Determination in progress:
Agency-driven deconstruction in JRPGs

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Abstract

The JRPG genre has a long history of trivializing violence, and making it the only means to progress through games. *Undertale* and *OFF* use the player's expectations, stemming from playing other games in the genre, to allow the player to follow this pattern, and then force them to face the consequences of their freely-chosen actions. Because it is the player's own intentional behavior that is put under examination, these games are more effective at leading the player to think about these "default" behavioral patterns as well as the violence omnipresent in JRPGs, making these two games very valuable as deconstructions of the genre.

Introduction: Redefining agency via interactive drama

Agency is a complex term to handle, and one that requires defining before usage. The games community at large has very often and most frequently used Murray's description in *Hamlet on the Holodeck*: "*the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices.*" This definition, though a good attempt, has a few large drawbacks. It defines it as a "power" to be wielded, it does not define what "meaningful action" constitutes, and does not take into account certain cases: if an action taken from player choice has a result opposite to what the player intended, does the player still "wield" agency?

It is because of this that we are going to use a different definition of *agency*, proposed by Wardrip-Fruin et al. in their work "Agency reconsidered": a "*phenomenon [...] that occurs when the actions players desire [to take] are among those they can take as supported by an underlying computational model.*" (1) We will gloss over the latter part: a large part of the focus of their work was to examine the effect of technical limitations in interactive experiences such as *Façade.* (Mateas, 8) Instead, we will focus on one of the questions they set out to answer: How do works evoke the desires that agency satisfies? (Wardrip-Fruin et al., 1) To explore this, they use Mateas's work on introducing Murray's aesthetic categories (of which agency is the most relevant to our work) into Brenda Laurel's adaptation of Aristotle's structure for drama.

Laurel follows neo-Aristotelian ideas, describing drama as being structured in Aristotle's six qualitative elements, layered from top (idea) to bottom (physicality) as: *plot* (a shorthand for the work and its themes as a coherent whole), *character*, *thought*, *language*, *pattern* and *spectacle* (the sensory experience that the audience perceives.) These are connected by two complementary causal chains. The first, from the point of view of the author, is top-down causality, named *formal cause*: the plot creates the necessity for characters with certain personalities, which will generate certain thoughts, and so on. The bottom-up *material cause* is from the point of view of the audience: the spectacle that they experience will allow them to infer patterns, which will compose their actions and language, and so on until finally inferring a plot from the ensemble. It is once that the audience has comprehended this chain of material cause that they are able to reconstruct the original chain of formal cause, and create an "ah-ha" moment in which the audience understands how all of the spectacle, language, characters, etc. relate to the overarching plot, and how the initial plot resulted in the spectacle they experienced. (Laurel, cited in Mateas, 3; and in Wardrip-Fruin et al., 3)

Mateas uses this schema as a base to examine the role of a player in an interactive drama, said player occupying the position of one of the characters in the play. In this case, the player acts not only as a character who must act, but as the audience as well: they must proceed through the chain of material cause in order to infer the plot and theme, so that they may act accordingly. Here Mateas introduces two new causal chains, parallel to the previous ones, that constrain the actions of the player/character: one from below, in which the spectacle and objects available become the resources with which to act (equivalent to the material cause); and one from above, in which the player's actions are coinstrained to "what makes sense" given the situation and the plot (equivalent to the formal cause.) (Mateas, 3-5)

Finally, Wardrip-Fruin et al. redirect this towards a generalized model for agency in games: the player will experience agency when the actions that are available to take (*material affordances*) are congruent with the actions that the player would want to take (*formal affordances*.) (3) We are going to propose that both *OFF* and *Undertale* use this phenomenon to let the player feel like they are making the right choices and experience agency, before the games force a shift in their understanding of their previous actions.

Managing the player's expectations

Both *OFF* and *Undertale* design the start of their player experience in the same manner: they rely upon the expectations that the player carries from other JRPG games, and use them to allow the player to act in the same way they would act in any other JRPG. In this section, we will elaborate on how the player is led to do so through the mechanics of the games and through the narrative; in the next section, we will explain how these expectations are contested and how the player is forced to confront their previous actions.

