

Self-reflection in Games - The Representation of the Individuation Process in Celeste and Persona 2: Innocent Sin

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Abstract—Video games are popular nowadays, possessing the potential to positively impact people by alleviating unpleasant emotions, giving them leisure and empowerment. Understanding psychological factors can aid in building meaningful and engaging gameplay, resulting in more beneficial impacts on players and desirable video games. This work analyzes how the games *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* and *Celeste* use core concepts from Analytical Psychology mixed with the Hero's Journey to build compelling narratives and gameplay. Game designers should not recognize these ideas as fixed rules but as an inspiration to create meaningful video game experiences and, consequently, aid the player's transformation.

Index Terms—narrative, gameplay, analytical psychology, hero's journey, individuation

I. INTRODUCTION

Video games have become ever more present in people's lives. It is estimated that approximately 2.7 billion of the global population play games on an average of 8.45 hours per week [1], [2]. The gaming industry had \$179.7 billion of revenue globally in 2020, increasing 20% from the previous year. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, people became limited from performing occupations outside, spending their leisure time on gaming-related activities for entertainment, and connecting online with each other [3].

Although players mainly recognize video games as entertainment, they can contribute to developing emotional regulation (monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions) [4], improving mental health and well-being [4], [5]. They can also help cope with troublesome times [6], serving as stress relief [6]–[8], a mood repair [7]–[9], and catharsis (venting frustrations and revolting emotions) [6], [10].

Studies from the past decades show the potential of video games to provide cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social benefits depending on the circumstances (game's genre, play-time, player's personality) [4], [11]. There are even acknowledged therapeutic effects concerning some mental disorders, helping alleviate symptoms such as intrusive memories from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [12], depression [6], [13], and anxiety [6], [14].

There are some controversies regarding classifying excessive playing as an addiction disorder [15] because of the psychosocial impairment associated with the problematic consumption of video games [16], [17]. Furthermore, aggressive behavior linked to violent video game usage was the subject of various past studies, and diverse factors such as repeated exposure and parental intervention need to be addressed when understanding this setting [17]. Regardless of the importance of these concerns, those specific situations are not in the scope of this research.

Based on the self-determination theory [18], some researchers attributed the enjoyable aspect of video games to their nature of satisfying the need for competence (sense of efficacy), relatedness (social connection), and autonomy (agency) [19], [20]. Competence and autonomy are strongly correlated to the intuitive nature of game controls, actions flexibility, and empowerment in players' experiences [19], and relatedness is satisfied with opportunities for online interactions and communities. Satisfying those needs can robustly increase the immersion and well-being of the player [20].

In summary, there are seven expected outcomes for playing: performance, agency, narrative, social, moral self-reaction, escapism, and pastime [21], [22]. The game's narrative is primarily connected to believability (internal game coherence) and involvement factors. The players' immersion state is equally affected by the narrative capacity to engage players, incite personal investment, and secure an emotional presence (game events with emotional weight) [20].

Narratives represent an essential part of humanity's way of expression by helping to build societies and affirming a community sense. It acts as a survival tool that helps to interpret the world [23]. People are not satisfied by lacking game stories [24]. Establishing an entertaining narrative enhances gameplay, and engaging stories are typically related to characters overcoming obstacles to achieve goals, conflicts leading to unpredictable results and meaningful changes [25].

Games can be defined as a set of rules integrated with goals, feedback systems, and participation [26], [27]. They exist on being surrounded by a cultural environment, reflecting this

culture to some degree, or even having the ability to transform it in specific cases [26]. Real-life does not have the same gratifying workflow as video games, yet games can prepare people to confront reality [27]. They can give power and structure when people lack them and also somehow enlighten individuals to continue to persist when encountering obstacles and finding meaning in their journey.

By constructing a game narrative with a well-grounded emotional background, it is possible to make players relate more to the story [24], [28], thus increasing immersion and engagement. Character design with interesting interactions helps to achieve that by portraying something perceived as accurate and emotionally rich [29].

There are various approaches to build game narratives enriched with meaningful content, mainly by understanding psychological factors and employing them. This paper analyzes *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* and *Celeste* to acknowledge ways of utilizing psychological components in the gameplay. They implement elements from Analytical Psychology, primarily the individuation process, to build rich gameplay with emotional depth, not only through the game story perspective but also game mechanics.

