Narrative Design of Sadness in *Heavy Rain*

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ABSTRACT

Aware of all the problems videogames have faced trying to elicit sadness from its players, we decided to analyse the videogame *Heavy Rain* in virtue of its capabilities to induce sadness in the players. The game was studied under two different perspectives: the character's non-verbal expressivity and the audiovisual artistic properties of the game. We have found that for the narrative design of sad interactive sequences, the game followed a three-stepped model made of: attachment, rupture, and passivity.

KEYWORDS

Narrative; Game Design; Aesthetic Emotion; Heavy Rain.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

In the past, some problems were found in videogames regarding the elicitation of inactive unpleasant emotions, like sadness or melancholy (Zagalo, Torres, & Branco, 2005). In those performed studies, none of the videogames used could elicit the "sadness cluster" when analysing interactive sequences. On the other hand, all the other emotional clusters dealing with emotions as fear, anger, happiness and relaxation, proposed by Russell's "circumplex model of emotions" (Russel, 2000) were elicited by various videogames. The same results were confirmed by Lazzaro's (2004) studies, where she listed a total of seven emotions found in the experience of videogames - "Fear", "Surprise", "Disgust", "Kvell", "Fiero", "Schadenfreude" and "Wonder" – from which none could be identified as inactive unpleasant emotion, with videogames being deemed unable to elicit saddening emotions.

The interactivity is generally an actions' cyclic process, between human and machine. The interactivity lies in a user's action over the object in order to make it significant. Therefore, the user's action is the energy point that produces the interactive art. In order for art to exist, a person needs to experience it, to bring it to life inside its own mind. However, interactive art requires an active user. Non-interactive art requires cognitive activity with the representation, whereas interactive art requires, beyond that, also an interaction with the representation. This interaction is performed by an active user that not only acts with his body but that acts in making decisions, meaning, taking time to digest and find an inner will to act upon the representation process. Concerning the sadness and melancholic emotions in its physiological components (Russell, 2000), we observe that it is characterized by motor inactivity. And this is where problems arise; we need an active user to make the artefact work, but on the other hand the sadness and melancholic emotions need an inactive user to be fully developed. This is a concrete problem for videogames expressivity, the difficulty to reach certain dimensions of our emotional reactions because they demand a set of physiological configurations that contrast with the physiological demands of interactivity.

The game industry has been aware of the impossibility of eliciting sadness since almost the beginning, with Electronic Arts stating in its first advertising campaign, "Can a Computer Make you Cry?" (as cited in Zagalo, 2012). In 1996, Brenda Laurel proposed an approach to solve the lack of drama in videogames, or the inability of videogames to make us feel saddening emotions, with the creation of a specific studio that would change our pre-conceived idea about games, Purple Moon (Moogridge, 2006). However, she was accused of developing stereotyped and sexist games, and gave up after being unable to fully create a model to achieve the purpose. In 2003, David Freeman, a Hollywood scriptwriter, wrote a large book, *Creating Emotion in Games: The Craft and Art of Emotioneering*, of which was filled with dozens of techniques to boost emotions within videogames. Its reception was weak, mostly because the techniques presented by Freeman were generally derived from film language, without any concern for the specificity of videogame language, namely its interactivity. Just one year later, Spielberg stated; "I think the real indicator will be when somebody confesses that they cried at level 17" (2004), which made Electronic Arts hire him to produce that "level 17" in 2005. The contract between Spielberg and EA stated three games, but they only made one, *Boom Blox* (2008), a very basic game with no relation with the issues that had been discussed in the press.

In an interview, Jaffe (2012), designer of *God of War* (2005) and *God of War II* (2007), discussed the issue again, starting with: "It's not about using cinematic techniques to express that. It's about using interactive language to express that". Because we've been able to create sadness and melancholy with games, but we've done that using text language, like in *Planetfall* (1983), or film language, like in *Final Fantasy VII* (1997). Doing it through game language is a completely different aesthetic matter, such that when the journalist pushed the matter further, Jaffe just avowed his resignation to the impossibility of the medium to serve these emotions. Jaffe said that whenever you wanted to talk about something emotionally sad, you should use another medium! In the same vein, Steven Spielberg and George Lucas appeared in a panel at the University of Southern California in 2013, presenting their ideas about why videogames were not able to induce the same emotional diversity as movies. Lucas stated, "By its very nature there cannot be a plot in a game (..) you just have to make the divide between games and stories" (as cited in Bishop, 2013), with Spielberg being more precise, telling "I think the key divide between interactive media and the narrative media that we do, is the difficulty in opening up an empathic pathway between the gamer and the character (..) the second you get to the controller, something turns off in the heart. And it becomes a sport." (as cited in Bishop, 2013).

