

# The Rhetoric of Videogame between *Elocutio*, *Dispositio* and *Inventio*: a Theoretical Proposal

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## Abstract:

The hegemony of digital culture has imposed a shift in the way of understanding narrative logics, which can no longer ignore a transmedia perspective. The task of comparative literature should be to study the new narrative modes using its own tools – especially rhetorical ones – through to a comparison between the different media that takes into account the specificities of each one. The aim of this intervention is therefore to study the rhetoric of the videogame, the figural set suitable for its specific narratives. From the figurality of *dispositio*, we have different perspective modes through the camera control and the camera angles between first person, third person or isometric. In elocutive figurality, we find direct effects on the level of expression such as photography between the use of light and colors, or the difference between the use of music in a diegetic and extra-diegetic way. Finally, the figurality of the *inventio* can be reread according to the intuitions of Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* relating to the degree of stature of the character: based on the freedom offered to the player and his way of interfacing with the physics of the game – intended both as the environment that like the other characters –, the videogame can change its narrative arrangement, now configuring itself according to a mythical mode – the player has full control of the surrounding world as it is totally superior to it, as in *Minecraft* and in the crafting games –, or romantic mode – the player has more limited control but can still intimately affect the structures, as in the latest *Zelda* or *Portal* –, or high-mimetic mode – the player has no control over the environment, but is superior to other characters as in most video games centered around the combat system –, and so on.

**Keywords:** Transmediality, Videogame, Rhetoric, Figurality

## 1. The tasks of Comparative Studies: dealing with the widespread narrativity

Comparative Studies were born under the banner of transmediality. In the inaugural lecture of the French Literature course he held at the University of Marseille in 1830, Jean-Jacques Ampère established the genesis of the discipline by stating that «C'est de l'histoire comparative des arts et de la littérature chez tous les peuples que doit sortir la philosophie de la littérature et des arts» (Ampère, 1830, 8). Alongside literature, in an inflexible syntagm, the other arts are mentioned as well, in an aesthetic circumscription that does not envisage hierarchies of value between the verbal text and the further configurations of textuality. This equal conception of the media cosmos is particularly urgent in the «narrarchie» (Salmon, 2007) that we inhabit today, an epistemic era during which the tale has become a logic of power and a source of scientific truth. The text is detonated in a polymorphic proliferation that abandons the verbal component and welcomes new forms of expression – audiovisual in particular –, as Barthes himself reminded us in the famous opening of *Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits*:

Innombrables sont les récits du monde. C'est d'abord une variété prodigieuse de genres, eux-mêmes distribués entre des substances différentes, comme si toute matière était bonne à l'homme pour lui confier ses récits: le récit peut être supporté par le langage articulé, oral ou écrit, par l'image, fixe ou mobile, par le geste et par le mélange ordonné de toutes ces substances ; il est présent dans le mythe, la légende, la fable, le conte, la nouvelle, l'épopée, l'histoire, la tragédie, le drame, la comédie, la pantomime, le tableau peint, le vitrail, le cinéma, les comics, le fait divers, la conversation (Barthes, 1966, p. 1).

For this reason, we need to study fiction closely, understand its specificities, analyze the media that convey it and assimilate its substance. To do this, Comparative Studies can offer us essential tools, which borrow from the traditional rhetorical analysis: faced with metamorphic textuality, the discipline must become fluid as the object of its study; certain prejudices are no longer admissible.

While it is true that literature has assimilated many narrative forms from other media – just think of the photographic nature of the modernist novel, or of certain similarities between the postmodern novel and cinemato-

graphy –, the opposite is also true: new media have carried off many rhetorical strategies from the literary phenomenon. Perhaps it is true that literature is no longer the main medium, the strongest art form, but it is certainly the most present because it lives in each of the other media as a sort of echo of the Freudian Father: the new mediatic systems have fed on it in a totemic meal, to quote the symbolism of *Totem und Tabu* (Freud, 1913).

This osmosis process has been accentuated by the digital revolution and the advent of digital culture, which have contributed to bringing together the different narrative phenomena in a single transmedia and intermedial fiction. One of the main manifestations of the new digital tale, the videogame, is in fact a text that recovers several discursive performances of the literary archetype, in a filiation that is above all adaptation. The aim of this intervention will then be to study the rhetorical structure of videogame by borrowing the terminologies and taxonomies of the literary text. The comparative analysis will highlight the specific properties of the videogame medium and what could be the figural set suitable for its narratives, paying attention not to disperse the boundaries of each semiotic jurisdiction and demonstrating how the rhetoric of the literary text must adapt in the transition from one medium to another.