II. BACKGROUND

This section explains the definition of identified psychological elements present in *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* and *Celeste*'s narrative and gameplay to provide a broader comprehension. Analytical Psychology and the concepts surrounding the individuation process represent the most notable subjects that are part of the foundation of this research. The Hero's Journey is equally relevant since it is linked to the path of individuation, and some of its elements are present in both games.

A. Analytical Psychology

Analytical Psychology is a field of study and a method of psychotherapy proposed by Carl Gustav Jung. It focuses on understanding the human mind through symbolic interpretations [30]. To better understand the individuation process, it is necessary to grasp some main basic concepts: the psyche; *shadow*; *persona*; *the Self*; unconscious (individual and collective); archetypes; and individuation itself.

According to Jung [31], the individual psyche (mind) would be composed of conscious and unconscious. The mind's consciousness consists of recognized thinking and feeling. Moreover, the personal unconscious represents repressed content and all other mental material that is unacknowledged.

Jung observed recurrent motifs in the dreams and other mental images from people of different cultures and social realities through his decades of clinical work. From this experience, he concluded that the collective unconscious forms a part of the psyche [31]. The structures of the collective unconscious are the archetypes, which present themselves in emotional situations through symbolic concepts and images [32]. Therefore, it is something inherited that can not be controlled or shaped from an individual perspective. Various cultural myths have recurrent representations from these archetypes adapted to their realities.

B. Archetypes and the Hero Myth

Archetypes are patterns of instinctual behavior. They represent motifs that constantly appear through myths, religions, and philosophies. One that repeatedly appears in the media, even more in video games and movies, is the hero archetype and its myth. The essential function of heroic myth is to portray an evolving individual awareness of oneself's weaknesses and strengths, resulting in achieving the next stage of maturity [32].

There are other theories around the hero myth. Influenced by Jung and other authors, Campbell [33] gave a large extent to the concept of the monomyth: a path pursued by the hero that follows the structure of separation-initiation-return. Each phase has its steps. Vogler [34] adapted this structure into three acts focused on screenwriting, emphasizing and detailing other characters' archetypes of the narrative to aid the Hero's Journey. Table I presents the differences between Vogler's and Campbell's Hero's Journey structure labels.

TABLE I
HERO MYTH STRUCTURE AND TERMINOLOGY, ADAPTED FROM [34,
TAB. 1]

Vogler's Writers Journey	Campbell's Hero with a Thousand Faces
First Act	Separation
The Ordinary World The Call to Adventure Refusal of the Call Meeting with the Mentor Crossing the First Threshold	The Ordinary World The Call to Adventure Refusal of the Call Supernatural Aid Crossing the First Threshold The Belly of the Whale
Second Act	Initiation
Test, Allies, and Enemies Approach to the Innermost Cave The Ordeal	The Road of Trials The Meeting with the Goddess Woman as the Temptress Atonement with the Father Apotheosis The Ultimate Boon
Reward	
Third Act	Return
The Road Back	Refusal of the Return The Magic Flight Rescue from Without The Crossing of the Return Threshold
The Resurrection Return with the Elixir	Master of the Two Worlds Freedom to Live

According to Vogler [34], by following some acknowledged structures when building a narrative, it is possible to reach a broader public. However, innovation and creativity are greatly encouraged since a predictable story is undesirable. Adapting the narrative layout to portray unique cultural, geographical, and historical qualities can result in a fascinating and engaging tale. The stories can be interpreted as a metaphor to acknowledge human life and its stages: growing up, learning, adapting, maturing, and death [35].

Understanding the archetypes can help to give purpose or function to characters in a story. Since those patterns are universal, there is a better understanding among the public, making it easier to connect and engage with the narrative [34]. Nevertheless, they are not rigid. It is possible to change a character's archetype during the narrative to serve other purposes. Even the hero can change or interpret different roles from story to story: from warrior to pacifist, artist, trickster, and others.

Other types of archetypal images are also present in the unconscious linked to individual experiences and characteristics [32]. They manifest during the Hero's Journey as a means to help or present obstacles [33], [34]. It is essential to acknowledge and work together with them through the path of achieving higher maturity and knowing oneself better [32].

