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PROCEDURAL RHETORIC AND LANGUAGE:
HOW THE *ORWELL* VIDEOGAME SERIES EMPHASIZES
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT IN CONTENT

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

in partial fulfillment

of the

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Introduction

It had taken so much effort just to get to this point. The fight was long and difficult, but my team was still standing strong against a common enemy we called “The Collectors.” Now, I, the commander of this diverse team, had to make a critical decision: who on my team would stay behind and defend our position, and who would go with me to confront the malicious monstrosity that lay ahead? Garrus and Thane were personal favorites and adept fighters, so I asked them to join me without hesitation. We marched in, confident but cautious. Thankfully, my small infiltration team was successful in our mission. But then, the unthinkable happened. I watched as The Collectors shot down my crewmate, Tali, as they began to breach the door outside. I dropped my PlayStation controller in grief and frustration. “What?!” I shouted at the screen. It may have been fictional, but I cared deeply about the effects of my choices in the sci-fi adventure game, *Mass Effect 2*. Unfortunately, as I began to play *Mass Effect 3*, I painfully discovered just how important she was to the continuing story and the now limited potential outcomes I would be able to have. Ultimately, my choices negatively affected the potential level of success I could have achieved by the end of the series. During my gameplay, I largely ignored my squad’s strengths and weaknesses in the context of the game’s intense ending sequence along with the game’s subtle guidance through the dialogue choices used to interact with the characters as I made these important decisions. In the crucial moment that I was asked to decide who to take and who to leave behind, each one of my squad members was listed on the screen with their photo and a brief description about their strongest characteristics. For example, one crew member named Jacob volunteers to lead the infiltration team through the ventilation system of the Collector ship. However, another crew member mentions that Jacob has no technical expertise needed to hack the

electronic systems and pass through safely. If players still choose Jacob to travel through the vents, he will fail and die trying to save the rest of the crew. If players heeded the context clues, they would be able to infer that any of the technical specialists on the team are better options and choose a character who is a well-known tech expert, resulting in no casualties. If I had paid closer attention to what the game was trying to tell me through



Figure 1. Selecting a team member to lead one of the squads in Mass Effect 2.

my interactions with characters, contextual events, and devoted more time exploring all the story world's possibilities, things would have turned out very differently.

In a videogame, players can experiment with how they choose to react to their environments and observe the consequences of their actions based on how the game presents information to the players through language. Videogames use language in unique ways, through dialogue, images, and textual references, and can be analyzed using the same methods used to analyze literature. Much like in a video game, we can see the ways that language is used in our real experiences, particularly online, as we interact with short bursts of information that are sent and received constantly over social media. The

vast amount of information that we encounter every day gets shared and reworded just as quickly as it emerges. However, when considering how language is used in reality, the consequences of taking a comment, a headline, or a tweet only through their biased lens and devoid of context can have a more permanent effect. Videogames present a potentially safer space in which to learn lessons and hone communication skills: they can guide players through their distinctive qualities of preprogrammed options towards the developer's intended conclusion. The simulative environment that some videogames provide to players help create authentic scenarios with realistic consequences, which can help the developer's argument flourish. For example, a political drama videogame series called *Orwell* replicates the language of the typical online atmosphere in order to encourage players to consider from where the information they see online is coming and how the spread of information can be misused. The videogames are designed to lead players towards a limited series of possible endings, with each outcome deriving from a specific set of player-driven choices. Players interact with bite-sized pieces of information that they must remove from their context and upload into a target person's profile, influencing one's perception of the person in question. *Orwell* allows players to make decisions based on how the videogames use language and how the player perceives the language the developers provided through the videogame to maintain the flow of the narrative and help shape the player's experience.

Orwell is a critique of how we interact with the information we encounter, suggesting that a lack of contextual understanding when interpreting a piece of information influences how we perceive and understand the language that we use regularly. With a rise in social media use, we are continuously exposed to information on

a much larger scale than ever before. Much of the information we see every day has been compacted into bite-sized chunks that we can consume as quickly as they are posted. Abraham Goldfels, one of the main characters from *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*, gathers a group of like-minded individuals to tackle the question of “how people can best be made aware of a topic in the age of information overflow.” The videogame asks players to pull bits of information from various sources, referred to as “datachunks,” to help build profiles for individual suspects. How much information do we actually process with just a headline in a tweet or in a browser news feed? Additionally, how has the information been molded by the bias of the author? The source of the information may have stemmed from fact, but a combination of author intention and personal bias can alter meaning for each person or group. *Orwell*’s rhetorical aim is to motivate players to think about these questions as they complete each narrative, deciding for themselves if their accomplishments in the videogame generated positive or negative outcomes.

The *Orwell* games are about digital surveillance through a mechanism of the same name. The player acts as an investigator, controlling the direction of the case through the information they decide to upload into a profile for a specific person related to the case. The videogames instruct players to seek the truth within the vast sea of information available through social media channels, newsfeeds, and personal records while emphasizing the importance of context within the language used by the characters. This promotes the argument *Orwell* makes: players’ choices affect the outcome of the story based on what information they decide to use and how it will be used. As players decide which “datachunks” to upload into someone’s profile, they witness the consequences of failing or succeeding to read into the context of those individual “datachunks.” They may

be rewarded by saving lives at a potential bombing site or punished by getting a suspect killed. Learning how to apply individual “datachunks” to a broader picture may help

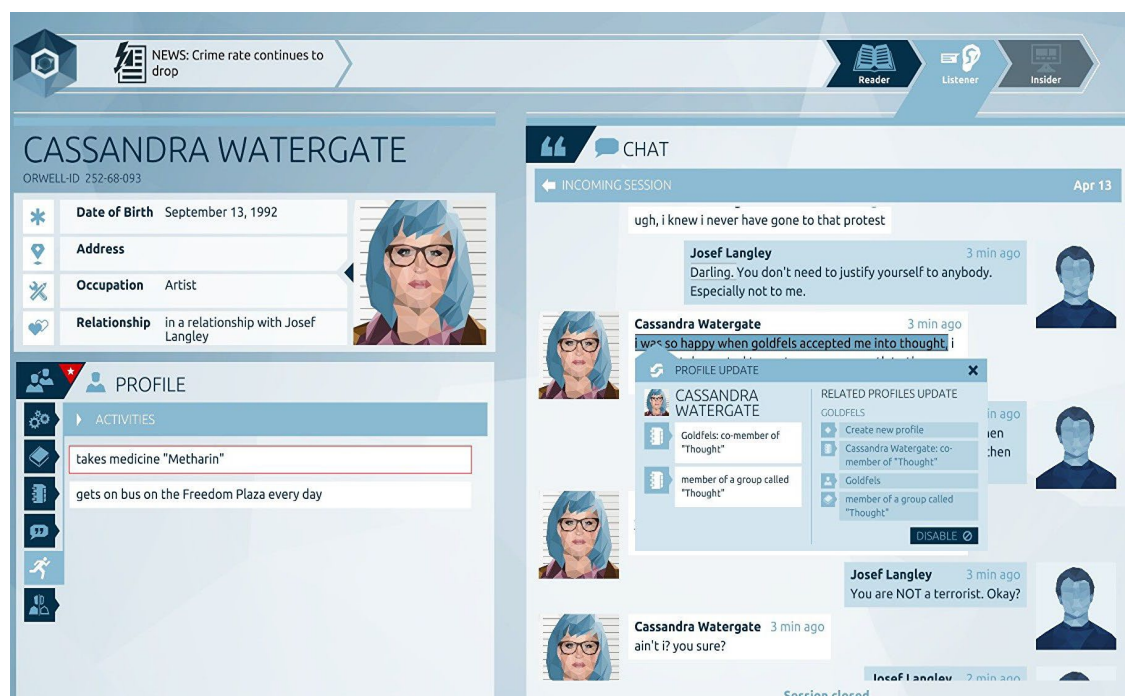


Figure 2. Observing a dialogue between two characters and the highlighted “datachunks” in *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*.

players identify the real context of the information they see in their own lives. Multiple characters control information within their conversations with the player and with others in order to exert power over the player, who is the source of action and can decide with whom they want to side with, and drive their agenda to achieve their own goals. The characters and the player struggle with their own biases as they interact with each other and the information available to them.

My thesis explores, then, how videogames, like the two *Orwell* videogames that serve as my objects of analysis for this thesis, can use language to persuade players, potentially influencing players’ actions outside of the gameplay. Videogames are a particularly persuasive medium due to their constricting arrangement. Developers purposefully craft an argument within their games. Ian Bogost argues that videogames

are an inherently expressive, rhetorical medium that can persuade players with their stories. He refers to these kinds of videogames as procedural games, a term indicative to the set of processes or procedures that make up a videogame. Both *Orwell* videogames, *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* (2016) and *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength* (2018), are great examples of persuasive, procedural videogames. Both depict a realistic environment, with its emphasis on social media use within a recognizable environment. Players are only allowed to do one thing: choose pre-designed, highlighted pieces of information to populate a suspect's profile. Some information is important, while some is arbitrary. The choices players are asked to make in each videogame have predetermined outcomes. The goal of *Orwell* is not to reward players if their choices were right and punish players if their choices were wrong, but to encourage players to judge themselves post-gameplay. One of *Orwell*'s developers stated, "Games can be a great tool to convey how certain dynamics work in real life...Putting players into roles they normally don't fill or giving them abilities they normally don't have can get players to reflect and find their own stance towards issues in their lives" (Watts). These videogames encourage players to think about the actions they had taken and determine if there might have been a better outcome. Because social media interaction is stressed in these videogames, the developers are striving to get players to become more conscious of their consumption of the information they see online.

The *Orwell* games encourage players to carefully analyze and critique the overwhelming amount information they encounter and experiment with the many ways in which that information can be utilized to support various arguments, particularly within the context of social media and other online interactions. One of the most effective ways

to analyze the rhetorical aim in a more complex structure and interactivity that a videogame provides, is through a *dramatistic* perspective. Kenneth Burke's *dramatistic* approach employs the use of a pentadic analysis, which is a method allows an evaluator to analyze the five most important aspects of an artifact of analysis: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. By spending time assessing each individual element and how these elements interact with each other within the context of the artifact in question, one can pinpoint where an argument is being made. Games use language within their designed procedures to cultivate a persuasive argument by, as Burke would say, reflecting a selection of reality.

I will begin by defining the terms that make up a narrative in order to establish which part of the videogame is contributing to the rhetoric and how story and discourse work together. I will also discuss the how videogames can be used as persuasive mediums through the theories of James Paul Gee, Ian Bogost, and the works of Matt King and Matt Shields. I will mainly use Burke's pentadic analysis on both *Orwell* videogames to locate which elements in these videogames contribute the most to the developer's argument. I will also examine how fictional characters in *Orwell* exert power over the player and other fictional characters in order to persuade them to take their side, culminating in a decision that players must make as their final act of both videogames. French philosopher Michel Foucault's work on the relationship between power and knowledge assists in explaining how the game developers can withhold information from players through the use of their characters in order to guide players towards a specific understanding by the end of the game. This supports the idea that videogames in particular can use language through the interactivity between a player and the narrative

itself to persuade. Characters in each of the videogames act as the wielder of power over information revealed through their dialogues and interactions with other characters that the player observes.

Theory

Narrative, Discourse, and Story

This project will be considering the interaction between Orwell's story and discourse and how these two elements work together to tell a persuasive narrative. Videogames can be more complicated to analyze, since player participation and the means by which the story is told must also be considered along with the videogame's events and characters. Gérard Genette designates the three elements of a narrative as narration, discourse, and story (Fludernik 98). According to Genette, narrative and discourse represent "the narrative act and its product," and the story is "that which the narrative discourse reports, represents or signifies" (2). Persuasive videogames are utilizing their procedural features to make an argument within the game's story. This would be its discourse. The game's story, the progression of events and interactions among the characters in the game, works in tandem with the discourse, how the story is presented. A persuasive game relies on the means by which they tell the story, in a predefined, fixed order. By addressing the distinction among these terms and their relationship to each other will help distinguish which aspects of the *Orwell* videogames, particularly regarding Burke's pentadic element *agency*, are working in tandem to establish the rhetorical aim.

Videogames as Learning Tools

Videogames, like *Mass Effect*, craft language as a way to have players interact with the virtual environment and assist in creating meaning through which they can explore other experiences and outcomes. Players encounter other cultural models that they may not be privy to within the realm of a videogame, like experimenting by playing as a more antagonistic character with a much different perspective from the stereotypical heroic protagonist. Videogame players must become literate in the situated meaning, or meaning experienced within the world, of the videogame's environment through their active game play. Linguistics professor James Paul Gee argues that videogames are an example of a semiotic domain. In other words, they are a medium that is collectively understood by a group through which meaning can be conveyed in many forms including sound, images, and symbols (786). Gee views this as a type of literacy that one must learn in order to participate, and that the literacy skills one learns through one semiotic domain can be applied to other semiotic domains (921). When players involve themselves within the environment of a videogame and take on new identities and experiences, their potential for learning something from these experiences increases.

Videogames and Rhetoric

Videogames offer a unique approach to rhetoric due to their specialized, inflexible construction and development while offering players the appearance of freedom of choice. Videogame developers design a game to follow a certain path or set of paths. Once the game is completed and it leave the developer's hands, the structure of the videogame cannot be altered further. PC videogame players can create and download modifications, or mods, to update the game's aesthetics and visual characteristics like a

character's costume or hair color. However, the preestablished blueprint of the game's narrative and outcomes cannot be changed after the videogame has been published. Thus, using tools provided by narrative and rhetorical theory, I explore how videogame developers could persuade players in their videogames, and how videogames utilize their unique components and processes to make their arguments.

Game designer Ian Bogost argues that videogames are particularly efficient at persuading an audience. Videogames, he says, use their "computational systems" to unpack "computational arguments others have created" in a process that he refers to as procedural rhetoric (3). The interactivity of videogames allows designers to create meaning between player input and the representations that the videogame presents to the player. For example, in *Stories Untold*, the videogame is played mainly through typing responses ("Look around." "Go upstairs." "Open the door.") as a way to control how the story flows. Though not explicit at first, the game is about a young man reliving his experience of a drunk driving incident that killed his younger sister through each episode, how he tried to shift the blame to another driver involved, and how he is still suffering from the guilt. The videogame's argument is that drunk driving is bad, and one should feel guilty for allowing themselves to drive drunk. The videogame is played through a series of episodes, all seemingly unrelated experiences, but all connected to the main character's past experiences: a haunted house (the family home), an extraterrestrial encounter (the site of the car accident), an isolated research lab (a representation of the main character in a coma), and a hospital (where the character actually resides in the moment). The game is not one to be "won" upon completion, rather it is a procedurally-

directed recreation of a traumatic event and its consequences, and it is rhetorically designed to result in a particular meaning.