The particular behavior common to JRPGs that the player is allowed to enact and that we are interested in here is the trivialized and seldom explained violence present throughout the genre: players will fight and kill monsters and enemies without a second thought, and without considering their actions as particularly violent or morally reprehensible. This behavior was pointed out as far back as 1999 by Satoshi Tajiri: "*I'm very careful about violence in games. I'm not interested in creating violent effects. [...] I was really careful in making [Pokémon] faint rather than die. I think that young people playing games have an abnormal concept about dying. They start to lose and say, 'I'm dying.' It's not right for kids to think about a concept of death that way. They need to treat death with more respect.*"

Throughout this work, we will assume in our reasoning a player with experience with JRPG games, on their first playthrough through either of the two games studied, and coming into the games with the minimum amount of information possible (being aware of no *spoilers* regarding the games' eventual subversion of their projected expectations.)

Through game mechanics and semiotics

Both *Undertale* and *OFF* present themselves as traditional JRPGs; in using conventions of the genre in their presentation, they let the player set their expectations based on previous games they have played in that genre.

OFF codes itself as a JRPG in every way: it follows the usual turn-based battle structure with elements like Active Time Battle, developed for *Final Fantasy VI* (Square, 1994); includes items to equip in limited slots in order to maximize the characters' battle prowess with a structure very similarly to *Golden Sun* (Camelot Software Planning, 2001); and completely separates the "overworld" and battle phases, which along with random enemy encounters have become a staple of the genre.

Undertale, on the other hand, while still showing itself to be a JRPG (with turn-based combat, equippable items, *EXP* rewards that raise the character's level and other genre clichés) strays slightly from that path. Its battle system incorporates a different manner of defending from attacks: the player must maneuver the protagonist's "soul" (represented as a heart) around the enemy attacks, in a manner reminiscent of games from the shoot'em-up or bullet hell genres. The most prominent difference from the JRPG genre is the *ACT* menu, which allows the protagonist to interact non-violently with the monsters they encounter (who also serve as the friendly NPCs for the game) during battles. Through this mechanic, the player is able to appease the monsters they encounter and spare them instead. However, the player is not awarded any *EXP* for doing so, and may question the usefulness of this approach, opting instead for the violent method, as it grants them more rewards for a lesser amount of effort (there is only ever one option for attacking, while the *ACTing* mechanic requires learning the monsters' particular personalities and patterns of interaction.)

While this may seem like an invitation from *Undertale* to play non-violently, it is important to remember that players come to games with assumptions about the domain of play, which will inform their behavior in the game. (Wardrip-Fruin et al., 8) Lankoski and Heliö singled out three main elements that shape the expectations of the players: the expectation of gaming (a game should be challenging and interesting), genre, and intermediality (other texts previously experienced.) "*Games are not only read in relation to other texts, but the reading also affects the choices made by the players. Players usually behave according to the rules of the genre and they use patterns of behavior learned from other sources while playing.*" (315-316)

In JRPGs, these expectations come in the following form: everything on a combat screen should be killed or felled as soon as possible, lest the player character be felled in return; and increasing the player's stats through accumulation of *EXP* will make the later stages of the game easier (in many cases, it will make them beatable in the first place.) The expectation of the player is to be presented with violent combat which rewards them with *EXP* in order to increase their level (usually abbreviated as *LV*), and both games supply this.

The apparent inital blindness of the player towards the non-violent alternatives can be understood by examining a certain aspect of the *SimCity effect* that Wardrip-Fruin et al. comment on. "*[...] playing SimCity begins with audience expectations [...] SimCity begins with expectations of city planning and the graphical user interface (a palette of icons, maps for information and icon placement, status messages, etc. As play begins, initial stages of agency are supported. The player takes action and the system responds.*" (5) However, where they showcased how the player's comprehension of the game moves from early expectations to a more accurate understanding of the underlying system as play goes on, we are more interested in something else: the user interface matched the player's expectations; the player acted and the system responded accordingly, in a manner that was consistent with those expectations. This is what happens in both games: the player expects violent combat, and the game responds in exactly the way the player expects. The first character in *OFF* immediately presents a combat tutorial; in *Undertale*, the first character attempts to kill the player character. This reinforces this pre-conception in the player's mind, and reassures them that that is the intended gameplay.

This is supported as well by the application of Mateas's material causality chain as explained in the introduction, especially when combined with the concept of affordance used in the work. An object "affords" an action when it "cries out" for the action to be taken; in other words, when its design makes the action seem obvious and intended. (Norman, 1988; cited in Mateas, 4) The player is given a resource to act with: an interface they have come to associate with a combat system, which affords them to do combat.

