Crossing the Threshold

Teaching Transmedial Narratology with Videogames and Film

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is threefold. First, to look at the curriculum of English in the upper secondary classroom and what the role of narratology is. Secondly, an analysis of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001) and *Journey* (2012) through Campbell's monomyth and how the stages are presented to the viewer/player. Lastly, how these media and analysis are beneficial in teaching narratology in the English upper secondary classroom in Sweden. The content analysis is shaped with the narratological concepts laid out by Huisman (2005), Bal (1997), narrative descriptors by Tekinbaş & Zimmerman (2004), as well as concepts relating to transmedial narratology from Ryan & Thon (2004). The media are chosen for their relevance to upper secondary students and their narrative clarity. The essay, with narratology as the tool, and the hero's journey as the lens, highlights how the same narrative structure is represented in vastly different ways based on each medium's idiosyncrasies. Through analysis and subsequent discussion, there are several key points, such as 'media blindness' and 'media relativism' which needs to be addressed with learners to facilitate discussions about transmedial narratology and develop all-around communicative skills among learners.

Keywords: Hero's Journey, transmedial narratology, media, narrative structure, teaching.

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Introduction

Narratives exist in all kinds of media, and newer media such as videogames (along with film) are extremely prevalent among teenagers (ISFE, 2012). These modern media can, and should, be utilized in the English classroom to allow learners to work with a variety of narratives. Hayden White (2009) argues that narratives are a "meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (p. 1) and therefore essential to understanding human nature and how we tell stories in all kinds of cultures.

Narratology also allows for "an informed discussion about that crucial relationship between the text and the effects that are claimed for it" (Meffan & Worthington, 2013, p. 121) and the storytelling potential of media. This is an essential skill for future learners, who will not only create written narratives, but translate and adapt them to various media. This essay will examine how Joseph Campbell's *monomyth*, the hero's journey, is represented in two different types of media, the film *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Heyman & Columbus, 2001) and the game *Journey* (Thatgamecompany, 2012). Through this analysis, I will examine and contrast the two media and their narratives and provide an account of how the role of narratology fits into the Swedish curriculum for English at an upper secondary level.

The structure of this essay is in three parts. First, to look at the curriculum of English in the upper secondary classroom and what the role of narratology is. Secondly, an analysis of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Journey* through Campbell's monomyth and how the stages are presented to the viewer/player. Lastly, how these media and the analysis can be beneficial for teaching narratology in the English upper secondary classroom in Sweden.

Background & Previous Research

The Swedish Curriculum and GERS

Media is barely mentioned in aims of the upper secondary English curriculum, but aims concerning narratology, i.e. the study of the function and structure of narratives, and digital media can be found in the margins. The curriculum for English in upper secondary school only mentions "film and other media" (Skolverket, 2011, p. 7) a handful of times and only touches on narratological analysis by way of making use of surrounding information to "develop an understanding of how to search for, evaluate, select and assimilate content from multiple sources of information" (pp. 1-2). These descriptors are very vague, and usually point to the term "all-round communicative skills" (Skolverket, 2011) which is a reference to the more specific skills outlined by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) or GERS (in Sweden). The 2011 curriculum is more in line with this European framework compared to the 2000 curriculum (Skolverket, 2017) and GERS give more elaborate descriptors of what the English curriculum should include.

Looking at GERS, there are some limits on which media are considered for the classroom, but competencies concerning narratology are still relevant. The media mentioned in GERS range from the classic books, voice, and CDs to the more 'advanced' forms like picturetelephone (bildtelefon), cinema, and computer (Skolverket, 2009, p. 91; my translation). However, it does recommend the teacher using this framework determine which media the learner should, can, and/or need to be able to handle (Skolverket, 2009). Despite the list of media leaving things to be desired, combining narratology with media has the potential to investigate and enrich modern storytelling.

Brought up in the section on linguistic competencies, there is a clear connection to the purpose of narratology in the classroom and how it is part of the all-round communicative

skills mentioned in the 2011 curriculum. Linguistic competency is here defined as "knowledge of, and ability to use, the formal resources which makes it possible to construct and shape well-formed and meaningful messages" (Skolverket, 2009, p. 107; my translation). This is an essential part of the narratological analysis and is further emphasized in the section on "textutformning," translated to 'text design,' on the knowledge about how texts are shaped and constructed according to different types of texts and genres (Skolverket, 2009, p. 120). Narratology, as a theoretical tool for helping "to understand, analyse, and evaluate narratives" (Bal, 1997, p. 3), aligns well with the requirements to develop all-around communicative skills mentioned in Skolverket's 2011 curriculum.

Previous Research

Film in the classroom

Movies and TV shows have been used to various effects in the classroom to enhance motivation, provide examples of authentic English, and sometimes as just a 'reward' from the regular curriculum (Golden, 2001). Using film is a great way to incorporate authentic texts and to integrate cultural viewpoints and perspectives into the English classroom (Sturm, 2012) which is one of the requirements of the curriculum (Skolverket, 2011). Several authors have provided concrete examples and pedagogical approaches to incorporate film in a meaningful way, using literary analysis to analyze films (Golden, 2001; Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016), the benefit of watching English movies with English subtitles (Fumuselu et al, 2015), or using film as an interdisciplinary approach together with History (Toplin, 2002). The use of film in language classes usually either focus on merging literary analysis with media-specific terms or on enhancing language proficiencies.

