“A peaceful world is a boring world”

- a study in narrative structure and mythological elements in Squaresoft’s *Chrono Trigger*

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Abstract

The focuses of this paper are narrative structures and mythological elements in the video game Chrono Trigger. A qualitative method was used to code the game world’s seven eras into themes of symbolism, quest-themes, and, characters. These themes were compared with Northrop Frye’s archetypal myth theory from Anatomy of Criticism. The results show that each age relates to a season and moves due to the player’s influence according to a cyclical pattern. Six out of seven epochs show high correlation to Frye’s archetypal model whereas options such as to discard the main hero illustrates the player’s control. The seventh era pictures a more female symbolism than the male dominant template proposed by Frye. A hypothesis is presented with the concept of a fluent surface which argues that the player manipulates the basic story to build a personal narrative. Furthermore, the hypothesis emphasizes that the specific game mechanics stimulates the player’s sensitivity to the narrative elements when constructing an individual ideal story.

Key words: Chrono Trigger; Frye; symbolism; video game; narrative; ludology; literature; mythology; interactivity.
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1. Introduction

This essay attempts to compare the narrative structures of video games with literature. The study analyses the video game *Chrono Trigger* (1995) and compares it with Northrop Frey’s literary theories from *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). I have always been drawn to video games and mythology and thus my personal passion for the media found a natural foothold when the opportunity to combine the two presented itself.

The video game industry has grown massively since the 1970’s and has developed a breadth of titles, platforms and genres. *Chrono Trigger* was made by the Japanese video game company Squaresoft and is of the role-playing genre. Role-playing games commonly share many features with fairy tales, fantasy novels and sci-fi movies. *Chrono Trigger* is no exception with a multitude of man-beasts, sorcerers, fierce battles, and, underground lairs. Northrop Frye’s book *Anatomy of Criticism* includes four separate sections, or “essays”, where he systematically explores the history of storytelling. Frye presents a myth-based perspective on how to identify stories, patterns, and, symbols. He bases his theories on Plato’s and Aristotle’s legacy and supports it with psychological explanations provided by theorists such as Freud and Jung. Frye demonstrates his examples on literary giants such as Milton, Dante, Shakespeare, and even, the Bible.

Through this essay I hope to shed light on the structure of video game storytelling. Video games present new narratives which challenge classic criticism since the game play includes interactivity. Furthermore, video games content should be brought forth as a resource rather than as something crude or simply dangerous.
2. Background

2.1 Video games and storytelling – narratology versus ludology

Storytelling in videogames has received its acclaim in titles where the players have found themselves deeply touched during their gaming experience in role-playing juggernauts such as Squaresoft’s long-running Final Fantasy series. With the release of the seventh installment, Final Fantasy VII (1997), it was declared by reviewers and critics that “never before have technology, playability, and narrative combined as well as in Final Fantasy VII” (http://www.gamespot.com/ps/rpg/finalfantasy7/review.html). Although the player population finds the story value of games high, scholars are divided in two polarized camps.

Video game studies are frequently labelled with studying either narrative or ludology. Narratological scholars claim that video games are best understood as narratives and stories, and are to be considered as such. Ludology scholars claim that video games are best understood through ludology theories, meaning interpreting video games primarily as rules and simulations. The two perspectives have been considered opposites, with “the term ‘ludologist’ grew in popularity among the academic community to describe someone who is against the common assumption that video games should be viewed as extensions of narrative.” (Wolf & Perron, 222) For example, a book about a ninja who stalks through the night narrates that situation, while Ninja Gaiden (Tecmo 1988) simulates the abilities of the ninja (in a limited way). This essay assumes no direct affiliation with either of the perspectives and does not aim to strengthen either case. Rather, a combined view of both is considered the optimal approach.

2.2 Previous studies

In the area of literature studies many books have been written on narratology, hero tales and electronic texts, yet very little about video games. The lack of games in an academic context becomes evident when compared to other media. However, recently more and more research texts have been written in the field.
Video game studies take many forms. *The Medium of the Video Game* (Wolf, 2001) and *The Video Game Theory Reader* (Wolf & Perron, 2003) summarize many of the topics that interest contemporary scholars: design, identity, sexuality, spatiality, virtual worlds, ludology, and narrative. Concerning stories, Ståhl’s 2007 essay “A digital hero? A classic narrative analysis of a new medium – the video game as a media text” [my translation] analyses the video game *Shadow of the Colossus* and its storytelling elements using Propp’s narrative analysis method and Todorov’s equilibrium method. Ståhl aspires to see a balance between narratological elements and game play rules. Ståhl found that the events in the game constituted the narrative elements and gave meaning to the ludology of the game.

Gustafsson’s 2002 essay “Digital narrative: An analysis of Zelda’s development as a narrative media text” [my translation] researches five games from Nintendo’s *The Legend of Zelda* series to discover how the games have developed with time. He compares plot differences, typical content, amount of developers, and, how the console development is correlated to device power and game content. Another game study, Krzywinska’s (2006) *Blood Scythes, Festivals, Quests, and Backstories - World Creation and Rhetorics of Myth in World of Warcraft*, argues that

> to understand the game’s formal, aesthetic, and structural specificity, its pleasures and potential meanings, it is essential to investigate how the mythic functions [and that] … it provides a rationale for players’ actions, as well as the logic that underpins the stylistic profile of the game, its objects, tasks, and characters (abstract).

Throughout history, narrative studies and works such as Aristotle’s *Poetics* (384-322 BC) have had an impact on how we see stories. With a schema of poems and principles, Aristotle provided the oldest remnant of literary criticism, influencing other critics and continues to be seen as a *magnus opus*. Modern analyses concerning electronic texts can be read in, for example, Anna Gunder’s 2004 *Hyperworks – On Digital Literature and Computer Games*. Gunder deals with the digital texts or “hypertexts,” where the term is explained as digital texts which share the features of the standard “paper” text but is simply viewed through electronic devices. However, the text format can also contain computerized alternatives such as internet hyper links, thus accessing further texts.

No studies have yet been made including *Chrono Trigger* itself. Written essays-like tutorials exist but these are not considered critically useful in this academic context. There are
therefore no scholarly sources on Chrono Trigger. This can be argued to be negative from an academic point of view since the material has not been previously commented on by academics nor has its value been confirmed. On the other hand, the freshness of Chrono Trigger can be seen as beneficial since no previous academic heritage can color scholars’ analytic views or choice of tools.
3. Purpose and research questions

3.1 Purpose

This essay analyzes the video game *Chrono Trigger* and compares it with Northrop Frye’s critical models presented in *Anatomy of Criticism*. The purpose of that analysis is to discern literary elements in the video game and to highlight them and their structure. These elements will be scrutinized to attempt a hypothesis about video game narratology and storytelling.

3.2 Research questions

What narratological elements can be found in *Chrono Trigger*?

1. What symbolism is central?
2. Do the characters follow any archetypes?
3. What setting drives the plot forward?
4. Can any of Frye’s terminology be applied to the game content?
4. Theory

4.1 Northrop Frye

Northrop Frye was a Canadian scholar who lived between 1912 and 1991 and is regarded as one of the most influential literary critics during the 20th century. He studied at both University of Toronto and at Emmanuel College of Victoria College and at Merton College, Oxford. Interesting himself in the subjects of theology and literary studies, his breakthrough came with the 1947 analysis *Fearful Symmetry* of William Blake. Blake wrote complex poetry and painted abstract images which Frey designed a method of interpreting. Frye’s discoveries and the development of his mode of interpretation can be found in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

4.2 Frye’s literary criticism

The *Anatomy of Criticism* builds on four “essays” in which Frye develops his framework of critical theory and literary symbolism. Each essay guides the reader through an analysis that is consequently rooted in literature to provide examples of the complex formula. Among these examples, Frye uses the Bible as the central illustration of stories which he argues contains all forms of symbolism as “the main source for undisplaced myths in our tradition.” (Frye 140) Therefore, Frye’s analysis rests mainly on literature, drama and poems with a Western European heritage but also include other cultural contexts and sources. Founded in a European context, his argumentation draws strength from Freudian and Jungian imagery and concepts to provide his analysis with psychological perspectives.

Frye’s first essay is called “Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes” and deals with structuralizing literature. Acknowledging Aristotelian formula, Frye considers the three forms of poetry of *mythos* or plot, *ethos* or characterization and setting, and *dianoia* or “thought” and hypothesis. He explains that fiction has “as Aristotle called it, the "soul" or shaping principle, and the characters exist primarily as functions of the plot” (52), whilst dianoia refers to texts concerning the writer and his or her society. From there, he divides literature according to Aristotle into the three categories of the tragic, comic and thematic. Tragic
literature handles literature where the main character is cut off from society, comic literature deals with the main character’s blending with society, thematic literature takes a step from plot driven literature to idea-based in essays or lyrics. Frye argues that the three classifications derive from “general distinctions” (35) which he observes can take any of these three routes. Secondly, Frye divides the literary schemata into five “modes” which are based according to the hero’s power of action and compared to his surroundings: the *mythical mode* contains a hero who is divine and powerful on all levels; in the *romantic mode* the hero has slightly less power than the mythical but is a legend to his society; the strong leader is typical in high mimetic mode where he is stronger than men but not nature which he cannot rule over; the hero of the *low mimetic mode* is neither more influential to other men nor in nature; the *ironic mode* presents a hero that is subordinate to both man and surroundings with a sense of absurdity and frustration.