## **2. The figurality of videogames: a tripartite division**

As in the literary text, in the videogame text the figural action intervenes as a departure from traditional communication. Quoting and adapting Barthes, we then say that the videogame figure is a deviation from «le degré zéro de la programmation» (Barthes, 1953): Game Designer, which is the instance most similar to that of the author, makes alterations in the specific components of the text – for example, on the audiovisual level, on the informative one, and on the interactive one – to convey a message.

The field of videogame text is particularly interesting because in the videogame the figure really appears as a union between content and form, a space of tension between the conceptual and technical level; together, they set up a theme, or a certain semantic declination. The figure of the videogame is something dynamic, active, industrious. It is no coincidence that Ian Bogost speaks of a «procedural rhetoric» in the case of a videogame (Bogost, 2007), that is, of a mutual collaboration between the elements of the text – video, audio, camera, UI, button layout, physics, etc. – as if it were a mecha-

nism. The contingency of digital narrative, unlike the verbal one, requires immediate and reciprocal contact with its addressee, who is thus called to interact with the text through a figure capable of coordinating the narrative movement according to the single textual circumstance, in a more elastic rhetoric than the literary progenitor. The two districts of the videogame text – the plot and the gameplay, which can be associated with what in Linguistics corresponds to the pairing between signified and signifier – are therefore inseparable, and constantly collaborate in an unstoppable dialectic for the working of the narrative engine.

It is possible to subdivide and catalog the figurality of the videogame by recovering what the ancient rhetoric had dictated and adapting it to the specific conformation of the medium. In a famous passage, Quintilian spoke of five moments of rhetorical activity:

Omnis autem orandi ratio, ut plurimi maximique auctores tradiderunt, quinque partibus constat: inventione, dispositione, elocutione, memoria, pronuntiatione sive actione (utroque enim modo dicitur). Omnis vero sermo, quo quidem voluntas aliqua enuntiatur, habeat necesse est rem et verba. Ac si est brevis et una conclusione finitus, nihil fortasse ultra desideret: at oratio longior plura exigit. Non enim tantum refert quid et quo modo dicamus, sed etiam quo loco: opus ergo est et dispositione.<sup>1</sup>

For obvious reasons the last two – *actio* and *memoria* – are not present in either the literary or the videogame text. The remaining figural operations, on the other hand, regulate the narration in both media, dealing respectively with the «quid» – what to say, *inventio* –, the «quo modo» – how to say it, *elocutio* – and the «quo loco» – in what order, *dispositio*. Let's then proceed to theorize a possible videogame figurality by keeping faith with this tripartite division and using some of the main and most recent videogame products as samples.

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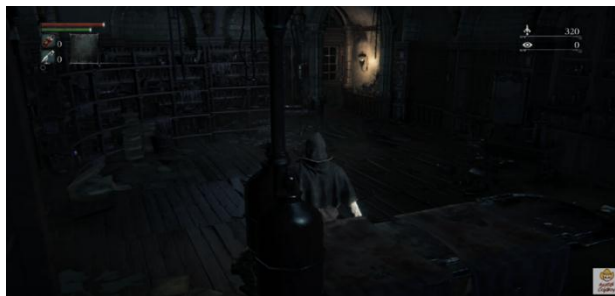
<sup>1</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* III, 3.

## 2.1. *Elocutio*, the expression field

In literature, the elocutive dimension covers figural maneuvers on the level of pure language like phonetics or syntax: within it we find those common sense has baptized as rhetorical figures – onomatopoeia, rhyme, anaphora, alliteration, metaphor, litotes, apostrophe, etc. In the videogame text, however, the expressive membrane from strictly verbal becomes audiovisual: the language of the videogame is no longer based on words, but on sound and image. The alterations produced by the elocutive intentionality therefore concern the specific expressive matter of the medium, such as for example the direction of the photography –lights, colors – and the sound effects – soundtrack, ambient music, audio editing.

### 2.1.1. Photography

For what concern lighting design, we can state by borrowing cinematic terminology that lighting can be either diegetic, when it comes from an element internal to the story, or non-diegetic, when the source of light is external to the fiction world. We note the difference using the same videogame, *Bloodborne* (2015), as a witness: in the first image (see fig. 1), there is a lamp that illuminates the room, an object physically present and explicit in the reality of the game; in the second one (see fig. 2), that corner is not illuminated by something present in the story but by an external, authorial light, which suggests to the player to continue in that direction.



