

The Legend of Zelda – Breath of the Wild:
Engagement and Poetic Gameplay as Balance Between Immersion and
Alienation in Videogames



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Year: 2020/2021
Block: 2
Date: February 3, 2021
Word Count: 7691



Universiteit Utrecht

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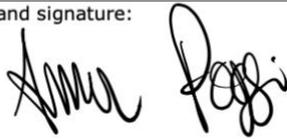
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Abstract

This research focuses on how the feelings of immersion and alienation are encouraged in the videogame *The Legend of Zelda – Breath of the Wild*. Different definitions of immersion and alienation are explored and explained to determine how they relate to each other and how they can sometimes co-exist through poetic gameplay and engagement. Specific parts of the case study are analyzed through a close reading to demonstrate how the game encourages immersion and alienation: how they are balanced in the game, what happens when they are both present at the same time, and how engagement and poetic gameplay can be considered as balance between them. The analysis focuses on specific parts of the game such as the menu, the map, the main fights and the use of memories and flashbacks in the game narrative.

Immersion in videogames is different than in other media based on the interactivity and the other affordances that this medium has compared to other ones such as cinema. For this reason, Daniel Dunne, Gordon Calleja and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi are used to better understand how immersion works in the case of videogames and how it must be approached in this field. On the other hand, alienation is an essential part of videogames since their functioning requires alienating elements such as the menu, loadings and game overs. Dunne and Alex Mitchel discuss the fact that alienating elements indeed break the state of immersion but that at the same time when combined with other elements, they can create different forms of immersion mixed with alienation thus creating a new experience of playing videogames.

It was also included the game style of the author in order to better understand the gameplay strategies and techniques that were used in approaching the game. Furthermore, game genre and gameplay are analyzed to better understand why this game is relevant for the analysis and how they can influence the gameplay.

Key terms: immersion, alienation, flow, poetic gameplay, defamiliarization, engagement.

Introduction

This research focuses on the videogame *The Legend of Zelda – Breath of the Wild* (BOTW) for the Nintendo Switch and how it raises questions regarding immersion and alienation.¹ The game was released in 2017 for the newly launched Nintendo Switch and was elected game of the year 2017. It consists in a role-play, single player, open-world game.² The goal of the game for the player is to save her from her imprisonment by Calamity Ganon and save her kingdom by assuming the identity of Link, one of Princess Zelda’s guards.

The game presents a different form of playing that incorporates both alienating and immersive elements in its gameplay creating an interesting form of gaming experience. The term immersion is associated with the “sensation of being lost in a different life or world” to the point in which the player forgets that it is just a simulation.³ On the other hand, alienation comes from the world of theatre and is connected with the interruption of the immersive state.⁴ Immersion and alienation are in tension with each other based on the belief that for alienation to be present immersion must be broken when in reality it is possible for them to be present at the same time. This research looks into how immersion and alienation can be present at the same time when playing BOTW and what effect they create when they are both present.

This game incorporates both immersive and alienating aspects that create a new effect when playing compared to the previous ones. This game allows for countless hours of gameplay and can be played and explored even after the main storyline is completed. BOTW is different than the previous games of the series because of the insertion of a bigger game-world to explore. It offers the player the chance to explore the game freely and not necessarily follow the storyline. There are in fact areas of the game-world that have nothing to do with the storyline but are only meant for exploration. BOTW incorporates several alienating elements in a way that they are necessary for the gameplay instead of being hidden. Thus, intertwining immersion and alienation.

Alienation and immersion might be considered as opposite and therefore it would be difficult for them to co-exist in the player. Through a close reading of specific parts of the game

¹ Nintendo EPD. “The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild.” Nintendo. Nintendo Switch, 2017.

² The genre of the game is important since it gives a more concrete framework of how the game works. There is no possibility of playing with other players or online, the game must be completed alone. Furthermore, it is a role play game where the player assumes the identity of one of the characters (Link) and will command it throughout the game. The game is also open-World which means that the game-world is broad and that it can be explored freely by the player.