The second essay is called “Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols” and is concerned with symbolism. Four sections called phases present symbolism in five levels (where the first contains two). The descriptive and the literal phase speak of descriptive signs which are symbols that stir a sense of imagery in the reader that is his or her own personal view of the image, whilst the literal phase and motives display the symbol as it is used in that literal context. The formal phase displays images which are symbols that are the most occurring in that work and helps define the mood of the piece. Spanning the whole history of literature, the mythical phase and archetypal symbolism propose a nature to symbols. Symbolism is argued to be a template that is used throughout human history and can be identified in most cultures and works. The anagogic phase and monad symbolism perceives symbols as representations of spiritual imagery, closely compared with archetypes but in a sense of entities.

Frye’s third essay, “Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths”, unifies the categorization of literature from the first essay with the symbolic phases from the second essay into a cyclical disposition. Frye argues about the Great Chain of Being, also known as “worlds,” inside the structures of the modes and their symbolism which all stories inhabit but alter depending on their mode and imagery. These seven worlds are the divine, human, animal, vegetable, mineral, fire, and water with their forms within respective mode defined by the cycles of the seasons. Each of the worlds is tweaked by the apocalyptic and demonic affinities and twists the symbolism accordingly. The apocalyptic mineral world is as such the heavenly City of God whilst the demonic imagery would be the burning city of Dis in Dante’s hell-pit. Both images are colored by the world of fire but in a divine and diabolical form respectively. Frye
Norman

proposes a cyclical model with the apocalyptic or desirable closely related to heavenly imagery with the demonic world polarized sustaining the same elements but in a darker and more brutal form. Pictured as the outer rim of the circle, the apocalyptic and demonic are seen as closely related to the modes of myth and irony respectively which inherit two forms of plot analogies: the analogy of innocence pictures purging and chastity whilst the analogy of experience displays the hardships of labour and loneliness (see model I). In relation to the apocalyptic and demonic cycle, the five modes are positioned in a similar cycle but with the high mimetic in the centre showing its more neutral position although it still carries mystic elements (see model II).

Frye continues in the second part of the third essay with the theory of mythos depicting the connection of each mythoi to one of the seasons. He explains that he sees “four narrative pregeneric elements of literature which I [Frye] shall call mythoi or generic plots” (162). Each season contains symbolism related to the Great Chain of Being but alters its interpretation in accordance with the seasonal imagery. As seen in model III, the mythoi fashion a cycle in which the pattern follows that of the archetypes and modes.
Visible in model III, romance has taken the place of myth since the latter is raised above into the apocalyptic. High and low mimetic are exchanged with tragedy and comedy to reflect Frye’s connection to the seasons. This compressed formula is illustrated with a cyclical pattern to simplify the mythoi’s complex relationship and metamorphosis throughout the theory.

Probing deeper into the layers of the story, Frye isolates four character roles within each of the mythoi: “the alazons or impostors, the eirons or self-deprecators, and the buffoons (bomolochoi)” (Frye, 172) with the later addition of the agroikos or plot-refuser. With the addition of the agroikos the characters are formed into two contrasting pairs. Frye explains that “the contest of eiron and alazon forms the basis of the comic action, and the buffoon and the churl polarize the comic mood” (172). Furthermore, Frye elaborates on what he calls the quest-myth. The quest-myth is commonly associated with the mythoi of summer and romance but is identified within all the mythoi. The story, and specifically the hero, partakes in four stages. The first, agon or conflict, is “the basis or archetypal theme of romance, the radical of romance being a sequence of marvelous adventures” (Frye, 192). Secondly, pathos or catastrophe is the battle between eiron and alazon. Pathos is not restricted to heroic victory but may take any form of death of one or both parts. Thirdly, sparagmos or the split of the hero shares the hero’s body or power amongst his followers. Lastly, anagnorisis or the uniting is the resurrection or celebration of the hero. The hero can (in less epic stories) through a
social sparagmos return to his hometown to be revered or more heroically through a physical
death be restored and exalted as a hero-god.

Lastly, the fourth essay, “Rhetorical criticism: Theory of Genres”, is not referred to in this
eyessay. A genre-analysis is not required since Chrono Trigger belongs to the video game
genre.
5. Method

5.1 Material

5.1.1 Chrono Trigger – “the dream project”

Chrono Trigger is a game that was seen by its creators as a “dream team” project. The development team consisted of Final Fantasy series creator Hironobu Sakaguchi, Dragon Quest series creator Yuji Horii, and creator of the manga Dragon Ball Akira Toriyama. They worked together with producer and role-playing game factotum Kazuhiko Aoki to produce this highly recognized video game that has been re-released twice on two different consoles.

The game features a story where the player controls Crono, a young boy who lives in the land Guardia during a period called the 1000’s. One of Crono’s friends Lucca, a young scientist, creates with her father a teleporting device which malfunctions when the Guardia princess Marle’s pendant reacts to the teleporter and opens a time portal which swallows her. Crono quickly identifies the pendant as the key and repeats the process to find himself travelling back in time to the 600’s where Marle has been mistaken for a missing queen. With the aid of Lucca, who travels via a so-called Gate Key, Marle is rescued and the original queen is rescued from a nearby monster-infested monastery. Upon returning to the 1000’s, the group is prosecuted for kidnapping Marle and escapes captivity to be forced into yet another time portal and discovers the year of 2300. A video in a desolate dome-residence gives witness to The Day of Lavos, the destruction of the world, which the characters vow to prevent. Thus, the characters travel through time to explore and alter events in the history of the world to avert Lavos and the cataclysm in his wake.

The player accesses the eras through the portals scattered around the game world which steers the player along the story to lead the quest onward. Along this progression, the player witnesses seven eras with their individual characters, environments, plot lines and events. Exploring the time periods delivers insight into the world structure and plot development where the player must take action to progress and alter the age. Speaking with inhabitants (also called non-player characters, or NPCs) presents quests or information and wandering the fields or wilderness can randomly produce combat where the characters use their skills to
defeat monsters and increase their skill levels (commonly known as leveling through gathering experience points).

5.1.2 Why Chrono Trigger?

Chrono Trigger is a video game that has been met positively due to several reasons: the top game designers worked together to create one of “Square’s largest project this far” (Super Power, 1995:24 [my translation]); players found the rich story and game mechanics satisfying and the game is often mentioned in polls concerning appreciated games in history; the game contains a multitude of settings and characters which makes it interesting to analyze; the game changes shape continuously. The game mechanics emulate several literary styles making Chrono Trigger a suitable video game for literary criticism.

5.2 Tools and method

A qualitative inductive method will be used in this essay. “One of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory,” (Creswell 30) where the researcher advances on a subject aspiring to draw knowledge from it rather than to establish a theory common to quantitative studies. Qualitative studies uses “open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data” and “makes interpretations of the data” (Creswell 19), compared to closed questions, numerical and statistical analysis common in quantitative studies.

The essay uses a simple qualitative structure, working with breaking down an object to apply a theory to the selected parts. The method is called a “top-down” design (Malterud 151) which is done in four steps of data gathering and thematization, theme representation and quoting, converting themes and quotes into texts, and lastly to applying theories on the text. Creswell recommends that “the researchers may incorporate the related literature in the final section of the study, where it is used to compare and contrast with the results (or themes or categories) that emerged from the study.” (31)

Quoting Chrono Trigger required designing a reference system to save space. For example, quoting such as the character Magus saying “The black wind howls” during the
battle at his castle during the 600’s could be overly extensive. To avoid typing “Chrono Trigger, Magus: 600’s/Middle Ages, Magus’ Castle”, a shorter version was fashioned. The above quote would be cited: “CT:MA:Magus”, where CT equals Chrono Trigger, MA Middle Ages and so forth.

Abbreviation legend:

CT = Chrono Trigger

Pres = Present

MA = Middle Ages

F = Future

DoL = Day of Lavos/ Apocalypse

PreH = Prehistoric

DA = Dark Ages

EoT = End of Time
6. Analysis

Chrono Trigger is structured around time travel and the time periods that the characters visit. The analysis is organized into eras that are briefly summarized, analyzed and compared with Frye’s terminology and theory. Furthermore, since the story does not follow the chronological order Frye proposes, the eras will be analyzed in their order of appearance. Each section includes the plot, chain of events, main characters analysis, and symbolism according to each era.

6.1 1000 A.D “The Present”

The Present is Chrono Trigger’s first era and is a time at peace. The primary colours are light greens and blues. Thin clouds dot the sky and birds soar. The Guardia Kingdom is celebrating their existence with a Millennial Fair: 400 years ago, during the Middle Ages, the Legendary Hero appeared and slew the evil wizard Magus. The Present has four villages; Truce, Porre and Choras are inhabited by humans while the Medina is the home of the Mystics. The Mystics are a humanoid race with a variance of monster-like features. The Mystics of Medina differ in their attitude towards humans depending on events in the Middle Ages (if their primary leader Magus or secondary leader Ozzie is active, they are hostile, if inactive they are peaceful). Even though the Present is in harmony some denizens are not as pleased as others, claiming “a peaceful world is a boring world” (CT: Pres: Choras maid).