To answer this general resignation on videogames being unable to elicit sad emotions, it is our intention to demonstrate in this paper how *Heavy Rain* (2010) was able to overcome the problem. In analysing how it was done, we'll demonstrate that creators have followed some of the same steps that were modelled as a suggestion for the game industry by Zagalo, Torres, & Branco (2006). Our intention with this paper research is to demonstrate that videogames do not lack expressive capabilities, it is just that interactive language is still evolving, carving its own models. It is too early to give up.

2 | THE STORYTELLING MODEL

After failing to identify sad interactive sequences in games (Zagalo et al., 2005), it was conceptualized a model to generate interactive sadness grounded in emotional design (Norman, 2004) by using film clips that have been emotionally tested (Gross & Levenson, 1995) and cognitive theory of emotion (Frijda, 1986; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1990). That model suggested a division of the design of sequences in three steps: 1) "Attachment"; 2) "Rupture"; 3) "Passivity" (Zagalo et al., 2006) (see Figure 1).

Feeling sad is an emotional reaction to something the subject relates to deeply (Frijda, 1986, p. 194). Because of that, we need to start by creating a kind of bond with the player. The most intense type of human bonds is called 'attachment', which is "the propensity of [a] human being to make strong affectional bonds to particular others" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 39). Therefore, this suggests the presentation of a situation of attachment between characters, but the presentation is not enough; it must be done in a form that guarantees a player's empathy with that attachment, in which the player can put themselves in the shoes of one of the characters, and consequently feel the bond with him or her. De Waal explains how empathy works, arguing that, "It began much simpler, with the synchronization of bodies: running when others run, laughing when others laugh, crying when others cry, or yawning when others yawn. Most of us have reached the incredibly advanced stage at which we yawn even at the mere mention of yawning - as you may be doing right now! - but this is only after lots of face-to-face experience." (De Wall, 2009, p. 51)

Relating to the creation of attachment with fictional artefacts, characters are the most important elements in such process. It is acknowledged that our capacity for empathy depends on the presence of "others" similar to us. Synchrony helps us adjust to movements that we recognize. This is why when using non-humane forms we resort to anthropomorphisation (e.g., Disney characters). The "mirror neurons" (Gallese, 1998) support synchrony in order to let us experience the outlook of another being within oneself, not through an identification process, but through recognition and understanding of the states of mind of others which are followed by an emotional answer state (Zillmann, 1994).

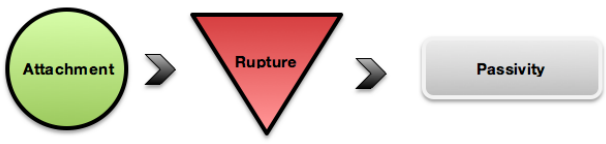

Figure 1 | The three-step narrative design model of sadness. As proposed by Zagalo et al. (2006)

With the achieved attachment and empathy, we follow to the second step, the 'rupture'. Sadness emerges as a response to the ending of a relation with something we cared about. The more we care about something, the more intense the sadness will be, the death of a loved one being the most intense because of its irreversibility (Frijda, 1986, p. 200). Thus, the importance of cementing the connection of the player to characters makes him/her care for them. When the rupture between characters happens, the player will empathise with the feeling of the character that stays in the scene. The more it is portrayed in the characters face and body, the more the player will empathise and feel the sadness of the loss created by the end of the attachment.