³ Daniel Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation in Video Games," *Press Start* 1, no. 1 (2014): 80, accessed June 20, 2020, <http://press-start.gla.ac.uk>.

⁴ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 85-86.

this research looks at how immersion and alienation are encouraged when playing and how the same elements could encourage both at the same time demonstrating that immersion and alienation can coexist in the case of engagement and of poetic gameplay.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1.1 – Immersion

Daniel Dunne analyses the concept of immersion firstly by its commercial connotation in order to better understand why in videogames there is no clear definition of what immersion is. Dunne explains that immersion is a concept that has been used in different fields but in videogames it has created incongruities since it was used as an umbrella term to attract more audience and only lately real research has started on what it actually entails.⁵ Dunne, therefore, defines immersion as the “sensation of being lost in a different life or world so completely that the audience forget that they are experiencing an abstract representation or a simulation.”⁶ By this definition it is possible to understand that immersion is a sensation, this is connected with the point that Cathrine Bouko raises in her paper. Bouko uses the idea of Elena Gorfinkel of immersion as an effect rather than a characteristic of a medium, therefore, it is necessary not only to look into the medium but also in the player to better understand the concept of immersion.⁷ Thus, Bouko argues that immersion is a subjective feeling that allows players to maintain a level of detachment if they wish to. At the same time, Dunne, Calleja and Csikszentmihalyi argue that even if immersion is a feeling there are still identifiable textual characteristics that can encourage it, this is further analyzed in the next paragraphs.⁸

There are several definitions and terms connected with immersion in videogames that are important to address in order to better understand what immersion is and what it entails. Gordon Calleja underlines how immersion in videogames differs from immersion in media such as paintings or literature because they provide a form of “engagement qualitatively

⁵ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 81.

⁶ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 80.

⁷ Catherine Bouko, “Interactivity and Immersion in a media-based performance,” *Participation - Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 11, no. 1 (May 2014): 260.

⁸ Gordon Calleja, “Chapter 2: Immersion,” in *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2011), Kindle edition, 18; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Flow,” in *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2014), 230, doi:10.1007/978-94-017-9088-8_15; Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 83.

different from those of the game environment.”⁹ In the case of videogames, unlike movies or books, there is a haptic feedback between the media and the user. Therefore, this changes their interaction into something personal that can create a different form of immersion that is based on the individual player rather than an audience. Daniel Dunne elaborates on what Calleja discusses by additionally taking into consideration that in order to play videogames and for them to function, several pauses are necessary unlike in movies where there are no pauses.¹⁰ Therefore, the feeling is not that of complete immersion such as in cinema or literature but is a new form of immersion which must be studied and analyzed as such instead of comparing it to other media. Coming from the field of media and communication with a specialization in videogames, Dunne focuses on the different ways in which immersion can be achieved and the different kinds of immersion that can be present when playing a videogame. His definition expands on what Bouko has presented since he bases his definition on the flow theory presented by the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in which immersion is created not only from the medium itself but also from the action of interacting with it.¹¹

Csikszentmihalyi defines flow as “a subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue and everything but the activity itself.”¹² This definition is used in psychology and is born from the assumption that human beings have a drive for self-preservation.¹³ When applied to BOTW this assumption becomes a precondition since in order to survive in the game the player needs to enter the flow and focus on surviving and reaching her goal in order to win it. Furthermore, according to Csikszentmihalyi, three main characteristics need to be present for the flow to happen: a merging of action and awareness, a sense of control and an altered sense of time.¹⁴ The first characteristic means that in the flow all the attention is invested in the task at hand and all external or non-activity-related details are excluded from the player’s awareness. The sense of control is created by the absence of anxiety connected with losing control since all the attention is focused on the activity at hand. Lastly, the altered sense of time refers to the idea that when an activity is immersive and takes a lot of attention, it makes the player feels like time is passing faster than it actually is.¹⁵

⁹ Calleja, "Chapter 2: Immersion," 18.

¹⁰ Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 85.

¹¹ Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 230.

¹² Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 230.

¹³ Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 227.

¹⁴ Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 230-231.

¹⁵ Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 230-231.