The Present is idyllic but beneath the green plains are two stories of conflict: the first features Marle and her father King Guardia XXXIII (and the Chancellor’s influences) and the second revolves around the Mystics and human relationship. Both storylines are influenced at some points by Mystic activities. Initially, the quarrel between the King and Marle is rooted in her boredom and frequent escapes from her royal life, a habit and attitude the King sees as inappropriate. Marle decision to flee through time is because of the Chancellor’s persecution of Crono which extends her distant relationship with her father. In a later sub-plot of the story, King Guardia XXI is asked to hide an artefact known as the Rainbow shell at the castle treasury but it is discovered that the Chancellor is holding King Guardia XXXIII accused for selling the heirloom. The Chancellor explains that “if he hasn’t sold the heirloom, it should be
in the castle. Show me the Rainbow Shell, and I’ll accept his innocence, heh, heh...” (CT: Pres: Chancellor). Naturally, the shell is where it is supposed to be but guarded by monsters. Once retrieved, the King is proven innocent and the Chancellor is unmasked as the ancestral Yakra XIII. Yakra XIII’s defeat and the scheme moved the King and Marle closer to each other especially since the late queen died. Concerning the Medina Mystics, the default and untampered Present’s inhabitants practice a man-hate and praise statues of Magus. If Crono tries to approach the Mystics he is attacked accompanied with curses such as “come join us in singing your funeral dirge!” (CT: Pres: Mystics). More renegade Mystics are seen in the Heckran cave where the fellowship travels to find a secret route back to the west continent. This attempt is gleefully commented by Medina residents as “I hope those humans get what they deserve from Heckran!” (CT: Pres: Diablos). Inside the cave the Mystics are directly aggressive yelling such as “death to the Mystics’ enemies!” (CT: Pres: Hench) and Heckran laments a sorrowful heritage claiming that “if only the great Magus who brought forth Lavos 400 years ago, had destroyed the human race! The world would’ve belonged to us Mystics!” (CT: Pres: Heckran). Lastly, when the player has encountered Magus and disrupted his plans during the Middle Ages, his henchman Ozzie is instead praised during the Present. If Ozzie is defeated, the Mystics are a friendly and trading folk.

The first of the seven worlds, the divine world of gods, in the Present is identified in lore and myths. The human population tells of an ancient war but the general expression is of boredom and ambivalence, such as a boy at the Millennial Fair claiming “so what if we won a war against a Wizard hundreds of years ago!” (CT: Pres: Little boy). Firstly, the eternal struggle of an apocalyptic and demonic world is not of any interest to the humans and seems to be dormant. Secondly, the human world of men is summarized as one of harmony with Crono’s transparent role providing a human representation of the era’s neutrality. Thirdly, the animal world includes small white birds soaring the sky and small kittens as well as shadowy remnants of monsters in the forests and caves. Fourthly, the vegetable world portrayed with green fields and calm forests. Fifthly, the mineral world includes the modernization of cities and mechanics, including the Guardia castle, Lucca’s teleport device and electricity. The worlds of fire and water are not specifically notable. Sixthly and seventhly, fire or light can be observed in the lightness of the era itself and water as a simple obstacle seen in when the party passes an underwater trench to return to the western continent from Medina.

Four romance character stereotypes can be identified. The alazon, imposter or nemesis, is observed in both King Guardia XXXIII and the Mystics as disruptors of peace: King Guardia
XXXIII’s attempts to encage Marle would if successful have stopped her from meeting Crono and thus stopped the realization of Lavos; the Mystics, led by Yakra XIII, are imposters since they (in the unaltered Present) are hostile and still have active agents who seek to overthrow human reign. The eiron, or hero, is visible in Crono but also in Marle. Crono, as the game’s primary protagonist, is the embodiment of the saviour who experiences and alters the story in the game. Frye explains that the female eiron usually is a “stage prop” (Frye, 173) such as a bride. However, Marle’s participation as an active character in the fellowship promotes her to an actual heroine. Frye proposes other eiron characters such as the benevolent grandfather figure, seen in Melchior, withdrawing and returning when needed to aid in the quest. This is foremost seen in his aid in constructing the legendary sword Masamune. Frye identifies a character known as the bomolochoi, or buffoon, a character that adds flavour to the mood of the story. Such is seen in the Chancellor at the Guardia castle who later in the story is revealed as the vengeful beast Yakra XIII. He can also be identified as the agroikos, or kill-joy, since he also manifests the absurdity of the royal confinement of Marle and intentionally tries to execute Crono. The Chancellor maintains elements of the bomolochoi and agroikos as his true form, Yakra XIII, where he pathetically and humorously utters “defeated again” once thwarted (CT: Pres: Yakra XIII).

Frye explains that during summer and romance the “birth of the hero,” (Frye, 198) occurs. The green fields of youth introduce the player to Crono and puts the rest of the game into contrast with this era which twists the other eras to a perilous tone. The symbolism also establishes the quest on a small-scale and large-scale according to Frye who argues that:

The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero (173).

A small-scale quest is seen in the minor challenges that acquaint the player with such monstrous elements as the Guardia dungeon and the Heckran cave. The large-scale quest which takes speed from this era overlaps the entire game.
6.2 600 A.D “The Middle Ages”

The Middle Ages is the era where Guardia knights are at war with the wizard Magus and his army of Mystics. The era is presented as gloomy and shadowy battlefields that are scattered across the lands. It is a period where the elements of summer have turned to autumn: the grass, waters, mountains and forests have a darker shade. The world is covered in a thick mist and the world has more caves and forests compared to the Present. The human settlements seen in the Present are here villages and where Medina will be built are the two lairs: Magus’ Castle and Ozzie’s Fort.

The age tells the story of a war boiled down to the battle between the characters Frog and Magus. The Mystics’ hatred is empowered into a war machine with the commanders Ozzie as general and Magus as a spiritual leader. The Guardia kingdom’s first major issue with Mystics is with the abduction of Queen Leene by the Chancellor-impersonating Yakra. She is saved by the player who arrives from the Present. Revisiting the era, it is learned that King Guardia XXI’s brave knight Cyrus seeks the legendary blade Masamune since it “is required to fight Magus” (CT:MA: Frog). During his search, Cyrus is killed by Magus and his squire Glenn is turned into the anthropomorphic Frog. Frog is left brooding over his friend’s death and frequently experiences visions of his past with Cyrus and their tragic events. His mood plunges further as he considers himself incapable to serve the crown when the King gets injured in battle. Frog withdraws into solitude in the Cursed Woods with the appearance of a new legendary hero. However, the hero, a boy named Tata, is proven a fraud and Frog reveals the top-half of the Masamune, leading the party to retrieve the bottom piece from the Denadoro Mountains and forging materials from the Prehistoric era. With the reforged Masamune and the spirit of Cyrus assuring that Frog carries no burden for his death, Frog agrees to assault Magus’ castle. Magus’ summoning of Lavos is disrupted and malfunctions throwing the group into another time hole.

The chain of being in the Middle Ages shows the divine world as a dialectic struggle between the legendary hero and his rival in the form of Magus. The tale can be heard in taverns and homes alike and is common knowledge amongst the people. The human world’s icon is the hero, expressed by the warring knights as “stories about the Hero and his legendary medal... Now it turns out he’s our only hope” (CT:MA: Knight). The hero, Frog, acts as the extended arm of the people and represents all their aspects in his relationship with his
deceased friend Cyrus in a micro-macro formation: the human war on Magus is his revenge, his sorrow of Cyrus connects with the people, his pride as a servant of the crown embodies the people’s loyalty. The animal world is one of mythical sentient beasts primarily seen in Frog’s dual nature as human and amphibian. The vegetable world has retreated into the mysterious forests where beasts and heroes alike live seen in the Cursed Woods where Frog has his hideaway. The mineral world is embodied both by the castle and the mountain. Guardia castle, Magus’ Castle and Ozzie’s lair are all constructs symbolizing the shaped mountain as the point of epiphany. The twin imagery of fire and water are illustrated in tragic forms: the divine fire is present in Magus’ castle and water is symbolized in the brooding Frog (frogs being amphibians). Magus’ castle is a dark structure ornate with a massive dragon which houses otherworldly fire as candles in dark corridors and blue flames in Magus’ summoning room. Fire’s connection with the divine is evident in the castle’s closeness to the sky pointing at divine contact but with a malevolent quality. Water usually symbolizes death and the underworld (Frye, 146) and Frog’s amphibian form represent his physical passage through a watery existence and an existential labyrinth. Eventually Frog exits his dissonant maze with Cyrus’ blessing, “I can rest now, knowing that everyone is in good hands” (CT: MA: Cyrus), and finds strength in his form accepting that “a changed frog art I!” (CT: MA: Frog).

Chrono Trigger’s concept of the hero is explicitly developed in the Middle Ages. Guardia’s champion (Cyrus and later Frog) uses the term hero and assumes such a role in the quest to slay Magus. A hero is identified by carrying the Hero’s Medal which has been in the hands of both characters. In tragedy, however, the roles of the eiron, alazon, bomolochi and agroikos are “very like that of comedy in reverse” (Frye, 216). The eiron is thus Magus since he, in his sorrow of losing his sister Schala during the 12000s, attempts to summon Lavos for revenge. Frye explains that the eiron’s tragic state exists because “an event previous to the action of which the tragedy itself is the consequence” (Frye, 216). Magus’ hidden plot makes him actively disregard the troubles he makes during the Middle Ages such as killing Cyrus. The expectation of an eiron raises them to near-divine levels as the sole saviour, a role Magus’ fulfills as the powerful leader of the Mystics. In the mythos of autumn and tragedy “we see the tragic hero as disturbing a balance in nature ... a balance which sooner or later must right itself” (Frye, 209). This balance is the life and future of the planet which is manipulated by Lavos. Magus’ illustrates the interruption in summoning Lavos as “a dark wind howls” (CT: MA: Magus) which carries an analogy to wind as “images dealing with the movement of
“spirit” are likely to be associated with the theme of unpredictability or sudden crisis” (Frye, 160). Intruding upon Magus’ plan, Frog unknowingly walks a doomed path. “The tragic hero usually belongs of course to the alazon group, an impostor” (217), Frye explains. Magus’ hatred of Lavos is only revealed later in the story enlightening the heroic deeds of Frog to be, in a sense, contradictory to Magus’ disruption of balance. Frog is thus a tragic hero since he attempts to create a new order but is characterized with both a sense of rightness and pity due to balance and strong external will. The tragic bomolochi takes the form of the suppliant, usually an outcast, sentenced or haunted. The role’s function is to increases the feeling of tragic due when excluded. Tata, the young boy who falsely acts as the hero of legend is mocked when discovered a fraud: “Scoundrel! I knew this was all a sham!” (CT: MA: Tata’s Father). Mockery is used as a mental and social expulsion rather than the physical that Frye proposes, both creating the same feelings in the character and reader. A faithful friend of the hero assumes the role of agroikos, the tragic-refuser is “an outspoken critic of the tragic action” (Frye, 218). Frog in his former form as Glenn alongside Cyrus fills this role in his flashbacks. His former self expresses no will to fight nor to be heroic, being called a “spineless wimp” (CT: MA: Ozzie) when transformed, and, avoiding knighthood claiming “I think I’d really lose it if I had to hurt someone” (CT: MA: Glenn).