Until rupture, everything follows the exact same approach as is done in film or literature; the problem in games has been with the design of what happens during and after that point. The communication of the non-active emotion state of sadness is defined by Planalp (1999) as behaviours of slowness, inertia, lethargy, softness, and indifference, but Frijda pushes it even further, saying; "the expression of sadness, deactivated behaviour is no behaviour, properly speaking, but absence of behaviour (...) sadness become hypotonic" (Frijda, 1986, p. 39). Consequently, how can we design interaction in moments of pure sadness, in moments that physiologically require from the experiencer introspection and meditation, some interior recoil? Because the player needs to maintain some activity and interaction with the game, we suggested the creation of a third phase: the 'passivity'. This means that the player will be active, but more or less passive, with the game requesting the lesser active actions as possible. The idea is to present in this passivity step some comforting actions with other characters, like the possibility to 'reattach' or create new attachments, thus, opening the possibility for the player to interact with other characters through gentle and soft actions, working for the relief of sadness.

These are the overall guidelines of our model, although it is not enough to achieve a successful communication of the emotional experience of sadness. As with any artwork, using story to communicate is what makes the experience unique and meaningful; otherwise, we could use algorithms to design stories following these models and formulas. And this is why we wanted to examine a case from the real world, to analyse if this model was being used, and how it was implemented. For that, we have chosen the videogame *Heavy Rain*, from 2010.

3 | CASE: "HEAVY RAIN"

Heavy Rain was highly praised by reviewers, gathering a total of 87 points at Metacritic (n.d.). Nevertheless, it also received its share of negative reactions. The 107 reviews collected by the Metacritic portal can be mostly divided in two sides, the pro and contra. On the pro side, the majority, as reflected by the high grade achieved, supports their positions in arguments about the game capability to stimulate an emotional experience, to fulfill the sense of drama, and create empathy with characters. Anderson, from *Gamespot*, said: "A powerful interactive drama, *Heavy Rain* is an intensely absorbing experience that meticulously conveys the tension, urgency, surprise, and tragedy that its characters feel" (2010). Lachel, from *Gaming Nexus*, reports "I was both shaken up and a little shell shocked, surprised at how emotionally invested I was in the well-being of these characters" (2010). As for Totilo, from *Kotaku*, "*Heavy Rain* is a quiet downer, a rare – for a video game – persistently sad experience" (2009), and within the same form, Kelly, from *Videogamer*, shows his surprise for the unusual emotional experience, expressing that "it feels a little strange to be writing such things in a game review, but the characters really are the heart of *Heavy Rain* (..). When their lives are in danger, you'll care about whether or not they survive, and if they do die, you'll almost certainly mourn their absence" (2010).

On the contra side, we found a common pattern. There was a lot of complaining about the awkward mechanics, controls, and pace that would configure the experience more as a movie than a game. *Edge* magazine questions the creators with, "Do you make games or films?" (2010) The same question was put in another way by *The Sixth Axis* magazine, "But it's not a game, is it?" suggesting the game for players looking for "minimal interactivity" (2010). Naik, from *GameCritics*, said: "The controls and interaction with the game world are suspect at best and downright awful at worst" (Naik, 2010). This contra perspective analysis, of accusing the game of lacking interactivity and being a movie, not a game, made us stop and reflect again and again about this particular case. The most referenced examples for the emotion of sadness (Zagalo et al., 2005) were the scenes of "Aeris death" in *Final Fantasy VII* and "Sniper Wolf's Death" in *Metal Gear Solid* (1998), where both were non-interactive sequences, using only film stylistics. Could it be the same case here? Re-analysing the pro critiques, we found negative answers to this possibility, with Anderson, from *Gamespot*, stating that the "control scheme does a fantastic job of grounding you to the characters and their emotional states" (2010) and also Bramwell from *Eurogamer* saying "the mechanics provide the framework for emotional investment in these characters (...). You may end up shocked by how much you liked certain people once the truth breaks from behind the clouds" (2010). Nonetheless, part of the interest in pursuing with our research rested in finding whether the emotionally sad connection praised to be developed by the game, not only by the critics but also by players in forums (This game is, 2010; Heavy Rain Discussion, 2010; Did Heavy Rain, 2010), was being achieved through interactive or non-interactive sequences.

As has been thoroughly discussed (Zagalo, 2013), the medium of videogames has a much wider scope than games, mainly because of its capabilities to use the basic elements of the narrative art. Videogames are an art form, and a very new one, and as that should not be confined to models rooted in its origins, but defined by what it can come to achieve throughout its history.