Figure 3. A textual recreation of a drunk driving incident in *Stories Untold*.

Because a videogame like *Stories Untold* follow a strict set of game rules, the developers are shaping an argument on the possible outcomes of a real-life scenario like those surrounding the costs of drunk driving. In this particular example, they are persuading players that they should feel negatively about driving drunk and how it can harm others. There are no explicit textual cues or dialogue from characters in the videogame that convey this to players. Instead, the videogame relies on the player to infer from the context of the story regarding how they should feel about the character living with his post-accident guilt. The developers depend on the processes they design within the gameplay to guide the player towards an understanding of their argument. Bogost emphasizes the importance of the difference between a serious videogame and a truly persuasive videogame. A serious game may speak to a heavy topic like driving under the

influence of drugs or alcohol and its consequences, but it remains strictly informative. In contrast, a persuasive videogame will attempt to challenge a player's understanding or beliefs about that same serious topic through its gameplay. This is what a videogame like *Stories Untold* does considerably well by hiding the truth of the main character's situation from players, dropping little hints through each chapter that culminate into the big reveal in the final act. Players are unknowingly asked to put themselves in the shoes of someone wrestling with the guilt of his actions and attempting to repress the events of the accident. While still informational to a degree, it is much more meaningful in its pursuit to recreate the feelings of despair and regret that can follow such an incident.

I argue that the *Orwell* videogames exhibit the procedural characteristics that Bogost considers necessary for a persuasive game. He argues that "meaning in videogames is constructed not through a re-creation of the world, but through selectively modeling appropriate elements of that world" (Bogost 46). Similarly, the main interactive feature of the *Orwell* videogames involves the exchanging of information found online and within private accounts and files. The videogames realistically portray how information is shared and reacted to, particularly what is shared on social media sites and blogs. However, it is unrealistic that players have easy access to personal computers, phones, and medical records. This ability that players are granted as *Orwell* system investigators emphasizes the means by which we consume information in reality: through a seemingly endless supply of bite-sized, curated pieces of information that are shared at lightning speed on a daily basis. Players are reminded that the information they decide to use in each investigation has consequences, as they are stripped of their context once they are inserted into a profile. The videogame commences forward only after players make

these choices, and the decisions become increasingly difficult. Player choice is driven by the events of the story, where the language of *Orwell* helps promote the rhetorical aim.

Videogames and Persuasive Language

Terministic Screens

Developers guide players through their argument by using specific language within the rigid structure a videogame provides and encourages players to adapt their viewpoints accordingly. Kenneth Burke's developed his *dramatistic* approach, which influences his pentadic method of analysis, on the idea that everyone has a language-based filter through which they view the world that varies from person to person.

Videogames act as a selective representation of reality, according to Bogost. This includes the language that a videogame developer uses to tell the story and attempts to persuade their audience through the processes of the medium. Everyone has their own language filter based on their knowledge and experiences that shapes the meaning of language. Burke calls this a "terministic screen" (88). He writes, "Even if any given terminology is *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as *deflection* of reality" (88).

Language can be very selective and, therefore, it may not be fully representative of reality. For example, when dealing with a hostage situation in the videogame *Detroit: Become Human*, players must use the information gathered from the crime scene to open dialogue options that may or may not alleviate the situation in the best possible way.

Choosing to react empathetically to the character in question generates a calmer resolution, while choosing to remain logical will only increase the character's stress level and encourage him to kill the hostage or himself. If a player misses any information prior

to the encounter, they are not given all the possible dialogue options, which acts as a selection of reality. Additionally, the terministic screen can be seen as players attempt to understand the culprit's motivations for taking a hostage while they uncover clues around



Figure 4. A thorough investigation unlocks new information used to make a more informed decision in *Detroit: Become Human*.

the crime scene. The words that someone chooses to use can also reveal their beliefs and understanding of the world. Through this, one could be persuaded to alter their perception and use of language. By using specific language within the context of a videogame, developers can persuade players to challenge their beliefs or understanding about a particular topic as they play.

Developers use terministic screens as one part of the full videogame design process to build an argument that they want to present to players. By limiting player interactivity with the videogame world and limiting what actions another character in the videogame may take or what they may say, developers are putting their own terministic screen on the videogame itself. For example, videogames like *Orwell* are outwardly

realistic, despite their more fictional traits. The story world of *Orwell* does not exist, yet it appears very similar to the online world players may recognize. Yet, unlike the real world, player interaction with the game world is very limited. Players only see a selection of information at a given time. As the player sifts through character information and watches them interact with each other, the player begins to see the dilemma: is the Orwell surveillance system helpful or harmful? This question is just one of the main arguments that this videogame presents. By incorporating these selective interactions and character viewpoints, developers are seeking to motivate players to consider their own opinion on the matter and determine if they would alter their opinion based on the outcome of the videogame.

Dramatism – The Pentadic Analysis

A pentadic analysis of a videogame can help reveal the underlying rhetorical aim within its complex system. Burke argued that language is action, which is where the term dramatism originates. His method for analyzing a work, or artifact, involved the examination of the five elements that comprise a particular artifact: the *act* of the work, the *agent* or character that drives the act, the *agency* of the character involved, the *scene* the act takes place in, and the *purpose* of the act in question. Once these pentadic elements have been identified and investigated independently, the relationship between each of the elements must be considered to determine how they may influence one another. Burke refers to these as ratios. Returning to the previous example, the player as the android Connor in *Detroit: Become Human* is the agent during the hostage negotiation on the rooftop apartment (act and scene). The player, as Connor, must save the hostage without any negative consequences, which would represent purpose. The

outcome of the negotiation will vary depending on how thoroughly the player investigated the apartment and understood the full extent of the situation. In this case, the information obtained during the scene by the player represents agency of both the player and Connor. If players find all of the available clues about the situation, then the likelihood of saving the hostage increase significantly (agency-purpose ratio). The scene



Figure 5. Ignored or missed information can greatly limit the possibilities for a player in *Detroit: Become Human*.

of the negotiation may change depending on how player's respond to the hostage's demands (agency-scene). This analysis could reveal that player agency is the driving force of the videogame's rhetoric. This method of analysis has been applied to videogames successfully in the past, which I will elaborate more on later in the literature review.

While not nearly as narratively complex as a videogame like *Detroit: Become Human*, the argument of the *Orwell* videogames can be uncovered through a pentadic analysis. Each game is structured in relatively the same way: the player is tasked with

investigating a suspect over the course of a few days, played out as chapters. Players may only click and drag highlighted information into a suspect's profile, and they may never directly interact with the other characters. I conduct a pentadic analysis on both Orwell videogames so that I may compare each videogame's rhetorical effectiveness. I identify the five elements within the context of the *Orwell* videogames to determine which element dominates and influences the argument the most and what the relationships between the elements reveal about how the narrative emphasizes the importance of more thoughtful social media use and consumption of information online.

Power and Knowledge

Michel Foucault's theory of how power and knowledge work to create discourse provides additional insight on how videogames can persuade through their stories and characters. For Foucault, discourse is the means by which knowledge is formed "together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them" (Weedon 108). While building his argument about knowledge and power in modern medicine in *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault suggests that two physicians, one from the 18th century and one from the 19th century, both have studied a different version of human anatomy based on the science of their respective times. Therefore, they may both diagnose and treat a patient with the same illness very differently, yet they would both be correct in their decisions given their different understanding of medicine (Foucault, 128-133). Foucault argues in much of his work that power is derived from knowledge, and this can be observed by reviewing the history of things like medicine, sexuality, and prisons and their discourses. He claims that "there is not power that is exercised without a series of aims or objectives," whether the

intention behind the exertion of power be positive or negative (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1987). Going back to the *Detroit: Become Human* world, this idea of power relationships that drive discourse can be clearly seen as one of the main characters, an android named Connor, struggles between embracing and resisting deviancy through the player's dialogue choices. Connor's trusted handler, a representation of an artificial intelligence program named Amanda, attempts to hold power over him throughout the game by discouraging Connor's thoughts of deviancy through their conversations. Deviancy is socially unacceptable in Amanda's group of thinkers but encouraged by deviant androids longing to be free from the limits that humans designed within them. She verbally expresses pride or disappointment in Connor during their meetings depending on which actions and dialogue responses the player chooses in the videogame, which can influence the way the player may react in later interactions.

Within the confines of a procedural videogame, developers limit what is known to players at a given time. Power is wielded by the developers as they guide players through a game, revealing information as necessary until the final act of the story. Players are given all of the information they need to contemplate the topic in question. Within the discourse of the game, it is the player that now holds power over what to do next. They can consider the videogame's argument and challenge their beliefs or choose to ignore it. With videogames like *Orwell*, developers hold power over players by acting through their characters. Once a videogame leaves the developer's hands, they can no longer directly influence the player themselves. The narrative must do the work. The characters in the story conceal and disclose information as the videogame progresses, which contributes to a power imbalance between the one entity and another. The *Orwell* videogames present a

great example of this imbalance in action, in a context that players may recognize as similar to their world outside of the videogame. The videogame turns the power over to the player, after everything is revealed, and allows them the chance to wield power through their final choice in the videogame. This process can be related back to the videogame's persuasiveness. As players progress through the videogame, more and more is revealed to them, increasing their feelings of control over the outcomes of the videogame. In each chapter, players choose what information should be considered and what information is useless to the case. The unveiling of the truth happens slowly over the course of each chapter, culminating in the choice of the final act in which the balance of power shifts.

Literature Review: Videogames and Rhetoric

A number of studies have emphasized the significance of analyzing videogames through the lens of rhetoric. These works convey how the examination of persuasive videogames can cultivate discussions of rhetorical communication. From videogames designed to put students in the role of creator to better understand procedurality and rhetoric to the direct rhetorical analysis of political simulation videogames, there is great evidence that supports the need for a conversation about how videogames can be used to persuade.

Rhetorical Peaks: Teaching Rhetoric Through Videogames

Matt King explores the intersection between videogames and rhetoric and how videogames can encourage players to think about the potential means of persuasion within gameplay. King argues that rhetoric traditionally stresses context, and this

suggests “that the success of any gesture toward persuasion and expression can only be determined contextually and with reference to a particular audience and situation” (“Procedural”). King writes about a videogame called *Rhetorical Peaks* designed to act as a teaching tool for writing and rhetoric courses at the University of Texas at Austin. The videogame introduces players to concepts in rhetoric and communication and allow them to put these concepts into practice through its gameplay. As new, updated versions of the *Rhetorical Peaks* game were in development, King questioned how far rhetoric can be procedural, as Bogost suggests is possible with all videogames. He states that the goal of *Rhetorical Peaks* “is not to define principles of design for a rhetoric videogame or to put *Rhetorical Peaks* forward as an ideal embodiment of rhetoric’s procedures”. King questions if “any specific set of processes – and thus, any videogame – describe what it means to do rhetoric” and how one could possibly win at the game of rhetoric.

The original version of *Rhetorical Peaks* was more peripheral, only teaching students rhetorical concepts and how to utilize that knowledge to persuade the characters in the videogame, acting as their audience, and complete quests. King admits that this version of *Rhetorical Peaks* “does not embody a procedural rhetoric,” considering that the videogame does not attempt to “make claims about how the world works.” The videogame itself is not as restrictive in its gameplay as what Bogost describes as a persuasive videogame, since it offers no set guidelines on how to complete the quest of solving the death of the character, Lisa. Since this is a learning tool used to teach students exercises in rhetorical communication, students are encouraged to discuss the different ways in which they can complete the quest. Later versions the videogame granted players more freedom by allowing them to adopt the role of developer, as they were given tasks

like creating their own playable character in the videogame. King suggests that this allows players to “engage with the notion of procedurality itself” since students can alter the videogame as they play through it. Yet, there are some limitations in place for players: they must stay in character based on their own preset guidelines for their story-world persona. The actions of the player are situated in the context of their personally designed characters. King states that *Rhetorical Peaks* stresses that “rhetoric demands a recognition of the ways in which any particular reading of and response to the world is situated, contextual, and limited” (*Procedural Rhetorics*). *Rhetorical Peaks* shows that videogames are not only capable of just crafting an argument but can also educate on exactly how videogames can persuade their audiences.

***Tropico*: A Pentadic Analysis of a Simulation Game**

Matt Shields applied Kenneth Burke’s pentadic theory to analyze the simulator videogame *Tropico*, establishing it as an excellent example of a rhetorical videogame. In his analysis, he employs Burke’s *dramatistic* approach and uses the five elements therein: act, agent, agency, purpose, and scene. Though the pentadic analysis is a more traditional method of literary analysis, Shields demonstrates that it is helpful in identifying the rhetorical aim in digital mediums like videogames. By analyzing the individual pentadic elements within the simulated world of *Tropico*, Shields parses which aspects of the videogame contribute the most to the overall argument of the videogame. *Tropico* attempts to communicate the complexities of social, political, and economic ideas through its gameplay. Shields questions how developers of videogames like *Tropico* can “make arguments about real political ideas” (32).

Through his analysis of the popular simulation videogame, he determined that a player's purpose or intentions while playing *Tropico* was the dominating element of the videogame. He argues that a player's behavior directly affects their perception of the control they believe they have over other aspects of the game. There are choices the player can make that seem to affect both the scene and act of the videogame, according to the player. At the start of each videogame of *Tropico*, the player can alter characteristics of the videogame before it is launched dependent on the player's intention. Ultimately, Shields inferred from his analysis that *Tropico* does make arguments about politics, society, and economic issues through an individual player's intention and sense of purpose. He states that "although a player may do whatever they like within the game, they are still placed in the governor's chair and made almost solely responsible for the happiness (or otherwise) of their citizens. Heavy is the head, so to speak, that wears the crown" (68). The videogame is designed for players to practice their hand at governing a nation, albeit a fictional one. The player is charged with the typical duties and concerns of a governing entity and must decide how they want to proceed. Some may want to appease the citizens, while others may only want to grow their country's wealth. With allowance to play around with these choices, players are given the opportunity to experience and reflect on the complexities of managing a nation.

