenes: various button prompts come up, and if the player quickly presses the right ones, this determines the outcome of those cutscenes. The player can thus actually influence the development of the STORY during the cutscene. This in turn also allows a game like *Heavy Rain* to consist of complex situations and events, where other games are, for instance, restricted to firing the same weapon over and over again. However, this does have consequences for the degree of involvement a player feels in the gameplay. In *Half-Life 2*'s combat, the player is responsible for

movement, taking cover, keeping track of ammunition, aiming and firing the weapon. Events are completely unpredictable, and thus highly exciting. In *Heavy Rain*, by contrast, combat is not the focus of the gameplay experience; the instances of combat are encountered only in the interactive cutscenes. This allows the STORY to become dynamic, but the combat markedly less so. *Heavy Rain* thus does not deliver the fast-paced gameplay of a first-person-shooter. This also becomes evident when one counts the number of forces present in gameplay (both less varied and lower in number than in a game like *Half-Life 2*). Instead it wants to provide a dynamic story, and that is where its strength lies.

We then have to ask: if *Heavy Rain* is more story-like than *Half-Life 2*, what is the relation, if any, between its STORY and JOURNEY domains? The answer is two-fold. On the basic level of movement and gameplay in *Heavy Rain*, the player's actions and performance have consequences for the STORY. Either escaping or being captured in, for instance, the segment ("chapter") "On the Loose" alters the STORY. But arguably the JOURNEY affects the STORY also *metaphorically*, albeit only rudimentarily. In a manner similar to the animation films discussed in Forceville and Jeulink (2011), the injured protagonist's visible difficulties in the simple act of running, for example, inform the player about the approaching end of the STORY. This is very different from the situation in *Half-Life 2,* in which the player never has troubles with such injuries: when his health reaches "zero," he simply dies and the player has to restart at an earlier point in the game.

4.3 *Grim Fandango* (Ver. Personal Computer. LucasArts, 1998)

Grim Fandango's overarching QUEST domain can be described as Manuel Calavera's determination to solve the mysteries surrounding the Department of Death and to save Mercedes Colomar from the perils of the afterlife. As a prime example of the classic "adventure" genre*, Grim Fandango* consists of a chain of events that can be triggered only when the player successfully completes all the specific tasks (puzzles, or mini-QUESTS) the game has set him/her. Every player will have

exactly the same experience; the only thing that varies, to a small degree, is the order in which the puzzles are solved But much of the game's interest resides in the cutscenes. They reveal information about the characters and the world, and many of the game's conflicts and puzzles are resolved through social interaction. QUEST-completion, therefore, simultaneously generates a compelling STORY. In addition, while most of the cutscenes merely add another layer of exposition in the game, some of their content informs the player about details that need to be understood to solve upcoming puzzles. Arguably, there are even some basic metaphorical mappings operative in the game, for instance when the snows of winter appear (JOURNEY) in the game's fourth and final year (exemplifying A LIFETIME IS A YEAR) and thus its last "chapter" (STORY).

This greater focus on telling a compelling STORY, however, comes at a price. The puzzles obviously require some action on the part of the player, but most of Manuel's troubles surface in the form of social interactions occurring in cutscenes and dialogues rather than in the form of problems requiring the kind of physical solutions (i.e., performing actions on the control panel) that characterize enjoyable gameplay. *Grim Fandango*'s gameplay elements are completely scripted: the player has no choice in or control over these sequences. The same arguably holds for the puzzles themselves (the dialogue often providing crucial information for solving them): when the player manages to use a number of tools in the correct order and location, the game simply triggers yet another scripted scene that displays the results of the player's efforts. This means that the game's interactive or dynamic parts are restricted to the small-scale movement that takes the player through the locations (JOURNEY in the literal sense), but even in that sense, the first thirty minutes of the game hold only four real obstacles in the JOURNEY domain, and these are overcome by solving puzzles in the cutscenes that require no physical dealing with the obstacles. The real interest of the dialogue in the cutscenes thus comes from the way they provide a STORY. The epic nature of Manuel's enterprise does a good job of conveying the PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS A JOURNEY metaphor, but it requires very little gameplay. While *Grim Fandango* has an intriguing story, application of

Johnson's forces is far less relevant than with *Half-Life 2*. The (near) lack of observable forces in the gameplay's JOURNEY domain and the scripted, rigid character of the puzzles in the QUEST domain is significant: the movements and puzzle-solving simply exist as a byproduct of the game's more important objective – to tell a compelling tale.