The concept of revenge and the inevitable gloom that exists at the centre of the Middle Ages identifies it as the mythos of autumn and tragedy. Both Magus’ and Frog’s attempts to stop evil are always doomed to fail which summarizes the mythos in their actions. Tragedy embodies the struggle for success but is tragic since it has been destined to fall since the beginning. The typical fantasy elements common to tragedy are also present such as wizardry, shape-shifting creatures, dungeons and knights.

The quest-myth from romance continues in the Middle Ages as the story goes on. Believing that Magus was the reason to Lavos’ existence, agon (conflict) takes form of the quest to slay Magus. Pathos is seen at two occasions: Frog’s flashback with Cyrus’ death includes the clash between the perceived enemy and the hero resulting in Cyrus’ death; Frog’s determined climb to reach Magus and stop summoning Lavos is the second and foremost primary death-struggle since at that point the player and Magus are both removed from that time which could be interpreted as the death of hero and foe. The removal and entrance into the next era and episode of the game can be seen as the act of sparagmos (separation). The need of the hero disappears with Frog’s last act which stops the war. Anagnorisis does not happen in the era but rather in the Present where the legendary hero is revered.
6.3 2300 A.D “The Future”

*The Future* shows huge craters scarring the surface, a constant wind and lightning scorching the land, a wasteland burned by Lavos dotted with human domes in ruin. The few survivors live in these shattered buildings in poverty and despair, lacking the will to live. The only other living creatures are numerous mutants that roam the wastes between the domes, robots, a band of Mystics inhabiting the sewers, and Belthasar the Guru of Reason. Towering above the ruins is the mountain Death Peak, the residence of Lavos. The player accesses the domes and remote areas via roads mazes and underground passages.

The main storylines of the era are the human survivors struggle with their robotic legacy and secondly Crono’s resurrection at Death Peak using time devices. Arriving to the era Crono meets Doan, an elderly man and descendant of Marle, baffled at their arrival, saying “Hey, we’ve got people who crossed the ruins! ... So there ARE people who can beat up those freaky mutants...” (CT: F: Doan). To solve their poverty, the storage centre below the dome is explored and found infested with renegade robots and the corpse of a man holding a seed. The seed is the same that is created by Melchior during the 12000s which has travelled through history. Returning without food, it is still clear that “those seeds might be your only hope” (CT: F: Lucca). Found offline in the Promo Dome, Robo is a robotic artificial intelligence that accompanies the fellowship. Although mechanical, he surprises his new friends with his human emotions primarily during his encounter with his creator Mother Brain and mate Atropos XR; it is revealed that his purpose was to infiltrate human behaviour to ultimately destroy them and enable a new robotic civilization. His former kin practices a dislike for humans, claiming “I’ll reset your circuitry and erase your memories. Then we’ll dispose of these filthy humans” (CT: F: Mother Brain). Robo resists his proposed programming and values his human experiences and destroys the robots. Lavos is said to reside on Death Peak which acts as the trademark of the era: in its shadow is the Keeper’s Dome where the Guru Belthasar keeps the flying time machine Epoch which allows limitless time travel. After Crono’s death, sentries from the Keeper’s Dome assist the climb to the summit where the item *Chrono Trigger*, a device that “will have an effect equal to the effort you put into your search” (CT: End: Gaspar), alters time. Atop the height, where “the only chance you have of reviving your friend” (CT: F: Belthasar) is by exchanging him with a clone, a sole tree stands. Shattering the Chrono Trigger with the words “all who fear the night stand against the darkness...Please give us strength!” (CT: F: Marle), the sun is eclipsed and the scene shifts to
the moment inside the Ocean Palace when Crono was killed. Magus explains that it is “a time freeze... I never thought it possible” (CT: F: Magus) and Crono is replace with the clone. Next a black background is shown with the tree atop Death Peak visibly shining white and the silhouette of Crono equally white descending. Crono awakens and is declared “thou art a lucky lad.” (CT: F: Frog).

The chain of being viewed in the Future is dark. The divine world is influenced by Lavos and its presence in the world colouring all aspects of the environment making the divine ruthless and wrathful. It is revealed that Lavos harvests biological DNA inside the planet which provides with an association to Frye’s explanation that demonic gods “intervene in human affairs chiefly to safeguard their own prerogatives” (Frye, 147). The human world is on its way to extinction and small groups live in famine: the human reality reflects the pressure from the dark divine. The animal world is twisted with mutated monsters and renegade robots: mutants symbolizing the corrupted animal distant from nature and the robots symbolizing the metallic humanoid incapable of human emotion but effective in killing and rationality. The vegetable world is dead in the scorched landscape and the imagery of the garden or tree of life are absent except for two units: in the Arris Dome, a seed passed down throughout the game is discovered and mysteriously starts to grow which indicates hope and revival of the human race; atop Death Peak stands a one tree, seemingly dead and fossilized white. Although sterile, the tree is positioned at the peak where the resurrection of Crono is held thus reflecting the tree of life and the tree as a growing organism of life. The mineral world is the destroyed city. The demolished domes and ruined skyscrapers that litter the surface as skeletons of past civilizations are identified with Frye’s “cities of destruction and dreadful night” (Frye, 150). Death Peak as Lavos’ seat of reign, acts a as a symbol of the mineral perversion where the holy mountain is the home of evil (but at the same time also life, as seen in the resurrection of Crono). Lastly, the worlds of fire and water have their elements demonized in the forms of evil energies: divine fire falls in the form of lightning giving it a wrathful attribute while water has taken its physical form of snow and hail. Passing under the Sewer Access to reach Death Peak gives the notion of underworld symbolism, traversing water labyrinths to reach the home of the dead and the monster. Frye draws the parallel to the monster Leviathan, who “is the sea” and also death where “the hero has to enter the body of death” (Frye, 191-192 [original italics]). Therefore, Lavos and the Future symbolizes both water and death, where the people live metaphorically in the beast through the weather as well as near death itself identified in the water-surrounded Death Peak.
A mirrored form of romantic characters can be identified in the *Future*. The eiron is Lavos, reversing birth with death and destroying the world. The oppositional alazon, usually the monster, is here the fellowship. Their inverted roles as opposition are the bringers of life and hope, visible in their strengthening of the people, repairing Robo and reviving Crono. Romantic bomolochoi are neutral spirits from “a world of mystery which is glimpsed but never seen” (Frye, 196) and in irony they are maddened humans increasing the demonic setting. These are visible in the trashed humans and the insane Belthasar, representing human suppression. The kill-joy is the reversed fearful-companion (Frye, 197), here in the form of the strong-willed Robo. Robo’s persona symbolizes the opposite to that of the human: he is an inhuman product and instilled with the strength that men lack meaning he enhances the ironic mood as a mechanical object more powerful as a human than the humans themselves.

The *Future* inherits symbolic features of the demonic in combination with the mode of irony and the allegory of winter. Deadly water, hard winds, rampaging mutants and monsters construct a cold parody to the closely experienced and romantic *Present*. Lavos’ awakening pulled the previously stable society down into a dark underworld where Death Peak symbolizes the escalating hardships of enmity. Lavos’ presence at the top can be seen as the wrathful god that punishes humans. The player needs to climb the mountain to challenge the suppressor in hopes of overcoming this form of erect and inverted hell-hole. In irony, Frye claims that “calling a man a swine or a skunk or a woman a bitch affords a severely restricted satisfaction, as most of the unpleasant qualities of the animal are human projections” (Frye, 225) and instead mankind experiences a dehumanization. Winter and the *Future* embody the ironic state of being human but ridden of humanity in the form of depression, famine and a need to fight the Peak to regain life.

The quest-myth formula continues and is to a certain extent completed in the *Future*. Agon and pathos are not actively performed since in the *Future* the *Apocalypse* has already happened. Agon and pathos rather linger in the background driving the plot forward although small-scale conflicts such as Robo’s exist. Sparagmos happens during the 12000’s when Crono is killed. Anagnorisis, on the other hand, is fulfilled at the use of the Chrono Trigger atop Death Peak. Resurrection seems to be capable only here in the ironic since of the closeness to the symbolic world of darkness, cold and water, and its proximity to the realm of death. This imagery is firstly knit in the era with Lavos’ activity and will manifesting winter and darkness in the surface world. The *Future* corresponds to Frye’s cycle where death and
the demonic is closest to winter and therefore uses an imagery that shortens the bridge between the world of the living and the dead.