(Figure 1) *Diegetic lighting* in *Bloodborne*.



(Figure 2) *Non-diegetic lighting in Bloodborne.*

Like lighting, the color design also responds to a figural need and a specific investment in narrative sense. The color can represent an implied message to the addressee, suggesting the correct path: in Naughty Dog games, the color yellow highlights where the player can climb (see fig. 3 and 4). Or, using the well-known psychology of colors, they can characterize the surrounding world: in *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020), chromatic schizophrenia suggests a composite and posthuman reality, in which different genders, races, ideologies, etc. coexist (see fig. 5).



(Figure 3) *Climbing in Uncharted 2.*



(Figure 4) *Climbing in The Last of Us.*



(Figure 5) *Colors in Cyberpunk 2077.*

### 2.1.2. Sound effects

Even music can be diegetic and non-diegetic, depending on its more or less contingent presence in the game world. In *Death Stranding* (2019), the adventure of the protagonist is accompanied by the most famous tracks of various really existing groups, such as Low Roar and Silent Poets; however, within the reality that the text simulates there is no music player, and the music therefore comes from another dimension that has nothing to do with the substance of the story outside of a dramatic and immersive function. In *Grand Theft Auto V*, each car is on the contrary equipped with a radio that the addressee can access through an interaction carried out by the character himself: music is part of the game world, it is perceivable both by the player and by his avatar.

Furthermore, the sound effects are fundamental as they help the player's immersion: many war games push towards the absolute sound realism of weapons, in order to return as much as possible the same sensations of the authentic experience.

### 2.2. *Dispositio*, the information field

The dispositive dimension has to do with figural actions on the level of information, that is how the text offers its data to the addressee: within it we find all the narrative operations that Gérard Genette has cataloged and described in *Figures III*, founder of modern narratology – order, duration, frequency, mode, voice, etc. (Genette, 1972). In the videogame text there is too a narrating instance that manages and regulates the flow of information: there are many strategies and procedures through which the gamer can obtain instructions on how to best receive tale features. Beyond the obvious similarities between the storytelling of literature and the storytelling of the videogame – the common presence of flashbacks and flashforwards, rhythm effects, extradiegetic or intradiegetic narrators, etc. –, it is above all in what

Genette defined «mode» – or else «la régulation de l'information narrative» (Genette, 1972, 251) – that it is possible to find a coincidence between the figural businesses; a coincidence which, however, takes into account the properties of each medium. In particular, Genette speaks about a quantitative gradation – the distance – and a qualitative gradation – the perspective. In videogame, the distance corresponds to the dialectic between telling – minimum information and maximum of informer – and showing – maximum information and minimum of informer –, based above all on the User Interface and on what the player can see on the screen; the perspective coincides instead with a data filtering system where camera positioning replaces the character focalization.

### 2.2.1. Screen and UI

Tutorials, that are guides to the fruition of the game, can be explicit or implicit depending on the type of storytelling that the figural principle wants to set up – telling or showing. Below, two specular situations: in the first one, from *Assassin's Creed* (2007), clear information appears to the player, since it is the game that instructs the action through a clearly visible text window (see fig. 6); in the second one, from *Half-Life 2* (2004), the presence of a corpse on the electrified grate suggests danger without an actual writing imprinted on the screen (see fig. 7).



(Fig. 6) *Tutorials in Assassin's Creed.*





(Fig. 7) *Tutorials in Half-Life 2.*

The signaling of the correct path can also come through more traditional information devices as well as more subtle instruments such as light and colour. Again, the communication that the game has with the gamer can be more or less implicit: in *Dead Space* series, pressing a button corresponds to a light path generated by the character's armor that indicates the next destination (see fig. 8); in *Uncharted 3* (2011), on the other hand, it is the movement of the birds that suggests to the player which direction to take during an escape from enemies, with a much more veiled but still effective message (see fig. 9).