Dunne and Csikszentmihalyi present similar characteristics but Dunne specifies that although flow and immersion in videogames have several characteristics in common there is one main difference: flow is focused on the best way to achieve an action whereas in videogames it is not always possible to do it perfectly but they are nonetheless immersive. Therefore, Dunne agrees with the preconditions of the flow that an activity must be engaging with a clear goal, there is need for a balance between skills and the challenge of the activity and the need for an immediate feedback but also adds the fact that the loss of awareness of the real world and of time are necessary for the flow state, or immersion, to happen when playing videogames.¹⁶ Dunne identifies these characteristics as the main ones the player feels when immersed in a videogames but there are other factors that must be taken into consideration to understand how immersion works in videogames.

Videogames are based on interactivity and the haptic feedback between the player and the technology; thus, this must be addressed when talking about immersion. So far, immersion has been defined as flow and as a feeling of the player rather than a textual characteristic of the medium but there are also some elements that can encourage the feeling of immersion. The main characteristic of videogames is their interactivity based on the fact that the player is present in the virtual world. Calleja presents the idea of presence in videogames and how it offers the opportunity of inhabiting the virtual world, creating a new nuance to the definitions of immersion. With the term presence he refers to the “experiential state as general engagement, perception of realism, addiction, suspension of belief and identification with the game characters” that allows the player to inhabit the virtual space.¹⁷ Thus the author underlines how the feeling of immersion and the characteristics of the medium are necessary for the state of immersion to happen.

Therefore, Calleja explains that there is a distinction in being immersed in an action (immersion as absorption), and in being immersed in an action while also being present in a virtual world that can be explored (immersion as transportation).¹⁸ This distinction is relevant because even if they both are equally immersive experiences, they are also different. Immersion as absorption is more similar to the flow state as Csikszentmihalyi describes it whereas immersion as transportation relies on a sense of presence in the virtual world. Both these forms of immersion are a psychological state of the player, but they depend on the interactive nature of videogames.

¹⁶ Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 232; Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 83.

¹⁷ Calleja, "Immersion," 25.

¹⁸ Calleja, "Immersion," 27.

Another term that is often used connected with immersion is engagement, because in the field of videogame studies it has been used in several different ways with contrasting meanings connected with both alienation and immersion. This term is important because it has been used to describe both immersion and sometimes specific forms of alienation. According to Calleja's research engagement and immersion can be seen as the same thing with the difference that engagement is seen as the purest form of immersion.¹⁹ Contrastingly, Jane Yellowlees-Douglas and Andrew Hargadon perceive them as opposite; instead of deepening the immersive state, it encourages the player to assume an "extra-textual perspective on the text itself, as well as on the schemas that have shaped it and the scripts operating within it."²⁰ This term thus presents a paradox: a form of immersion that makes the player see the structures of the game and makes her reflect on the game itself in a way that breaks her away from the state of immersion. This idea of distancing from the game can be connected with alienation since at the base of this concept is the idea of breaking the immersive state.

Chapter 1.2 – Alienation

Videogames incorporate functions and characteristics that are inherently alienating: loading screens, menus, game overs, saving and upgrades are all essential parts of videogames that break the player away from the immersive state but, at the same time, they are necessary for the game to function. This research not only focuses on how immersion is present in BOTW but also how alienation is presented and integrated in the gameplay.²¹

Alienation as a concept was first introduced by Bertolt Brecht in theatre to refer to "a technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling them as something that striking, something that calls for an explanation that is not to be taken for granted."²² This was a revolutionary idea since previously theatre was thought to be as verisimilar as possible and to be immersive. Brecht proposed a new form of theatre that required the audience not to be immersed but to pay attention and reflect on what presented. Alienation is often used in theatre to attract attention to an "overarching theme, or movement that would otherwise be ignored in the medium."²³

¹⁹ Calleja, "Immersion," 28.

²⁰ Jane Yellowlees Douglas and Andrew Hargadon, "The pleasures of immersion and engagement: schemas, scripts and the fifth business," *Digital Creativity* 12, no. 3 (August 2001): 154, doi:10.1076/digc.12.3.153.3231.