As films have started to tell elaborate stories, studies have followed which examine how narrative structure and narratology can be examined through those media.

Kokonis (1993) noted that most studies about using film in the English classrooms focused on the possibilities of language teaching, i.e. vocabulary, reading, etc (Sturm, 2012; Golden, 2001), but his own study focused on film's potential for teaching narratology and narrative structure. By analyzing detective films, knowledge of narration, focalization, and the difference between story and plot were some of the narratological concepts which could be given concrete representations and allowed students to gain greater understanding (Kokonis, 1993). Concluding his study, Kokonis noticed that "due to the capacity of video to make elusive and abstract ideas accessible and concrete, the difficult task of teaching literary concepts [became] easier and pleasurable" (1993, p.167) to learners and the teacher. It is important to note that the concepts of narratology used are still remnants from literary analysis, and Kokonis used a film adaptation of an Agatha Christie novel for his study. However, the benefits of film for increasing the potential for understanding narrative concepts still holds true and especially when making abstract concepts available to students.

Videogames in the classroom

In recent years, research into the beneficial uses of videogames has increased and various studies are starting to bear fruit. One such study, by Chen & Yang (2013) examined the effects on EFL learners when playing an adventure game; the results were increased proficiency in L2 vocabulary, listening, reading, and improvement in learners' motivation and attitudes. Other studies have also focused on videogames impact on the affective domain of L2 learners. One such study done in Thailand by Reinders & Wattana (2015) resulted in a beneficial cycle of "lowered anxiety, resulting in more L2 production, leading to greater self-satisfaction, and resulting in more motivation, which in turn led to a further lowering of affective barriers" (p. 50), all because of utilizing game-based learning.

Some studies focus on the cognitive aspects of gameplaying, like the one in *the Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning* by Tobias et al (2014). By continuing past studies done by Richard E. Mayer on the principles of multimedia learning, the studies solidify the following findings: learning occurs when people play games and players can ignore distractors and focus on tasks. Instructional strategy studies have also shown that games "help to develop the conceptual links needed for retention and transfer of what is learned" (Tobias et al, 2014, p.777). Therefore, it is no surprise that studies have appeared concerning the use of videogames (and film) to teach narratology and other subjects.

Videogames could arguably contain "some of the most important storytelling in the 21st century" (Ostenson, 2013, p.71). Statistics show that 89% of all males and 81% of all females between ages 16-24 in Sweden have played videogames (ISFE, 2012), which makes it a relevant medium to many students in upper secondary school. Games, being interactive, allow for more agency than books or films, which makes the experience more immersive for learners, and allow them to experience participatory storytelling (Ostenson, 2013). As videogames are maturing and have begun to tell grand and intricate narratives, like film and literature before them, their value in the current (and future) English classroom should not be underestimated.

Theory and Method

Narratology

The theoretical approach, the tools, for this analysis will be based on narratology. Narratology and narratological analysis has changed and evolved over time, from as early as Aristotle's *Poetics* to structuralism to post-structuralist, etc (Bal, 1997). In terms of its usefulness, Meffan and Worthington (2013) argues that narratology enables "an informed discussion about that crucial relationship between the text and the effects that are claimed for

it with some descriptive precision and force" (p. 121). Since narratology only provides the tools to talk about different texts, the need for a second theoretical framework, a 'lens', namely Campbell's monomyth, is necessary. Bal (1997) points out that "the need for more theory, beyond narratology: a theory that accounts for the functions and positions of texts of different background, genres, and historical periods" (p. x) is required to provide more depth to a narrative analysis. This is where the focus of this essay will lie, examining how the same narrative structure is represented through different media, and how to bring this discussion to the upper secondary classroom.

The definitions of narratology need to be defined for this analysis. Starting with *narratology* itself, it is defined as "the study of the form and functioning of narrative" (Prince, 1982, p.4) and "the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that 'tell a story'" (Bal, 1997, p.3). In recent years, this definition has changed to include more than just written narratives, but also films, comics, and videogames. In the traditional narrative discourse, *Text* (also referred to as *discourse* or *narrative*) is "the particular telling" (Huisman, 2005, p.37) of a story, i.e. what is actually told. This is the most concrete part available to us as readers/viewers/players, because it is only the Text layer which uses different semiotic domains such as images, words, etc, which is directly accessible for analysis.

In more general terms, *narrative texts*, will be considered as the multitude of Texts which convey some sort of narrative. This essay will define the corpus of narrative texts in the terms of Mieke Bal (1997): "A *narrative text* is a text in which an agent relates ('tells') a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, [gameplay,] or a combination thereof" (p.5, my addition). Since this definition was written 20 years ago, for the purposes of this analysis, the term gameplay has been added to include the interactive elements present in videogames.

Transmedial Narratology

Transmedial narratology will be the focus of the discussion and used to address questions concerning the portrayal of narratives through different media. There are various definitions of transmedial narratology but the one which will be used in this essay is 'the study of narrative potential of media and the idiosyncrasies unique to each media' which is a combination of definitions given by Ryan (2016) and Thon (2017). The analysis done later will focus on this, examining the same narrative arc through each type of medium and what "narratives of a certain medium can do that others cannot" (Ryan, 2016, p. 38). One of the core issues of transmedial narratology, and subsequently this essay, is to, as Thon (2017) puts it, remain "media conscious" (p. 288) and be aware of the specific characteristics, advantages and limitations, of the medium used to tell the story. This also means that an "analysis of literary texts cannot (or, rather, should not) be directly applied to other media" (Thon, 2017, p. 288). However, this does not mean that a literary analysis is useless, only that some principles and challenges need to be remembered during analysis.