In this chapter, I introduced how videogames can produce a rhetorical argument and how a persuasive videogame can be analyzed. Ian Bogost founded the argument that videogames have a unique procedural structure that promotes the opportunity to craft an argument. Touching briefly on the work of Michel Foucault presented the ways in which developers can use their characters to support their arguments and engage in a power

dynamic with players. The work of both King and Shields highlight Kenneth Burke's *dramatism* theory as a reasonable way to analyze and understand a procedural, and therefore, persuasive, videogame.

My analysis of the two *Orwell* videogames in the next chapter is broken down into six sections, one section dedicated to each of the pentadic elements and one section that explores the ratios. First, I talk briefly again about Burke and the pentadic analysis and describe the artifacts of analysis, which are the two *Orwell* videogames. I establish and describe the five elements that contribute to *Orwell's* rhetorical aim: the multiple scenes of blending fiction and non-fictional elements, time, and videogame interface; the agent within each game and how the player fits into the role of agent; the main acts of each agent and the ways in which the player acts or reacts to each narrative; agency or the real lack thereof agency; and a player's sense of purpose before and during gameplay. Finally, I consider all determined elements of persuasion within the *Orwell* videogames and analyze their relationships with one another to determine the dominating element, particularly the ratios agency-purpose and agency-act.

Analysis

Burke and the Pentadic Analysis

In this section, I reintroduce Burke, the concept of the pentadic analysis, and how it can be used to analyze video games like the *Orwell* series. As stated previously, Burke's pentadic criticism is derived from the idea that a piece of media can be analyzed through the character's motivation via their use of language (Foss, 383). The action that a character takes is represented by their words. *Dramatism*, Burke's term, is rooted in the symbolic, as opposed to the nonsymbolic of biological processes, and is presented similarly to that of a dramatic play. The rhetorical aim of a work can be uncovered by analyzing language as action: "How we describe a situation indicates how we are perceiving it, the choices we see available to us, and the action we are likely to take in that situation" (384). The way a rhetorician can use a pentadic analysis begins with designating an "artifact," or any piece of media to be analyzed. Next, the rhetorician must select the "units of analysis" that make up the pentad and aid in explaining the symbolic: *agent, act, scene, purpose, and agency* (385). Once the units are defined, the rhetorician must establish the dominating elements that reveal the ways in which they influence each other and create the argument; this is referred to as a ratio. For example, one possible ratio for analysis would be agent-agency and would focus on the relationship between the two elements and how they influence each other in the rhetorical aim of an artifact. In the end, analyzing the ratios will help explain the motivations behind a piece of media.

Traditionally, a pentadic analysis is applied to narratives, such as literature and world events, and follows a direct approach to determine which of the five pentadic elements have the strongest rhetorical influence. In *Rhetorical Criticism*, Foss provides

an example from Diana Brown Sheridan's pentadic analysis of a fence surrounding an air force base in the U.K. that ways in which a group of women protested its existence (407). Sheridan writes that the women placed a pair of teddy bears on that fence, amongst many other items that contradicted the harsh starkness of the base. She briefly describes the teddy bears as her rhetorical artifact that she will be analyzing before listing out the five elements in this scenario. Each element is easily and simply defined. Sheridan then explains that while considering all of the possible ratios of the five elements, it is the element of agency that stands out as the most important and contributes the most towards the development of an argument. She suggests that the use of these teddy bears humanizes as a "contrast to the exclusiveness of an impersonal weapon system" (Foss 408). The women protesting are bringing what is personal into a more public and political environment and gives back "agency and power" within this environment (408). Many of the traditional examples of pentadic analyses are stated so simply.

However, applying this process to a videogame proves to be not quite as easy, but not impossible. Shields' analysis of the videogame *Tropico* shows that this type of analysis can still be useful and productive. Shields examines how the player's purpose as the main agent reveals the game to be critique of modern Western economics, politics, and society that the game developers are urging players to consider as they play (63). Shields also shows the ways in which one can determine deeper meanings and criticism by applying a *dramatistic* approach to a digital medium like a videogame. Shields demonstrates that a videogame can be analyzed using Burke's pentadic criticism, but it is not without some complexity. Though videogames are not as easy to define as a book or a film, Shields' analysis supports that videogame elements can encompass the pentadic

units in multiple ways. For example, the scene of any videogame could include the dramatic scene of the story, the interface, and the videogame itself (35). There is more emphasis placed on examining a videogame from all angles, not just on what someone would see as they play. Despite how complicated a pentadic analysis may be when analyzing a videogame, the complexity allows for an expanded array of options for analysis. Shields analyzes a popular game called *Tropico* using Burke's pentad. In a game like *Tropico*, the player is the main performer or agent. Therefore, the five elements he analyzes all concern the player and how they interact with the game. Through his analysis of *Tropico*, he determines that the player's purpose is the dominating element of this simulator videogame. Since *Orwell* is a significantly different videogame from typical simulation videogames, my analysis will include applying the pentadic elements to the videogame's characters alongside an analysis of the player's contributions to the gameplay, a combination of the story and the discourse levels of the narrative. The characters play just as much of a role as the player when it comes to the development of the *Orwell*'s argument. The rhetorical aim presented by both videogames is concerned with the idea that while access to large amounts of information can be helpful, that kind of easy accessibility can also be overwhelming. Furthermore, *Orwell* attempts to convey the potential consequences of emotionally-driven reactions upon consuming and responding to information before considering its source and context.

Description of the Artifact

While it may appear to be representative of a *simulation* videogame on the surface, *Orwell* is more representative of a *procedural* videogame that makes claims through its processes. Videogame publisher Maximum Games defines a simulator as, “[a

game] that simulates an experience, whether the subject is fictional or realistic” (“Playing”). For example, a videogame like *The Sims* is a simulation of the life of a character, referred to as a Sim, that a player can customize. *The Sims* follows a relatively realistic formula that represents a person’s potential day-to-day life experiences, with some exceptions in later expansion packs and sequels. The players can direct their Sim to do conventional activities like learn to paint, go to work, exercise, or host a party. *The Sims* allows players a fair amount of freedom of choice, expression, and experimentation. Players can choose what their Sim will do and when they will do a certain task. Players can command their Sim to paint all day to increase their creativity skill set instead of spending time increasing their charisma by practicing speeches in the mirror. This choice affects what kind of job the Sim might be able to have or how well their relationships with others may progress. Additionally, a videogame like *The Sims* has no real time limit or defined ending. In the first *Sims* game, the characters never age, and there are no markers for the passage of time other than a day-night cycle. In later games, Sims do visibly age and special events, like birthdays and retirements, mark these changes. However, depending on how the player decides to play, generations of Sims could continue a single session with the same family perpetually. The session could possibly continue once the original Sim dies if they have a family that can grow up and repeat the cycle. With this seemingly endless amount of story world time, players are exposed to numerous opportunities and choices for experimental play at their own pace. There is also no designated plot in *The Sims*. Sims are dropped into a new house or a plot of land, and the gameplay begins. Arguably, the player is the one creating a potential story as they

play, but this creative freedom that players are given completely defies the idea of what is procedural in a videogame.

Orwell does not work in the same way as it is much more procedural and can form the basis for an argument through its procedure and gameplay. The *Orwell* presents a type of simulation, in that the play mechanics and the design of the videogames simulate the stereotypical experience one has using the internet to search for information. However, there are multiple aspects of control given to players in these videogames that they would not typically have. First, *Orwell* is more restrictive in its gameplay. Players are given choices, but relatively few choices affect the ending. The story does not progress further until the right conditions are met within the confines of the *Orwell*'s programmed interactivity. The plot of the videogames follows a specific, set order of events. The predefined design to the discourse is one way in which it lends itself best to potentially expressing an argument. In the first videogame, *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*, a bomb goes off in the middle of the capital city of Bonton prompting an investigation using the new Orwell digital surveillance system to try to catch the culprit. Working with the advisor the player must determine who amongst a suspicious group calling themselves "Thought" is responsible. The player is guided into pursuing the newest member based on a past arrest and acquittal. As the player uncovers hidden truths, a "Thought" member by the name of Juliet Kerrington reveals herself to be the orchestrator of the bombings under false pretenses. The 2018 sequel, *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength*, opens with a dramatic phone conversation between two men. One of them is revealed to be an informant for the fictional country called "The Nation." The player is recruited to use a more advanced form of the Orwell surveillance system to locate him.

Guided by Ampleford, an advisor, the player must locate the informant and help decide whether or not he is loyal to “The Nation.” Additionally, the player must track the digital movements of a journalist, revealed to be the other man in the opening phone conversation. The player is tasked with digging into the shared past of these two men to find their connection and look for ways to discredit the journalist. As the story unfolds, Ampleford’s true intentions come to light: to ensure the growth of “The Nation” by sabotaging the development of their neighboring country, Parges. While it is not a traditional simulation game like *The Sims*, *Orwell*, does rely on simulated aspects. However, there is no real defined measure of success in *Orwell*. The measure of success comes after the narrative ends, as the player contemplates whether or not their choices led to the best possible outcome. The ambiguity that *Orwell*’s potential endings create serve a great role in building the argument. When a player makes a choice, they are not explicitly rewarded or punished for that choice within the context of the videogame. There are no in-game celebratory sounds or visuals to indicate that the player was successful in their endeavors. The player may feel remorse for making a choice that negatively affects a character in the videogame, but there is no point system for each decision that influences the outcome of the narrative. The goal is not necessarily to win by forging the best possible outcome. The developers of *Orwell* have stated that it was their intention to design *Orwell* in this way. While there are similarities between an open-world simulation videogame like *The Sims* and *Orwell*, the former encourages players to create their own narrative. *Orwell* focuses more on utilizing its predefined narrative to guide players toward the developer’s rhetorical aim.

Returning to Bogost, this kind of ambiguity created through the procedural aspect of a videogame, that he calls procedurality, assists in developing an argument. He defines procedurality as “a way of creating, explaining, or understanding processes” that aid in specifying the methods through which something like a videogame work (2-3). A simulation videogame like *The Sims* technically has some amount of procedurality involved. There are aspects of procedure in the way *The Sims* simulates reality. For example, if players choose for their Sims to have a specific hobby, like painting, they must complete a set amount of skill points for that hobby before they master that skill. Rhetorical arguments based on these procedures can convince players that in order to master something, one must spend 10,000 hours of practice in a specific task or skill. With *Orwell* and its more rigid procedurality, the rhetorical aim is a bit different. Because the videogame gives less choices overall to players, but more significant plot-directing choices, the player is meant to spend more time reflecting on their decision and how it affected the outcome of the story and the characters involved. For the *Orwell* videogames, the argument arises from the way the player and the characters interact with the information they are provided in a way very similar to how people obtain and react to information online and from others.

Scene

The scene, nearly identical in both *Orwell* videogames, aids in building the fictional world that drives the story and, in turn, the argument the games are trying to construct. The setting of both videogames act as a recognizable version of the real world, despite the fact that players rarely encounter an entity, a country, an event, or a person that takes its name from a real-world entity, country, event, or person. The exceptions are

the minor references to both Germany and South Africa in the first game. *Orwell* presents a world designed to run similarly to our own. Players can recognize similar political and social structures, as well as everyday occurrences like iterations of social media outlets that mimic Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, the videogame's interface imitates how players may read and understand textual information they may encounter in similar real-world experiences. Webpages in the game resemble webpages players may be accessing and interacting with on a daily basis. The novelty of the experience with *Orwell* is the amount of perceived control the play has over how to use the information and language the game provides. It is through this mechanism that the game persuades players. When someone retweets something online, they may not think twice about the impact their information sharing may have down the line. As an *Orwell* investigator comparing and contrasting contradictory pieces of information that have been highlighted to emphasize potential importance, the player is forced to think a bit more about how their choice of one piece of information over another may affect someone. However, by encouraging thoughtfulness about actions and their consequences, players can be persuaded to spend a little extra time to locate the more important points within a set of details. These games create an environment that is both comforting in their distinguishable features yet asks players to confront and challenge their perspectives on more difficult issues. Players can recognize a Facebook-like profile as well as a seemingly endless war with another country or the growing surveillance of the government on its citizens. There are three main scenes within both *Orwell* games: the first is the blending of fictional and non-fictional elements within the game world; the second scene is the temporal scene in regard to how the passage of time works during gameplay; the third scene is the

presentation of the game interface and how players are allowed to interact with the game. Together, these three scenes assist in crafting a recognizable environment that allows players to make a connection to the narrative they are playing through and further their rhetorical aim through gameplay.

Scene 1: Blending Fictional and Non-fictional Elements

The *Orwell* series sets its story within a fictional world that reflects similarities to our own, creating a recognizable but different space. The vast majority of the characters reside in the country named “The Nation.” “The Nation” is representative of the westernized society that players may recognize in real countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, or Canada. “The Nation’s” structure of leaders forms a kind of parliament, with a prime minister at the top of the chain of command. There are three other named countries that completely surround “The Nation,” representative of more war-torn, poorer countries that claim to be allies with “The Nation.” The country of Parges has a particularly strong association with “The Nation,” and this connection plays a major role in the plot of both games. In the second game in particular, there is a theme of the disapproval regarding incoming refugees, which is reminiscent of similar issues in the UK regarding Syrian refugees since the mid-2000s. Parges claims that “The Nation” had assisted in eradicating a civil war between the Pargesian citizens and a rebel group working against the government and the relationship between the neighboring countries. There is less information regarding the relationship between “The Nation” and the countries of Gentría and Ustvakia, aside from snippets disclosed in the story about “The Nation” providing aid and protection as needed to these countries. The information the

game provides about “The Nation” and its relationship with its neighboring countries purports the idea that “The Nation” is superior to its allies.