3.1 THE ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

In order to understand if the model of storytelling proposed above was implemented in the chosen case, we will deconstruct our object, taking into account our main focus, the communication of an emotional experience. To do this, it was found in past empirical analysis of movies (Zagalo, 2009), that to understand and sense the emotional experience being portrayed, verbal language was less relevant than non-verbal; and the style chosen to audio-visually present the non-verbal language was significant. These elements were also previously used in the building of emotional relations between computers and users (Picard & Klein, 2002), and were again proven to be relevant in the building of emotions between users and characters in virtual worlds (Eladhari & Lindley, 2003; Gratch & Marsella, 2004; Stern, 2003). From here, we defined an analysis of the communication divided into two main components: the non-verbal expressivity of the characters in the videogame, and the media properties used by the videogame to present them.

To achieve an in-depth deconstruction analysis, we could not analyse the entire videogame, which runs approximately for 8 to 9 hours. We have then analysed the first three chapters of the game — Chapter 1: Prologue; Chapter 2: The Mall; Chapter 3: Father and Son — that we considered as being the full first sequence, being played through with the father character, Ethan Mars. This sequence ends when our control perspective in the game is changed to assume that of the private detective, Scott Shelby. This cut was made by taking into account that it achieves a complete story arc, within the overall dramatic arc of the game, which in our perspective is enough to illustrate the storytelling model of the design of sadness.

3.2 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

To understand what we are looking for when we talk about non-verbal communication, we need to start by acknowledging that body language "takes place whenever one person influences another by means of facial expression, tone of voice or any other channels", and that it is very competent in the expression of emotions (Argyle, 1975, p. 2). The facial expression is one of the most important non-verbal channels for expressing emotions and attitudes to other people.

Ekman (2004) argued about the way different emotions are recognized and experienced in similar ways universally. But it is not only the face; the way we touch each other becomes even more relevant when talking about intimate relations. Even if is forgotten during verbal accounts, it is highly relevant in terms of non-verbal communication (Hertenstein, Keltner, App, Bulleit, & Jaskolka, 2006). For Damásio (2010 p. 114) "our connection to others occurs not only through visual images, language and logic inference but also through something more profound in our bodies: the actions with whom we can represent others movements". The ways in which people react, including their behaviour patterns, have an effect on the way others feel and interact (Knapp & Hall, 1997).

As we said, we will only be analysing the first sequence of *Heavy Rain*, which interestingly was classified by some players as being boring and missing action. However, taking into account the concern of the story being told by the game, to portray melancholic events, and also the kind of expressive behaviours needed to achieve such portraying (discussed in point 2), this first sequence and its pace became responsible for the creation of the tone that would accompany the player throughout the rest of the game.

Therefore, the beginning of the sequence – waking up, bathing, etc. - functions as an introduction (Chapter 1 - Prologue) to the world setting and principal character (Ethan Mars), leading the empathic synchronization between the player and the character. The feeling of 'attachment', "strong affectional bonds", starts when kids and wife arrive home. Actions and body touches, portraying explicit attachment relations between all the characters (see Figure 2), drive the player toward feeling empathy. Ethan embraces and kisses his wife, goes out into the garden and plays with his kids - touching hands,

Figure 2 | 'Attachment' expressed by touching actions. Pictures extracted from the 'Chapter 1: Prologue' of *Heavy Rain*.

Figure 3 | '*Rupture'* is made of stress and focus. Pictures extracted from the 'Chapter 2: The Mall' of *Heavy Rain*.

Figure 4 | 'Passivity' is translated in soft actions/touches non-obligatory. Pictures extracted from the 'Chapter 3: Father and Son' of *Heavy Rain*.

walking the piggyback, and laughing together. Touch between characters in *Heavy Rain* happens to develop a sensitive comfort between the player and the character attachment relations, leading the player to empathize and feel attached to that family.