6.4 1999 A.D “The Day of Lavos” or “The Apocalypse”

Exploration of the Day of Lavos, the Apocalypse, is never accessible to the player. It is either briefly visited from End of Time (leading straight to combat with Lavos) or from a video in the 2300’s. The land resembles much of the 1000’s with a healthy surface covered in grass, trees and sunshine. Humans appear to live in large domes connected by asphalt roads. The scenery changes when Lavos splits the earth crust. Lavos resembles a maliciously magnified hedgehog-woodlouse crossbreed. The spherical body is covered with large spikes and three mandibles encloses a single eye. Apart from breaching the surface spewing lava and fire it dispatches several of the large thorns that lay fiery waste to the lands.

The seven worlds are sparsely shown in the Day of Lavos due to lack of interaction and information. The divine world is assumedly one similar to the Present where the ancient trials of heroes and magic are but mere stories. As Lavos is introduced the divine world is shaped around it as the superhuman entity that defines the higher realms. Lavos and the apocalypse is the introduction to the more elaborated Future where the demonic elements are clearer. Accordingly, the divine is demonic in the Day of Lavos as well. The human world seems to be peaceful and united alongside technology. Roads connecting the domes propose an era of unification. The animal world is absent since no beasts or domestic animals are shown. The vegetable world is similar to the Present showing the era as an extension of the previous. The mineral world is identified in the domes and asphalt roads symbolizing the technological advancement of the human species and a movement from the city gardens to the more sterile materialized world of a mechanical future. The two worlds of fire and water are visible in the short glimpse of the Apocalypse where fire is the most prominent. Fire embodies a destructive character at Lavos’ disposal, raining down and burning the earth eliminating life. Water is not as pronounced being only visible as the sea.

The characterization of the eiron, alazon, bomolochi, agroikos are not present apart from Lavos since the Apocalypse cannot be interacted with. Lavos assumedly fills the role of the impostor since it breaches the peace visible in the era. Possible eirons are the humans who
experience the destruction. Lavos can also be argued to act as the agroikos as it disrupts harmony and produces the chaotic mood experienced in the era.

The *Day of Lavos* can be seen as the mythos of summer and romance in an extension of the *Present*. With a green and prosperous civilization living in advanced technology domes, the awakening of Lavos and the destruction of the world’s surface moves the mythos rapidly from summer to winter, romance to irony, passing autumn and tragedy quickly. Watching the recording at the Arris Dome during the *Future* shows the experience of two Operators and their supervising Director evaluating the attack. This combines the agnon (conflict) and pathos (struggle) as the era reflects romance quest activities. Furthermore, Lavos produces a sense of vengeance or balance, called nemesis (Frye, 209) reflecting the tragic formulae. These merge into the rise of Lavos signifying the resistance brought by an alien force. The mythical symbolism in Lavos’ unearthing alters the scenery dramatically. The once green and tranquil plains are covered by a world-wide shadow and the earth cracks as Lavos bursts out. The hole it makes and the pieces of rock that shoot into the air are coloured by lava and fire as the whole form of Lavos seems to be burning. Lavos entry upon the world also unleashes several of its spikes that rain down and damages the earth. Lavos connection with the underground as the nether world, destructive fire and darkness, identifies it as the demonic presence. If the player attempts to interfere and attacks Lavos but fails the sentence “but...the future refused to change” (CT: DoL) declares the absoluteness upon the world, carrying a likeliness of an evil god taking control. Such an evil force, Frye explains, usually takes the form of a single monster such as the biblical Leviathan. The monster is described as the “enemy of the Messiah, and whom the Messiah is destined to kill in the “day of the Lord” “(Frye, 189). Leviathan’s symbolism is similar to Lavos’ in embodying evil, being present at the *Day of Lavos* instead of “the Lord.” Frye continues arguing that upon battle the hero goes “down the monster’s throat” (Frye, 190) which is visible in the final battle with Lavos: the battle has three stages which include breaching its first form, Lavos shell, entering to defeat the second form, Inner Lavos, and finally the core, Lavos Core.

6.5 65.000.000 B.C “The Prehistoric”

65.000.000 B. C is pictured resembling Earth’s prehistoric ages along with a single continent, a flourishing and untamed wild life. Green patches are sparingly strewn across a
mud brown supercontinent. Jagged mountain peaks cover most of the continent and the centre is composed of four active volcanoes in the midst of a sea of lava. The two human tribes, the Ioka and Laruba, are in combat with the hostile humanoid reptilians the Reptites. Both groups have strong women as leaders: Ayla the fist-brawler leads the humans and the cunning Azala the Reptites. The human Ioka and Laruba villages are crude huts positioned near flourishing forests. The Reptite Lair is also in a forest and depicts deep caverns while the Tyrano Lair, on top a peak surrounded by lava, is a dark complex made of huge reptile bones.

The central narratives of the Prehistoric are the battle of humans versus Reptites and the fall of Lavos. Upon reforging the Masamune, Crono discovers the needed material Dreamstone in the Prehistoric era and in Ayla’s possession. The party is welcomed with open arms and a drinking contest and Dreamstone is won. However, their Gate key device is stolen by Ayla’s jealous partner Kino who later is intercepted by Azala who in turn steals it. Defeating the Reptites opposition allows the party to return and continue with their quest to defeat Magus but disrupting his summoning ritual forces the fellowship into the Prehistoric era once again. This time Crono discovers that the tribes have suffered a direct attack from the Reptites and captives have been taken to the headquarters inside the Tyrano Lair. On the way to the lair and during the ascendant to the topmost turret a red star has been visible in the sky. After defeating Azala’s monstrous pet the Black Tyrano, it is revealed that the red star is Lavos and Azala prophesizes that upon its fall “stones of fire will rain down. Flames shall scorch the land. The burned out plains will slowly freeze, ushering in a long, cruel ice age” (CT: Preh: Azala). Lavos’ impact alters the temperature and Kino explains that the event experienced as “Lavos fall. Reptites gone. Good! But get cold now. Hunting bad...” (CT:Preh:Kino).

The Prehistoric chain of being shows a divine world as the battle over life and death of species. Survival versus death takes on the rudimentary form of a kind’s privilege of evolution. The human world is crude and is on the border of a Reptite advantage symbolizing mankind’s blossoming as a new race on earth. The animal world is unified as the beast and dinosaur, a symbol of prehistoric times and brutish animals. The vegetable world is untamed with large plants and thick jungles reflecting the world in a state of rapid growth. The mineral world is not the simple mud hut but the mountain and the super continent where unpolished peaks house Reptite lairs symbolizing the construction of rock. Also, a yet-to-be moving landmass points at the newborn quality of the world. The worlds of fire and water are in their forms of basic elemental affinities: fire as lava and water as the inaccessible seas surrounding
the continent. The two elements are usually seen with separate functions but during the 
Prehistoric fire and water both contain life. Water works in tandem with fire to cool lava into 
rock and thus allowing land dwelling life. Lava becomes the solid equal of the seas as water 
usually is connected with the realm of life and death.

Characters of comedy and the mythos of spring follow somewhat Frye’s standard 
characterization template. The alazon is early identified as the Reptites and later, past Reptite 
extension, as Lavos. Frye argues that the comical eiron usually “is the ... heavy father, who 
with his rages and threats” (Frye, 172) opposes the hero’s will and is related to demonic 
characters. Visible here is the lack of the male parental figure. Azala the Reptite leader is 
female and Lavos is pictured as genderless which shows the era to use non-male alazons 
instead. The cavemen embody the eiron seen especially in Ayla as their leader. Raw strength 
is the central theme visible as force acts as the primary attribute to iconize the crude era. In 
the search of the Dreamstone, Ayla explains that “rare, red rock sign of power. Ayla strongest 
in Ioka village. So Ayla’s rock!” (CT: Preh: Ayla). Furthermore, classically the male hero 
seeks his bride who fulfils the role of “stage prop” (Frye, 173), whilst Ayla as the strongest 
human functions as the hero and her mate Kino acts as the left-behind groom. Withdrawing 
and returning grandfather-figures are also common in comedy but are not identifiable. Ayla 
and Azala utilize the traits of the bomolochoi and agroikos respectively: Ayla’s caveman 
speech, “come to village. We talk and eat. Dance! Eat! Fun!” (CT: Preh: Ayla), and focus on 
eating (from Frog to quest items) emphasizes the scenery of a simple and natural life. Ayla’s 
obsession with food is related to the bomolochoi as the cook, who to establish the setting are 
“something more like a master of ceremonies, a center for the comic mood” (Frye, 174). A 
connection can be seen at the festivity that introduces the players to the Prehistoric era and 
the central role Ayla has and her addition to the party. Azala’s more intellectual and sardonic 
comments to the rising mankind embody the “killjoy who tries to stop the fun” (Frye, 176). 
When stealing the Gate Key, she questions how “those apes have made something THIS 
advanced?” (CT: Preh: Azala), continuously suppressing the humans and their culture.

Birth and creation are the key aspects of the Prehistoric moving the era close to the mythos 
of spring and comedy. It is here that the humans are given their foothold on life and where 
Lavos lands, creating the natural beginning of the game’s story. Humanity as cavemen 
symbolizes the growth of civilization that defeats opposition in the form of the Reptites. 
Spring feelings of love are present in the relationship between Ayla and her fiancée Kino. 
Frye explains that:
What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that this desire is resisted by some opposition, usually parental, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will (163).