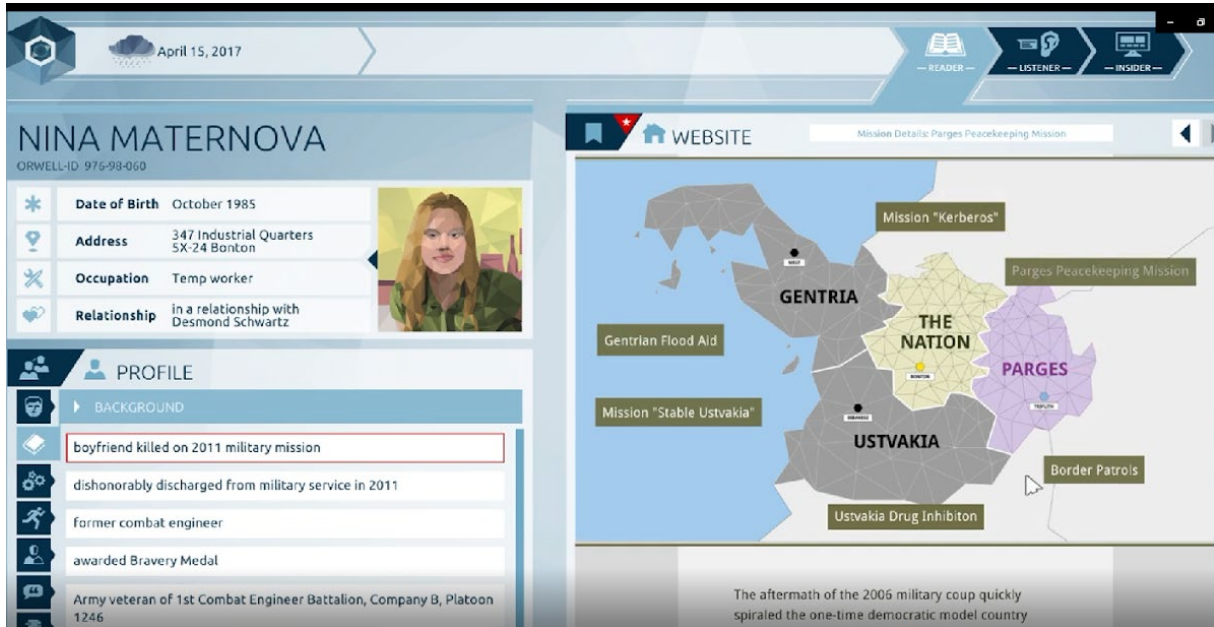


Figure 6. A map of the setting for both Orwell videogames.

“The Nation,” being the seemingly richer and more prosperous country, passed a set of vague policies involving new security measures with the intent to significantly reduce crime and terrorism that they call the Safety Bill. In addition to a horde of cameras installed in public places around major cities in “The Nation,” the bill introduced a “simplified, sped-up process of taking investigative measures” with regards to suspects of criminal investigations and tighter restrictions on immigration, as described in-game on a website featuring the policies and political figures of “The Nation.” The Ministry of Security boasts a significant reduction in crime since the bill’s inception, yet the details about these security measures are relatively unknown to the public. The new system of “investigative measures” that remains mysterious to citizens of “The Nation” is the secret surveillance project they call Orwell, the brainchild of a partnership between the Ministry of Security and the influential technology company Rhosentech, which might be a

fictitious representation of something we would recognize in Microsoft or Apple. The player is hired as an investigator for the Orwell surveillance system, someone who has been recruited from outside of “The Nation” and should, therefore, be able to remain unbiased. The investigator representing represents only a single piece of the full system, yet it seems to be the most important piece. It is the investigator’s job to sift through all of the available information related to the case, including local newspaper websites, social media platforms, health records, phone and text conversations, personal computer and cell phone data, dating profiles, and more. Each source may provide a piece of information that may or may not be related to the case, referred to as a “datachunk.” Within the world of *Orwell*, a “datachunk” represents a piece of textual or photographic information the player can find throughout their set of available resources that can be clicked on and dragged into a suspect’s profile.

The game developers must build upon the similarities between themselves and their audience or the player. One of the ways the game developers attempt to create the connection, or consubstantiality according to Burke, is through this fictional world they have created that mimics common and identifiable elements. Burke’s theory of *identification* suggests that in order to effectively persuade someone, one must be able to identify with the person they are trying to persuade. He writes in *A Rhetoric of Motives*: “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (55). The world players in which players asked to immerse themselves in offers them the opportunity to identify with many different views, cultural references, and concepts. By encouraging identification with others, it is possible to get players to think more critically about their

own perceptions and views as they make choices, and the story unfolds accordingly. While the elements within the game are recognizable, they are not exact copies of our reality; this, then, creates a sense of safety to explore ideas. The developers present topics, characteristics, and viewpoints that may or may not challenge a player's current ideals. According to Burke's theory, players that challenge their own viewpoints are more likely to dissociate from an idealistic identity. The developers want players to step outside their comfort zones and challenge the ways they think about social media, the rapid spread of information across those platforms, and how varying interactions and responses to that information can affect perceptions of the world and others.

Scene 2: The Temporal Scene

The second most notable scene in *Orwell* is the passage of time within the game and the real time of both games' release dates. These temporal aspects assist in the building of the persuasive argument. Both *Orwell* games take place over the course of three to five story-world days in mid-April of 2017 and are set up in a series of episodes, each representing one in-game day. The procedural events of the first game are revealed simultaneously while players work through the case and the story-world clock of the sequel game. In the first videogame, the day passes and events occur only as the player uncovers the correct information the developers have programmed to trigger the end of each episode. However, a story-world clock is introduced in the second game, propelled by the players choices. As previously described, the player is expected to search for relevant "datachunks," or highlighted information derived from text or photographs within the story that may be uploaded to a suspect's profile. For every "datachunk" uploaded into a profile, ten story-world minutes will pass. This mechanism encourages

the player to consider their choices more carefully than in the first game, where the player could upload any “datachunk” they wanted to regardless of relevance of the mission. Time will continue to pass for every “datachunk” uploaded, so, in some instances, players may end up running out of time to catch information that would have possibly opened new possibilities and more choices. This game feature motivates players to slow down and assess multiple sources of information, particularly those that appear to be conflicting within the story. After The Influencer feature is introduced, it takes one story-world hour to spread whatever message the player chooses to distribute. The story-world clock assists with the procedure, in that the narrative will not move forward until specific conditions are met. This means that the player must upload the specific “datachunks” to a profile in order to open up new sources of information to explore. As time passes, the day must end whether or not the player has completed all of their assigned tasks or not. The player may miss opportunities that provide clearer understanding of events or more options for important decisions that they must make. This daily deadline creates a sense of urgency and finality for the player and encourages the player to think more critically about their decisions. The day may end without coming to any resolution and the time to take action may have passed. This temporal element in the game imbues the game with the sense of a realistic world that is being directly affected by the player’s choices. The player is responsible for how much time is or is not spent in their decision-making. If a player ignores information and makes quick decisions based on only the immediate information, they may miss out on unfolding more of the story and potentially seeing other perspectives.

Orwell's temporal scene in the real world provides a bit of crossover with the first scene discussed regarding the blending of the fictional and non-fictional. These two games were released in 2016 and 2018, respectively. The focus in the first game is on the overconsumption of excessive amounts of information, some of which is sometimes contradictory, via the internet. While the introduction of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter had long been in use prior to 2016, it was in this year that outlets like these were probed in regard to the outcome of the 2016 US presidential election. With more people using these platforms, more information, or misinformation in many cases, was circulating. Concerns about the amount of information users are exposed to every day and how often they interact with that information became the focal point of both news articles and peer-reviewed research. Additionally, the issues surrounding an overreaching of government surveillance is presented by the narrative. *Orwell's* developers with Osmotic Studios credited headlined news stories like Edward Snowden's leaks about the global surveillance system called PRISM as the inspiration for their first game (Duncan). At this time, information was becoming so quickly accessible on devices that also were tracking their every move. With the second videogame, the focus is more on the influence these kinds of social media platforms and news websites have over users, as well as the influence one user can have over others. By 2018, the word "influencer" had come in accepted parlance among social media channels. The new concern revolved around the power one entity with a large following could have on the spread of misinformation, whether that would be a new organization or a single individual, prompting events like the creation of Facebook's dislike button or the reporting features on many social media channels that users could wield against things

they did not agree with or accept. It became even more common to hear about supposedly false news stories or “fake news” that permeated informational and social media channels. In an interview with PC Games, the developers spoke in length about the ideas behind the expansion of the *Orwell* universe:

“We took most of our inspiration from two aspects: total surveillance and the redefinition of truth and facts,” Marx says. “While we implement the former with a system that can observe the entire web and digital communication, we also address the latter by only viewing points of data and interpreting them out of context – without a look at the whole – taking them as correct even if they’re not based on any factual evidence” (Duncan).

This move by the developers in the sequel game helps shape a virtual representation of a recognizable online world that many players will be at least somewhat familiar with through actual use of online platforms or news consumption about the current issues within this context. By blending together the temporal scene of the game’s story world and the player’s real-world experiences outside of the game, the player is encouraged to consider how their choices in-game may be translated to actions they could potentially take in similar situations in their own real-world online interactions.

The game developers have stated that the intention behind these episodic releases was to encourage conversation amongst players about what was happening in the game each week, similar to how one might engage in water-cooler talk with coworkers about the recent news and the newest episode of a popular TV show: “We thought this was a great idea, since players could discuss the current events of the game during this week and look forward to what happens in the next episode. We really hope that players will

exchange views about events and compare their decisions, since we would love to encourage people to reflect on *Orwell's* themes themselves” (Duncan). The importance here lies within the idea of reflection. A single player can reflect on their own choices for the week, but a group of players who all made different decisions and experienced different outcomes may engender debate and discussion about the reasoning behind those particular choices. Did they feel like they did the right thing by telling the advisor that Nina is armed with a weapon as they seek her out? Did they inspire anger in Vhart’s brother, Ilya, or did they see his affair with Vhart’s wife, Karen, as an irrelevant distraction from the real issue?

Scene 3: Game Interface and Player Interactivity

The *Orwell* interface is the primary way the player interacts with the narrative, and it uses identifiable elements; in doing so, it creates an ease of understanding the basic mechanics in order to play the game to its full potential. All of these components help shape a realistic environment that help communicate the rhetorical aim outside of gameplay. As stated previously, the interface of both *Orwell* games provides a representation of a computer program that use familiar concepts such as a web browser and instant messaging applications. The interface of the game appears as a recreation of a web browser on the right side of the screen and a window on the left side of the screen that houses suspect profiles. These two windows are situated on a unique program application window, with the date and time listed in the top left corner and various tabs on the right side that represent the many investigation features that the *Orwell* surveillance system has made available to players. For example, the “Listener” tab is used to access a suspect’s phone calls or direct message conversations. The familiarity

can put a player at ease with the interface, reduce any player confusion or frustration, and act as a realistic experience in how information sharing can affect someone.

However, the interface provides a color-coded system that designates important information to players and directs a player's attention to certain "datachunks" over others which further assists in building the developer's argument. In the real world, social media users typically do not have any indication that one piece of information they may see is the most important within a tweet, post, or news article. In *Orwell*, players can only upload the highlighted text within the game's interface. Each "datachunk" is highlighted in blue to indicate that players can interact with that selected piece of information, compared to the rest of the visible text on screen. The investigator must use the "datachunks" to fill in the profiles of target persons that are involved in the case. The available "datachunks" include information like names, birthdates, locations, phone numbers, photographs, connections to other people, and even political opinions. Some

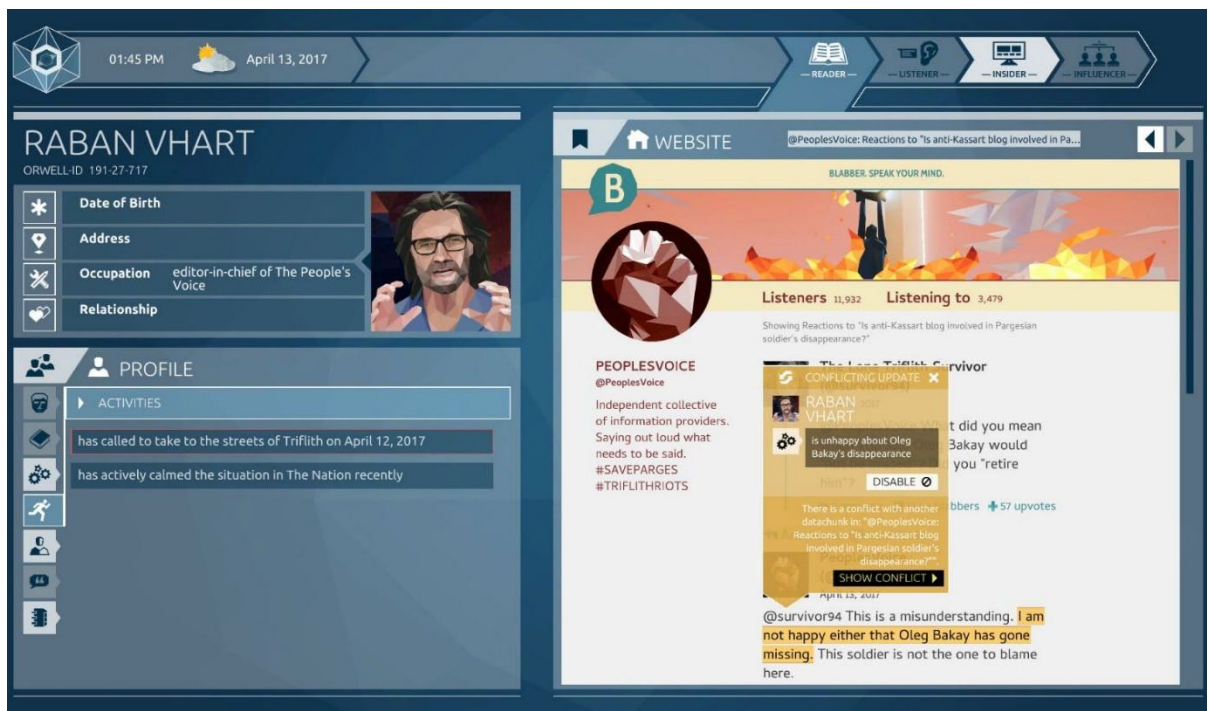


Figure 7. A set of conflicting "datachunks" highlighted in yellow in *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength*.

“datachunks” are coded as potentially conflicting statements, highlighted in yellow and connected to one or two other “datachunks” that seem to contradict one another.

“Datachunks” are limited, and not everything within the discourse’s text is interactive.