There are three methodological challenges to transmedial narratology: 'equaling idiosyncrasies as media features', 'media blindness,' and 'media relativism' (Ryan & Thon, 2014). The first of these "is the temptation to regard the idiosyncrasies of individual texts as features of the medium" (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 33) which emphasizes the caution to overgeneralize one example as feature of the whole. The second is that of "media blindness" and deals with the failure to realize that "concepts designed for the study of the narratives of a particular medium" (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 34) cannot be transferred to another medium without thinking about them first. The final challenge, 'media relativism,' is the assumption that "because media are distinct, the toolbox of narratology must be rebuilt from scratch for every medium" (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 34) and here is when it starts to get a bit

contradictory. One cannot blindly apply different concepts of narrative to different media, but if each media is unique, one cannot transfer it.

The answer to this is to create an analysis on what Ryan & Thon (2014) call a spectrum between *medium-free* and *medium-specific* concepts and components to highlight similarities and differences. As a spectrum, there are some concepts that may apply to some media, but not others. Starting out, the medium-free concepts are those which transcend all media, e.g. character, events, setting, time, space, etc (Ryan & Thon, 2014). Then there are some concepts in between, e.g. *interactivity*, which can apply to videogames, theater, choose-your-own-adventure stories, and others (Ryan & Thon, 2014). Finally, medium-specific concepts are those exclusively tied to a certain medium, e.g. "the concepts of gutter, frame, and the arrangements of panels on a page are tailor-made for the medium of comics" (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 4). While the concept of *focalization*, defined as the phenomenon of which perspective that the narrative is presented from (Huisman, 2005), is considered somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. This essay will make use of medium-free concepts during analysis, since these can be used freely for both media, but some concepts relating to games will also be needed.

Games and Narratives

Games as narratives contain in many ways similar concepts to other media, but some concepts need to be addressed as part of games' unique way to tell narratives. Juul (2001) proposed that "games and narratives are not very far apart" and that "a narrative may be used for telling the player what to do or as rewards for playing." This is done mainly through key storytelling elements which Tekinbaş & Zimmerman (2004) call *narrative descriptors*. This is a term which can also be applied to other media and is defined as "representations … [or] depictions of one or more aspects of the game world" (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004, p.

393). This is not dissimilar to Golden's (2001) mentioning of symbols, certain elements which are literal but also "representative of something greater" (p. 82). When playing a game, and experiencing other narratives, "we rely on narrative descriptors to help us make sense of the settings, events, and characters encountered" (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 393). The essay will thereby focus on these narrative descriptors in both film and game when examining their narratives.

There are some game specific concepts which will be necessary for the analysis, and these are narrative *goals*, *conflicts*, and *core mechanics* (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004). Two of these, narrative goals and core mechanics, are meant to "guide players in understanding the significance of their actions within a narrative context" (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 379). Presenting a clear goal, through the environment or other gameplay elements, is where "the art of game design comes in … embedding narrative information into the environment without destroying its immersiveness and without giving the player a sensation of being drug around by the neck" (Jenkins, 2004, p. 127). These are a few concepts which may vary a great deal between media and will be looked at in this essay, especially how the core mechanics of the game influence the narrative.

The last concept, conflict, is an essential element for engaging and motivating the player to go through the narrative, but it also carries narrative purpose. It is rare for a game to not include some type of conflict, a villain, environment, or mystery to overcome or solve. "In traditional storytelling, the internal conflict of a character often shapes the kinds of experiences encountered by the audience" (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 381) while conflict in a game has the potential to create events and contextualize the obstacles encountered by the player as they advance towards their goal (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004). When these concepts are put in the context of the hero's journey narrative structure, they take on a more tangible and sometimes literal nature in a game context.

Narrative Structure: The Hero's Journey

The narrative structure which will be examined is Joseph Campbell's *monomyth*, also known as *the hero's journey* (Campbell, 2008), and is a narrative arc divided into three main chapters: departure, initiation, and return. Each chapter is further shaped by five major events which will be explained in further detail as they are encountered in the analysis. The hero's journey has been an inspiration to many modern works of storytelling, e.g. *Star Wars, The Matrix*, and *Harry Potter*. Applying Campbell's structure has been done in different ways, whether using it as an outline for a movie or book, examining how a match in *Warcraft III* is similar the stages of the hero's journey (Buchanan-Oliver & Seo, 2012), or how *Journey* as a pilgrimage includes elements of Campbell's structure (Nuenen, 2016). However, it must be mentioned that the hero's journey is not a formula for a universally engaging story, but rather a tool for how narratives throughout history have been constructed and how it can assist in shaping a modern narrative.

The hero's journey is based on several different mythologies from around the world, culminating in a 17-stage journey, but each stage may not exist in every type of narrative. As mentioned previously, the 17 stages can be reduced to three main chapters: departure, initiation, and return (Campbell, 2008), and the following summary by Buchanan-Oliver & Seo (2012) gives a short overview of the broad strokes:

> 'Departure' is the beginning of the hero's journey and the hero's adventure on the quest. One of the most common elements of 'Departure' is the miraculous birth of the hero. 'Initiation' reflects the hero's adventures along the way and describes trials that the hero undergoes in order to finish the quest. Finally, 'Return' is the end of the journey and the hero's return home (p. 428).