The home scene ends and a new scene begins in the mall (Chapter 2). Touch between characters becomes absent, and when tried by us, it is made impossible. We try to reach Jason (the son). We try desperately to grab him and to touch him but the game does not allow us to do that. By the end of this scene, the father fails to save his son, and watches him being hit by a car and die (see Figure 3). The attachment is cut, put to an end, and "rupture" is made complete. All the good and comfortable feelings created by synchrony and empathy in the attachment phase starts falling down. The 'rupture' creates a feeling of loss in the player, a feeling of sadness, and the game must now comply with that.

The third chapter of the first sequence starts two years after the previous scene, with the father picking up Shaun (the other son) at school and taking him home. The entire scene at the father's home will represent how he is coping with the loss. The player, still controlling the father, has some optional goals that he can follow, but is not forced to do them. The little goals stated in the kitchen slate are simple and require only very soft actions. The game does not forget that the player is feeling sad, and so physiologically they are not ready for strong interaction with rigid goals. The content of each action is designed to produce re-attachment with the son. The player gets to feed, talk, and interact with his son. All this is done very slowly and the re-attachment grows throughout the entire sequence. It starts with almost no speaking between them as the father sits by the son in the sofa, the characters responding slowly. The final scene ends the chapter with the re-attachment fully completed as the father takes son to bed by holding him in his arms and interactively kissing him on the forehead (see Figure 4). The entire scene served the player's emotional regulation, allowing him/her the time to introspectively feel saddening emotions and preparing them for the next chapter in the game. All that we have described in this phase clearly configures the necessities we presented for the third phase of 'passivity', because when feeling sad, there is little will to act and then action is not obligatory. When acting, it is made slow, and everything moves toward the creation of a new attachment.

The importance of body touching has been well highlighted since Harlow's studies (1958), in which he concluded that the comfort of body touching is determinant for the attachment creation. The fact that attachment propitiates sensations of security is known and therefore the existence of body touching in this passivity phase is pertinent for the sequence to stimulate sadness in players (see bottom images in Figure 4).

3.3 MEDIA COMMUNICATION

In the previous point, we only analysed the character enactment in the game. We need now to analyse representation in *Heavy Rain* and its relation with interactivity. With the emergence of 3d environments, the representation in videogames has inevitably approached filmic conventions. This is not exclusive to videogames. We can find the same approaches in the representation of other media like television programs (telefilms, series, soaps, animation, news, sports), web storytelling (web series, web animations) or any other media that conveys audio and visual representational messages with movement through a closed frame. All these media, in which videogames must be included, are part of one great domain that we call audio-visual communication. Film was one of

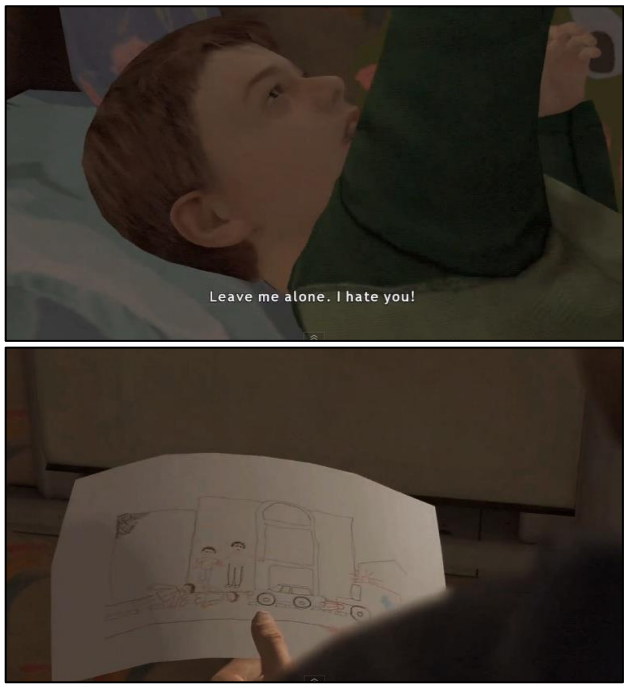

Figure 5 **|** *Heavy Rain* is not a movie because story changes accordingly to actions and choices [2]. Pictures from *Heavy Rain*.

the greatest drivers of conventions, mainly because of its popularity throughout the 20th century, but with the success of each new medium, this great domain came to emerge more as a mashup of media conventions.