C. Unconscious Elements and the Individuation Process

To become one's true self, the individual undergoes a process called individuation. A remarkable parallel can be established between the hero monomyth and the individuation path since both deal with developing oneself and confronting difficulties [32]. The individuation process frequently involves recognizing and accepting what corresponds to one's own conscious and unconscious characteristics, resulting in the differentiation of oneself from the collective through life [31], [32]. This process also is believable to exert therapeutic effects on the individual as a whole.

One component of the individual unconscious is the archetype of *the Self*: a wise part of oneself that tends to regulate any unbalanced aspect of the psyche and give inner guidance and collaborate with the individuation process. From the perspective of traditional Analytical Psychology, the individual can recognize *the Self* messages through investigating and analyzing one's dreams [32].

Part of the personal unconscious consists of the *shadow*: qualities and functions that are unacceptable or undesired by oneself, regardless of whether they are positive or negative [32]. The act of becoming conscious of the *shadow* can be a challenging one, met with resistance, although it is part of any self-knowing experience [36]. Those often unwanted elements are necessary for the individual to become well-grounded and complete.

For performing in society, the individual creates a mask called *persona*. It opposes the *shadow* as an identity-constructed function to make an impression on others while concealing the true nature of oneself [37]. Since the *persona* is a segment of the collective psyche, it can be a traditional known role (artist, teacher, doctor, and others) or one created specifically for specific situations [31].

D. Related Work

Other works used the concepts of archetypes and the individuation process to analyze experiences or designing systems. Browman [38] correlates the individuation process and archetypes to role-playing narratives, stating that participants may gain personal insights and reflection when playing. It

explored the potential of individuation in traditional role-playing, but it does not analyze in detail a particular game or possibilities of electronic video games and other genres. The primary concern is towards the player action rather than game characteristics.

Palomino et al. [39] explore Jung archetypes, Peirce's Triadic Semiosis [40], and Campbell's Hero's Journey to design gamified educational systems. This framework offers the potential of achieving better results by adapting to a student user preference. Its core focus is towards gamified educational systems rather than video games or particular game components. It does not also correlate psychological benefits that those systems could provide, but rather its user experience improvements.

Some authors analyzed other games using elements of Analytical Psychology as well. Pereira and Araújo [41] analyze three characters from *Persona 4* that deal with gender and sexuality conflicts, using the concepts *animus* and *anima* [31], *persona*, and *shadow*. It does not correlate the gameplay in particular to the individuation process or the Hero's Journey, but it focuses on the positive impacts of exposing players to gender-related subjects in a well-blended situation.

Junior et al. [42] use symbolic interpretation from Analytical Psychology to analyze the creation myth from *Dark Souls*. Additionally, there are reports of psychological improvement for some players by encouraging them to transcend personal limitations and helping to deal with mental health issues. Its prime focus is the mythological interpretation of part of the narrative rather than other aspects related to the individuation process that the player could experience.

Aguiar, Lucas, and Junior [43] use Jungian concepts to analyze archetypes presented in the narrative from *Persona 5*. It exposes the recurrence of the rebel and the hero archetype during the game and some society correlations regarding them. The psychological impacts to the player and the correlation between the individuation process and gameplay aspects are unaddressed. The main focus concerns narrative elements related to those archetypes, describing relevant story elements from the game.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this work, two games with similarities to the Hero's Journey structure are selected to illustrate how psychological elements can be present in the gameplay. Both narratives are about growing, accepting, and recognizing one's true self, correlating with the individuation process as well. Components related to the unconscious are present in varied ways through each game.

It was identified in prior investigation a lack of academic studies regarding *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* and *Celeste*, representing a potential to be researched and analyzed. Simultaneously, few studies focus on analyzing gameplay aspects correlating with the individuation process and its components from a psychological point of view, even with some video game narratives similar to the Hero's Journey, therefore possibly with individuation in some manner.

Based on prior related work [41]–[43], bibliography research about Analytical Psychology is conducted to define a framework that analyzes the game components. Moreover, the Hero’s Journey and its elements are researched since this structure represents a recognizable way of constructing narratives with a thematic similarity to individuation. The theories from Jung, Campbell, and Vogler are the most relevant to this context.

Each game delivers its way of presenting those elements. Every element related to integrating with unwanted components of the mind is selected to be analyzed, alongside obstacles and helpful features. Those manifest in the narrative through the characteristics and story of the character controlled by the players; how other characters relate to them; how are the goals and obstacles presented and outgrown; and how the game universe reacts to the players’ actions. Additionally, game mechanics are also part of this: how they help or challenge the player and how they are related to the character journey (struggles and goals).