Through all of this, we see that agency as we have defined it is strong in these stages of the game: the actions the player desires or expects to be able to take (as informed by previous gameplay in the same genre) match up with the actions afforded by the game's interface (the battle screen allows them to do battle, and rewards them for doing so.)

Through narrative

The mechanics and semiotics are not the only resources that are presented to the player for them to comprehend the material cause chain of the games; their characters and narrative qualities also play an important part. In this section we'll examine how the narrative and the characterization first reinforce the player's initial expectations.

In Mateas's model, a formal constraint is imposed on the player's possibility space when they understand the plot of the work they are in and reconstruct the author's formal cause chain: "*the dramatic probabilities of the fiction strongly motivate certain actions through "formal affordances" (and constrain [the possible actions to] those that make sense in context.)*" (Wardrip-Fruin, 3) This means that the player, put into the character's role, will, consciously or subconsciously, strive to act in a way that is consistent with the personality that their character is represented as displaying.

Earia explains how, in *OFF*, the player character's (named "the Batter") dialogue, his interactions with other characters (and the image that these other characters build of him) and his actions all contribute to form an image in the player's mind of the character as a traditional RPG hero, on a virtuous mission of "purification," which is enacted by battling against the spectre enemies present in the world and eradicating them. (1-2) This places a formal constraint on the player, making it dramatically probable that the Batter would solve any kind of conflict through combat (conveniently agreeing with the battle system interface which affords it, and facilitating agency in the process.) This encourages the player to keep using violence in order to progress, even when said violence sometimes seems uncalled for (such as when seeking out the guardians of the zones, unprovoked), since it is "something that the Batter would do" (e.g. the Batter himself claims aloud "*I must destroy him*" and seeks out the guardian of the first zone, unprovoked.)

In *Undertale*, the violent reaction is encouraged through a different mechanism. The first character we meet, Flowey, immediately attempts to kill the player character, and though this character is immediately demonized, it takes advantage of the primacy effect, a "*tendency to privilege [...] the first impression we developed early in the reading.*" (Abbott, 81) Every other character (with notable exceptions) that appears in a battle screen immediately attacks the player character, and Flowey's message of "*Kill or be killed*" will take precedence through primacy over Toriel, the character met immediately afterwards, who teaches the player the non-violent mechanics of the game and suggests an approach easily dismissed as being naïve: "*While you are in a FIGHT, strike up a friendly conversation.*"

Keeping the balance: subtle clues in the opposite direction

While both games give both formal and material affordances to the player to lead them to play in a violent manner, they also engage in a careful balancing act: providing affordances that

would justify the player acting non-violently. This way, when the player is made to confront their previous actions, they will be able to look back at the clues that they "missed," and infer that they "should have" been able to recognize them and act differently. This gives the reversal of expectations an important legitimacy; if these nudges towards playing differently weren't present in the game before the inflection point, the player would simply feel cheated by the game, because there would have been no actual reason prior to the reveal for them to act in a different manner. Nevertheless, through their first playthrough, the player will *underread* these clues (Abbott, 79).

OFF's method of placing these indices while keeping the player unaware of them takes advantage of the *boiling frog* effect. It first allows the player to battle the hostile ghost-like enemies that terrorize the Elsen (meek, friendly NPCs); then follows by singling out an NPC called Dedan, harsh to the Elsen but apparently on their side, as hostile based on his demeanor. Later in the first zone, the player fights a *Burnt*, an Elsen whose stress seemingly irreversibly transforms him into an aggressive monster; this dehumanization allows the player to fight it without feeling like they're killing the Elsen. Dedan turns out to be the "guardian of the first zone," whom the Batter kills, unprovoked, in the manner of a "boss" for that section of the game. Once again, because this is what the player expects of a JRPG, it does not strike the players as especially violent or unusual; not having any other choice but to fight in order to progress through the game will also not lead them to question their methods. (Earia, 3-4)

Undertale's second encountered character, Toriel, protects the player character from the aggressive Flowey, and actively encourages the player to act non-violently, teaching them the *ACT* and *spare* mechanics. Furthermore, none of the monsters are dehumanized in the battle screens: they have lines of dialogue, distinct recognizable personalities, and can be interacted with. After exiting the first area of the game, Flowey reappears to talk to the player character, and he mocks them if they have killed anyone: "*Froggit, Whimsun. Vegetoid, Loox. Migosp, Moldsmal. Think about those names. Do you think any of those monsters have families? Do you think any of them have friends? Each one could have been someone else's Toriel. Selfish brat. Somebody is dead because of you.*"

Reversing the player's perception of their actions

After the player has spent most of the game fighting and leveling up, both games present the player with a point in the narrative when they are harshly forced to stop and reconsider their actions.