3.3.1 Visual art and editing

It has been said numerous times that *Heavy Rain* is more of a movie than a video game, but as we have stated earlier, it is not because a game uses filmic conventions that we can call it a movie. *Heavy Rain* has really borrowed a lot from film language, but in essence, the interactive play belongs to the world of videogames, not of movies. The actions we make in the game change parts of the story throughout the entire game fulfilling player "agency" (Wei, 2011). The attention to little details makes different paths of storytelling happen in the game, and this cannot be called a movie (see Figure 5). Therefore, let's examine what *Heavy Rain* has derived from film language.

The clearest filmic evidence appears in the form of cinematography and editing. *Heavy Rain* extensively uses these formal techniques that have been built throughout the twentieth century by film in order to tell stories with an emotional impact (Smith, 2003; Tan, 1996). As it has been said, videogames "needed to rethink visual language while taking into account film narrative strengths and impact creation" (Zagalo, Branco, & Barker, 2004). The goal of cinematography

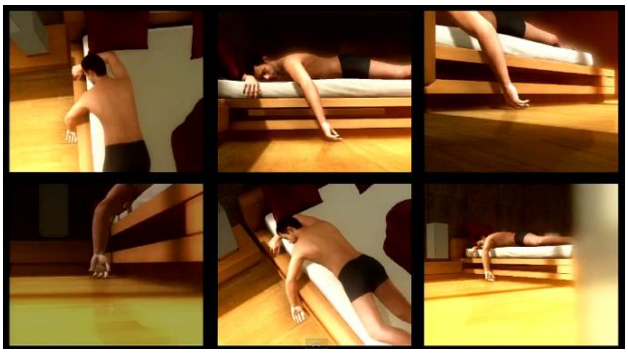

Figure 6 **|** We can see different types of shots being used within an effect of split screen. Picture from **"***Heavy Rain"*.

and editing is to convey expressivity in images, to create attraction spots in the representation, presenting visual information not neutral, but being able to induce specific sensations. Film language uses a large set of different shots to communicate different meanings, and mixes these shots through montage techniques that create the sensation of invisible changings in the shots. The invisibility of editing makes the difference in shots invisible to the viewer, enabling them to fully concentrate on storytelling. In *Heavy Rain*, we can see close-ups, medium, and long shots, establishing shots, panning, traveling, steadicam, zoom, over-the-shoulder, tracking shots, and top-down perspectives, among others. All these different types of shots are then edited using the classical match-cut rule, providing a sense of invisible montage. Besides that, *Heavy Rain* is able to use split screen techniques and mix these splits with cross-cutting techniques (see Figure 6).

All these techniques have been very difficult to manipulate in video games because we need to maintain the player's attention in the actions being performed. This means that using close-ups or just even changing a shot angle while playing has been difficult, because player could lose sight of what his own playable character is doing or become disoriented. *Heavy Rain* achieves this through a very

Figure 7 **|** We can see two extreme close ups of hands, and two close ups of face expressions, emphasizing the expressivity of each scene. Pictures from *Heavy Rain*.

strong mix between interactive and non-interactive moments (see Figure 7). *Heavy Rain* is not the first game to do this, but its great achievement is really in the way it does it without disturbing the player's attention, making it easy to understand so that the player does not even have to think about when they are able to interact. We call classical montage "invisible"; therefore, we should call this *Heavy Rain* capacity "invisible non-interaction". We should also state that all this is only possible because *Heavy Rain* is using a third-person perspective, which opens up much more room for this when compared with a closed first-person perspective.

Finally, in terms of the specificity of visual arts, and having already talked about the characters, we must emphasise the atmosphere design within the game. *Heavy Rain* does not build beautiful and powerful visuals just to impress the player. Everything we see in the environment and all weather conditions are fully controlled with one objective only: to induce very precise emotions at each moment of the game. Consequently, and looking again into the first sequence of the game, we can see that everything is clearly divided into three big moments (the three chapters).