The twist, in this case, is that it is Ayla who seems to be chasing Kino. However, the story shows that Kino tries through dirty tricks (stealing the Gate Key from Crono) to ensure Ayla’s interest in him, making their relationship equally desirable. Creation in the spring mythos is commonly the founding of a new society built atop the old. This is seen as how the Prehistoric settles with the Reptites extinction. Frye argues that such a shift is usually followed by a “festive ritual, which either appears at the end of the play or is assumed to take place immediately afterward” (Frye, 163). These also include weddings and dances. Although it does not occur after the death of the Reptites, a tribal feast is held at the fellowships arrival in the era, accommodated with dance, music and drinking contests. In the newly released version to the Playstation (1999) a cinematic ending is added showing the marriage of Ayla and Kino (as well as Crono and Marle) symbolizing the beginning of a new history where the old one is refuted to let the new be built upon. The cycle of mythoi continues with ice age because of Lavos corresponding to the symbolism of winter and death following birth.

The quest-myth visible in the Prehistoric is naturally connected to birth. Agon is identified in the collision between the humans and the Reptites with the climactic pathos atop the Tyrano Lair symbolizing the complete death of either race. Sparagmos is more complicated as it is not the will of a hero that is spread but rather Azala’s prophecy. The red star, Lavos, brings forth what Azala leaves behind but also carries the power of birth since it wipes out the Reptites and allows humans to evolve. Anagnorisis in the reunion of the hero is also not clear. Indeed Lavos’ fall allows the humans to continue peacefully but Azala’s death does not provide the return of the hero. This could be in unity with the fact that there is no male alazon or eiron classically found in stories but rather the female representatives’ gives “birth” to the future generations where the male hero does exist.
6.6 12,000 BC “The Dark Ages”

The Dark Ages is shown as the ice age that occurred after Lavos impact during the Prehistoric. The formerly jointed continent has been split up and the landscape is lashed with snow with large ice flats floating on the seas. No signs of life are to be seen but deep inside the Terra Cave holding the city Algetty live the Earthbound Ones in rocky environment with tangled weeds climbing the walls. Deeper inside the caves are connected to the floating rock-prison the Mountain of Woe. The Earthbound Ones live in poverty as cast-aways from the Kingdom of Zeal -- the floating continent above the clouds where humans live and prosper in a highly developed society. In contrast to the harsh surface, the flying island of Zeal is covered in forests and a lake flows freely through the white otherworldly golden cities as the opposite to the hard life of the 12000’s. The Dark Ages are also known as such due the inhabitants in the Kingdom of Zeal being wielders of magic, calling themselves the ‘Enlightened Ones’, leaving those unable to learn magic on the cold surface bear their lesser titles of ‘Earthbound Ones’. The Kingdom of Zeal is accessed through teleporting devices known as skyways to either one of the Kingdoms three cities; the capital city called the Zeal Palace, Enhasa, or Kajar. It is lead by the sorceress and queen named after the kingdom itself: Queen Zeal. The three powerful gurus met in different parts of the game lived here: Gaspar the Guru of Time, Melchior the Guru of Life and Belthasar the Guru of Reason.

The Dark Ages is visited two times, first discovering the magical Kingdom of Zeal and secondly returning to venture deeper into the real face of the era. Upon arriving, Crono travels the lands freely and discovers Algetty and the Earthbound and later the skyways to Zeal and the Enlightened Ones. The party discovers that a machine called the Mammon machine has been built to harvest power from a source deep inside the earth. The power is revealed to be Lavos and in order to magnify the machine’s absorption, the Ocean Palace is under construction to house the machine at the bottom of the ocean floor and closer to Lavos. Also arriving at the time as the Prophet, Magus influences the party’s capture by convincing the queen that “they are the evildoers I warned you of” (CT: DA: Prophet). To stop their meddling, Crono is imprisoned but is rescued by the benevolent princess Schala and child-prince Janus. Before getting expelled through a time gate, Crono is instructed with the importance to rescue Melchior from the Mountain of Woe. Finding the Epoch in the Future opens the possibility to return. Climbing the floating Mountain of Woe, Melchior is rescued after defeating guarding monsters, telling that “if the Mammon machine is brought closer to
him [Lavos], he may be awaken!” (CT: DA: Melchior). Schala meets the party at Algetty and declares that the machine cannot work without her and she has abandoned it. She is, however, taken back to the Ocean Palace by the queen’s guard commander Dalton. Before leaving to rescue Schala, Melchior gives Crono a red knife that can stop the machine. Inside the palace, Queen Zeal drives Schala to the edge when empowering the machine and Crono stops the scene by plunging the knife into the machine where the knife transforms into the Masamune. The plan fails and Lavos appears, the party tries to battle it but are defeated. Magus reveals himself but suffers the same fate. In a last act of desperation, Crono jumps into Lavos’ mouth and disintegrates. Shocked, Schala moves the fellowship outside of the palace as it crumbles. At its awakening, Lavos obliterates the Kingdom of Zeal which plunges into the sea causing a tsunami. The remnants of the Earthbound and Enlightened that survived overcome their differences and live together at a make-shift camp called the Last Village. Mourning Crono, his friends are captured by Dalton but escape and defeat him. The ice age subsides and Magus meets with the fellowship to reveal his past as Janus and the possibility to resurrect Crono. A showdown between Frog and Magus occurs with the option to join forces or battle to the death. The era ends with the surfacing of the Ocean Palace as the Black Omen, the flying citadel displaying Queen Zeal as alive.

The Dark Ages five worlds are split upon the two pictures shown of the Earthbound surface and the glorified Kingdom of Zeal. The divine world of the gods is hard and cold showing the era, as the name implies, as dark due to an external force’s touch (Lavos during the Prehistoric). The human world shows two forms of bondage with the slaved Earthbound trying to maintaining their humanity compared to their magic-wielding and zealous brethren. The animal world includes several aspects: the Mountain of Woe houses Mystic imps and demonic beasts such as the crystalline boss encounter Giga Gaia; beneath the surface monster oxen roam the caverns; the Ocean Palace and later Black Omen has demonic and mutated monsters guarding its corridors. The vegetable world is covered by ice while the floating isles are green and prosperous, symbolizing the death of the cold and the perverted garden in the presence of Lavos. The mineral world of the city is the Zeal Kingdom architecture including the palaces, the floating and chained Mountain of Woe, as well as the mechanical Ocean Palace/Black Omen, which are all demonic constructs. Due to the moving nature of the Dark Ages, the worlds of fire and water and their symbolism are also in movement. The world of fire is firstly seen in a tragic-heroic form in the point of epiphany in the skyways connecting to the Kingdom of Zeal through pillars of light and the kingdom’s lightly lit corridors. The
element descends however into the corrupt as the Ocean Palace portrays the humanely captivated fire inside the mechanical structure iconized with the Mammon machine tapping Lavos’ power. Lastly, Lavos’ devastation of the floating kingdom marks the full force of the demonic fire. Yet, the fall also completes the circle of life-death-rebirth, winter to spring, as the fire cleanses the earth and produces the new jointed human society. Water follows the same formulae as the winter landscape represents the winter of irony and the demonic in the inverted point of epiphany of the submerged Ocean Palace, housing “the ultimate dream of eternal youth and life” (CT: DA: Old man). The palace being under water suggests a connection to the death realm seen in the belief of its power of extending life and the demonic imagery in “water of death” (Frye, 150). Water and the afterlife further invade the living as the structure rises from the depths to become the floating Black Omen. Finally, the winter subsides as Lavos obliterates of Zeal which plunges into the water and creates tsunamis that splash the earth cleansing them to let spring near.

Since the era includes several mythoi, several characters have multiple purposes reflecting the tragic and ironic nature. The eiron, alazon, bomolochoi, agroikos are reversed forms from the mythos of comedy and romance. The alazon or impostor is Crono and his companions, and especially Magus, who stir the situation that divides the humans and the process of harvesting from Lavos. Magus’ interference as the Prophet iconizes his role as the impostor. The eiron is content to maintain the unbalanced world between the Earthbound Ones and the Enlightened Ones, where the Zeal population argues that “those lacking magic have always lived beneath the clouds, as the Earthbound Ones. After all, they lack what we have...” (CT: DA: Young woman). Queen Zeal occupies the central figure as a xenophobic maddened royalty expelling the Gurus for responding to the Mammon machine’s evil. She scolds Crono’s arrival with “how DARE you think you could oppose me, you ... foreigners!” (CT: DA: Queen Zeal). A string of the tragic hero of revenge is visible within Magus as he finally returns to the point in time where he might face Lavos and find Schala. Visible above in his role in the 600’s, Magus once again functions as an elevated being, here in the masquerade of the Prophet. The benevolent grandfather seen in comedy and in romance is present in Melchior atop the Mountain of Woe because “she [Queen Zeal] locked the Guru of Life up on the Mountain of Woe for opposing her” (CT: DA: Old man). He warns the players of the Ocean Palace and the Mammon machine. Arguably, his role reflects the time before Zeal was corrupted but also incorporates the consciousness of aiding in the creation of Zeal showing his double nature reflecting the era and manifesting a role as both an alazon and eiron. Distorted
by magic and Lavos, the Enlightened Ones are the mood-enhancing tragic-ironic bomolochoi discovered beneath a golden surface. Depicted as “figures of misery and madness” (Frye, 238), the folk gives the feeling that something is amiss in the glorified kingdom. Schala, the magical princess, is the tragic-ironic agroikos, characterized as the tragic-refuser, the fearless and faithful companion. With her will to guard her brother Janus she plots to rescue the fellowship although Janus explains that he “thinks it’s useless. Besides, if they escape, you’ll be in trouble” (CT: DA: Janus). Schala, opposes the queen and is driven by her sense of righteousness sees the possibilities of Crono and claims that “they just might be able to rescue the Gurus” (CT: DA: Schala).