In *OFF*, this point can be reached at several different places in the narrative: when traversing the last stage of the game, known as *The Room*, which casts the Batter's actions in a different light, showing how rather than "purifying the world" he has been destroying the world that a character named "the Queen" created; or when visiting a previously "purified" (cleared) area of the game, which appears devoid of color and of NPCs, symbolizing this destruction. (Earia, 3-4) This may also occur when encountering two unavoidable enemies: the *Critic-Burnt*,

which does not attack and only screams for help (a fact the player is likely to overlook as they treat the *Critic-Burnt* as all of the other *Burnt* enemies prior); and to a much higher extent Hugo, who does not attack either, and is depicted as a crying, scared child.

In *Undertale*, there is a specific narrative point where the player is made to face their actions, near the end of the game. The character Sans, initially encountered early in the game, explains the "true" meaning of the *EXP* and *LV* stats: *EXP* standing for "execution points" ("*a way of quantifying the pain you have inflicted on others*"), as opposed to the traditional JRPG "experience points;" and *LV* standing for "level of violence" ("*a way of measuring someone's capacity to hurt.*") He then, without offering any judgement of his own, prompts the player to examine what they have done and whether it was the right thing.

These points introduce information that does not fit in the chain of formal cause that the player has reconstructed so far, forcing them to reconsider the chain of material cause and create a more accurate version of the top of the neo-Aristotelian hierarchy, the plot (as well as, in the case of *OFF*, the player character himself.) This casts a different light on the actions they've taken through the game: they thought they were playing a typical RPG hero and that their actions were consistent with that image (Earia, 1-2), and come to realize this is not the case. This causes the player to feel, like their agency was taken away from them, like they were tricked into believing that those actions were "right". However, this agency stayed strong through their playthrough: at all times, the formal affordances were matched by the material affordances. There aren't any points before this when the player "didn't want" to take these actions.

In addition to this, the games actively blame the player directly for their actions: in *Undertale*, if the player reloads their saved game and talks to Sans again, he will provide a "judgement" based on their LV; if they restart the game in order to play again less violently, they are mocked by Flowey for doing so. In *OFF*, the fourth wall is broken by one of the characters to directly chastise the player and question their motives. This is explored more thoroughly later in this paper.

Linderoth's work (no pagination) provides us with two ideas that allow us to understand why the player is affected by this shift in their understanding of their own actions. First, we will use for a lens his explanation of player avatars performing a threefold function: as tools for handling the game state; as roles for socio-dramatic interaction; and as "props" for the player's presentation of self towards others in the social arena surrounding the game, i.e. towards other players. In this case, we can see the latter two working in a conjoined manner: the player used the player character as a prop to represent themselves towards the characters inside the game. When this role is reversed from a positively-charged into a negatively-charged one, the player feels the image of themselves that they were presenting being misrepresented as the opposite of what they meant to communicate to the "others," the game characters for whom the player has developed empathy thanks to their depth.

We can also examine this through his theory of the three separate meanings the word 'I' can represent when used by a player: 'I' as a person playing a game, 'I' as the fictive character they are playing, and 'I' as their "*agency within the game activity. [...] When our agency in a certain activity system is extended outside our own body we talk about this extension as a part of ourself. For instance a horse and a rider tend to become a unit, and, while only the horse is exhausted after a ride, we still say 'I trotted'.*" What this entails is that, regardless of the fact that it is the player characters that carried out the violent acts, it was the player, who identifies those actions in the first person with that 'I' as their agency in the activity, who was responsible for them.

This leads the player to examine the previous events one level deeper: could they have acted differently? In the case of *Undertale*, the answer is yes. The mechanics for non-violent combat were always present, and even explained to the player, who was encouraged to use them by Toriel at the start of the game. In this case, the player realizes that it was their own "genre inertia" (the expectations that they brought in, as explained in the semiotics and mechanics section) that led them to act violently without thinking.