Each chapter then contains about five different stages and each one may or may not exist in a narrative text, e.g. sometimes only one stage of the return is present. Authors, filmmakers, and game designers, sometimes choose to ignore or modify some stages of the hero's journey

because it has "become a conventional stylistic device – even formulaic" (Nuenen, 2016) but despite this, it still holds great value in understanding narratives and our human nature when telling stories.

Method

Based on the theoretical approach described above, the analysis has mostly followed the principles of qualitative content analysis as described by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009). The content analysis was shaped with the narratological concepts laid out by Huisman (2005), Bal (1997), narrative descriptors by Tekinbaş & Zimmerman (2004), as well as concepts relating to transmedial narratology from Ryan & Thon (2004). With narratology as the tool and Campbell's monomyth (2008) as the lens, the analysis examined the two media and their portrayal of the hero's journey.

The analysis found narrative descriptors which relayed the monomyth stages, and what made them significant. The focus was then put on describing how each stage is constructed and portrayed in relation to the medium it exists in with the help of the narrative descriptors. As transmedial narratology explains it: "all representations [take] place in a medium, and the characteristics of each particular medium dictate key properties of any representation that takes place in that medium" (Thon, 2017, p. 288). After finding the descriptors, the analysis focused on how each stage was characterized in their respective media and then followed by a practical discussion regarding classroom use.

The media used for this essay were chosen for their relevancy to upper secondary school learners and their narrative clarity. The game *Journey* was chosen because of its "embedded narrative" (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 377) structure, a linear narrative experience more like movies or literature, in contrast to an open-world or 'sandbox' game which contains emergent narrative (e.g. *The Sims*). Another reason for this choice was its

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minimalist gameplay with little to no user interface and simple controls. This allowed focus to be put on the player, visuals, and narrative structure rather than dialogue or writing.

The film, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, was chosen for its relevance and well-known story among upper secondary students. It is the first film based on the book by the same name by J.K. Rowling. As Frumuselu et al (2015) remarked, the use of a feature films in the classroom are believed to be more motivating to students since it allows for enjoyment as well as opportunities for learning. It is also a well-known film and book-franchise and easily accessible to upper secondary students, and does not contain overly complicated English.

In summary, the analysis will consists of the following pattern: First, deductive analysis and identification of each monomyth stage present, followed by inductive analysis of the stage's characteristics (visuals, audio, etc), and lastly, a didactical discussion for teaching this information to upper secondary school classrooms.

Analysis and Discussion

Departure

The Call to Adventure.

The first step on any hero's journey as described by Campbell (2008) is the call to adventure which summons the hero to commence their journey into the unknown. This stage is characterized by someone or something happening upon the hero, either by chance or not, calling him from "the pale of his society to a zone unknown" (Campbell, 2008, p. 48). Other instances of this is Leia's hologram in *Star Wars* and Bilbo giving Frodo the ring in *Lord of the Rings*. The game *Journey* and the first *Harry Potter* movie present this stage in similar but slightly different ways.

In *Journey*, the stage is represented by a shooting star across the sky and landing on the top of a mountain. The first thing you are prompted to do is to physically tilt the controller to look up from the sand towards the direction of where the star fell. Moving the entire controller, rather than push the analog-stick, amplifies the participatory and interactive nature of the videogame medium (Ostenson, 2013) to emphasize that this journey is for you, the player, to embark on. The avatar on screen is only an extension of yourself and as you tilt the controller, the camera does too. Therefore, following the star and accepting the call becomes a choice, not compulsory, but more details on refusing the call will be brought up in the next stage. When finally reaching the peak, the player is rewarded with an image of the mountain and the star in the distance and the title of the game accompanied by rising music.[1]

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone has a different, more explicit, call to adventure in the form of an invitation. After experiencing some magical mishap at the local zoo with the Dursleys, Harry collects the mail the following day and receives a letter from Hogwarts. Like the star in *Journey,* the scene is entirely focused on the letter in Harry's

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 0:02:10

hands.[2] However, he does not get a chance to read it before Vernon or Dudley yanks it away

from him, but the call has been sounded and will not be ignored, resulting in hundreds of

letters bombarding the residence before Harry finally being able to read the invitation.

Campbell's stages are often shown in very literal ways, as with the literal call to start

studying at Hogwarts, and some later stages of Harry's journey will also be quite literal

representations.

Refusal of the Call.

The refusal of the call is characterized by the hero's choice to ignore the call and "turn

the ear to other interests" (Campbell, 2008, p. 49) and this is where the main differences

between film and videogame begin. This stage is usually represented by hesitation to leave

the comfort of everyday life, e.g. Luke's reluctance to accept Obi-Wan's offer in *Star Wars*.

In *Harry Potter*, this becomes the moment right after Hagrid says: "You're a wizard

Harry," followed by Harry's short response "I can't be a wizard."[3] The hero's refusal means

to give up what is safe, comfortable, and what the hero currently is, for some unknown

destiny. However, this is usually impossible or calamitous (Campbell, 2008, p. 49), and this

stage is normally filled with reluctance, but not for Harry. The film does not linger on this

moment, and Harry, as well as the audience, knows that Harry will begin his journey when

Hagrid asks, "unless you'd rather stay, of course?"