²¹ The term gameplay refers to how the player is able to interact with the game-world and the feedback that the game-world offers the player.

²² Bertolt Brecht, "The Street Scene." Brecht on Theatre. Trans./ed. John Willett. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964,) 125.

²³ Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 86.

In the case of videogames, alienation is both a feeling that the player experiences and a textual characteristic. Unlike immersion that is just a feeling of the player, alienation can be both. Alienation is, in fact, embedded in the way in which videogames are constructed, it is inevitable because alienation is necessary for the game to function and operate correctly. Furthermore, alienation is also present in the core game, most of the times in form of game overs, loading screens, menu interfaces and the most evident of them all, bugs. Dunne argues that these alienating characteristics have not been exploited in their full potential and that they could be incorporated in the gameplay creating a new gaming experience.²⁴ Therefore, he suggests that these textual characteristics can be used to create a feeling of alienation in a way that it would improve and influence the gaming experience in the same way immersion does. There are several types of videogames and gameplay and since there is no specific way in which videogames should be developed beside their interactive aspect, Dunne underlines that gamers who are familiar with one type of games or gameplay are not necessarily capable of playing another one or they might not enjoy playing a different type of games than the ones they are used to.²⁵ Thus, just like immersion, alienation is a feeling of the player.

On the other hand, Dunne defines alienation as “the events or section of media that break the audience away from emotional impact, or immersion, breaking the suspension of belief [...] installing, loading and saving and resetting are all alienating aspects in playing a game.”²⁶ With this quote it is possible to see how in the case of videogames alienation is already embedded: for example, the only way to access the core game is through alienating aspects. In the same way, to exit or save the progress it is necessary to interact with alienating aspects that break the immersion. Based on these premises, Dunne argues that there are two main types of immersion: aesthetic alienation and system alienation.²⁷ The first one is the type of alienation that happens for aesthetic reasons, the game seems alienating but it does not change at all, in this case the alienating aspects are incorporated into the game and included in the gameplay like in the case of BOTW.²⁸ On the other hand, system alienation affects the game narrative in a way that makes strange what was normal thus making a change in the way in which the game works.²⁹ Therefore, system alienation is connected with the interruptions of the game that break the immersive state. Aesthetic alienation does not break the immersive state when interacting

²⁴ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 87.

²⁵ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 87.

²⁶ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 85-87.

²⁷ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 91.

²⁸ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 91.

²⁹ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 92.

with these alienating elements but undermines the expectations of the player by breaking the schemas of conventional immersion mixing alienation and immersion.

Alienation forces the player to reflect actively on what she is doing and her approach to the game in a way that makes her more aware of what is happening in the simulated space. Yellowless-Douglass and Hargadon argue that the pleasure in alienation “comes from the users’ access to a wide repertoire of schemas and scripts, our attempts to discover congruencies between the hypertext [videogames] and an array of often mutually exclusive schemas, and ultimately our ability to make sense of the world as a whole.”³⁰ This quote demonstrates how immersion is created when something is predictable and the player is able to respond to it quickly and adapt to what is happening whereas the unpredictability of videogames sometimes can encourage alienation and break the immersive state that was created before by defamiliarizing the player.

Chapter 1.3 – Poetic Gameplay

Defamiliarization is one of the main techniques in which alienation can be encouraged in the player but at the same time it could also be identified with specific types of immersion. This duality of defamiliarization is explored by Alex Mitchell who applies the idea of poetic language that is found in literature to videogames introducing the concept of poetic gameplay.³¹ These theories are based on defamiliarization, especially in making the familiar look unfamiliar, and in the specific case of videogames, “the formal structures within a game that draw attention to themselves and encourage reflection.”³² This form of reflection and defamiliarization is strictly connected with alienation since it forces the players to actively reflect on what is happening. Defamiliarization can be achieved through different techniques and Mitchell identifies the three main ones in videogames: undermining the player’s expectation of control, disrupting the chronological flow of time and blurring the boundaries of the form.³³ These characteristics, when applied in videogames interrupt the flow and create poetic gameplay since they break the schemas the player is expecting when playing.