The analysis consists of comparing the games’ narrative and mechanics with the theories behind the individuation process as a whole, including unconscious aspects. Both are from distinct game genres and release eras, thus representing diverse ways of portraying those psychological aspects. Simultaneously, both have remarkably different content and gameplay length, taking an average of double the time to complete *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* compared to *Celeste* according to the HowLongToBeat website¹, consequently reflecting the amount of content presented for each analysis.

As an information resource to *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* analysis, content from the collaborative website *Megami Tensei Wiki*², YouTube videos with gameplay footage from the channel *BuffMaister* [44] and game analysis from the channel *SnicketySlice* [45] are used. Moreover, for *Celeste*, gameplay footage from the channels *Jub Dub* [46] and *Encrypted Duck* [47] are used.

The following two sections contain the analysis of the components related to the individuation process in each game. Each starts by presenting the story summary and the game’s mechanics, later describing the correlations to individuation and The Hero’s Journey.

IV. PERSONA 2: INNOCENT SIN

Persona 2: Innocent Sin is the first part of the duology *Persona 2*. It was developed and released by Atlus in 1999 for PlayStation 1 in Japan only and received a PlayStation Portable port in 2011. The original release was unlocalized for western audiences, but the PlayStation Portable port was released in English for North America and European countries.

The game is a turn-based Japanese Role-playing game (JRPG). Frequently, JRPGs are more focused on the game’s story and its characters than Western RPGs [48]. In *Persona 2: Innocent Sin*, players encounter enemies, defeat them in

battles to gain experience, acquire new skills, and level up stats. Other characters are allied to the players’ party during the story, strongly aiding in their journey.

A. Story Summary

In this game, players control Tatsuya Suou, a high school student from Seven Sisters Academy at Sumaru City, a fictional place in Japan. Supernatural rumors started to become real, and people from the city are playing the “Joker Game”: an incantation said to make Joker, a character in this universe, appear and grant one wish. If people fail to express their wishes, Joker will transform them into a lifeless shell deprived of dreams and aspirations, making them gradually disappear from other people’s memories.

Tatsuya and his group try the “Joker Game” to see if rumors are becoming real. Joker battles with them, seeking revenge for events from the past that the party members do not recall. Upon seeing this, Joker retreats and promises to face them to death when they fully remember their sins from the past.

Thenceforward, an apocalyptic prophecy called “Oracle of Maia” unfolds since rumors are turning true. Joker and his servants run a cult called “Masked Circle” that seeks to complete the steps from the prophecy, collecting people’s hopes and dreams using Crystal Skulls. They believe that this prophecy will bring paradise to earth.

As the main goals, Tatsuya and his party members have to restore the city to normal and prevent the cult followers from fulfilling the prophecy. The party characters are the only people in Sumaru City that can achieve this since they possess the power to use *Personas*, making them powerful enough to defeat enemies in combat.

B. Mechanics

The tarot influences a significant part of *Persona 2*’s combat elements. Customarily used for divination, the tarot is a pack of playing cards consisting of the 56 cards from traditional playing decks and includes another 22 known as major arcana, totaling 78 cards [49].

The major arcana have designs and meanings connected to the archetypes from the collective unconscious. In the game, all party characters are associated with a major arcana from the tarot that represents their core personality characteristics, consequently linking them to an archetype and influencing characters’ affinities and bonuses when equipping *Personas*.

All party members can use their *Personas* to attack enemies. Each *Persona* is categorized into a major arcana or card suit (e.g., cups, spades, and others) from the tarot. They are creatures that can level up and learn abilities, usually referred to as a part of oneself, a mask that one can wear when facing danger. A recurrent phrase said by the *Personas* is “I am thou... Thou art I...”, confirming, even more, their relation to the user as being part of their psyche.

The *Personas*’ designs are strongly inspired by mythological and historical figures, emphasizing the correlation between *Personas* and archetypes from the collective unconscious. In this sense, *Personas* are similar to the Jungian definition of

¹HowLongToBeat: <https://howlongtobeat.com/>

²Persona 2 Innocent Sin Wiki: https://megamitensei.fandom.com/wiki/Persona_2:_Innocent_Sin

persona since they are wearable masks linked to roles and archetypes, used when necessary.