5. Conclusions

We first of all hope to have shown that the Source-Path-Goal schema and Johnson's force gestalts are useful tools for researching the videogame medium, since they account for differences between games in terms of the obstacles and forms of enablement that characterize a game's QUEST. It is telling, for instance, that Johnson's force gestalts work best with a game like *Half-Life 2*, where they feature prominently in the JOURNEY and QUEST domains. By contrast, the physical forces appearing in *Heavy Rain* and *Grim Fandango* appear more in the cutscenes than in actual gameplay. It is obviously much harder here to "translate" the conflicts at stake into literal forces than in *Half-Life 2,* where the player must constantly negotiate threats that are physical in nature. Much of the charm of *Grim Fandango* comes from finally solving a puzzle and listening to the entertaining dialogue. However, since it is very difficult to design puzzles and dialogues in such a way that they are not scripted, the resulting game is far less dynamic than the embodied and visceral experience of *Half-Life 2*. Examining more games both within and across subgenres in light of the SPG schema will undoubtedly reveal further pertinent insights. *Half-Life 2* is just one of dozens of popular first person shooter games, and an analysis of the various types of forces operating in them can contribute to classifying and theorizing them. For this line of research to be fruitful, however, the characterization of different types of forces in videogames needs to be fine-tuned further. What qualifies as a significant action? Should every footstep the player takes be catalogued as a "movement"? How do we measure the frequency of forces when the pacing and length of games can differ so greatly? These and other questions need to be addressed if application of the SPG

schema and Johnson's force gestalts is to prove insightful.

Secondly, comparing the use of the SPG schema in the games and the animated and documentary journey stories allows us to cautiously conclude the following:

(1) JOURNEY and QUEST are crucial in both, but while the stories encourage metaphorical mappings from JOURNEY to QUEST, games by and large conflate the two domains. Put differently, in the games the JOURNEY *is* the QUEST; in the stories the JOURNEY *comments* on the QUEST;

(2) Since the STORY is mainly conveyed in (non-interactive or minimally interactive) cutscenes, the more complex the STORY in a game, the less pleasurable the gameplay. There thus seems to be an inverse relation between quality of STORY and quality of gameplay. This confirms Juul's observation that "there is no compelling argument demonstrating that a well formed 'narrative' would be a more interesting *player* experience. No game-player will find a substitute for the pleasure of game play in even the most sophisticated story" (Juul 2005: 17, emphasis in original).

(3) The journey films allow for a greater degree of metaphorical mapping from JOURNEY to STORY than the games. This is a critical difference, since in the journey animations and documentaries aesthetic success partly depends on the use of the JOURNEY to help impose *metaphorical* structure not just on the QUEST, but also on the STORY. The absence or rudimentary nature of the STORY dimensions in the videogames, compared to the journey films, presumably depends most crucially on the fact that the games are not *narrated* by an (implied) author*,* at least not in the sense that a film or novel is. Sure, game makers provide a backstory, and sometimes allow this backstory to function in the player's QUEST, but this not the same as narrating the story. A narrative agency imposes "narrative integrity" (Freeman and Brockmeier 2001: 76) on the quest-as-journey by all the stylistic means available to the medium (what Bal 2009 calls "colouring," see section 2), and

thus turns a fabula (which pertains "merely" to a QUEST) into a story. The story-genre is very good at ensuring that successes and failures in overcoming obstacles keep resonating as "motifs" throughout the films; at aiming for endings that feature some cathartic "return to the beginning" that retrospectively bestows meaning on the intermediate stages of the journey; at developing complex relationships among protagonists, and at audience empathy with them. Games can do so only in an impoverished form. We here thus wish to qualify Gee's (2011) point that videogames have great potential for simulating identities, and by extension for augmenting one's ability to empathize with those who are very different from ourselves – although this may prove more true for multi-player games. (It needs to be emphasized that this crucial difference between stories and games, namely that the former, but not the latter, are narrated, has probably not much to do with the SPG schema as such.)

Let us finally return to the narrativist-ludologist debate. It should be clear now how the fact that the SPG schema underlies JOURNEYS, QUESTS, as well as STORIES is what got the debate started in the first place. The narrativists rightly pointed out that QUESTS are central to both stories and games. Since in videogames there is a very close connection between players' QUESTS and their JOURNEYS, and since in STORIES (specifically in journey-stories, but by extension in non-journey stories as well) protagonists' QUESTS are often metaphorically presented in terms of JOURNEYS, the similarity is further reinforced. Finally, many games have a backstory providing motivations for the player's QUEST, which brings in the STORY domain. However, the ludologists correctly emphasized that all these similarities between stories and games did not obliterate the crucial difference that stories are narrated, and games played, and that game-play interferes with story-telling, and vice versa.

considerably better than the first draft – but all responsibility for errors and claims of course resides entirely with the authors.

NOTES

1   Aarseth insists that he has never been "opposed to the application of narratology to games"; he only was "critical to the weak story-game hybrids at the time [i.e. the early *noughties*, RK & ChF]" (2012: 2). In this paper he proposes that "narratology, properly applied, and combined with a broad sampling of different game types, can provide a fruitful and enlightening perspective on games and game design" (ibid.: 3).

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Table 1

JOURNEY/MOVEMENT	QUEST/PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY	STORY
Traveler	Person	Character
Progressing	Approaching goal	Developing
Fellow-travelers	Family/friends	Helpers
Dangerous people	Adversaries	Antagonists
Meeting people	Meeting people	Introducing characters
Change in destination	Changes in purpose	Turning point
Pleasant incident	Achievement, happy event	Advancement of plot
Obstacle, delay	Misfortune	Setback in plot
Means of transport	?	?
?	?	Medium

[Caption for table 1]

Table 1. The S-P-G schema: Correspondences between JOURNEY/MOVEMENT, QUEST, and STORY (adapted from: Forceville 2011: 285). Question marks indicate that there is not always a self-evident correspondence between elements across all three domains.