OFF produces a slightly different kind of realization. When faced with the consequences of their actions, they will understand that they did not have the choice to play in a non-violent way; the game would not have proceeded otherwise (this is explored in more detail below.) It also becomes obvious that, despite the player not knowing so, they were playing the Batter "true to character;" that is, in retrospect, these new formal constraints fit the actions that the players performed. This being said, they will still recognize that the reason they acted in that way without thinking twice was because of this "genre inertia."

In both of these cases, the games set up a mental stage for the player to examine this genre inertia and think about the reasons why these automatic reactions are ingrained into them: the genre and intermediality expectations the player brought into the play by having experienced JRPGs before. (Lankoski and Heliö, 316) At a larger scale, the player is also able to consider the JRPG genre as a whole, as well as the ethical background behind the mindlessly violent gameplay. It is this effect, this setting of the mental stage for introspection about the genre itself and the tropes associated with it, that makes both *OFF* and *Undertale* effective deconstructive works.

Howard's ideas about meaningful gameplay also lend weight to this invitation for the player to reconsider their actions and the genre in general. He lists three ways in which the player's actions can be meaningful to the player (because he takes a design approach rather than an analytical one, he considers these actions in the frame of the quest they are performed in, so he refers to meaningful "quests" instead): the player's accomplishments having an impact on the game world, (see also Earia, 3); a narrative backstory that reveals why the player-avatar is performing an action and what effects this action will have, (providing material cause in order to reconstruct the plot further); and thematic meaning: ideas symbolized by the challenges faced and enacted through the player's actions. (25) The player's perception of all three of these has

at this point in the gameplay been completely inverted: their accomplishments left a destructive rather than constructive mark in the world, the consequences of their actions had a narrative consequence opposite to the one they expected, and the themes they were enacting through their actions were sociopathic and murderous rather than heroic and valiant. Because the player carried out these actions themself ("*fulfilment of [these games'] challenges allows players to contemplate nuances of thematic implications through their active effort rather than through passive spectatorship*" (21)), their meaning will have more weight than if they had watched them happen ("*the player 'cares' about [the world] because it is her actions that can save it.*" (26))

Agency after the reveal

Both *Undertale* and *OFF* force the player to re-examine their behavior towards the end of their respective games; however, they do not stop there. Instead, they offer the player choices beyond that, in order to give them more tools to examine their own motivations for playing.

It is interesting to examine what is left of the player's agency after having re- examined the formal cause chain of the work. *Undertale* allows the player to continue playing, with only the fight against the final boss remaining; this final boss is reluctant to fight the player character, and attempts to comfort and ease the player character, who is still a child, into a battle he does not want to have but knows has to be carried out. This offers the player a different frame to examine this violence: one where it is recognized as unwanted, but where it is in fact supported by the narrative and follows from the plot, rather than the previous unnecessary violence.

Because the plot requires it, and because the situation affords it, agency is still strong for the player (the formal and material affordances that Wardrip-Fruin et al. base their agency on match up.) They may feel apprehensive about fighting a character who seems to have the good of everyone, even of his impending enemy, in mind first; thanks to this, the player can relate to the feelings of the characters involved, and carry through the fight seeing the violence (that they had previously brushed off) as undesirable, and only necessary in this particular context, where it follows from the chain of formal cause originating at the plot.

OFF, instead, takes a less subtle approach to this. After letting the player explore the last area of the game, the Room, the player is pitted against the aforementioned Queen. Before and throughout the battle, the Queen talks to the Batter as she fights, in a manner that implies that they are married, and that they are meant to take care of a child together. The Batter kills her (in a battle in which the player has full control), and moves on past her, where he finds Hugo, implied to be the Batter and the Queen's son, as well as their creator. Upon entering the room, a battle is triggered. Hugo is depicted as a scared, crying child: his soundbite is that of a frail cough, he does not attack, and is only able to defend himself. The player cannot take any action other than attacking him, and he is killed in very few hits, an anticlimax in comparison to the epic battle that precedes it.

The player's agency is effectively nullified here: despite how the character of the Batter has been revealed (Earia, 3-4) and despite these actions being coherent with the Batter's

personality, the player feels a strong unease at killing a child with their own hands. The agency the player had has disappeared, because the actions they want to take and the actions they can take are completely misaligned, despite the in-universe true-to-character congruency: they experience this section of the game with the feeling that they are watching a cutscene, without the ability to change anything.