All *Persona* users have their initial *Persona*: one that reflects the user’s most inner thoughts and core personality, usually represented by a less significant mythological equivalent. The characters that can use them sometime during their life played the “*Persona*” game: a ritual that unlocks the ability to summon the *Persona*. The most typical route in which the initial *Persona* becomes fully activated during the game’s story is when the character is confronted with great danger, allowing them to self-defend from enemies.



Fig. 1. Initial and Ultimate forms of Tatsuya, Lisa and Eikichi’s main *Personas* respectively; First row: *Vulcanus*, *Eros*, *Rhadamanthus*; and second row: *Apolo*, *Venus*, *Hades*

The enemies throughout the game are other *Persona* users or demons. Similar to the *Personas*, demons are creatures who are categorized into a major arcana for most cases, having diverse personalities and abilities as well. Various archetypes from mythologies, folktales, and historical events inspire their designs, ranging from Japanese, Nordic, Egyptian, Roman-Greek, and others (Fig. 1). The party members can initiate contact with demons linked to a major arcana, making it possible to form contracts, receive tarot cards of their arcana or free ones (unrelated to arcana), items, and information.

Persona users have to use the tarot cards collected from demon contracts to summon new *Personas* at the “Velvet Room” (Fig. 2). Philemon and his assistants, who act as critical guiding figures, inhabit this place. Since the first conversations, they constantly have mentioned concepts of finding the truth inside oneself and the relation of *Personas* and demons to the collective unconscious, guiding the characters when facing the world full of rumors.



Fig. 2. The Velvet Room: a place where players can summon new *Personas*

C. Correlations to Individuation

Throughout the game, it is possible to see the non-controllable characters from the city being manipulated by false information, with their mental sanity and coherence becoming worse due to game events related to the rumors. The city’s physical structure is severely affected, with parts of it being destroyed later in-game.

The city’s devastation can be attributed to Nyarlathotep since his powers made the rumors real. Also known as the “Crawling Chaos”, he represents the malevolent collective *shadow* of humanity inside the game. He came from H.P. Lovecraft’s stories, being brought to life after a nightmare experienced by his original author [50].

In the game, Nyarlathotep manipulated events to unfold to his liking, shape-shifting into diverse forms and altering important story characters’ memories with inaccurate circumstances and illusions. He believes humanity is fated to destroy itself by succumbing to its *shadow* and wanted to grant this by exploiting some mentally fragile characters and giving life to people’s selfish wishes.

The supernatural rumors becoming real, even without logical explanation, depicts the power of manipulation in making people believe in conspiracies with enough reasonable evidence. Information comes and goes, sometimes without having enough time to verify its credibility. The rumors gave Joker the power to concede people’s strongest wishes, later cursing and taking away the people’s willpower as a consequence.

Individual dreams and aspirations can only become true by knowing oneself better and reaching for inner goals. Hence comes the parallel to the individuation. When the individuals are not very aware of their psychological aspects, they are attracted to authorities, cult leaders, and dictators [51]. Nyarlathotep exploits this to his advantage, fostering a favorable environment for a prophecy that promises a utopia, leading and manipulating its followers as well (Fig. 3).

As a counterbalance to Nyarlathotep, there is Philemon. He directly comes from Jung’s writings, initially showing up in his dreams and fantasies [52] and acting as a guiding and astute figure throughout life. In the game, Philemon believes humanity is capable of surpassing its *shadow* and become enlightened. He and his assistants are the representation of the *Self*, the wise part of the unconscious. Therefore, they serve

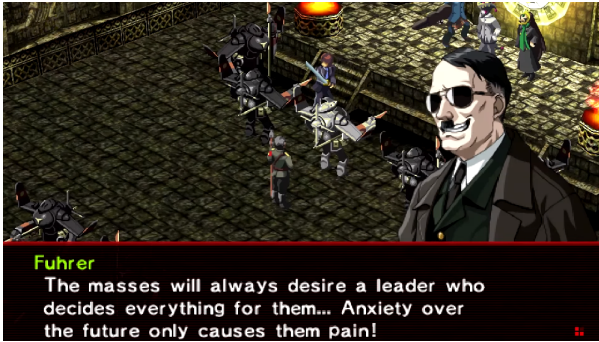


Fig. 3. The rumors brought Fuhrer back to life, a dictator who caused most of the city’s destruction alongside Joker and the cult members

as guiding guardians who provide advice and explanations but cannot defend the party members physically.