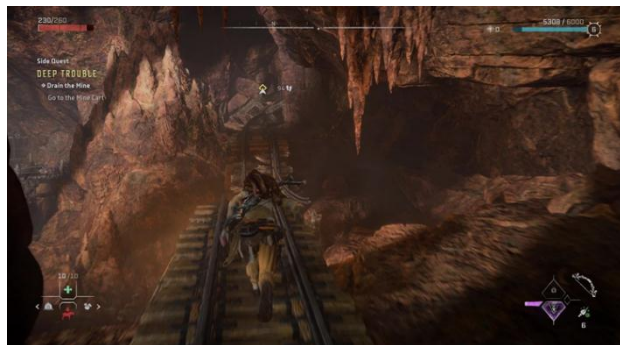


(Fig. 8) *Exploration tips in Dead Space.*



(Fig. 9) *Exploration tips in Uncharted 3.*

In turn, even the compass can be made available to the player according to different quantitative gradations and figural applications of distance. In most open-world games such as *Horizon Forbidden West* (2022), waypoints are constantly and clearly imprinted on the screen without the player having to worry about navigating the game world independently (see fig. 10); it is therefore a non-diegetic tool. But in other games such as *The Last of Us* (2013), it is the various elements of the scenario that silently constitute indicators useful for exploration: the bridge that can be observed in the image stands out from the environment thanks to the color and it gets closer and closer in a realistic way as the player continues on his journey, without any marker that communicates the distance in an artificial way; it is then a diegetic tool. (see fig. 11).



(Fig. 10) *Waypoint in Horizon Forbidden West.*

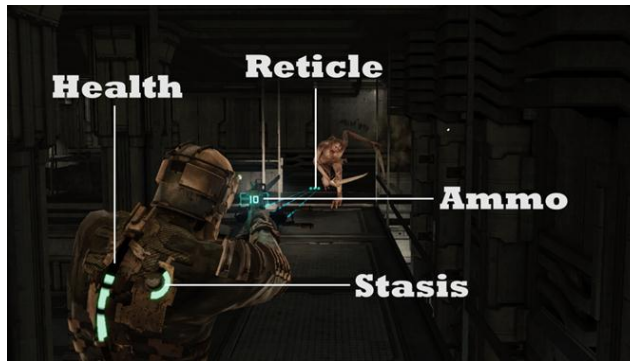


(Fig. 11) *Waypoint in The Last of Us.*

Finally, even the UI or User Interface proper can be non-diegetic – in *Horizon Zero Dawn* (2017), an essential element for gameplay such as the life bar is communicated to the player through a dedicated window that goes beyond the game world (see fig. 12) – and diegetic – in *Dead Space* (2008), it is the protagonist's armor itself that displays parameters such as vital signs and number of ammunition, thus remaining within the fictional perimeter (see fig. 13).



(Fig. 12) *UI in Horizon Zero Dawn.*



(Fig. 13) *UI in Dead Space.*

### 2.2.2. Camera positioning

As mentioned, camera positioning is equivalent to the focalization of the character, that is the exceptional perspective through which we witness the story. If Genette distinguishes the perspectives between internal, external and 0 focus, we can do a similar thing with the videogame: we thus have a first person game (see fig. 14) when the camera is placed according to a subjective view as if we were looking at the game world through the eyes of the character, a second – to tell the truth, very rare – (see fig. 15) when the camera assumes the point of view of another character engaged in observing the movements of the protagonist, a third (see fig. 16) when the camera follows the protagonist at close range – often positioned above and just behind his shoulder –, and an isometric view (see fig. 17) – a camera that represents a three-dimensional scene by maintaining the proportions of objects along all three axes of space, with no vanishing point.



(Fig. 14) *First-person camera in Battlefield 4.*





(Fig. 15) *Second-person camera in Kingdom Hearts 2.*



(Fig. 16) *Third-person camera in God of War.*



(Fig. 17) *Isometric view in Dragon Age Inquisition.*

Camera positioning also structures the level design, that is, the spatial geography through which the world to be explored is modeled, and consequently setting the direction – or directions – to travel. In the first *Super Mario Bros.* (1985), the character is positioned on the left of the screen and the shot shows a large portion of the environment on the right, suggesting to the player that he must continue in a linear progress (see fig. 18). In the first *Metroid* (1986), the character is in the exact center of the shot, and in fact she can go both left and right in a semi-linear exploration (see fig. 19).

In the first *Zelda* (1987), the map opens up, the shot shows different roads, but the closest one is definitely the cave, which is the first place to visit since Link the protagonist will find a sword there (see fig. 20).