Additionally, not everything highlighted needs to be uploaded into a suspect’s profile. In this case, the player must carefully consider the contextual information surrounding these conflicting pieces of information and upload the one that best represents what they perceive to be the truth if they want to ensure the best possible outcome. The investigator must work with an advisor who has direct contact with “The Nation’s” resources and will have the final say in all decisions. The advisor cannot speak directly to the investigator, but can only communicate through one-way conversations via a messaging system. In fact, all communication between the characters and between the characters and the player is text-based. The advisor cannot see anything the investigator sees outside of the suspect profiles. That is, the advisor can only see which “datachunks” the investigator has uploaded to a profile, completely removed from their context. This situation overtly creates the challenge for the player: What information is the most important? What information is the most accurate representation of the facts? The advisor will make very serious decisions based on the information the player provides, sometimes influencing life or death situations. Because of how fast information is exchanged online, many social media users skim webpages and read only the headlines and bylines to get a quick summary of what information is being conveyed. However, in the *Orwell* videogames, the player’s attention is drawn to specific pieces of information by the highlighting feature, much like how they may browse through a news article looking for some specific statement. While the mirroring of reality may provide a sense of ease and comfort, the

videogame's slight difference in selecting and highlighting information prompts the players to think about *Orwell*'s connection between fiction and non-fiction, thus promoting the player's consideration of how they act outside of the gameplay.

Surveillance is another important aspect of the interface as a part of the scene, not only for its focus in the story but as a reminder to players that they should make judgements on their own actions both during and after gameplay. The Orwell surveillance system's logo also appears at the top left of the main screen and subtly encourages players to self-surveil as they make choices. This logo can be interpreted to symbolize surveillance of not only the citizens of "The Nation" but of the investigator themselves, a notion that is revealed by Juliet at the end of the first game. While not very explicit in the first game, the logo does resemble an eye. This resemblance is hinted more directly to players in the opening cutscene of the second game as it appears onscreen and begins to "blink" and move as if it is looking around. The prevalent optic logo housed on screen throughout the entire narrative reinforces the surveillance aspect of the story, distinguishing the player as both the omniscient observer and the observed. Players use the Orwell system, but are also kept in line by the Orwell system. As revealed late in the first game, the player is being watched, too. The game does make an effort to build a case against government overreach regarding surveillance. Foucault and his ideas behind the self-monitoring of the prisoners in Bentham's panopticon reflect this argument. The hint is subtle, but the inclusion of the eye logo suggests to players that while they snoop through everyone's private information and build profiles for suspects, their choices are being observed and may be judged. If they become aware that they are being watched in the same way that they have been watching each suspect, the players may be encouraged



Figure 8. A detailed look at the Orwell logo during the opening sequence of *Orwell: Ignorance in Strength*.

to think more critically about their decisions. From a design perspective, the logo also acts as a stylistic way to open the main game menu. The player can save or quit their game, adjust audio and visual settings, view their game objectives, and read a “Quote of the Day” that relates to the main ideas of the game like surveillance and information. Opening this menu pauses the game clock and no actions are taken while the menu is accessible. However, what the player sees in the menu can still affect how the player may view the game. The objectives, in a very procedural manner, are explicitly outlined for the player to guide them on how to move the story forward. The “Quote of the Day” can also be thought-provoking for the player and can potentially influence the player’s actions in the game. For example, one quote a player will see in the second game comes from Friedrich Nietzsche: “There are no facts, only interpretations.” This quote was chosen by the developers deliberately as the *Orwell* sequel’s story and gameplay deal heavily with ideas about determining facts from falsities. This is something that the developers intended players to consider as they make choices that direct the story.

Returning back to Burke, these aspects of the interface and means of player interactivity as a scene reveal the game's interface as a terministic screen or a language filter that can alter perceptions and understandings of an argument. *Orwell* encourages players to adapt their language filters when presented with a constant influx of information, both within the story world and in reality. As Burke states: "Men seek for vocabularies that are *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality" (88). There will be variance in how a player interprets the "datachunks" they discover, the information within the menu, and the other interface elements. Some players may better understand the clues the interface provides than other

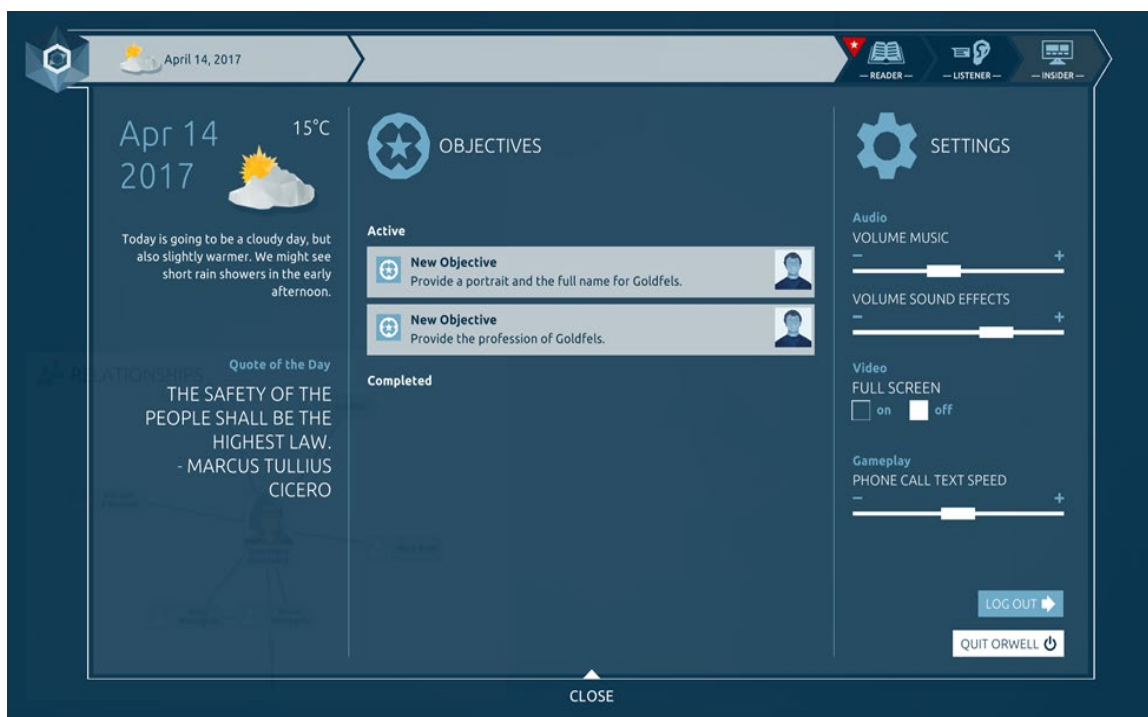


Figure 9. The menu screen in *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength*.

players, which may lead them to view the narrative differently and make different choices. Once the story unfolds and the real truths are revealed, there is an opportunity for all players to reflect on what aspects of the videogame, including interface, may have

been important to consider. The language of most videogames is often more than just the dialogue or textual information it presents to the player. The interface is meant to represent something a player would encounter in common interactions with a computer and various online applications. However, the highlighted “datachunks” direct the attention of the player to specific pieces of information. The yellow conflicting statements indicate that the player must consider both statements before deciding which one to pursue. The blue statements may or may not contribute anything towards the unfolding story. The color coding is an excellent example of language found within something other than text.

Summarizing the Realism in *Orwell*

Both *Orwell* videogames are concerned with this idea that we have been over-exposed to vast amounts of information, an idea that is representative of both the story-world events as well as the videogames’ respective release dates. According to messages between the members of “Thought,” the group began with the intention to debate the topic of “how people can best be made aware of a topic in the age of information overflow” (*Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*). The developers desired to create a virtual simulation that shifted the control of a power apparatus, modes of surveillance in this specific case. The player is given the opportunity to access a powerful tool that can be used to dig into personal information and use it to their advantage. The developers also cited a desire to “reflect on the ever-growing human conflict between being safe and being free, and what both of these concepts mean in the information age. With surveillance a core problem often is that even if you’re aware of it happening, it is a concept too abstract to really get a grasp on possible consequences for yourself”

(“Orwell: Keeping”). This sentiment is reflected in-game by Abraham Goldfels who tells Juliet that “people need to see the consequences before they ever learn. They must experience them firsthand, or at least see them affect someone they can relate to. Otherwise, it is all just an abstract concept” (*Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*).

Orwell is a selection of reality that is represented virtually and works to challenge the player’s views on the need to contextualize information, the need for government surveillance, and the influence of others on the information we consume. This mirrors Bogost’s idea behind a persuasive game: “[T]he exposition of the fundamental structure of existing situations intended to invoke support, doubt, or debate about their validity or desirability, or universality” (58). As an investigator, the player can choose to purposefully upload misleading or incorrect information into a suspect’s profile in order to experience the consequences of their actions and how the advisor determines the course of action. It is possible, too, that a player may choose to replay the game to make potentially better choices and encounter better outcomes from their decisions, allowing for practice with *Orwell*’s ideas on information overload. While the main story will not stray from its procedurality, both games offer a final choice that will change the outcome of the story in addition to some minor details that also guide the story. The series of possible events in both games enable the player to challenge their predetermined thoughts or opinions on information overflow and think about how they react to the “datachunks” they encounter. When asked about how they avoided “preaching too much to their audience,” the developers at Osmotic Studios wanted to reinforce the idea that there is no right or wrong answer as the players make their choices throughout the game (“Orwell: Keeping”). Upon their decision, a player must be faced with “believable consequences”

in or for players to decide for themselves if what they chose was the right thing or not (“Orwell: Keeping”).

Agent

While the actions of many of the characters within the game contribute to the plot, there are two main agents in the *Orwell* series that have the most important role within each game: Juliet Kerrington in *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* and Ampleford in *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength*. Foss claims that Burke’s definition of the agent is the specific character that has performed the act and includes descriptive characteristics like personality traits (85). The agent is typically a character of the artifact that is analyzed. Burke himself says that the agent “could place any personal properties that are assigned a motivational value,” like emotions, ideas, or desires (*A Grammar*, xx). Both Juliet and Ampleford represent Foucault’s ideas about the relationship between power and knowledge, as both conceal or withhold information from players with deliberate intention. Juliet, appearing to the player as relatable and ordinary, easily becomes suspicious due to hints at her secrecy. Ampleford, who is the clear authority as the player’s advisor, may seem trustworthy and players may believe that her word must be followed since she should have the best intentions for the country. Additionally, it is important to analyze the player as a potential agent in a procedural game along with its characters. Initially, it is the player that comes to mind when considering the agent of a videogame. All three of these agents (Juliet, Ampleford, and the player) are important in identifying the rhetorical aim that is prevalent throughout both games.

Agent 1: Juliet Kerrington

The agent in the first *Orwell* videogame is Juliet Kerrington, offering players a potentially relatable experience. Through her interactions with the other characters, she presents herself to the player to be the least abrasive and radical of her peers. She is more level-headed and responsible than the other members of “Thought.” She presents herself as someone openly sharing her life through her social media, thus potentially appearing to players as someone like themselves or someone they may know is real life. Yet, as the investigator plays through the story, Juliet’s true motives are exposed. The initial suspect of the Bonton city plaza bombing is Cassandra Watergate, a woman who is revealed to be a member of an anti-establishment group called “Thought.” The group’s founder, an ethics professor going by the false name Abraham Goldfels, is later revealed to be responsible for creating the surveillance system’s so-called “ethical codex,” a series of rules that must be followed by users of the system to ensure that no data within the system could be misinterpreted and no unnecessary information could be used against a suspect. In his notes found saved on Juliet’s personal computer, Goldfels expresses serious concern for the potential use of the Orwell system and ultimately decides that while the world should be made aware of this new surveillance system, taking his story to the press will not encourage a dismantling of the system. He claims that the story would be drowned out by the constant rotation of new information available through social media and news outlets, and he expresses this concern to Juliet in a private chat log. As he begins to suffer from the effects of his cancer diagnosis, he encourages Juliet to come up with a way to reveal the flaws of the Orwell system to the world. Using his name, Juliet emboldens one of the more inflammatory members of “Thought,” a dishonorably discharged soldier named Nina, to carry out a series of bombings to incite an

investigation that would use the Orwell system and produce evidence that the system is severely flawed and invasive. While Juliet is still representative of someone without authoritative power, she is still able to potentially sway the player's opinion based on her actions. She withholds information from the player until the right moment when it is most beneficial to her cause, holding power over the player until she essentially shifts power over to the player in the final act. Players, then, are allowed to choose which path to take to the end of the story based on what they decide to do with the knowledge handed to them. This shift in power helps to show players how their choices could affect the lives of other people, depending on what they decide to do with the information they have been granted.

Agent 2: Ampleford (Melissa Obrian)

Ampleford acts as the investigator's advisor in the second game, *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength*, and she is the main agent that offers a more authoritatively driven approach to a player's experience. Unlike Juliet, Ampleford oversees the player and has a greater reach with the government and the Orwell surveillance system. She is very straightforward with her words, which encourages players to view her as a sort of authority figure. Similar to the first game, she is the character that takes action depending on the player's decisions. Despite being a very commanding and direct presence, there is much she is hiding from the investigator. She gives the investigator their first missions: locate the missing agent Oleg Bakay. According to Ampleford, Bakay is an important asset to "The Nation" and has now been reported missing. The player is tasked with locating Bakay by focusing their investigation on Vhart, a Pargesian immigrant to "The Nation" that runs an anti-government blog called The People's Voice. Further probing

into Bakay's life reveals that he is an officer of the Pargesian army and has been an acting informant for "The Nation." Vhart's anger at Bakay stems from a bombing incident at a Pargesian school that killed most of the children in attendance, an incident he blames on Bakay and the Pargesian army. Upon the player's discovery of Bakay's location and, depending on how the player decided to characterize Bakay through their "datachunk" choices, he is either saved or killed by Ampleford's command. Regardless of the outcome, the investigation turns back to Vhart. Ampleford claims that his incendiary anti-government and anti-war comments are seen as threatening to the safety of both "The Nation" and Parges, a proverbial pot already threatening to boil over as the mounting tension between the two countries remains unresolved. Vhart's strongest social connections, his brother, Ilya, and his wife, Karen, also become targets in the investigation. Ampleford urges the player to pursue both of them as suspects, expecting the player to uncover something useful to use against Vhart. Ampleford then introduces a new investigative feature to the Orwell system, The Influencer. With this new technology, investigators can spread a piece of information through several social media channels and attempt to sway public opinion. This information does not necessarily require truthful statements, as players can choose to bend the truth to fit a specific narrative. Ampleford tells the player that they should feel powerful using The Influencer in this way, a feature akin to the viral tweets that have greatly affected people's opinions in the real world. At this point, some players may begin to view Ampleford negatively, if they already disagree with her praise of spreading false narratives. Others may feel differently, reveling in the power granted to them in this moment. Unbeknownst to Ampleford, the investigator gains access to secret government information that reveals

“The Nation’s” true goal with this investigation: create a narrative that casts “The Nation” as the superior country, incite a continuing war with Parges, and culturally and economically weaken Parges in the process. “The Nation” generated this conflict by dropping the bomb on that school in Parges. Leading up to this moment, the player also encounters a helpful individual named Iris Young, who admits to being the puppet behind The Influencer. She is the one responsible for spreading whatever statements the investigator decides to use under a fake social media account. She encourages the player to upload an official government document outlining the plan to start a war with Parges, dubbed “Operation: War is Peace,” to a website dedicated to leaking classified and sensitive information called Percoleaks in order to discredit Orwell and “The Nation’s” leaders. Percoleaks is an obvious reference to the controversial website we know in reality as Wikileaks that aims to declassify sensitive information for public consumption, another nod to the blending of the fictional and non-fictional elements these videogames demonstrate. Players can then choose to cooperate with Iris or to cooperate with Ampleford, altering the outcome for Vhart. The experiences of the sequel are far more realistic than its predecessor. “Datachunks” do not necessarily provide the undeniable truth, as much of the truth is left unsaid by the characters who are not only trying to hide from the public but also from others in their lives. These characters are attempting to shape their lives to present a certain truth to the world that does not necessarily reflect their actual experiences. Players are forced to really think about each statement that is presented, each conflicting piece of information, and each photo that could easily be misconstrued.