The first one, the 'attachment' phase, is presented within very spacious rooms and areas where we can roam around freely. The atmosphere is full of bright light coming from the sun through very big windows. There are almost no shadows, and it makes use of soft pastel colours. In the second moment, for the 'rupture' phase, starting with the chase at the mall, we continue to have full bright light, now with more vivid colours, stressing the player's attention. In addition, albeit being in a big spacious mall, the crowded effect reduces space to almost nothing, obligating the player to focus on one thing only. Even the split screen effect reduces space and focuses the player's attention to prepare the anxiety for the moment of rupture. Finally, the last phase, being 'passivity', is done under completely different weather conditions [1]. The weather changes right after the rupture, from being very sunny to being very rainy, lasting for the entire game and so giving the game its name. The father's apartment is smaller than the previous house with much darker light and almost no colour; everything seems grey.

3.3.2 Rhythm and Interactivity

Film rhythm is completely defined by the editing. However, *Heavy Rain*, although using film editing, still manages its rhythm through game interactivity. Bogost's (2010) in-depth review of *Heavy Rain* for *Gamasutra* was specifically written to demonstrate that it is not an "interactive film", starting the discussion by analysing in detail the power of editing in film. We will pick out quotes from the analysis done by Bogost, presenting our agreement and disagreement about the way rhythm and interactivity are built in "Heavy Rain". Bogost says,

> *"Like many interactive narratives, Heavy Rain appears to adopt the practice filmic editing by allowing the player to control how sequences of narrative appear based on quick-time event (QTE) actions. In this respect, it follows in a long lineage of titles starting with Dragon's Lair. But that similarity is a foil. Instead, the most important feature of Heavy Rain, the design choice that makes it more important than any other game in separating from rather than drawing games toward film, is its rejection of editing in favour of prolonging."* (2010, p. 1)

We agree that the essence of the pace of *Heavy Rain* happens through the prolonging of the scenes. Look at all the little things of mundane actions we have to do in Chapter 1 — wake up, take a shower, get dressed, draw, put the table, etc. All this would be edited out in a regular Hollywood movie; Bogost is right here. The only thing that fails in his judgment is when he considered the art of editing to be an exclusive art of deleting the boring bits, or as he says, "move action forward". As we have demonstrated in the previous point, shot editing is a central tool in the expressiveness of the storytelling in *Heavy Rain*. Therefore, what happens in *Heavy Rain*, the so-called prolonging of action, is made through the use of interactivity and not through the absence of editing. We can understand this more when analysing the "rupture" phase. Bogost presents the scene as not being achieved though the power of editing but exclusively through the power of interactivity.

> *"But as anyone knows who has actually lost a child in a public place, even if only briefly, the central sensations of that experience are not rapidness but slowness. The slow panic of confusion and disorientation, the feeling of extended uncertainty as moments give way to*

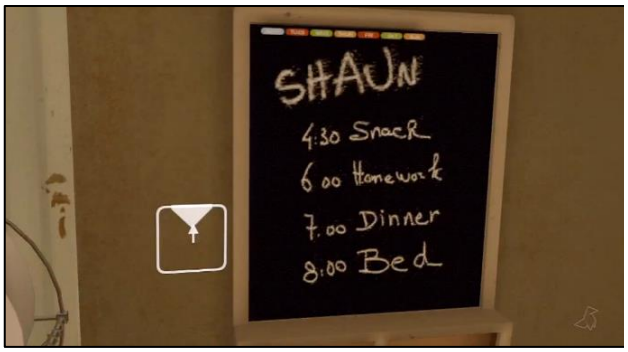

Figure 8 | In the Chapter 3, the rhythm is clocked by the game. Picture from *Heavy Rain*.

> *minutes - the sound of each footfall and the neurosis of each head turn. While its narrative fails to set up a credible reason for the chase, the chase itself captures this panic far more than a sequence of cinematic edits might do. If the edit is cinema's core feature, then Heavy Rain does the opposite: it lengthens rather than abridges."* (2010, p. 2)

Looking at the synthesized action in our Figure 4 above, it is very easy to understand that the power of editing is still there, strongly emphasising the expressiveness of drama. Without shot editing, we would have ultimately fall into a very homogeneous visual point-of-view that would bore us before we even find the kid. The interesting point of Bogost's view is what he calls the power of "retention" that "lengthens" the events. This is really central in *Heavy Rain* and is achieved through the perspective of interaction design based on the creation of synchrony between the player and the character in the game. Not being allowed to push the crowd forward synchronizes the player with the impotence being felt by the father in trying to find his son. Interactive synchrony designs the terrain for empathy, and it becomes impossible for the player to not feel when in the shoes of Ethan Mars.