The Dark Ages contains two symbolisms in the winter surface and the floating islands of the Zeal Kingdom. The surface habitation of the Earthbound Ones and monsters can be seen as the demonic and the Kingdom of Zeal as the apocalyptic with green grass, light architecture and vibrant inhabitants. However as the plot unfolds, the Kingdom is actually a perverted vision of the apocalyptic with a lunatic queen and a power-hungry population siphoning power from Lavos. Queen Zeal demonstrates the ironic role of the “sinister parental figures naturally abound, for this is the world of the ogre and the witch” (Frye, 238). The era also includes several chains of events that moves it through three mythoi: it begins with the mythos of autumn and tragedy alongside winter and irony with the tragic hero the Prophet (Magus) trying to claim revenge on Lavos for its abduction of his sister Schala, to progress into the demonic imagery with the doomed kingdoms obsession with Lavos’ power, to finally be destroyed, fall and rise as an united human settlement. Destiny is a key element in the Dark Ages. As in the Middle Ages, the tragic hero attempts to fight the superior force of balance observable in Magus. Magus relives his past simultaneously since he is present both as himself as a child in Janus (who later is tossed into the Middle Ages by Lavos) and as the Prophet (his present self with the knowledge of the events). His tempering with history, however, is certain to lash back at him, visible in his attempt to attack Lavos in the Middle Ages and once again in the Ocean Palace only to be defeated. This enhances the tragic structure since the event is in symbiosis with laws of nature, a force of existence that gives the hero a deep angst. The tragedy involving Magus is thus seen in the clash of his sense of rightness and the ultimate suppression by Lavos’ will. Elements of winter and irony, close to the demonic, such as Queen Zeal who conveys the concept of the “femme fatale or malignant grinning female” (Frye, 238) and imagery of the evil point of epiphany exists in “the dark tower and prison of endless pain, the city of dreadful night ... [or] the tour abiole, the goal of
the quest that isn’t there” (Frye, 239). Typical to irony, Frye argues, “we often find, on this boundary of the *visio malefica*, the use of parody-religious symbols suggesting some form of Satan or Antichrist worship” (238). The sadistic Enlightened Ones pervert the benevolent imagery of Kings or church as rulers over the Earthbound Ones and their own transcendence as disciples of Lavos. Demonic influences are visible in the true face of the Queen and the Kingdom of Zeal, as the soaring city is the house of lunacy which is magnified in the Ocean Palace as the dark dungeon. The travel under water incorporates the symbolism of entering the realm of the dead where the prophecy is inevitably fulfilled and Crono is killed. Lavos awakening closes the mythos of winter with the fall of Zeal yet a line of winter stays alive with the appearance of the Black Omen and Zeal’s henchman Dalton’s attempt to rule during the chaos (only to quickly be put down). Soon afterward the mythos enters spring with the resurrection of humanity as a whole and the passing of the ice age. Although the Black Omen lingers in the background, the general picture shifts to one of spring over the unrecorded 12600 years until the *Middle Ages*. Spring is brought to the earth symbolized and physically in the planting of the magical seed that starts to grow at the site of union between the Earthbound and the Enlightened Ones.

During the Ocean Palace encounter the four stages of quest-myth are visible. Agon is constructed around the conflict between players and Lavos’ early awakening alongside the effects it bestows on the people of Zeal. Pathos reaches its climax in the struggle of Crono against Lavos and the hero’s death. This death aligns with Frye’s explanation of the struggle as a “battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die” (173). Sparagmos is evident after Crono’s death as the player is allowed to continue the story with the main character dead. The death actualizes the split of his powers and ambitions as the journey still develops. Although the quest’s purpose is split between the followers, they are firm in their attempts to find Crono, arguing that “dead or alive, let’s go find Crono...” (CT: DA: Frog). Furthermore, the characters stress the need for Crono’s return claiming that “without Crono, everyone is depressed...” (CT: End: Robo) reflecting the design towards attempting his resurrection. Lastly, anagnorisis is made possible later in the game due to sparagmos. Anagnorisis occurs in the *Future* with the resurrection and reunion of Crono.
6.7 ∞ “The End of Time”

_The End of Time_ is a platform which appears to be floating in a dark void. It is divided into three areas: a dais lit with beams of light operating as portals accessing the world’s time lines; a street light shines on Gaspar the Guru of Time; a courtyard houses Spekkio the God of War. Other notable objects are the mystical bucket which one can enter to go directly to _The Day of Lavos_ and a flight of stairs sloping down into nothingness where one boards the Epoch. Gaspar observes that there is “nothing here...this must be...the End of Time” (CT: EoT: Gaspar).

The end of time can be seen as a neutral time period since it mostly inhibits spaces of game mechanics, such as the time portals, battle-practice with Spekkio and accessing the Epoch’s docking area. The presence of Gaspar, the Guru of Time, could act as the benevolent grandfather figure or as the good-willed wizard that offers the adventurers advice. Frye argues that “romance has a counterpart to the benevolent retreating eiron of comedy in its figure of the “old wise man” ... often a magician who affects the action he watches over” (Frye, 195). Gaspar’s instructions of time travel and Crono’s resurrection points at this role as he has insight and clues to the mystical elements. His good affinity could be identified in his constant position beneath the street light’s beam and the light pillars that Crono travels through.
7. Results

Model IV presents the eras in relation to the model illustrating the cycle of mythoi:

Firstly, the *Present* correlates to the mythos of summer with elements of romance. The era is presented as pastoral. Only few disturbances occur in the form of Mystics in Medina and Yakra XIII which provides the era with some adventure. These activities are seen as remnants of past ages. The Mystics are seen as the alazon which allows the development and realization of Lavos’ (as the true alazon) influence to twist the story later. Generally the era acts as an introduction to historical events such as mentioning the war against Magus. Moreover, the era is seen as more transparent and neutral compared to the other eras since it acts simply as the game’s starting point. The quest-myth unit agon is the primary concept since the story begins in this era. Equally transparent is the concept of the eiron as Crono is introduced as the central character that the player controls. Crono’s absence of will and personality does, however, not stop him from participating and influencing major events. Crono functions as a tool to explore the game and with his neutral characteristics he is the eyes used to see the game world. The role of agroikos and bomolochoi are fulfilled by Yakra XIII impersonating the Guardia Chancellor.

Secondly, the *Middle Ages* when analyzed shows resemblance with the mythos of autumn. Classic fantasy imagery and a tragic formula can be identified especially in the characterization of Frog (as the supposed hero) and Magus (as the supposed villain).
Supernatural and mystical elements indicate that the narrative leans toward a dialectic setting. Frog and Magus are tragic manifestations of the clashing good and evil. Frog’s hideout in the Cursed Woods reflects his troubled past and his role as the misshapen hero and Magus’ gloomy tower is used to empower his image of darkness and angst. In line with Frye’s reverted comic characters, Magus fulfills the role of the eiron wanting revenge but walks a doomed path. Frog is the tragic alazon who tries to maintain law and order but is also destined to fail. The reversed agroikos is Frog’s supporting friend Cyrus. The tragic bomolochi is seen in the hero-impersonator Tata who is expelled and ridiculed. Pathos is the central element of the quest-myth since the key focus of the era is the climactic battle between Frog and Magus.

Thirdly, the Future embodies numerous of Frye’s demonic and ironic images, characters and obstacles. Among these are destruction, human decay, robots, dehumanization, water, and death. The era is thus associated with the mythos of winter. The era shows Lavos’s effects on life and encourages the characters to stop it. As ruler but also destroyer of the world Lavos is the reversed romantic eiron embodying a demonic presence. The fellowship is the intruding alazons. The mood-setting bomolochi are insane humans and the reversed churl is the human machine Robo. Sparagmos can be seen as the central quest-myth since the destruction of life itself promotes the characters to undo the past. Furthermore, the closeness to sparagmos allows anagnorisis to be accessed if the player chooses to resurrect Crono. This connection to the era is argued to be associated to the imagery of death and darkness proposing that the player enters a death realm.

Fourthly, the Day of Lavos functions as an extension of the Present illustrating the possible future. The Apocalypse is placed between romance and tragedy since the mythos of summer is exposed with demonic symbolism with the rise of Lavos. The era pictures a scene of its direct touch on the world. The player can attempt to stop Lavos distinguishing the limited period with Lavos as the alazon and mankind as the eirons.

Fifthly, the Prehistoric shows the beginning of the world and is identified with the mythos of spring. Lush scenery hosts the survival of mankind against the humanoid Reptites and Lavos’ impact. Life and death are the primary imagery of the infant world. Anagnorisis, the new born aspect of the quest-myth, is central as mankind evolves through opposition. The characterization of the Prehistoric does not follow Frye’s male-oriented model since the eiron
and alazon are Ayla and Azala respectively. The two characters also act as the bomolochoi and agroikos with Ayla’s comical comments and Azala’s dispraising view of humanity.

Sixthly, the Dark Ages is argued to include several mythoi. A gradual change from autumn to winter and lastly spring is identified as the story progresses. The arrow in Model IV displays the movement across the three mythoi. The Zeal kingdom is of a magical nature and includes tragic influences seen in Magus and his mysterious past. His maddened mother Queen Zeal and the proximity to Lavos inside the Ocean Palace develop the theme towards irony and the demonic. Lavos’ awakening destroys the world and allows a new and humane era to take place. The elements of agon, pathos, sparagmos and anagnorisis are all identified in these events. Although sparagmos and anagnorisis can be recognized with the fall of Zeal it is overshadowed by Crono’s death and the quest for his resurrection. The characterization is an inverted form of comedy and romance with Crono and the party as the opposing alazon. Magus acting as the false prophet embodies the tragic alazon-hero doomed with failure. Queen Zeal and Lavos form the eiron that maintain the balance. The Enlightened ones increase the irrational mood as the bomolochoi. Contrasting the lunacy is the benevolent princess Schala as the reversed agroikos.