The first technique, undermining the player’s expectation for control, entails that in some crucial moments of the game, or simply when immersed in the flow, control is taken

³⁰ Douglass-Hargadon, “The Pleasure of Immersion and Engagement,” 160.

³¹ Alex Mitchell, “Making the Familiar Unfamiliar: Techniques for Creating Poetic Gameplay,” in *Proceedings of 1st International Joint Conference of DiGra and FDG* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2016), 1, http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/paper_272.pdf.

³² Mitchell, “Making the Familiar Unfamiliar,” 2.

³³ Mitchell, “Making the Familiar Unfamiliar,” 4.

away from the player and given to the game.³⁴ This can be achieved by inserting cut-like scenes in the game that interrupt the flow by removing the interactive part of the game and therefore the immediate feedback between the medium and the player.³⁵ Another way in which this technique can be applied is by disrupting the player's ability to take control not necessarily through cut-like scenes but also through dialogues or tutorials.³⁶

The second technique is disrupting the chronological flow of time which can be seen when there is no direct connection between the time flow of the game and the time flow in reality. This can be an alienating aspect since the discrepancies in time can alter the way in which the game is played and the way in which the player understands and interacts with the game.³⁷ Flashbacks and flashforwards can confuse the player and force her to reflect on what is happening because they disrupt the chronological flow of the story thus alienating the player. On the other hand, in some specific cases, this can also be connected with the idea of flow since time is perceived differently in the flow state and the real time could be adapted to the flow of time in the game-world based on what Dunne identified with lack of awareness of real time.³⁸ In this case, the difference between alienation and immersion is based on the player. The immersive state of the player can be broken when the player loses control and becomes confused with what is happening. Contrastingly, if the player is engaged with the game, the state of immersion can continue despite the alienating effect transforming it in what Dunne identifies as a passive form of immersion.³⁹ In this case, the player continues to play and overcomes the confusion by simply powering through the game to look for an explanation.

The last technique is the blurring of the form, usually this can be achieved through cut scenes that interrupt gameplay. This technique forces the player into a passive role rather than an active one, undermining her expectations for control. The main difference between the first characteristic and this one is that elements from another medium are taken and incorporated in the gaming experience. In the case of videogames this generally consists into mixing videogames and movies by adding cinematic sequences in the game. However, Dunne argues that cut scenes in videogames are not alienating but rather they switch the type of immersion from an active to a passive.⁴⁰ Active immersion is when the player's immersion is triggered by an interaction between her and the medium (just like immersion as absorption) whereas passive

³⁴ Mitchell, "Making the Familiar Unfamiliar," 4.

³⁵ Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 232.

³⁶ Mitchell, "Making the Familiar Unfamiliar," 6.

³⁷ Mitchell, "Making the Familiar Unfamiliar," 8.

³⁸ Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow," 23; Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 83.

³⁹ Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 84.

⁴⁰ Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 84.

immersion is triggered by the reception of the content in a more traditional sense (similar to the one triggered by books or movies).⁴¹ Therefore, one element of the game can be seen as both alienating and immersive.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

The chosen methodology for this paper is a close reading of specific parts of the game in order to see which were immersive and which alienating and how the two concepts co-existed. This method was mainly used in literary studies and that was later adapted to fit other media, including videogames. Jim Bizzocchi and Joshua Tanenbaum define close reading as a “close examination, deconstruction, and analysis of a media text.”⁴² It is a humanist method that allows to see the structures, faults and incongruencies of the medium while at the same time highlighting the ways in which they can create meaning. The idea behind a close reading is not to analyze the full text but to select some specific parts and to focus on the content and on the form. The focus of the close reading of this analysis is to look into the selected elements and see whether they encourage immersion or alienation and how.