The destructive dangers from ignorance and manipulation are depicted throughout the game events. Nevertheless, the party members learn to face the actual truth of the occurrences of their pasts with the help of Philemon, his servants, and other friends along the journey, making it possible to break through the illusions. Those experiences served as an aid to make them morally and physically stronger.

After finally finding out the truth, the initial *Personas* achieve an evolution to the next stage (named “Prime”) if players selected the right choices during some past story events, thus acquiring a new powerful skill and upgrading stats. Shortly after, the main characters have to face Joker in a battle, causing him to acknowledge the truth about the past. If players gathered the necessary items, the initial *Personas* reach the ultimate form, transforming into way stronger versions.

The succeeding stage of self-realization is represented by some of the main characters dealing with their *shadow* selves: a twisted version of oneself repressed aspects, fears, and desires. The rumors make their *shadows* manifest in a physical form. The party members encounter them through boss battles equipped with a reversed version of the initial *Persona*, eventually becoming recognizable and accepted as another face of oneself after the battle.

As a final challenge, the main characters have to battle against Nyarlathotep himself, each part of his body shaped to represent the party members’ fathers (Fig. 4). To directly confront him is to tackle another part of their *shadows* since, for each party member, the father somehow is linked to an unpleasant memory or repressed characteristic of oneself.

In summary, *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* utilizes the concepts from unconscious and individuation to build a world with issues somehow similar to real life and characters that experience psychological challenges that players are able to relate. The proximity with human emotional struggles increases the believability of the game’s story, consequently enlarging players’ engagement and immersion.

D. The Hero’s Journey

The narrative structure of *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* presents a structure similar to the Hero’s Journey, although it is not

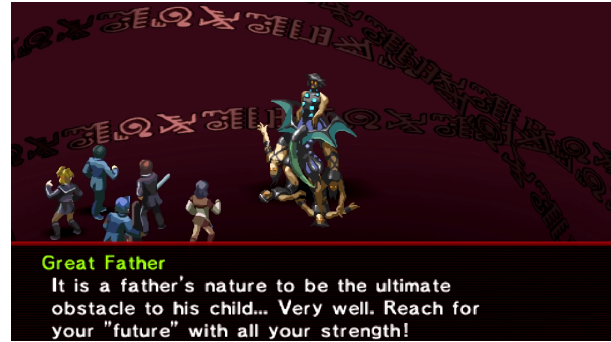


Fig. 4. Final battle with Nyarlathotep, who is shaped to represent the party members’ fathers

chronologically followed neither completed since the game is only half of the story (*Persona 2: Eternal Punishment* is the other half). The structure is followed until the “The Ordeal” step of the Second Act. Table II correlates the acts identified in Vogler’s Hero Journey and *Persona 2: Innocent Sin*, giving a summary of the story events ordered by the Hero’s Journey’s steps.

TABLE II
HERO MYTH STRUCTURE IN PERSONA 2: INNOCENT SIN

Step	In-game
The Ordinary World	Start of the story with Tatsuya at Seven Sisters Academy
The Call to Adventure	Tatsuya, Lisa, and Eikichi’s goal to defeat Joker after he cursed Eikichi’s friends
Refusal of the Call	There is no refusal of the call
Meeting with the Mentor	Meeting with Philemon in an unconscious state after fully activating their <i>Personas</i> for the first time
Crossing the First Threshold	The party members go exploring to learn more about Joker and the rumors becoming true
Test, Allies, and Enemies	Enemies to defeat, dungeons to be completed, and friendly characters who give quests, information and sell useful stuff
Approach to the Innermost Cave	Navigating through challenging dungeons to advance story events until a turning point where they face their real past
The Ordeal	Confrontation with the physical manifestation of the characters <i>shadow</i> selves, eventually accepting them as a part of themselves; and facing Nyarlathotep

V. CELESTE

Celeste is a 2D platform indie game developed by Extremely OK Games in 2018. It was released worldwide for PC

(Microsoft Windows, macOS, and Linux), Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One. Players use jumping, climbing, and dash abilities to navigate between platforms and obstacles, being encouraged to collect as many in-game strawberries as possible.