Journey shows the refusal of the call in a unique way, and depending on the

player, some may never even experience it. At any point during the beginning of the game,

looking out over the wide, sprawling desert, the player may choose to wander off into any

direction other than towards the star. However, when trying to do so, a powerful gust of wind

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[2] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 0:08:52
[3] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 0:15:20

will blow the player towards their inevitable and unavoidable goal. Due to the limitation of the game world, the refusal becomes literally impossible.

The two refusals are represented in vastly different ways and adapted to their respective media. Film, utilizing dialogue, body-language, and environment, shows Harry's refusal through some exposition but mostly through visual means, confused expression, and contextual clues to understand the acceptance that follows. *Journey*, on the other hand, devoid of speech or body-language, relies entirely on interactivity, allowing players to skip the refusal entirely, depending on if one chooses to ever try to 'escape' the desert.

Supernatural Aid.

The heroes who do not refuse the call usually encounter "a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass" (Campbell, 2008, p. 57). This stage is sometimes called 'meeting with the mentor' and is where the hero receives vital support for their journey, whether that is guidance from a mentor, a blessing, or an invaluable tool or weapon. This is the role played by Virgil during Dante's travels from inferno to paradiso (Campbell, 2008) or Luke's lightsaber in *Star Wars*.

As someone who has known Harry since he was a baby, and the person to reveal to Harry his past, Hagrid is the essential figure during this step.[4] Not only does he play a key role in the next stage, crossing the first threshold, but is necessary later on, as he reveals the name of Nicholas Flamel, and the security-measures surrounding the philosopher's stone. Campbell noticed that this stage is usually characterized by a masculine figure (Campbell, 2008, p. 59). It can be argued that the supernatural aid is even more literal and comes in the form of Harry's wand, being the tool necessary to channel his magic, but since it is not

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[4] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 0:13:22

obtained until after crossing the first threshold and how Hagrid's role later on in the film is of greater importance than the wand, this analysis sees him as a better candidate.

The aid in *Journey* comes in the form of a simple, but unusual, item found during the beginning of the journey. On the first ruin in *Journey*, there are three pieces of cloth floating around in the air, which are drawn to the player and creates a scarf around the players neck when they approach.[5] This becomes an essential tool, and the core mechanic (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004), for moving around the world and progressing through the game. The scarf, so out of place in the desert, is revealed as a meaningful item in relation to the ruined world around the player, both in its creation and destruction.

Crossing the First Threshold.

Before this stage, the hero has felt the call and presence of their destiny, but when crossing this threshold, the hero enters the world of "darkness, the unknown, and danger" (Campbell, 2008, p.64). This stage is very often characterized by the presence of what Campbell (2008) calls the 'threshold guardian.' This custodian need to either assist or be defeated by the hero to proceed into the realm of the unknown. With the help of Gandalf, this is where Frodo leaves the Shire or Luke leaving Tattoine with Obi-Wan.

Hagrid, as the threshold guardian, becomes essential for entering the magical world of wizards and witches. He is instrumental in opening the path to Diagon Alley[6], holds Harry's key to Gringott's bank, and his ticket to the Hogwarts express. The actual threshold is also clearly characterized by a literal gateway into Diagon Alley, hidden from outside world unless one knows how to enter. The hero is normally quite content with remaining on the side of the threshold they know and recognize (Campbell, 2008) but the crossing here is

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[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 0:03:01
[6] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 0:20:42

made with ease, even with awe and curiosity. Leaving his current world behind is made believable by Harry's terrible upbringing, making any chance to escape the Dursley family easily understood and relatable, not too dissimilar to Charlie wanting to see the inside of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. The crossing is yet again made literal with entering platform 9 ¾ but this analysis does not consider it the quintessential threshold, since it is not the first encounter with the magic world.

Journey's threshold can be considered two-fold, both in terms of narrative and mechanics of the game. When reaching the first ruin, a gate prevents the player from progressing, unless they interact with an altar and meet the 'being in white.'[7] A short cutscene[8] tells a story, represented by stylistic imagery and no words, about your people and their use of the scarves and building of their society. Having listened to what the 'being in white' has to say, the gate opens to a long hallway of shining light, with a figure ducking out of sight at the end of it. The gate, being a literal threshold, is part of this stage, but more essential to this is what this stage means for you as a player. Beyond this gate lies uncertainty, especially since there was some other character at the end of the hallway. This "element of the unknown infuses the game with dramatic tension" (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 382) and serves another purpose, to lead the player into the game proper. Up to this point, there have been no stakes, no obstacles, but also no progress towards the goal, the star. It is also significant since the possibility of encountering other players appears after going through this gate into the next area.

The Belly of the Whale.

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[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 0:06:10

[8] "More than other game elements, cutscenes closely resemble existing forms of narrative media: they are linear, pre-scripted, non-interactive, and story-driven. Even the term "cutscene" refers to their patently filmic nature." (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 401)

The last stage of the departure into the unknown is 'the belly of the whale' and is characterized by "the hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown" (Campbell, 2008, p.74). Campbell (2008) means that with this new information, the hero's sense of identity is annihilated and born again, incorporating the new view of the world around them, caused by entering the threshold. A journey inward is required before being able to move forward, which takes on a literal representation in *Star Wars* when the Millennium Falcon is drawn into the death star by a tractor beam.