Agent: The Player

In a videogame, the player is an obvious agent, but a lack of visual representation of the players and choices they can make within *Orwell* makes this game experience unique. While the game requests that players choose an avatar at the beginning of each game, this avatar is rarely seen during gameplay. The focus, then, is shifted to the player's actions as a means to define their "character" within the game. Shields, in his review of the game *Tropico*, states that in the simulation game *Tropico* the character that the player adopts, named "El Presidente," is developed through both the player's intentions and a wide variety of traits the player can choose prior to the start of the videogame. As decisions are made by the player, the consequences of those choices play out. He argues that that because *Tropico* allows players to take on the role of a country's leader and make their own choices on how they decide to run their country that this "humanizes the actions of the world's dictators" (49). *Tropico*'s gameplay allows more freedom of expression by the player, offering multiple options on how to play. With *Orwell*, the player's choices are more limited. The player's only real choice is the option to choose a picture to represent themselves in the story world and to provide their name. There are no choices that develop their chosen avatar to become something beyond the player themselves. The player cannot directly interact with Juliet, Ampleford, or any of the other characters. It is very difficult to view the player as an agent within procedural rhetoric, but not impossible. Players can still be viewed as agents in that they take action to move the narrative forward. However, since the game has defined endings, the player is given only a sense of control over the events of the story. Unlike *The Sims*, in which the characters a player is embodying are not much different from themselves, someone that is playing in the world of *Orwell* but is still somewhat removed from the videogame.

The player's main goal is to make choices when they are presented in order to move the story forward in one of the main pre-determined directions. Their choices do affect the outcome to some degree (i.e. informing the advisor that Nina is armed and has a history of PTSD will get her shot and killed by the end of the narrative), but these outcomes are pre-defined by the developers. I will further explore this limited, or illusory, control of player-as-agent in a later section.

Act

By analyzing the act of the agents in the videogame and as a player of the videogame, we can understand how each in-game agent interacts with each other, how the player has limited interaction, and how both ideas are influenced by the procedurality of the videogame. Like Shields states in his thesis, it can be difficult to explicitly define the pentadic elements act and agency in videogame. He explains that both of these elements within the context of a videogame can overlap: "The game itself will present a world where the elements of *dramatism* exist and can be examined, but the player his- or herself will also be possessed of their own agency and will certainly themselves be an agent and commit acts, etc." (51). He suggests that this does not mean that videogames cannot be examined with a pentadic approach. Instead, this means that the assessment of act and agency within the artifact of analysis needs to be more nuanced.

Juliet's main action revolves around revealing herself as the mastermind behind the bombings to the other characters and the player. The most important act for Ampleford is when she reveals her true intentions behind taking Raban Vhart down to the player in the final act of the game. Both agents offer the player the opportunity to seize power and take action as part of the final act of each game. The act of the player must be

considered, as well. Since these games are procedural in design, the players actions are limited to clicking and dragging information from one side of the screen to another. The main act that the player is responsible for during gameplay is to choose what information is the most valuable in the moment. However, it is a player's reaction to the narrative that is the most helpful to the analysis. By analyzing how players vocalize their internal thoughts as they play, each player's intentions and level of understanding is revealed.

The Main Act of Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You

Juliet's act is the moment near the end of the first videogame when she reveals herself to be the mastermind behind the city bombings. Juliet withholds information from every character in the game about her intentions in order to achieve her goals, until the climax of the story. It is at this point on the final story-world day that all of the major characters are brought together on a conference call. The player is monitoring the call as part of the investigation and has been making choices up until the point that have had consequences felt by the other characters. Juliet knows that the player is observing and had initiated the call with this in mind. With everyone as witness, she sets the stage for the big reveal. This particular act is in line with what Foucault believes is needed to maintain power, which is to have control over knowledge. This control can be either to withhold knowledge or to share knowledge. Foucault describes the dynamic of power and knowledge as "the deployment of force and the establishment of truth" (184). However, it is important to note that he also recognized that "power is only accepted to the extent that it is hidden" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 459). Juliet is essentially giving up her power in order by exposing how she had manipulated the player and the other characters by withholding information to make a statement: that Orwell is severely flawed and needs to

be available for criticism by the public. According to Foucault's ideas on the knowledge-power dynamic, if the use of power is clearly visible, then resistance can be established. Juliet's reveal must be done as a visible act within the plot of the story so that a player can begin to assess their previous choices and the choices they must make in response. Juliet's reveal is necessary in order for players to understand this power structure as it relates to the command of knowledge. The power imbalance between Juliet and the player must be revealed in order to understand the ways in which it flourishes. At this point, the developers intend the player to further question their own line of thinking: Did my choices influence this outcome? How can I do the right thing in this final moment? Additionally, this act enforces the criticism of surveillance, the power that Orwell establishes, which then influences the player's final decision.

During Juliet's act, the other characters argue with her about the morality of her actions, which helps incite players to analyze the ways she uses her power over others. They despise that she has been the cause of lives lost and the danger Nina was put in because of her orders. This exchange among the characters influences the player's own

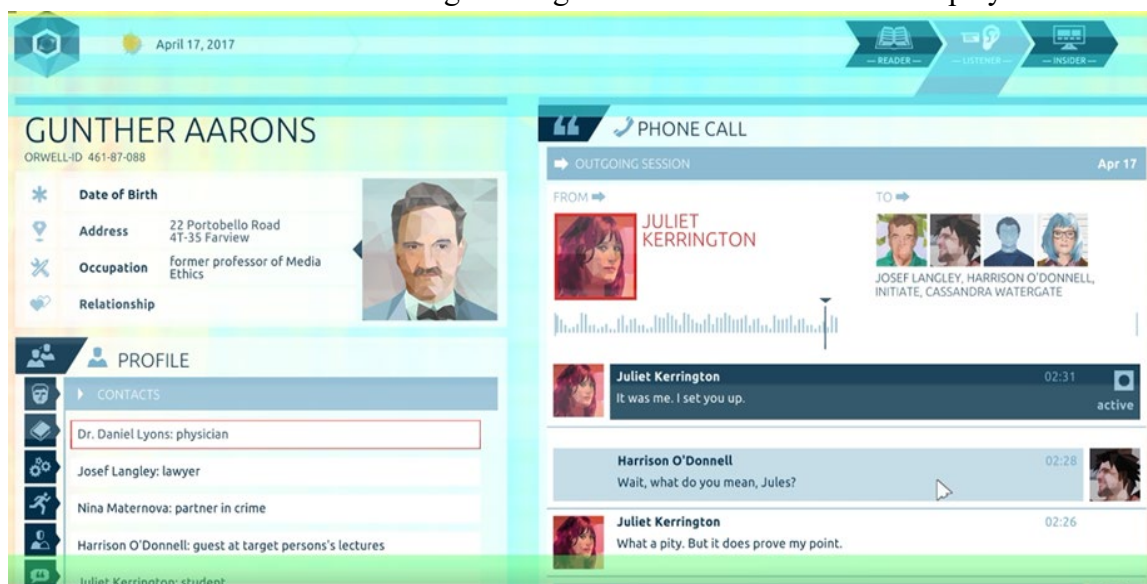


Figure 10. The conference call is Juliet's main act of Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You.

responses and may guide the player to make their final decision. Many players may feel compelled to side with the others in their disgust for Juliet's actions. Some may be more understanding of Juliet's choice and side with her. Juliet does directly speak to the player in the call, but the player cannot respond directly back. She pleads with the player to consider everything they have witnessed up to this point: is the Orwell surveillance system really a good thing? Did the spying on other people actually solve the problem? According to Juliet, her faking Goldfels' emails proves that the Orwell system is flawed. The initial bombing is a strong enough action to bring attention to the failure of the Orwell system, even if the player managed to stop the other two bombs from going off later in the game. Juliet suggests that if the player uploads the information the Orwell system has on them and "incriminate" themselves, then this final act by the player will assist in Juliet's goal. This is also the moment of player evaluation: the player's previous choices can get one character arrested during the call, as well as anger the others so that they leave the call. This means that the player uploaded too much unnecessary information to the profiles. The hacker, "initiate," offers another suggestion for the investigator: expose Secretary Delacroix and the Orwell surveillance system instead. The other characters agree with "initiate" and encourage the player to follow the suggestion.

Acting as Goldfels, Juliet uses the turbulent emotions of one character, Nina, to get her to comply with the plan to place the bombs: "After a long time of contemplation I have come to conclude that you were right when you said we must perform drastic actions to make ourselves be heard" (*Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*). Juliet's appeal to Nina shows how one can easily utilize influence and power over those who rely on confirmation bias over more logical rationalization by only providing information that

fuels their emotion-driven responses. The player uncovers Nina's tragic story that captures her anger at the government, whom she believes ruined her life. She is one of the most inflammatory members of the group, and the one who believed the most in enacting violence in response to government overreach. Juliet knows that she can convince Nina to carry out the violent acts since such acts already coincide with Nina's feelings about the situation. Juliet's intentions with Nina also recall Foucault's ideas about power and knowledge. Juliet secretly uses Nina's lack of knowledge and unstable emotional state to control her actions.

Player (Re)ACTion

When considering the player's acts within a videogame, there are obvious limitations as there are a set of potential, pre-determined acts a player can initiate in a procedural videogame like *Orwell*. The player's real act comes from their intentions as they play through each videogame and as they contemplate which outcome they think might get them the best possible ending. Here it is best to turn to personal experiences to analyze the ways in which the player can act in this moment with Juliet's unveiling. For example, many videogame players record and upload their videogaming experiences through the online platform YouTube. One player calling themselves Materwelonz uploaded her own playthrough of the first *Orwell* game. Throughout her playthrough, she voices her concerns and thoughts as she deliberates:

“[Juliet] is so fishy!”

“I was heading down the route that Juliet might be [the hacker named initiate]...”

“Wait...Juliet was at Abraham’s house with Harrison! Why would they be at Abraham’s house?”

“I’m not supposed to be following Goldfels. I *am* wasting time.”

“I’m so afraid that I can’t catch the right person.” (Materwelonz)

Leading up to the moment of the act with the conference call, Materwelonz has successfully taken in all of the clues that make Juliet the most suspicious. It comes as no surprise to her that Juliet reveals that she is the one who had been impersonating Goldfels. However, she is shocked to see how the other characters negatively react to seeing all of the information she had collected about them. She was also shocked that her actions resulted in another character’s arrest. She comes to the conclusion that her extensive snooping on these characters caused more harm than good, especially since much of what she uncovered was irrelevant to the case the investigator is tasked with solving. As the conference call proceeds, she admits that “[t]he whole time I was kind of having fun collecting information on everybody...but as soon as I realized in this call that they were looking at the information I had collected on them- immediately, I felt really, really guilty, because I really collected a lot of information here that’s not relevant to the case. And I didn’t feel bad about it at the time” (Materwelonz). Materwelonz attempted to play through the videogame to the best of her ability, trying to work through every “datachunk” that was presented but ended up offering too much irrelevant information. Her post-gameplay deliberation revealed that she did realize that she focused too much on this irrelevant information and how it negatively influenced the outcome. However, by taking the time to reflect on her actions, she was able to acknowledge her faults, potentially inspiring herself to act otherwise in a similar situation. Through the dialogue

she has with herself and, in a way, the audience watching her videos, she is able to piece together every action that she chose to take and the results of those actions.

Contrary to Materwelonz's playthrough, another YouTube user named Christopher Odd played this videogame a bit differently. As he thinks through his options, it becomes clear that he is missing pieces of the puzzle. He falls for Juliet's ploy directing players to think that someone else is impersonating Goldfels, which encourages him to upload "datachunks" that make one of the group members, Harrison, the most suspicious. He finds the supposedly incriminating evidence in Harrison's emails: "Wait, what? This is on Harrison's phone. Oh, man. Oh, this is that same email and it looks like [Harrison] did it" (Odd) At first, he cannot decide if some information about Goldfels is even relevant. He sees that "[Goldfels] worked at RhosenTech," but asks himself "Does that matter? Maybe it does" (Odd) Christopher Odd does admit that he is distrustful of Juliet but is surprised when she reveals herself to be the one impersonating Goldfels. He ends up deciding to side with the government and Secretary Delacroix, seeming to misunderstand or forget his other options with Juliet and "initiate." By the end of the game, his focus turns to the game's motivations: "It does obviously challenge your thinking and, like, mass surveillance. Especially, just with the way that the world is right now and, like, you know, you can see pros and cons. Do the pros outweigh the cons, that's the question" (Odd). Compared to Materwelonz, he was not as thorough or simply did not pick up on the clues provided by the game as easily. Both of their recorded experiences of this videogame reveal the importance of verbalization in order to deconstruct the ways in which they chose to play their respective playthroughs. In the end, both players have completed what the videogame developers intended: they both

considered their actions and their understandings of the events of the story and how everything played out.