Analyzing videogames is not easy since the experience of videogames can change from player to player based on several factors. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum argued that an unbiased close reading of a game may not always capture the variety of play experiences due to the fact that players can approach the game in different ways with different skills.⁴³ It is in fact important to understand that a close reading in videogames is different from a close reading in other media since it requires not only to look into several elements but also to take into consideration the necessary skills of the players to proceed in the game. There are several aspects that must be considered when carrying out a close reading of a videogame, the main one is that there is always a certain degree of indeterminacy. According to Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum, “one cannot guarantee that two readers will encounter the same media assets while interacting with a game, or that they will experience them in the same order.”⁴⁴ For this reason, the first part of the analysis is centered at positioning my gameplay style and the approach I used when playing the game and collecting the necessary materials for this research. It is

⁴¹ Dunne, “Brechtian Alienation,” 84.

⁴² Jim Bizzocchi and Joshua Tanenbaum, “Well Read: Applying Close Reading Techniques to Gameplay Experiences,” in *Well Played 3.0: Video Games, Value and Meaning*, ed. Drew Davidson (Morrisville: Lulu.com, 2011), 262, <https://dlacmorg.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/pdf/10.5555/2031858.2031881>.

⁴³ Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum, “Well Read,” 278.

⁴⁴ Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum, “Well Read,” 272.

important to define the type of player I identify with since it can heavily influence the gaming experience and the way in which the game was perceived.

In order to do the research, I played the game the first time focusing only on playing the game without intervening. I played the game and followed the flow of immersion looking at the moments in which I was pulled out of the immersive state and made aware of the fact that I was playing a game. To decide which parts of the game to analyze, I played the game a second time focusing on when I was immersed in the game and when I was alienated; I had already done my research therefore I knew what I was looking for and which parts could be more relevant. I selected several items: the narrative technique through which the story is told, flashbacks and memories, the battles against the main levels' bosses, the map and the exploration of the game world, and the main menu of the game. I chose these elements because each one of them display potentially alienating effects but at the same time they are also immersive. After I finished playing the game, I was able to proceed with my analysis based on the notes I took during the game.

First, I described in detail the selected material so that I had an accurate idea of the elements involved, consequently, I focused on why that part was relevant to answer my research questions and how it helped to answer it. I applied the theory I have found and connected it with the analysis I was doing. Through the use of tables and notes I was able to carry out the close reading and to focus on the relevant aspects to identify what was indeed useful for my research and what was not. The more I played the game, the more elements I noticed. While playing the game, the line between immersion and alienation started to be more blurred so I had to take more notes and screenshots in order to better highlight the elements that caused those feeling.

Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum identified the close reading as what comes after the data collection, "in effect, the close reading now becomes a process of using the experience to reverse engineer the mechanisms and dynamics of the design."⁴⁵ After the writing and taking screenshots part, I reorganized my notes and grouped them based on the feelings that were encouraged and then based on the elements that nudged those feelings. I applied the theory to my findings and again divided them into more categories in order to better understand what was relevant and what not. I classified each interaction according to my experience and the definitions I found. I was able to better understand the mechanics of the game and how authors approached the same element in different ways. By categorizing my findings, it was easier to

⁴⁵ Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum, "Well Read," 278.

identify the common elements that encouraged one or both feelings and to see which theory applied to specific elements. The concept of immersion, alienation and poetic gameplay were the main tools that guided my analysis which made it easier to focus just on the relevant parts of the game instead of its entirety. I had also taken into consideration the game played only in handheld mode instead of connected to the television, therefore, most of the affordances of the console were not taken into consideration in my analysis.⁴⁶

In order to answer my research question, I looked at how I was positioned when doing the analysis, what is the genre of the game and its influence on the gameplay, how immersion was encouraged, how alienation was included in the gameplay and in the story, what characteristics could be connected with poetic gameplay and when immersion and poetic gameplay (and therefore alienation) were present at the same time when playing the game.

Chapter 3: Analysis

Chapter 3.1 – Positioning and Game Specifics

The Legend of Zelda – Breath of the Wild (BOTW) is a role-play, single player, open-world game that tells the story of a warrior, Link, in his voyage to save Princess Zelda and the reign of Hyrule from Calamity Ganon (see [appendix 2](#) for the full summary of the game). It is important to specify the type of the game since it influences the gameplay and the type of narrative in the game.