This moment in *Harry Potter* appears when Harry is told by Hagrid how his parents died, the nature of his scar, and Voldemort. The scene is set in a tavern with low-lighting, no or some low music, and no other people.[9] The setting complements the stage it represents and the dialogue between them ends with Hagrid explaining why Harry is so special, which was foreshadowed by Olivander in the wand shop. From being 'just Harry' as he cleverly calls himself when first meeting Hagrid, he now takes on the identity which most wizards and witches know him as: 'the boy who lived.' This change in identity is not just important for the rest of the movie, with Harry having to deal with being famous or thought to receive special treatment at Hogwarts, but also for the rest of the whole series as he takes command of his destiny.

This stage is represented as a clear contrast from the game prior as the player enters the underground ruins of the city in *Journey*. After surfing through the city in the brightest and arguably the most beautiful part of the game, the player falls into the underbelly of the city, seeing the mountain disappear for the first time.[10] The lively music and bright, warm lights disappear and are contrasted with silence and only a few spots of cold, white light in the darkness below. The underbelly is a deliberate word-choice for this section, as the

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[9] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 0:30:20
[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 0:33:55

underground has scarves resembling seaweed, diffused lighting, and air populated with various particles, which gives the impression of being under water.[11] Through another cutscene, the player learns of the conflict among your people because of the scarves and the machines, the dragons, used to destroy them. The game uses a plethora of narrative descriptors to transform the world to reflect the nature of this stage (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004).

Departure – Didactical discussion.

The way in which these two media portray the departure can be used to facilitate a discussion about appropriating narratives effectively for each media. Morrison (2001) and Thon (2017) both emphasize a focus on *how* narratives are constructed, and this point should be the focus in the classroom. By looking at narrative units or descriptors brought up by Tekinbaş & Zimmerman (2004), learners can consider their effectiveness in reflecting the stage, based on the media. Consider designing an assignment where learners look for the same stage in three different media and discuss their similarities/differences, highlighting the subject aims to "search for, evaluate, select and assimilate content from multiple sources" (Skolverket, 2011). In addition, it would be of great value to relate back to 'media blindness' (Thon, 2017) to remind learners about the differences between being a reader/player and how the stages can, and need to, be shaped differently.

Initiation

The Road of Trials.

The hero has finally begun the journey and encounters allies, trials, and enemies in the unknown land beyond the threshold. It is here where "he must survive a succession of trials"

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[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 0:36:59

(Campbell, 2008, p. 81) and "dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed – again, again, and again (Campbell, 2008, p. 90). This is the main portion of the journey and can be realized in different ways, but it should be noted that the stages (Trials, Goddess, Temptress, etc) in the initiation, need not come in this particular order, but are presented in this order in Campbell's book. Some stages may also be omitted to keep the pacing of the narrative interesting, as will be seen later.

Harry's road of trials is filled with various challenges whether they be exams, trolls, or finding knowledge. Since this is the main part of the journey, not every trial will be recounted (the others range from the sorting hat to passing exams). The focus will lie on the ones that played an essential part in the final stages of the initiation, reaching the philosopher's stone. The most instrumental contribution in this endeavor were his friends, since Harry would never have been able to bypass the Devil's snare without Hermione's knowledge, or passed the wizard's chess without Ron's experience. Learning how to play quidditch[12] allowed Harry to catch the correct key, and none of them would have even known about the philosopher's stone without Hagrid's slip of the tongue. The road of trials is used to prepare Harry with the knowledge and companions necessary to complete his journey.

As a videogame, *Journey* makes the player experience the trials and find the path forward, through gameplay. After learning about the dark history of your people, it does not take long until puzzles are introduced in order to advance, and literal dragons, remnants from the war.[13] The dragons take on the role of objects of conflict and takes on a two-fold meaning, as an enemy and a trial (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004). Since the player has no weapon, enemies must be overcome by wits and clever strategy rather than brute force. This trial, as an interactive experience, strikes "a balance between the material and formal

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[12] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 1:22:44
[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 0:39:26

constraints" (Mateas & Stern, 2005, p. 11) of the game, resulting in a greater sense of agency and immersion. The journey is not that of the character, but yours, as the player, and passing the trial depends on the player's skill.

Meeting with the Goddess.

The meeting with the goddess is one of the more difficult stages to represent and can be interpreted in a few different ways according to Campbell (2008). One thing is clear though, the figure is always female, and the hero almost always finds a strong bond with this female figure who represents "the hero's total mastery of life" (Campbell, 2008, p. 101). This stage is meant to have the hero understand love, either romantic or maternal, in some way, but this can also mean the love for family or friendship. In *Star Wars*, this stage is exemplified in Leia and as Galadriel in *Lord of the Rings*.

It can be argued that Mrs. Weasley or Prof. McGonagall are the women represented by this stage (being maternal figures), but the more apt person contributing to Harry's growth and journey is Hermione. The reasons for this is partly based on Campbell's (2008) other characteristic of the goddess: "Woman … [as] the totality of what can be known" (p. 97) and as someone who directly affects the hero on his journey. With the movie establishing her as a smart and loyal friend of Harry and Ron, a skilled witch, and becomes invaluable later in the movie, even providing insight to Harry that "there are more important things" than books and cleverness, like "friendship and bravery."[14] With this final comment, the friendship is certain, and Harry and the viewers are certain that Hermione will be a close friend in the future. The bonding here is not necessarily of the romantic or the maternal sort, but rather that of friends and family, equally important, but a different kind of love than what Campbell (2008) encountered in myths and folktales.