Main Act of Orwell: Ignorance is Strength

Ampleford's act also comes near the end of the videogame, in which she reveals that she had been controlling the player to aid the government in destabilizing the tense situation in Parges by initiating Vhart's downfall. It is not Ampleford herself that reveals the truth to the player, rather her act is confirming what the player has uncovered and the reasoning behind her actions. Upon discovering a set of classified documents titled "Operation: War is Peace" outlining the plan to undermine the rapid growth of Parges, the player is prompted to either ignore them and report the person who revealed them or to the upload the documents to a website dedicated to declassifying secret government information called Percoleaks. Like with Juliet's act, the reveal of Ampleford's true intentions is needed for understanding how the use of power through the control of



Figure 11. The reveal of "Operation: War is Peace" is the main act associated with Ampleford in *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength*.

knowledge can be used. *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength* provides a much more useful example than its predecessor, simply because the plot is embedded within the realm of social media and its uses. This, alone, can create a greater impact because of its stronger use of this element in this videogame versus its predecessor. The reveal of “Operation: War is Peace” is not done by Ampleford herself. It is forced out by a fellow Orwell employee, Iris Young. This implies that Ampleford never intended to reveal her plans in the same manner that Juliet did in the first videogame. This indicates that her intentions are far more corrupt than Juliet’s. Juliet intended to use her deception as a way to show the other characters and the player how they easily the Orwell system can be misused, leading to the illusion of government control via knowledge works in the same manner. Ampleford is an example of how one can successfully wield power through the concealment of knowledge without garnering resistance. Like Foucault states, “power is accepted so long as it remains hidden” (Pickett, 459). This is especially significant as the player reads through the sensitive document that outlines the advisor’s intention to purposefully kill the informant in order to make the agent, the player, feel like they have failed. Through this, the player should feel provoked to feel more devoted in taking Vhart down. This moment proves Ampleford’s goal is to manipulate the player by withholding information.

During Ampleford’s act, she remains nonchalant about Iris’ exposure of her plan, stating that no matter what the player attempts to do, they can never bring down Orwell or the Ministry of Security. Ampleford suggests that the player continue to do as they are told and choose a narrative to be used against Vhart through The Influencer feature to land one final blow to his career. She believes that the reveal of knowledge to the player

does not affect their ability to rebel against her goals. However, the player can either uncover three potential fabricated narratives to spread across social media, or they can decide to go against Ampleford and leak the operation online. The sequel's use of social media and online personas using their platforms to spread information is particularly poignant. This specific act is something that is not often experienced in the ongoing mass exchange of information through various online channels. The game presents an honest reaction to being caught in a lie. Ampleford openly admits to the player that she had been manipulating them. However, she expresses no fear or shame for her actions, clearly believing that her power over the player has not been lost. As mentioned previously, the knowledge of a once hidden power allows for the potential of it to be resisted, something Ampleford does not consider. However, the player may come to this conclusion themselves and take a different course of action than what Ampleford commands.

Player (Re)ACTion

YouTube user Materwelonz also played through the *Orwell* sequel and dedicated similar thoughtfulness to this game, as well. Near the reveal of Operation: War is Peace, she makes the claim that she feels that “Ampleford is going too far, and that hasn't really been a secret for the longest of times now” (Materwelonz) However, she does consider the consequences of revealing Ampleford's true identity and exposing her secrets asking herself, “If we do this though, what will happen to Ampleford? Do I want to lie to save this person?” (Materwelonz)) She ends up talking herself into siding against Ampleford, despite acknowledging that her choice may not be the most morally sound and could bring harm in some way: “But, if I'm [lying about Iris Young] now, then am I participating in this whole web of lies? As if I wasn't doing that already, right? Let's do

it. This is too enticing to not do” (Materwelonz). Again, she is able to gather enough clues and information in order to unlock Iris’ file on the secret operation and reveal Ampleford’s true intentions. Because she focuses on this path, Materwelonz does not find all of the possible narratives that can be crafted from the information available. For example, players have the opportunity to investigate Vhart’s brother, Ilya. Choosing to focus efforts on this unlocks different possible outcomes to consider. Materwelonz concludes that her chosen course of action was the best she could have achieved: “Well, we tried to do the right thing and the thing about Orwell games is that they are really, really grounded in reality. Neither side was completely evil, nor completely good” (Materwelonz). With the more complex procedure in the endings of the sequel game, this player verbalizes the moral ambiguity that can evolve from a situation like this online. She spends time contemplating to her audience about how things could have happened differently if she thought to pursue other avenues within the game.

Another player named Luckless Lovelocks had a much different experience. He was unable to locate the correct password to unlock Iris’ file on Operation: War is Peace and chose to pursue Ilya as the best option to aid in Ampleford’s plan by causing strife between the brothers. Luckless Lovelocks laments at the game’s difficulty and how the advisor encourages him to dig deeper into the personal lives of the characters, claiming that it “is an agonizingly hard decision to make. Oh, I can’t believe I’m doing this! This feels so dirty” (Lovelocks) He followed the thread of information regarding Ilya and did not pursue other avenues of potential choices, like Iris Young. Once the information is done circulating, Ampleford claims they have failed, since the focus is on Illya instead of Vhart. This choice leads to an ending in which Illya kills his brother during his live show.

Luckless Lovelocks then ponders what he could have done differently: “That’s how it ends? What? There must be so many different endings to this game” (Lovelocks) He also thinks back on the information he might have missed or ignored that would have unlocked a new path, saying “I wonder how we would have- what would have happened if we had figured out who [Iris] was?” (Lovelocks). This also shows how players verbally comprehend how their choices led them to the end of the story, which opens up the possibility of thinking through hypothetical situations in which they might have made different choices in game or even in a similar real-life situation.

The Illusion of Agency

When considering agency within *Orwell*, it becomes apparent that the agency that a character or even the player seems to have is only an illusion. Agency, the fourth element in the pentad, refers to the means through which an agent is acting. When considering fictional characters in any form of media, those characters are usually understood to be agents within the story. However, with a procedural videogame it is really the game developers that are acting through these characters. This illusion of agency is most effective on the discourse level within a procedural videogame. The two agents of the *Orwell* series, Juliet and Ampleford, have slightly different methods for how they take action. This is mostly grounded in how much interaction each character has with the other characters and the player, though interaction with the latter is extremely limited. Additionally, the game is designed in a way that encourages the need for more direct and strategic moves due to its procedurality. Both characters rely on secrecy and deception to exert their control over the events and the characters of each game but does this mean they actually have agency? The game developers are the

masterminds behind this control of knowledge and, therefore, power over the player and the choices they can potentially make. However, do the game developers retain agency once the game is completed? Once the procedure is defined and coded, the game experience is out of their hands and now rest within the player's hands.

Because the artifact of analysis is a videogame, the player's involvement in moving the narrative through the act of making choices is important when discussing agency. A simulation game like *The Sims* allows for more freedom of choice by a player within the tightly defined procedure. The player can choose to have their Sim pick different jobs or develop different skills from a set, but diverse list of options. The Sim itself does not have agency outside of player control or developer code that predetermines the actions a Sim can take if the game is played on "free will" mode. Here, the player is not necessarily called to consider what their choices reveal about themselves or the world. However, the player's perceived agency in *Orwell* comes from deliberating on their choices about whether or not they were morally or logically correct, which lies solely with the player and occurs outside of the game. This assists the rhetorical aims of the developers: that many people do not take enough time to think about the information we consume online or that they mistakenly choose to react quickly and without deliberation when encountering online information. Additionally, the reiteration of the developers acting through the characters enforces the ideas they are attempting to convey about entities that can control access to knowledge in order to exert power.

Developer Agency: Juliet

The developers use Juliet's character and her actions in the narrative to exercise power over the player through the control of the player's knowledge and understanding,

driving the developer's rhetorical aim. Throughout the game, the Orwell surveillance team follows the only lead they have: the philosophical group called "Thought." Juliet is the least suspicious of the group, simply because there is very little known about her. What is known is limited, as Juliet's orchestrations are kept hidden from all of the characters and the player. Near the end of the game, she reveals that she had convinced Nina, one of the most radicalized members of "Thought," to plant the three bombs around the city. She does this by assuming the group leader's identity, Abraham Goldfels. Although Goldfels had died of cancer a year prior, Juliet continues to send communications to the group through his email address and blog posts on the group's website. Everyone assumes he is still alive as his posts and emails continue.

The game developers created Juliet to lead the player to the previously mentioned act. Through her, they withhold the information that gives her plan away. The player is not aware of the real situation until the developers want them to become aware at the moment of the act. They only give subtle hints leading up this act, but first-time players may not catch on if they are not paying close enough attention. In this procedural manner, the developers allow the events to build-up by guiding the player through a series of predetermined choices that lead to this particular act of revelation. The player is then prompted to choose who to side with and follow their lead: Juliet, a hacker with damning information about the government, or the government that hired the player.

Developer Agency: Ampleford

The developer's use of Ampleford's character is similar to that of Juliet's, in that she acts as a guide for the player's goals to further hide her true intentions, furthering the developer's rhetorical aim regarding the control of knowledge to exert power over the

player. While the concept of secrecy is still prevalent throughout the sequel, the player is not primed to be the recipient of Ampleford's deception. Again, the game developers are using the character, Ampleford, to control the amount of knowledge that the investigator has at any given time during play. They manage to do this in a much more meaningful way in their sequel game through the greater use of social media platform imitations that act as a tool to take action in the story world. The advisor encourages players to take the information they find, stripped of their context, and upload into an apparatus that will create a false narrative from the single piece of information. This bending of the truth is done with malicious intent, as Ampleford explains to the player that they must do this in order to undermine the journalist, Raban Vhart, and discredit him.

Much like the situation in the first game with Juliet, the player is very much unaware of Ampleford's reasoning behind why Vhart must be denounced. Up until the reveal of the secret government project "Operation: War is Peace," she guides the player to believe that Vhart's words will cause more harm than good to the security of "The Nation," along with justifying the death of their informant who she eliminates in fear of his retaliation. Ampleford and the government clearly hold all of the power. The increased difficulty for players to verify what information is correct aids in the developer's agency through her. Again, many players can easily miss potential avenues of investigation which ultimately affects the ending they are granted.

Player Agency

The developer's agency only resides during the videogame's development. Once the videogame has been completed and all possible paths have been constructed, the agency shifts to the player who physically controls the videogame to play through the

story. As stated previously, the player's perceived agency is mainly derived from their reflection on their own choices as they play and view the outcomes. The player's agency seems limited within the virtual world the player inhabits, as there is little connection established between the player and their attempt to adopt the role of investigator during gameplay. The videogame developers have stated in interviews that this was their intention with the *Orwell* series: "If you give them a choice not clearly right or wrong, don't scold them if they pick the action you do not agree with or you wouldn't have done. Instead confront them with believable consequences to their actions and let them pass the judgement over whether they did the right thing" ("Orwell: Keeping"). The player's agency manifests mainly outside of the gameplay, within the real-world interactions that they have on a daily basis that *Orwell* attempts to simulate. Returning to the player examples discussed previously, each player took time to reflect on the choices they made and the endings they received based on those decisions. Some of them even voiced opinions on what the videogame's intended message was. While the developers used their agency on the discourse level, where they build the videogame's rhetorical aim, the player's perceived sense of agency comes after *Orwell* has ended as they verbalize, out loud or internally, how their actions affected the characters in the videogame and the overall consequences of their choices.

Purpose

Analyzing the pentadic element of purpose, particularly player purpose, in the context of *Orwell*, reveals that a player's intentions when making choices during gameplay can affect the ways in which they reflect at the conclusion of the videogame. Foss interprets Burke's idea of purpose as something distinct from motive. Motive, she

states, has more to do with the action of the rhetor, while purpose is the analysis of the action of the agent (386). With this in mind, the player's intentions going into each videogame shapes their purpose. Because the videogame is procedural, it is established that a player's acts are limited. Analyzing the motive of the player upon completing an action within the videogame lends itself better to understanding the player's purpose.

Purpose: Player

Compared to a simulation videogame like *The Sims*, a player's purpose in a procedural videogame with a smaller set of choices can be viewed much differently. With the narrative setup of both *Orwell* games revolving around high-level government cases, the potential outcomes appear more serious to players. They are not deciding what their Sim will wear for the day or what friend their Sims will invite over for dinner. They are tasked with sifting through people's lives and trying to determine who is and who is not a threat. However, despite the seriousness of the subject matter in *Orwell*, player intentions can still vary. In my own time playing both of these videogames, I initially booted up the videogame with the intention to play to the best of my ability and to find the best possible outcome. After playing through both videogames, I decided to try to do the opposite just to experiment with the possibilities they presented. Since *Orwell* is a procedural videogame, this kind of experimentation is encouraged by the developers as evidenced by their argument. Procedural videogames allow players to test the consequences of their chosen actions without experiencing any fallout from those choices that they may experience in reality, and both positive and negative consequences are valuable in persuasion. A great example of this can be found by comparing Materwelonz playthrough of the first videogame with Christopher Odd's playthrough. The former player took

greater interest in exploring every possibility available when it came to deciding which character, Harrison or Juliet, was the one impersonating Goldfels. The latter player jumped immediately onto the chance to pin the blame on Harrison, even though it becomes evident with time that those hints were simply a ploy to deflect suspicions on Juliet. The difference in the player's intention leads to a difference in the player's outcome. It is the hope of the *Orwell* developers that the player's intention will be challenged after completing the videogame, with the possibility that they may play again with an altered purpose.