The rhythm in *Heavy Rain* is slow due to the main emotional objective of the game, and the full first sequence pushes sadness and melancholic feelings, which we have already shown in the introduction as having very low physiological activeness. Comparing the three phases – attachment, rupture, and passivity – we can see that the pace of action goes from moderately slow to extremely slow. In the first phase, we get to play outside in the garden with kids running and battling with toy swords. In the second phase, albeit being unable to push the crowd away as effectively as we wanted, we still advance. In the last phase of passivity, we are clocked by the game (see Figure 8), we cannot really advance the action and we must wait for the right time to give food to the kid or to take him to bed. Hence, while waiting we can sit down in the sofa and let our feelings emerge.

The action is fully paced by the interactivity proposed by the game. Everything is balanced to take the player down to passivity, to almost non-activity, obliging him/her to take the time to feel the emotional experience the game is proposing. Empathise with character, feel what he is feeling, feel for him and with him. It is very interesting to find reviews that state the exact same thing about the pace but classifying it in a different way. *Ars Technica* says that the pace of the game's first chapter "can be terribly slow in places" (Kuchera, 2010); also, *Destructoid* says the game is full of "boring moments" (Sterling, 2010). However, and as we have demonstrated throughout this paper, it is exactly because of this that players can really feel the game, as *Wired* puts it; "It felt like stepping into someone else's life (..). Rarely have I felt so attached to game characters or so invested in a story" (Kohler, 2010).

4 | CONCLUSION

The first main conclusion from the research done about *Heavy Rain* is that it represents a step forward in advancing videogame language. Videogames found its own methods to develop sadness and melancholy, enlarging the scope of emotions available to creators and designers. The grammar was dissected throughout this paper, and is now available to everyone. The resignation presented by Jaffe, Lucas or Spielberg in the beginning of this paper makes little sense. It is only a question of wanting to create games that follow these emotional dimensions. *Heavy Rain* has been very successful, though we can read about all the criticism in regards to its differences toward main industry titles.

We don't intend to say that games must follow *Heavy Rain* approach to develop sadness. *Heavy Rain* managed to do it following the steps of film language, but other titles coming after that, but also able to elicit sadness like *Brothers - A Tale of Two Sons* (2013), have been using very different artistic approaches. However, when these games manage to create sadness using different audio-visual stylistics, it does not mean they have also escaped the psychological needs of the players and so the appropriate narrative arc. Because of that the model discussed throughout

this paper — attachment, rupture, passivity — is still relevant, even if the artistic options vary.

We must say that the creation of games is the creation of experiences, and these cannot be confined to simple design decisions. For that we must acknowledge the differences between being a game designer and a game director. As Chen stated, in a panel talk on “Experiential Gameplay” at CADE 2012, “I really see my brain functioning differently when I'm trying to create an emotional arc and meaning. I'm thinking as a director, not a level designer or a mechanics designer” (as cited in Abbott, 2012). Games working to create experiences must be directed as full experiences. Designing mechanics is central to any game, but it is only part of the big experience that a game must be able to create in players. Another example appeared with the team behind *The Last of Us* (2013), which presented a widely acclaimed experience. Bruce Straley and Neil Druckmann were the main directors, though Stratley was directly responsible for the game design, while Druckmann was responsible for the overall game experience. Game artistic options will always vary in accordance with its directors, our main goal here has only been to present guidelines to optimize the narrative design of sadness.

ENDNOTES

[1] In 2008 it was presented a conceptual tool, ‘Emotion Wizard’ (Zagalo and Torres, 2008), designed to help elicit specific user emotions, in which it was used the weather conditions as the strongest variable. Having full sunlight for happiness scenes, and rainy grey atmosphere for sad moments, permitted to achieve relevant results.

[2] In these two pictures we can see that if we fail to take good care of the son, when he goes to bed, he’ll not let you kiss him, as you can see in Figure 5. Instead he’ll slap you and say he hates you. On the other side to compensate this situation the game shows you a drawing done by the kid reviving the killing of the brother by a car.

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