(Fig. 18) *Camera positioning in Super Mario Bros..*



(Fig. 19) *Camera positioning in Metroid.*



(Fig. 20) *Camera positioning in The Legend of Zelda.*

### 2.3. *Inventio*, the interaction field

The inventive dimension concerns figural interventions on the level of narrative materials, that is, on how the individual elements that are part of the fictional world are positioned in an argumentative geometry to convey a certain meaning; as Valentina Sturli recently wrote, collecting Francesco Orlando's notes: «it is about understanding the way in which the single text and the single author create and organize the semantic materials they use» (Sturli, 2020, 27-28, *my translation*). The figure of the *inventio* then becomes a sort of toll to be paid to enter the text, a passage that the contents of the extra-textual world must cross; Sturli again, describing Orlando's theoretical purpose: «his practice aims to be an investigation of the processes through which a single literary text models its referents and creates its specific world in a dialectical relationship between mimesis and convention» (Sturli, 2020, 30, *my translation*). In the videogame, inventive figurality asserts itself above all as a register of interactions between the factual and the fictional world, that is between the action of the player – what he can do in reality – and the action of the character – what he can do in the game world: the narrative materials are thus reorganized according to the relationship created between the two conceptual universes.

This takes place through two devices specific to the medium: the button mapping and the physics of the game world. Button mapping – or layout – becomes the main channel through which the gamer enters the game world and affects it; the commands translate an intention into action and therefore into an effect. The button layout is a window on the game world, a frame that structures it intimately; the narrowness of the buttons presupposes a selection of the actions that can be carried out, and therefore a design that established them. The physics of the game world, or the rules to which it is subject, instead determines the player's potential, what he can do based on the skills of the character he plays: not all actions – such as jumping, climbing, fighting, flying, speaking – have been programmed as possible, and therefore different configurations foresee a different treatment of the narrative materials. The theoretical reference that I consider closest to this typical setting of the videogame is what Northrop Frye wrote about «fictional modes», and in this case on the «degree of stature of character»:

In the second paragraph of the *Poetics* Aristotle speaks of the differences in works of fiction which are caused by the different elevations of the characters in them. In some fictions, he says, the characters are better than we are, in others worse, in still others on the same level. This passage has not received much attention from modern critics, as the importance Aristotle assigns to goodness and badness seems to indicate a somewhat narrowly moralistic view of literature. Aristotle's words for good and bad, however, are *spoudos* and *phaulos*, which have a figurative sense of weighty and light. In literary fictions the plot consists of somebody doing something. The somebody, if an individual, is the hero, and the something he does or fails to do is what he can do, or could have done, on the level of the postulates made about him by the author and the consequent expectations of the audience. Fictions, therefore, may be classified, not morally, but by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same (Frye, 1957/2020, p. 33).

It is this idea of "weight" that I intend to recover in order to classify the figural operations of an inventive type within the videogame: the player's intrusion into the game world can only cause a force of gravity which must precisely be managed by an adequate physical apparatus, by a set of rules. The fictional modes would then depend on the seriousness of the player's intention, that is, on the weight of his actions, on what he is allowed to do or not. Based on how the protagonist is portrayed in respect to the rest of characters and the environment, the text can make the player interact in different ways: as a general assumption, the greater the physics of the world, the greater the power of the character, the greater the player's freedom. It is possible to propose a typological division of videogame genres – and therefore a classification of the narrative treatment – by borrowing Frye's statements, depending on the physics of the game in question.

### **2.3.1. Button mapping**

Any intention of the player, to be realized, must be channeled and made programmable through the input of a button; behind the selection of the commands, also on the basis of their positioning on the game controller, an incisive planning emerges on the part of the Game Designer, as in the case of an author who carefully orders the inhabitants of his literary text to evoke



to his reader a certain interpretation and therefore a specific interaction. In *Ico* (2001), for example, the most important action to be performed throughout the game is to take the female protagonist Yorda by the hand to escort her on her journey; an entire button is dedicated to this single action, and this conveys to the player the importance of that gesture, the absolute need to protect the girl. Or, in *Assassin's Creed* (2007), the protagonist's actions are divided into high-profile and low-profile actions, depending on the pressure of the R1 button: the avatar can alternatively walk or run, commit a silent murder or a public execution, push people gently or push them violently, and so on. The player then has two different approaches to play, one devoted to spectacularity and one to stealth, and the narrative of the text changes considerably.

### 2.3.2. Physics of the game world

As Frye proposed to classify literary genres according to the degree of the protagonist, that is according to what he can do with respect to the other characters and the environment in which he lives, it is legitimate to act with a conceptually identical procedure in the case of videogame genres. About the mythic mode, Frye writes:

If superior in kind both to other men and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about him will be a myth in the common sense of a story about a god (Frye, 1957/2020, p. 33).

The player has full control of the surrounding world as it is totally superior to it; physics is at its best, the player dictates the rules, there is a potentially unlimited level of interaction. In short, the character is a divinity, just as Frye states in the literary text. Examples of this genre are crafting games and sandboxes like *Minecraft* (2011), where the player has full freedom and can create whatever he wants.