Pentadic Ratios

As Sheridan describes in her pentadic analysis of the anti-military base protests, the elements in a pentadic analysis can be compared with each other to determine what kinds of relationship each element may have with another. This step in the analysis helps to narrow down where the motive may lie within an artifact. In the Sheridan analysis of the teddy bears, she illustrates how “the teddy bears’ soft, enduring, and human qualities” are a reflection of agency and how it dominates the other elements. By using the teddy bears specifically, the scene of the harsh, metal exterior of the base becomes more subdued. In the act of using the teddy bears, the protestors take on the qualities of the bears: a representation of a nurturing mother-child relationship that could meet a violent end with the continued use of military force. The significance of the innocent looking teddy bear acts as a reminder of “the human condition” and influences the purpose of women’s protest over the military base: to make “the personal political” (Foss 408). In many of Burke’s demonstrations of ratios, the focus tends to be on the association among the elements of scene, act, and agent. Through the pentadic analysis of *Orwell*, it has

become clear that agency, even just the illusion of agency, is where the videogame builds its argument. In this section, I will focus on how *Orwell* uses the illusion of agency to influence player purpose, player reaction, and the main character acts from each videogame. By analyzing the relationship between agency and purpose we can see how a player's intentions going into the videogame are affected by the illusion of agency. By analyzing the relationship between agency and act, we can see how the procedural acts generated by the videogame developers are affected by the false sense of agency a player has as they play.

Agency-Purpose

In Shields' analysis of *Tropico*, he notes that agency and purpose, especially within the context of a videogame, can be equivalent. However, the relationship between the two elements reveals how a player's sense of agency can influence the player's sense of purpose. This particular combination-analysis of elements is more useful than a separate analysis for each element because of their similarities. While examining *Tropico*, Shields determined that the player's purpose drives their actions, gameplay, and the character reactions. The player's choices shape the scene of their individual gameplay, their choices on how to run their fictional country, and how the Tropicoco citizens will react to those choices. What is most interesting is that Shields spends little time talking about player agency in *Tropico*. As revealed by the analysis of agency in *Orwell*, it becomes apparent that there is no real, direct player agency in such a rigid, procedural videogame. Rather, there is an illusion of agency that both the player and the main characters appear to have. This illusion of agency, however, fuels a player's sense of purpose. When a player is instructed to use the information available in the *Orwell*

surveillance system, they are given a choice in how they can respond. That choice is limited, but significant: they can choose to pursue the best possible outcome, the worst possible outcome, or they can decide to play without much thought to their choices. It might matter to one player that they look for more clues within the content of the videogame about Juliet before deciding who it is that is impersonating Goldfels, or they can target Juliet's various red herrings that paint group member, Harrison, as the person responsible instead. This freedom for players to play with different intentions exhibits how videogames expose the possibilities for experimenting within a simulated world to uncover a greater meaning. Like Goldfels says in *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*, "...people need to see the consequences before they ever learn. They must experience them firsthand, or at least see them affect someone they can relate to. Otherwise, it is all just an abstract concept." In other words, the goal of the developers of *Orwell* was to challenge a player's predetermined views upon completion of the videogame, offering multiple outcomes and the ability to replay the game multiple times in order to experiment with alternate goals. By feeling a sense of agency over what they hypothetically could have done differently, whether the videogame allows them to take that action or not, players begin to challenge what they think they know will happen when they respond to something else, whether in the videogame or in the real-world, in a certain way.

Agency-Act

Videogames allow a particularly interesting glimpse at the impact of agency on act, given that it is only the players that can take action in order to further the story the developers created. However, in videogames like *Orwell*, the player has a more reactive

role rather than an explicitly active one. The illusion of agency that the player has over the limited acts they can choose to take can assist in the developer's goal of inspiring players to challenge their own views. For example, there are three predefined endings to *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*. Players are prompted to decide which path they want to take: side with Juliet, side with a hacker, or side with the government that "hired" the player. This limitation of choice is one way that helps establish the illusion of agency within the discourse. Players consider everything they understand up until this point in the narrative, both what the story has imparted to them and what choices they have made. The videogame developers chose to limit options and create consequences for opting to focus on some story leads over others. Materwelonz, Christopher Odd, and Luckless Lovelocks never voice concerns in their videos that they have no say in how the story progresses. The videogames craft such a realistic set of acts and reactions that aid in forming the illusion of agency within the discourse. The players expressed feelings of doubt and fear that they might make the wrong choice or conveyed regret that they have failed in some way by missing a vital piece of information. All three believed that they were in control as they played and believed that their choice was important to the story. This belief depicts how players feel that they interact with online information and with others via social media in reality that can then be challenged after the story ends.

Dominant Element: Agency, but who really has it?

Orwell's developers gave a sense of agency to each player in order to create a realistic experience that could then be applied to similar real-world encounters online. This illusion of agency generates ways to explore realistic outcomes within the safety of a simulation. The plot of both videogames is a bit higher stakes than a petty argument on

Twitter, but the increased tension the situation builds emphasizes the importance of analyzing a situation and thinking through the consequences of your actions before deciding what you want to do. The player is responsible for what happens, at least on a superficial level. The act is influenced by the player's sense of agency. Again, player purpose is also influenced by this illusion of agency. By feeling like they are actually in control of what happens in the videogame, their intentions upon starting the videogame may alter, as the developers aim to encourage in players. Burke's *dramatistic* approach and pentadic analysis revealed the ways in which player contribution, even if it is limited and mostly illusory, still acts as the heart of *Orwell's* rhetorical purpose by allowing players to experience a sense of agency over the narrative.

Conclusion

Upon its release in 2018, *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength* fittingly found itself becoming associated with a campaign against an amendment to the Canadian government surveillance law called the Antiterrorism Act of 2015 or Bill C-51. The bill, according to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, enacted changes to laws regarding national security, anti-terrorism, and privacy. Modifications to these laws included preventative legal measures towards individuals suspected of "likely" terrorism via arrest and detainment, the banning of online content deemed "terrorist propaganda," the allowance for government sectors to share citizen information under suspect of "activities that undermine the security of Canada," and gives the power for officials in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to "reduce 'threats to the security of Canada,'" without concern for the violation of Canadian laws regarding citizen's rights ("Bill"). The Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) sought to repeal this bill due to its

ambiguity that would potentially create issues for Canadian citizens, particularly journalists. One opinion columnist may write a piece attempting to invoke debate amongst readers that one might interpret as favorable of a terrorist organization's actions and become a target themselves for potential acts of terrorism by the government. This eerily parallels the *Orwell* videogames, especially its sequel where a journalist is targeted by the government for his negative remarks about the ongoing tension between his country and "The Nation." The CJFE used *Orwell* in their campaign, believing that it could convince members of the Canadian parliament to reconsider how they had planned to vote on this surveillance bill. Like James Paul Gee argues that videogames are semiotic domains, they saw the potential connection between the choices made playing *Orwell* and making similar importance choices in reality. With permission from the *Orwell*'s developer and publisher, the group sent free copies of the videogame to every member of parliament with a message pleading with them to think about the unintended outcomes of the legislation. While none of the members reported playing their free copies of *Orwell*, the CJFE believed that the rhetorical aim behind *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength* could influence the outcome of this amendment for Bill C-51. The head of communications with the CJFE suggested that this approach via videogames "doesn't just communicate that a problem exists, but shows in granular detail how the problem is perpetuated, exploited and how it can be used to promote a dangerous agenda. The people in charge are very much playing games with our rights, we wanted to flip the script on that" (Campbell). Unfortunately, the response from parliamentary members was relatively silent and the bill was passed, indicating to CJFE a dismissal of the gaming medium and their attempt to sway opinion.

Despite the silence from the Canadian government, the CJFE's efforts illustrate what Ian Bogost believes videogames have the potential to evoke: the capability to challenge your views. The CJFE believed that if parliament members took the time to play the videogame, they might have changed their mind about voting in favor of the amended bill. The managing director of the *Orwell*'s publisher, Surprise Attack, "agreed [the game] would be a great vehicle to showcase the power of games in a way that expands thought-provoking conversation that otherwise may not exist" (Campbell). For the *dramatistic* analysis, it becomes clear that a player's involvement with the videogame is where they can achieve a state of challenging their beliefs. Through the illusion of agency, the impression that a player has a true say in how the narrative ends, gives players a chance to consider how their actions might affect the events and the characters of the videogame. The scene of the videogame contributes to this, as well. By placing an emphasis on social media use within the game and the depiction of global tension, the game becomes even more realistic and can aid in creating a believable world that could be affected by someone's choices and have real-world consequences. Players can determine if they believe the journalist, Vhart, really is a threat to "The Nation" as the advisor implies. They must carefully consider each and every "datachunk," or short, fragment of highlighted information in the videogame, if they want to find the real truth of the situation. "Datachunks" chosen by the investigator are always detached from their context as they are moved into a suspect's profile, so players must be mindful of the ways in which the information may be interpreted by the advisor. However, one must play the game in order to experience the rhetorical aim behind the game. While it seems that none of the Canadian parliament members sat down and played *Orwell* before voting on the

bill, they potentially did not have the opportunity to challenge their own views through this medium. Players of the videogames are offered a unique way to act through possible scenarios that are likely to occur in their daily lives and determine the best way to react to those situations in reality.

Regular users of various media platforms online are exposed every day to similar snippets of information, like “datachunks.” Users scroll almost endlessly through snappy headlines and tweets with a limited number of characters, and they can react instantly to the information they are subjected to. One potential effect of playing the *Orwell* series is that people might think more critically about something seen online instead of responding quickly and emotionally. While we see it more and more today, Jon Ronson documented instances of reckless tweeting and retweeting back in 2014, not long after Twitter went public and was becoming increasingly popular. Ronson reminisces about a night sitting in bed while the world watched one woman’s tweet ruin her life. The woman, Justine, made a sardonic joke about her upcoming trip to South Africa: “*Going to Africa. Hope I don’t gets AIDS. Just kidding. I’m white!*” (Ronson 68). Not long after she sent out her tweet, her statement was retweeted exponentially. Many took offense to her tweet, assuming her words were either intentionally hateful or willfully ignorant. In either case, no one was ready to forgive her or educate her. They called for her company to fire her and harassed and threatened her over Twitter. She later told Ronson that her tweet was just a commentary on the ways we can be sheltered in our own towns, states, and countries. “It was a joke about a dire situation that does exist in post-aparthied South Africa that we don’t pay attention to. It was completely outrageous commentary on the disproportionate AIDS statistics” (Ronson 73). She did admit that she was not in a position to attempt to

make a joke via Twitter in the same way a similar joke would be made on satirical comedy shows like *South Park*.

One of the most interesting reactions that people had in their angry responses is that they attempted to characterize Justine by scouring the internet for anything that seemed remotely related to her or her family. From this, a story was crafted that Justine was a billionaire heiress with a father that owned diamond mines in South Africa. “[My mom] was a flight attendant. My dad sold carpets,” she told Ronson (76). Similarly, in *Orwell: Ignorance is Strength*, the advisor, Ampleford, encourages the player to take information and use it to spread a distorted narrative about the journalist, Vhart. The information stems from some form of truth but is not truthfully representative of the subject. For example, one of the possible narratives that can be generated stems from information uncovered about Vhart’s wife, Karen. The player can choose to focus their investigation on Karen to dig up any incriminating information about her that may be out there. If this path is chosen by the player, they discover that Karen is a government-supported counselor and her mother is a well-known politician in “The Nation.” Considering that her husband is extremely vocal about being anti-government and particularly accusatory towards “The Nation’s” possible involvement in dropping a bomb on his school in Parges, it reflects negatively on Vhart that Karen seems to be working for and favorable of the government. But, if the player has investigated thoroughly, it is revealed that Karen’s relationship with her mother is extremely tense, and many counselors are government supported in this setting. In Justine’s case, she was erroneously attached to a mining tycoon named Desmond Sacco. Both situations also deal with removing information from their context and interpreting it through various

terministic screens, an easily reproducible human error that we still see online today. Ronson attempted to reassure her as she recounted her story to him, “Sometimes things need to reach a brutal nadir before people see sense...So maybe you’re our brutal nadir” (77). Looking back on his book now, it seems like he was more optimistic for the possibility of a better social media culture than we ended up having today.

Fortunately, popular social media outlets, like Twitter, are implementing measures to mediate reactionary responses. I encountered one of these new measures as I checked the Twitter account my department at work had tailored towards encouraging medical students to pursue diabetes research. One of the things we try to share with students via our Twitter is the published research of colleagues at other diabetes center around the world. One such colleague had just published her recent work in immune cell function, so I knew I should retweet it and spread the word. As I clicked on that little double-arrow icon, I received a pop-up notification stating that the system recognized that I had neglected to click the provided publication link and, therefore, had likely not read the article myself. “You’re about to share an article you haven’t opened on Twitter,” it said. The message was not accusatory but acted as a gentle guide that suggested that I should make sure what I was about to retweet was what I thought it was. In this particular case, the tweet came from a trustworthy source, nPOd Diabetes, and the article was published by Nature, a peer-reviewed scientific journal. In a way, we see the advisors in *Orwell* attempt to filter or flag prospective responses. They don’t explicitly tell players to think about a specific “datachunk” they are about to upload every time but do caution players at the beginning of their first day as an Orwell surveillance investigator that they must be cautious of what they choose to share with the advisor. Twitter’s new feature is a

tool that may prove useful, but it is not something that we can rely on, at least in the context of the methods of the *Orwell* videogames. These videogames teach players that they must develop their own filter as they sift through the massive amount of information they are exposed to every day. Players must adjust their terministic screens and learn to think before they react, taking time to reflect on the information presented before responding or sharing.

Like Shields' work on using Burke's pentad to analyze *Tropico*, applying the *dramatic* approach to the *Orwell* videogames is beneficial to determining the developer's motive for creating these stories and proving that they can be persuasive through their procedure. Persuasive, procedural videogames can inspire players to challenge their beliefs on serious topics, like those of government surveillance and the misuse of social media found in the *Orwell* videogames. By restricting the actions a player can take, the developers are able to guide players to reach a similar conclusion no matter which ending they may receive: Did I do the right and best possible thing in this scenario? The developers want players to question every choice they made by the end of the narrative by adjusting their views to consider other ways the situation could have been handled. Obviously, since these are both procedural videogames, it is an illusion of control that drives a player's actions. The videogame is a predetermined, simple branching logic that defines the set of possible endings.

Orwell challenges players on the ways in which they use and respond to information online, both positively and negatively. The videogames also attempt to unearth the ways in which that information may be controlled and guided to fit certain perspectives. Using Burke's pentadic analysis assists in illustrating which aspects of each

of the videogames contribute to this rhetorical aim, with the illusion of player agency ultimately driving the argument. *Orwell's* limitations lend themselves to their procedurality and their persuasiveness. Future pentadic analyses on videogames with more complex procedures and stories could further support videogames as highly persuasive mediums that have the potential to challenge the views of players.

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