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[14] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 2:06:36

This essay would argue that *Journey* does contain this stage, but could, depending on circumstances which were not experienced when playing it for this analysis. Since most of the gameplay is spent alone or with limited interaction to other players (only through 'singing'), it would be difficult to recreate this stage. Juul (2001) argues that in movies "we need an actant to identify with … [but in a game] this actant is always present – it is the player." However, this stage requires a second actant, which can only be found in another player.[15] This second player, with their knowledge of the game could guide the newer player through the game, forming a bond of friendship and trust throughout the game. However, during this analysis another player was not encountered during the game and the essay can not comment further on the existence of this stage in the game, since it depends on circumstances outside the game itself, i.e. someone else playing it at the same time.

Woman as Temptress.

Campbell's (2008) definition of this stage is slightly misleading since it is more concerned with the temptations the hero would encounter during his journey and lead or lure him away from his destiny. This could be in the form of physical temptations (e.g. money, sex, etc.) or other temptations (e.g. power, fame, etc.) but this is the most abstract stage in Campbell's structure. It is a stage which tests the hero, and if they succeed, they are worthy of continuing their heroic journey.

Harry Potter provides the audience with a clear and concrete exemplification of this stage with the mirror of Erised. One suggestion for this is the clever use of naming, since the word Erised, mirrored, becomes Desire. When Dumbledore tells Harry that "men have wasted away in front of it. Even gone mad"[16], after Harry repeatedly returns to the mirror.

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[15] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 0:41:52. This did not occur during my playthrough but is a feature of the game nonetheless.

[16] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 1:36:15

Their exchange ends with the request to not go looking for it again, and to not "dwell on dreams, and forget to live." This stage can be exemplified by the One ring in Tolkien's stories, or the dark side in Star Wars. To pass this stage "the individual has only to discover his own position with reference to [his situation] and let it then assist him past his restricting walls" (Campbell, 2008, p. 101). Harry succeeds in the temptation of the mirror and can easily dismiss Voldemort's temptation later. The dark, cold scene of winter is replaced with colorful spring in the next shot, and upbeat music accompanying it. The temptation is beaten, and the journey continues.

Journey does not actually contain this stage due to the limits imposed on the game itself. Since the player avatar is not gender-specific, does not speak, and there are no temptations to lure the player away from the goal, only obstacles (platforming and puzzles). This makes more sense in terms of the design of the game, which would suggest it as a deliberate decision.

Atonement with the Father.

Like Woman as Temptress, the name is a bit misleading, as Father is more closely related to a 'father figure' which could be God, paternal figure, or a more symbolic ideal (Campbell, 2008). The hero must confront and/or reconcile with the Father before the hero can complete their journey in this penultimate step. This is done through faith "that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy" (Campbell, 2008, p. 110). The classic "Luke, I am your father" moment from Star Wars, after Luke confronts Vader, is a very good example.

Harry's moment of atonement comes in the form of meeting Voldemort in the room where the philosopher's stone is kept. This moment becomes significant in that it references back to the previous step, woman as temptress, but since Harry has already passed

this step, he does not give in when Voldemort says, "we can bring them back"[17], referencing

Harry's parents in the mirror. According to Campbell (2008), the Father holds power over the

hero in some regard, and if that power can be taken or overcome, then the hero would

become omnipotent. The scar is part of this, and is a constant reminder of Voldemort's

presence and power over Harry's life, but also the fact that Voldemort knows the stone is in

Harry's pocket. After refusing to join, Voldemort approaches him, and Harry retaliates by

desperately grabbing Voldemort's face, causing his body to crumble into dust.[18] Harry, who

Voldemort holds no power over, is able to defeat him, by being brave and grabbing the bull

by the horns, as hinted by Hermione.

This stage is alluded to through a cutscene in *Journey* as the player fights

against the cold, snowy climb towards the star. Near the end of the mountain, the character

slowly freezes to a halt and collapses in the snow, and a group of 'beings in white' is

shown.[19] As the player is bestowed with power, supposedly from these beings, the final stage

begins, the apotheosis. It could be argued that this is the Meeting with the Goddess, since it

provides the hero with the power over life, but this analysis sees it as more in line with

Atonement with the Father due to the proximity to physical death, which is more closely

connected to this stage according to Campbell (2008).

Apotheosis.

The final stage of the initiation, apotheosis, is exemplified in Campbell's (2008) book

as enlightenment in Buddhist belief. The ascension to something more, higher than the

physical world, and is usually represented by the death and rebirth of the hero

(metaphorically and sometimes physically) (Campbell, 2008). The hero sometimes changes

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[17] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 2:11:33
[18] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 2:12:49
[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 1:12:28

in appearance, which can be seen quite clearly in the case of Gandalf transitioning from Grey to White in Lord of the Rings.

Harry does not completely reach this stage in the first movie, but does gain some insight into his destiny. After grabbing Quirrell and turning him to dust, Voldemort's spirit literally passes through Harry's body[20] and he passes out, and wakes up in the infirmary. By passing out, it is a symbol for "what it is and something more" (Golden, 2001, p. 82) as it becomes Voldemort's attempt to kill Harry, but fails, and Harry wakes up the next day with new knowledge and strength. The reason why this only is a partial apotheosis is because Voldemort still survives, and remains as a threat even after this stage (and this movie). Campbell (2008) talks about the opposing forces of Yin and Yang becoming one in this stage, and this would finally occur when Harry defeat Voldemort, breaking their connection, and allowing Harry to live his life without this looming threat.