Seventhly, the End of Time is considered a stepping-stone from where the player navigates through the game. The neutral scenery includes no clear connections with the theory except the role that Gaspar the Guru of Time has as a benevolent wizard. The era is therefore located in the middle of the cycle to suggest its neutral position in relation to the mythoi and seasons (the position should not, however, be mistaken for a symbol of the high-mimetic mode as seen in Model II).

In summary, a general inclination towards the mythos of romance can be identified as encompassing the game. The adventurous quest-myth primarily seen as romance is the central mood although dominance of single units of the quest-myth can be identified in each period. Notably, however, the game reflects the possibilities of completing the full cycle of mythoi returning to the Present and thus emphasizes summer and romance.
8. Discussion and conclusion

The analysis shows that *Chrono Trigger* contains the mythoi that Frye proposes with a few exceptions. In sum, the mythos of summer has been identified as the framing mythoi. However, if considering Model IV (see Results) which represents the mythoi it is evident that the eras cluster around the mythos of autumn. This phenomenon is probably due to effects illustrating a journey and conflict. In other words, to complete a romantic cycle the player needs to witness the other phases of the cycle to recognize the return to romance. Furthermore, to emphasize the idyllic *Present*, the tragic, ironic, demonic, and comic events help since they create a dissonance in the world that the player wants to recover from. Monsters, corruption, and doom provide a symbol which the player can easily identify as the source of the disturbance. It also, of course, falls in line with video games in general where a large part of the market allows the player to fulfill heroic deeds and imaginary tales. Thus, the model one can recognize in *Chrono Trigger* is neither new nor unusual in storytelling or video games. However, the parts of the game that do not follow this composition, what can be said about them?

The iconic hero and his nemesis that Frye discusses are archetype figures. This is generally true in *Chrono Trigger* but with five exceptions. Marle, the tom-boyish princess, is the first accessible characters that Crono meets. She rebels against her father to go on an adventure with Crono and thus breaks free from her normative chains as a princess. There is, however, still the underlying structure that her father is the king and therefore is more powerful than her. Queen Zeal and her daughter Schala, although in a disagreement, are the primary powers of the influential Kingdom of Zeal. Not only does Queen Zeal rule but she is also the central antagonist of the era. Furthermore, the kingdom and its inhabitants have great effects on the world enhancing the characters importance in history. One needs to highlight the fact that once Queen Zeal and her kingdom has fallen, her guard captain, Dalton, tries to take control. His interception, although a failure, reflects the normative pattern of male rulers. However, the strong and independent women presented in the *Prehistoric* collide with the heroic norm. Ayla and Azala are strong and influential characters. Ayla is (obviously a reference to Jean M. Auel’s *The Clan of the Cave Bear* (1980)) the physically strongest character that the player can add to the fellowship. Her personality reflects her battle prowess as she argues that as long as the most physically strong person rules all things are in order. This is why she also is
chief of the *Prehistoric* clans. These ideas are generally only allowed to kings or father figures seen in the stories Frye relates to. The Reptite leader Azala is the other strong leader of the *Prehistoric*. Azala’s more cunning personality is probably used to differentiate the humans from the Reptites in a brain versus brawn-manner. Her intelligence also raises her above her own kin since she is presented with more developed speech. The interesting part is when considering why the developers chose to fill the seats of power with women when the remaining are men.

The characterization indicates that the game includes notions of gender-shattering ideas. Indeed, perhaps Ayla’s persona and role is to illustrate though patterns considered outdated similar to the undeveloped cave-men. However, one must note the important role that she and the other strong women have. The stereotype with a male-only seat of power is questioned and given a functioning alternative. This is seen as a positive development since the psychological imagery that women are exposed to when playing male dominant games might seep into their own personal development. Simply put, seeing other women as a hero’s trophy or a king’s porcelain doll might make players mimic that behavior. Fortunately, the same can be said about the identification with empowered characters seen here in *Chrono Trigger*. With the presence of these strong individuals and the option to not include Crono as the main hero after his death offer the option of creating an all-women fellowship. This game mechanic and structure addresses a broader audience and also the freedom of choice. *Chrono Trigger* as a game seems to favor strong-willed women rather than the damsel in distress.

From a mythological perspective, the connections with the *Prehistoric* and the fall of Zeal might be related to anagnorisis and the spring-theme. Spring, after all, symbolizes the birth of the world and could be seen as a motherly attribute. That attribute would thus be best displayed using women as the eiron and alazon to wholly transform the era into one of the womb or mother earth. Perhaps the Japanese mythology connects the imagery of construction or renewal with women and motherhood. Indeed, this would be an interesting idea for a new study.

If one continues along the idea of freedom of choice and the options in *Chrono Trigger*, one’s gaze also stops at the story’s progression system. The story is (relatively) open to manipulation depending on the choices the player makes throughout the game play. All these decisions sum up into one of thirteen specific endings. For example, slaying Magus at the duel between him and Frog during the *Dark Ages* can in some endings show Frog as his human
self. If never killed, Magus participates in the ending celebrations with the rest of the party. Throughout *Chrono Trigger* one can identify the alternatives to the game’s design focused around the manipulation of the narrative. The player tries (hopefully, unless playing in spite) to reach the ending that he or she finds most appealing. This ideal ending is a path that the player takes which produces the story-wise “best” of the many endings (an ideal story can also be highly personal but for the sake of the argument we shall continue to refer to the one presented in the plot). Attempting to get that ending is subtly hinted throughout the game such as the additional quests to save Crono or complete the other characters side-quests (that reward these characters with equipment or tweaks to the endings). Therefore, one can argue that there is an ideal ending that is to be considered the most successful one since it fulfills the most of the game’s potential.

Frye’s theory is based on a multitude of archetypal myths that all boil down into a basic formula; a variety of dragon-slaying narratives exists but they all stem from the same foundation. The quest-myth and the dialectic apocalyptic-demonic cycle are argued to exist in most of mankind’s legends, mythology and narrative. Frye touches upon this idea and reflects upon it as a natural part of human psychology in his second essay *Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols*. With the *Chrono Trigger’s* ideal story in mind and the central basic story presented in Frye, one can consider the following model.

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    Ideal story
    Chrono Trigger  →  Fluent surface: player
                     ↓
    Basic story
    Narrative  →  Fluent surface: writer
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The model attempts to illustrate how the game’s basic story is similar compared to the template that is presented by Frye. The term *fluent surface* refers to the interpretation and manipulation of a story. The *writer* produces his or her interpretation of narrative from the basic story when writing. The *player* develops the game’s basic story and produces an ideal form from the alternatives. The player can actively decide what sort of story there will be since *Chrono Trigger* includes multiple variations of the basic story. Such interaction is possible in *Chrono Trigger* since it is an interactive media where the player maneuvers the
fluent surface and shapes the story at will. The narrative is also central to the gameplay since the player creates as the game is played. The game structure encourages context sensitivity when the player interprets and is involved in the game narrative to produce the specific ideal story. The same method is performed by the writer who reflects and builds on the body of the basic story. Thus, one can argue that both are narratives.

Earlier in the essay the two approaches to video game studies narratology and ludology are mentioned as locked in battle. However, it would be more beneficial to consider both perspectives when analyzing video games. From a ludological standpoint the fluent surface would be considered as symbols for the game mechanic to win the game. The narrative elements would only add a fictional value as to why the player would want to play. Assuming such an argument, one can indeed see that unlocking the ideal ending can be considered “winning” since it is the reward for the hardest challenge. From a narratological outlook the fluent surface would be acknowledged as a central feature of the game where the player writes the narrative. This narrative is also vital to making it a game about participating in a story and also creating stories. Understanding the fluent surface is the motivation and the key to “winning” Chrono Trigger.

Endings form the closure of the adventure and the satisfaction of completing something. The ending, just as a beginning and middle, are crucial parts of a narrative. Since Chrono Trigger includes thirteen endings one can argue that these are important to both the video game narrative and mechanics. Interpreting the video game from a ludological or narratological perspective is to the researcher to decide. Optimally a mixed approach would seem most appropriate since Chrono Trigger is both a story and, in fact, a game. The disciplines would complement each other to fully understand the game and neither ludology nor narratology should be dominant in the case of Chrono Trigger. We should ask ourselves what video games can tell us about narratives and what narratives can tell us about video games. Video games do not recite stories – they allow the player to control them. Therefore, Chrono Trigger would be seen as a video game with mechanics that encourage plot development and has narrative elements at the game’s core. If one would take a step back and look upon Chrono Trigger one would see a requirement for sensitivity to the fluent surface besides exploring the plot. The player needs to understand the plot to fulfill the premises and unlock the ideal story. Chrono Trigger can thus be seen as a video game that demands of the player to decide, for example, when to fight of the final enemy and what characters to be kept or discarded. Such decisions have both ludological and narrative effects on the plot and
mechanics. The prime example of the player’s power over the fluent surface is displayed when given the possibility to resurrect Crono. Even though his resurrection is argued as benefitting to the game mechanics or presented as the ideal plot progression the player still ultimately decides. What happens then is that the game obediently responds. Therefore, the command authorized in *Chrono Trigger* has formed both plot and mechanics to adapt to a formula which is fluent – a fluent surface that on deep levels beckons the player to play a narrative.
9. Works Cited

9.1 Literature


9.2 Video games


9.3 Articles


9.4 Internet resources


9.5 Essays
