

PLAYING BEYOND ONESELF: AN APPLICATION OF COGNITIVE NARRATOLOGY IN THE STUDY OF DIGITAL GAMES

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Abstract: *Over the past decade, video game studies have largely ignored or underplayed the role of storytelling in the design and reception of digital games, but the industry itself has taken rather a different turn. Wildly popular titles featuring powerful narrative components have become increasingly frequent, while the academic community has been slow in the development of an appropriate response. As part of a larger project that seeks to reaffirm the importance of storytelling in contemporary digital games, the present paper investigates the possibility of applying a form of cognitive narratology to the study of the new medium. More specifically, my aim is to address the question of whether stories explored in digital games may serve for their players a purpose similar to that of traditional storytelling as defined by cognitive narratologists. I place particular emphasis on the importance of storytelling in building and enhancing the player’s Theory of mind (ToM), as well as their ability to empathise with the other. I then address certain essential differences between the new medium and traditional forms of storytelling in order to ultimately justify the potential use of digital games in a profound, yet intuitive exploration of one’s relationship with alterity.*

Keywords: *storytelling in digital games, cognitive narratology, Theory of Mind, role-playing game (RPG), video game culture, game philology*