Agency is restored to the player in a small amount afterwards, in the last moments of the game. After this battle, the Batter encounters a character from earlier in the game, the Judge, who condemns the actions of both the Batter and the player, and asks the player to join him in defeating the Batter to "*expiate the sins that we are guilty of.*" The Batter simply replies "*Don't do that. I need you in order to purify this world.*" The player is then given the choice to fight alongside either of the characters in order to defeat the other, this choice alowing the player to select which thematic meaning they want to enact. (Howard, 25-26)

Continuing play after the reveal

Before offering the player the choice explained in the previous section, the Judge breaks the fourth wall, as he did earlier in the game, and asks the player directly: "*What have you done, <player name>? Is the opaque mist of sceneristic frame [the plot] really your excuse for killing wife and child?*" Albeit obscured by the character's signature flowery language, a valid possible explanation is given to identify the reason why the player has continued to play regardless of their unease: uncovering the rest of the plot.

Undertale also presents this idea to the player. It is possible to play through the game again, while not harming any of the monsters, in order to unlock the "Pacifist route," granting the player access to the "true ending" of the game. However, it is also possible, after doing this, to play the game while seeking out every monster and killing them, to an extent much larger than simply battling the randomly encountered monsters or "level grinding:" in order for the game to divert towards the "Genocide route," it is necessary to stay in one area and defeat every monster in it, up until the point where the game triggers a battle screen with only the text "*But nobody came.*"

In *Undertale*, the RPG mechanic of saving the game in order to restart from that save point in case of defeat or in order to explore choices in a different way is diegetic: the main character is the only one in the world with the ability to "*save,*" explained in-universe as a form of time-travel that the main character can utilize while keeping their memories intact. There is one other character who had this ability, Flowey, but who lost it once the player character entered the game's world. Towards the end of the Genocide route, Flowey starts explaining what he did with the *save* ability, intentionally mirroring the completionist player's behavior: "*At first, I used my powers for good. I became "friends" with everyone. [...] As time repeated, people proved themselves predictable. What would this person say if I gave them this? What would they do if I said this to them? [...] It all started because I was curious. Curious what would happen if I killed them. 'I don't like this,' I told myself. 'I'm just doing this because I HAVE to know what*

happens.'" The players going through a Genocide route will recognize their own curiosity, mirrored in Flowey in *Undertale* and exposed by the Judge in *OFF*.

Howard supports this idea: "*A second form of meaning is derived from narrative, which motivates the player through a backstory that gives urgency to a task, or rewards the player through an explanation of the events that occur as a result of the task's completion. A successfully completed quest may reveal what happened to lead up to it, [...] or what will happen as a result of it, [...].*" (27-28) This is why the player keeps playing: despite not "wanting" to do the actions that are still available to them, they still want to uncover the rest of the narrative, in order to understand the complete chain of material cause, and thus be able to reconstruct an as-of-yet incomplete plot at the top of it in order to finally understand the chain of formal cause behind the rest of the experience. However, they cannot take a passive stance: "*Rather than being narrated to, the player herself has to perform actions to move narrative forward.*" (Manovich, cited by Lankoski and Heliö, 312) Thus, they keep playing.

Conclusion and future work

In this paper, we have established a working definition of agency and used it to examine the ability of the player to freely make choices in JRPG games *OFF* and *Undertale*. We have explained how the player relies on their expectations of the genre to inform their behavior, and how they play through the games while experiencing the agency of being able to carry out the actions they want to perform. We have focused on the games' treatment of violence as something they allow the player to carry out, but the consequences of which are then presented for the player to judge their own behavior with. Finally, we have examined why this approach that hinges on the player's own actions, rather than on a passively spectated narrative, is effective in leading the player to re-evaluate the treatment of violence in the genre and how it shapes their behavior.

Possible future work may use this paper as a starting point to take a deeper dive into why and how many JRPGs trivialize violence and make a matter-of-course subject out of it, without the plot necessarily justifying the need for this violence in many cases. It would also be interesting to use this work as a theoretical basis to perform a more experimental research in which players are brought into contact for the first time with one or both of the games, in order to more closely examine the behaviors of players as they play through them, as well as the effectiveness of the games in leading the players to re-examine their understanding of the genre, and thus evaluate their validity as successful deconstructions of JRPGs.

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