Symbolized through the phoenix (Campbell, 2008), this stage becomes exemplified in the death and revival of the player in *Journey*. After revival and provided with the longest scarf possible, the sky clears, and with a great jump, the character soars through the sky towards the star[21]. This moment does not only show the apotheosis visually (avatar glowing with power) but also mechanically through gameplay. Previously, the scarf has been used to allow greater jumps and floating through the air, but in this moment, the player flies unhindered through the air, higher than ever before. This harkens back to how core mechanics fit into the game and how the scarf, as a narrative descriptor, takes on another meaning (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004).

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[20] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 2:13:44
[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 1:12:58

Initiation – Didactical discussion.

Continuing from 'media blindness', discussing the omission of certain stages can allow learners to reflect on each medium's strength and weaknesses. Since "the storytelling possibilities of media are very different" (Thon, 2017, p. 288), the main section of the journey can vary, and some stages might not be fitting. This is partially due to the hero's journey as a narrative tool for creators, not a formula. This could lead to questions like the one posed by Ryan (2016): "how do we gamify the plot?" (p. 44). The teacher can assign students to adapt books/films to games in order for them to make use of their knowledge to identify necessary changes which need to be made, while still being true to the source-material.

Return

Crossing of the Return Threshold.

The crossing of the return threshold represents the return to the world from which the hero came from, now armed with knowledge of the unknown and realizing that both worlds are actually one (Campbell, 2008). In *Lord of the Rings* (the books), the hobbits must defeat Saruman and his henchmen as they return to the Shire.

This stage is the very end of the movie, as the viewer sees Harry step onto the Hogwarts express and return to the world of muggles.[22] As a side note, the book ends after Harry finally steps out of the 9 ¾ portal, one of the first thresholds on the journey. This would have given the film a clear circular structure with the entering and exiting the portal, making it an even more clearer threshold. But in the film, this connection is only implicitly understood as it ends at Hogwarts.

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[22] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 2:23:08

Comparatively, *Journey* incorporates this stage by allowing the player to experience the return, not just visually, but also through gameplay. As the game ends, the credits show the star of the mountain returning to the start of the game through all the narrative spaces throughout the game.[23] Through this cutscene, the game emphasizes what Jenkins (2004) refer to as "a space for rehearsal" (p. 126) and when starting the game again, the call returns and the journey starts anew. When first going on the journey, the player builds up a longer scarf, representing the gained wisdom and ability by enhancing the core mechanic of the game (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004). Returning through the threshold allows the player, through play alone, to bring back what they have learned on their journey and guide others, both in-game and in real-life.

Return – Didactical discussion.

The end of a book or film does not have to be the end of a narrative. This enables teachers to introduce assignments based on what Marie-Laure Ryan (2016) considers *transfictionality*, which is closely related to fanfiction. By taking in the stages of the hero's journey and extending the narrative past the return, the learner can imagine how the journey impacts the Hero in the future. This is also the time, if not brought up before, to acknowledge "both similarities and differences in how conventionally distinct narrative media narrate" (Thon, 2017, p. 288).

Conclusion

Narratology allows students of English to gain "a keener attention to the nuances of tone and the manipulations of narration" (Meffan & Worthington, 2013, p. 121) and can be used to examine all kinds of media. To be effective in this approach, the teacher

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[23] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUErsZQvorY 1:20:48 – 1:25:10

and learners need to remain conscious of media blindness and media relativism when analyzing different media, and the *media-specific* concepts which come into play. Learners, when creating their own narratives, can gain a greater understanding how "stories are shaped but not determined by their presentational format" (Thon, 2017, p. 288). Narratology not only allows for work with different media, but as a "meta-code" (White, 2009) it creates the possibility to look at "cultural features in different contexts" (Skolverket, 2011) when examining narratives, allowing for cooperation with other subjects, e.g. history or social studies.

There are limitations to this analysis concerning the media chosen and Campbell's structure, which requires further study. This essay focused on the transmedial aspects of each medium, and does not delve deeper into the complex nature of the relationship between being a reader/viewer and a player and the sympathetic/empathetic emotions attributed to those perspectives (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman, 2004). Unfortunately, during the playthrough of *Journey*, there was no encounter with other players. This was probably due to the game being released in 2012 and very few people currently playing it. This would have added further insight into the meeting with the goddess. The essay calls for more research concerning the adaptation of the same narratives across different media and practical applications in classroom environments to examine the efficacy of analyses like these.

This essay, with narratology as the tool, and the hero's journey as the lens, highlights how the same narrative structure is represented in vastly different ways based on each medium's idiosyncrasies. Film, as a more linear, narrative medium provides concrete and understandable narrative descriptors by using all aspects of cinematic storytelling. Videogames not only use cutscenes, but infuse the core interactive mechanics and world with narrative value without a single word of dialogue. Working with narratology, both in the

aspect of media and culture, will allow teachers to fulfill several aims in the teaching of

English as a subject and encourage learners to become better storytellers, no matter if they

write books, make films, or design games.

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