Next comes the romantic mode:

If superior in degree to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are

natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established (Frye, 1957/2020, p. 33).

In the romantic way, player has more limited control but can still intimately affect the structures of the world, shaping the rules of physics that exist thanks to his superior abilities. In this case, the interaction is based on the plurality of approaches within a closed repertoire; physics is exploited, there is a high level of interaction. The character is a hero or a wizard, an individual with particular attributes. He is not a god who can create from nothing, but thanks to his extraordinary abilities he can shape the world however he wants using the laws of physics to his advantage. This is what happens in Immersive Sims like the latest *Zelda* (2017) or *Dishonored* (2012) or *Portal* (2007), in which the player acts on pre-established tracks which however offer a range of different solutions based on the inventiveness and the different exploitation of the powers at one's disposal.

Then, the high-mimetic mode:

If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the hero of the high mimetic mode, of most epic and tragedy (Frye, 1957/2020, 33-34).

In the high-mimetic world, one of the two most common genres together with the low-mimetic both in the literary medium and in the video-game one, player has no control over the environment, but is superior to other characters – the enemies: the focus of the game is concentrated on the combat system, therefore physics is not very accurate; there is a medium level of interaction. In other words, the interaction and the playful value depend on the physical extraordinariness – and not magical, as in the romantic mode – of the protagonist, on how easily the character can overwhelm his enemies, but the player cannot in any way act on the surrounding environment which seems to have almost no physical laws unlike the bodies of the other characters. Great examples are action games like *Devil May Cry* series and shooters games like *Battlefield* series.

In penultimate position, the low-mimetic mode:

If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This gives us the hero of the low mimetic mode, of most comedy and of realistic fiction (Frye, 1957/2020, 34).

The novel and the open-world game are the two main narrative practices in their respective media, and they both belong to the low-mimetic mode. Player controls a character who has the same attributes as a human and who is therefore unable to influence the environment or overwhelm the enemies: this connotes the videogame text in a realistic way, and accentuates the importance of the plot at the expense of gameplay freedom; physics is at a minimum, there is a low level of interaction. In short, the player can do very little: he can only enjoy a story and act minimally. *The Last of Us* (2013), for instance, is a game with a high cinematic imprint, where the player limits himself to following the path traced by the Game Designer without being able to alter it in any way or solve it according to his own ingenuity, because the purpose of the text is to make one enjoy his narrative. Or, in open-world games like *The Witcher 3* (2015) the protagonist, although free to roam freely in a vast world, is still bound to certain actions: he cannot fly, he cannot climb, often he cannot jump over obstacles even if they are not very high, and generally he cannot interact with the scenery precisely because physics is not particularly developed.

Finally, the ironic mode:

If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the ironic mode. This is still true when the reader feels that he is or might be in the same situation, as the situation is being judged by the norms of a greater freedom (Frye, 1957/2020, 34).

Player's approach to the game world is very limited, he cannot do what he wants: commands are highly restricted and do not correspond to complete and free actions but only to supervised and pre-calculated movements; the game has strict rules that subdue the character as tracks that structure the

experience; physics is almost non-existent, the interaction level is close to 0. For example, there is no command to jump or a command to make a light or heavy attack, but these and other actions are triggered by pressing a contextual commands. It is the structure called «quick-time event» present in *Heavy Rain* (2010): some sequences of the game are not actually played through the interaction with the buttons, but are rather like cutscenes during which the players can command the character certain actions by pressing a single button reported on the screen as a sudden prompt and unrelated to a preset mapping. Or, graphic adventures such as *Monkey Island* series, otherwise defined as «point and click games» due to the only action that can be performed: point the cursor on the game screen towards certain sensitive points – such as objects, characters, places – and click to realize a particular action on them; in this case, therefore, there is no button mapping at all. In short, the character does not seem to possess our action skills, since there is no precise coincidence – as in other games – between the player's intention and the avatar's action: there is no jump button, rather a universal command that is used also for other actions depending on the context.

### 3. Conclusions

With this work we have tried to demonstrate how the figural operations typical of the rhetoric of the literary text can act, with the necessary media transcodes, also in the videogame text. The grammar of the tale thus turns out to be common to every expression of the narrative, and the task of Comparative Studies is precisely that of extending its field of investigation and untangling the meshes of widespread narrativity through tools – in this case, rhetorical analysis – as elastic as possible, never little formulas to be applied mechanically but always contingent investigation articulations.

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