A. Story Summary

In *Celeste*, players control Madeline, a young woman who wants to climb the top of the Celeste Mountain, located in Canada. Madeline must face her inner struggles to reach the top of the mountain. During the game, she meets important characters that aid her journey as well.

B. Mechanics

As a 2D platform game, *Celeste* offers a great challenge by instantly killing the player when touching one of the many dangerous spots or enemies, requiring them to restart from the beginning of the area. Despite that, the game constantly tells players to be proud of their death counter since it represents the players earning valuable experiences.

Games can help comprehend human experiences by metaphorically representing ideas, making players undergo them through tangible processes [53]. In this way, the deaths inside *Celeste* symbolize failures as part of accomplishing goals, similar to real life. Embracing oneself's mistakes is also part of the path to individuation.

C. Correlations to Individuation

The scenarios and obstacles in *Celeste* are all shaped to reflect the mental struggles of Madeline, except in the area named "Celestial Resort". In this place, Madeline had to help Mr. Oshiro to clean and organize it. The hotel reflected Mr. Oshiro's mental state, who suffered from mental struggles that were slightly similar to Madeline's.

Besides Mr. Oshiro, other significant characters are met along the way: Theo, the bird, and Granny. Theo comes to be a precious friend to Madeline through the game, giving support to her to deal with mental struggles. The bird and Granny, in particular, are characters that act as *the Self* to Madeline by mentoring her journey. The bird instructs Madeline on acquiring new abilities by visually displaying the buttons to press when she needs to learn them. Even being mean and sarcastic sometimes, Granny provides meaningful advice to Madeline that greatly directs her path when dealing with her greatest enemy.

Madeline's *shadow* is the main antagonist throughout a broad part of the game. Referred to as a "Part of Me" by Madeline, her *shadow* gained a physical form on the mountain. Madeline encounters her for the first time facing a mirror inside a dream sequence (Fig. 5). The *shadow* is scared since she believes that Madeline is incapable of climbing the mountain and tries to prevent her at all costs from pursuing this. However, instead of protecting, she ends up hurting Madeline and being overall sarcastic and rude with all characters.

When Madeline was close to the top of the mountain, she rejected her *shadow* (Fig. 6). Consequently, the *shadow*



Fig. 5. The first time when Madeline faces her *shadow*

brings both of them to the bottom of the mountain, making Madeline lose all her progress, thus symbolizing the harmful consequences of repressing or denying oneself *shadow*.



Fig. 6. Madeline's *shadow* reaction after the rejection

At the bottom, Madeline encounters Granny once again, who advises her to try to truly understand Madeline's "Part of Me". After following this advice, Madeline was able to gain a new powerful ability that made it possible to quickly reach the mountain's summit by combining Madeline's and her *shadow*'s powers.

The whole idea behind ascending the mountain represents the individuation process itself. Characters in-game constantly remind players that at the Celeste Mountain, one has to face the truth about oneself. To reach the top of the mountain is to confront unpleasant parts of oneself, overcoming obstacles that reflect the mental struggles. Granny recognizes the place as a healing location, in which confronting the problem is the first step, a challenging thing by itself.

Madeline wanted to climb the mountain as an aim to let go of her depression and panic attacks. She wanted to leave behind things that she could not forget and ultimately accomplish a significant goal by overcoming daunting challenges. In her journey, she comprehends the importance of listening to her *shadow* part, making it possible to accomplish anything if they both work together in harmony (Fig. 7). Similarly, individuation is also about learning to accept oneself *shadow* instead of rejecting it, resulting in better ways to work through obstacles and goals in life.

After reaching the top of the mountain, Madeline baked a



Fig. 7. Madeline working together with her *shadow*

strawberry pie for her new friends with all the strawberries collected throughout the game, influencing the game’s ending. The more strawberries collected, the better the pie is, changing characters’ reactions to the pie. The game hinted at the importance of gathering them by saying through loading screen messages that it would impress friends (Fig. 8), consequently encouraging players to face as many obstacles and challenges as possible.

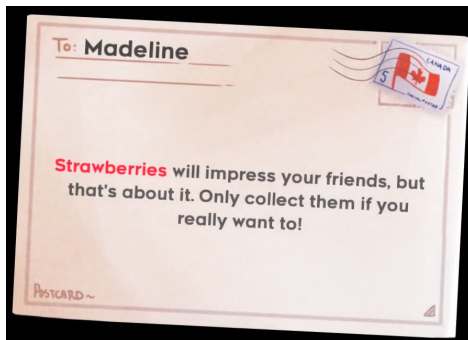


Fig. 8. How *Celeste* hints the importance of collecting strawberries

As a whole, *Celeste* empowers players by constantly encouraging them to confront the challenges, embracing and learning from the failures since they represent a significant part of the journey. Madeline and other characters display characteristics and goals correlated to the unconscious and individuation, making the game’s narrative more relatable and engaging. The game portrays a compelling message of overcoming psychological limitations, reaching players who also confront them, and increasing empathy of players in general by experiencing Madeline’s struggles and wins.

D. The Hero’s Journey

Celeste’s narrative portrays the steps from the Hero’s Journey in an unrigorous way. The main game represents the First and Second acts, with the free downloadable content (DLC) “Chapter 9: Farewell” portraying the last act. In “Farewell”, Madeline had to internalize the lessons she learned when climbing the mountain. She had to deal with a dreadful event in her life, requiring her to undergo self-reflection and mastering her emotions, consequently completing her hero’s journey.

Table III represents the Vogler’s Hero Journey stages identified in *Celeste*, presenting a summary of in-game events ordered by the steps.

TABLE III
HERO MYTH STRUCTURE IN CELESTE

Step	In-game
The Ordinary World	Not shown in game
The Call to Adventure	Madeline’s goal to reach the top of the Celeste Mountain
Refusal of the Call	There is no refusal of the call
Meeting with the Mentor	Meeting with the bird and Granny
Crossing the First Threshold	Start of ascending the mountain until finding Theo
Test, Allies, and Enemies	Encountering Theo, “Part of Me” (Madeline’s <i>shadow</i>), and Mr. Oshiro. Confronting obstacles until reaching the “Mirror Temple”
Approach to the Innermost Cave	Facing perils inside the “Mirror Temple”, a place where her mental struggles are more predominant
The Ordeal	Facing and integrating with her <i>shadow</i>
Reward	Baking a strawberry pie to her new friends after completing climbing the mountain
The Road Back	Returning to the mountain inside a dream to explore its core
The Resurrection	Overcoming a painful past event by solving internal struggles inside the dream
Return with the Elixir	Waking up from the dream after resolving its struggles, consequently mastering her emotions

VI. CONCLUSION

Past studies have revealed how video games can be influential to people’s lives. Video games are becoming even more present in everyday life as a means of entertainment, simultaneously impacting emotional regulation. The narrative can affect how players engage and immerse themselves into the game’s world. Hence it is necessary to be mindful when constructing it.

Exploring characters’ emotional weaknesses and strengths can help to increase the players’ level of interest and relatability with the story. Conveying these emotions can be done in many ways, with one of them being depicting psychological aspects throughout the game’s narrative. This work presented how two games from distinct genres and periods were capable of using concepts from Analytical Psychology to build enriched stories, portraying elements from the unconscious and individuation process in a narrative structure similar to the Hero’s Journey.

In its essence, the Hero's Journey is about achieving a more significant state of maturity, a process that all individuals can relate to and comprehend. *Persona 2: Innocent Sin* and *Celeste* both have narratives that adopt a structure similar to the one presented in the Hero's Journey defined by past authors, but without following it strictly or chronologically.

The Hero's Journey can be an initial guiding point when building games' narratives, although game designers should not follow it rashly since a predictable story is neither creative nor compelling. Narrative authors should explore possibilities of diverse cultural, geographical, and emotional backgrounds when fabricating their stories, mixing archetypes as they seem fit. Integrating these narrative aspects with the game's mechanics can also assist in consolidating its core message into players.

Both games teach players about the dangers of not properly handling unwanted aspects of oneself (the *shadow*). In *Persona 2: Innocent Sin*, the core message is about the dangers of ignorance and mass-mindedness (blindly following ideals from the collective). As for *Celeste*, its themes involve facing mental health struggles, becoming a stronger and more satisfied person afterward.

In conclusion, portraying a story where players can relate on an emotional level can consolidate players' psychological growth and increase players' levels of engagement and immersion. Upcoming games can substantially benefit from exploring human psychology when building game characters and narratives. Comprehending how other games used these concepts in their favor offers the potential of aiding better story writing, something that future works can try to answer.

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