In this role-play game, the player takes the identity of Link and moves him in the virtual space as representative of the player in the game-world, and he is the only character that the player can control. The player moves the character through a third person perspective that allows her to look around the avatar and have a full panoramic of the surroundings (Figure 3.1). Even if the perceptions of the player and of the avatar are not the same there is still the necessity to make sure that the avatar is taken care of, for example, if it is too cold or too hot the player will need to dress the avatar accordingly. In fact, the weather must be taken into consideration to avoid death when the avatar freezes or boils to death ([see appendix 1](#)).

⁴⁶ Handheld mode is one of the ways in which it is possible to play on the Nintendo Switch, it allows the players to play on the console with the small screen that accompanies the console instead of connecting it to a bigger one like a television and play in remote mode. It is important to point this out since the experience could be different when played in remote mode.



3.1 Link, the Player's Avatar

Through the avatar the player is present in the virtual space and can navigate it. This form of presence is connected with immersion as transportation. The presence of the player is reached via the controlled avatar; this interactivity is what distinguishes videogames from other media. The player is not a spectator to what is happening but rather the actor, she is the one to take action and move in the space while witnessing what is happening. Gonzalo Frasca defines this dichotomy that videogames allow as the spect-actor.⁴⁷ The fact that the player is at the same time an actor and a spectator allows her to be present in the virtual world and to be immersed in the game-world. This form of interactivity and presence is what allows different forms of immersion, such as immersion as transportation which will be analyzed in section 3.2 of the analysis.

A second important premise of this game is how the game-world is structured. Henry Jenkins underlines how the experience of playing videogames can never be reduced to the experience of a story.⁴⁸ He argues that the story is an important feature of the game but is not everything because videogames have their unique way of telling stories that “is unlikely to tell stories in the same ways that other media tell stories.”⁴⁹ In the case of BOTW the main feature is not the story but the game-world. The story is simple: the player is the hero that has to save

⁴⁷ Gonzalo Frasca, "Rethinking agency and immersion: video games as a means of consciousness-raising," *Digital Creativity* 12, no. 3 (2001): 170, doi:10.1076/digc.12.3.167.3225.

⁴⁸ Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture," in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game* (Massachusetts: Library of Congress, 2004), PDF, 119.

⁴⁹ Jenkins, "Game Design," 219.

the reign from Calamity Ganon by overcoming obstacles and in the end defeating Ganon (see [appendix 5](#)). On the other hand, the game-world is the relevant part: the game offers the player an extensive world to navigate and explore freely, secondary challenges that bring the player all around the map, and several characters to interact with. There are in fact several types of climate zones and areas to be explored all with their specific characteristics and tests that the player can explore. Therefore, BOTW can be considered an example of sandbox games. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum define this type of game as when “the player is deposited in a large seamless environment with only a loose mission framework to govern her actions – a framework which she may disregard entirely if so inclined. In a sandbox game the size of the world substantially impacts the game experience.”⁵⁰ These types of games allow for countless hours of gameplay, because secondary missions and explorations can heavily influence the way the game is played. In the case of BOTW this influences the narrative since the player not only has the main quest to complete but also has the freedom to explore the game without any obligations and that can influence the immersive state.

Considering the genre of game, it is therefore necessary to specify the type of player I identify with and my game style because as stated before this is a subjective method and thus it is important to understand my positioning in the research. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum adopt Richard Bartle primary division of player types as killers, socializers, explorers and achievers to better identify the different approaches when playing.⁵¹ As an “explorer” type of player, I preferred to explore first and then act. As I am not particularly skilled in fighting, I needed to always be prepared to revitalize myself or have the necessary upgrades so that I could survive the game and my potentially lethal need to explore. Due to my need to explore I have encountered several untimely and gruesome deaths that have shaped the way I played the game and the way in which I was immersed and alienated. Although the game genre and my game style pushed me towards an immersed experience based on exploring the game and surviving, I also experienced more alienating moments because I needed tools such as the map and the menu to survive. Furthermore, every game over made me realize what I was doing; even though I was alienated by them my engagement with the game was absolute. The failures at some parts of the game contributed to the development of my survival strategy but at the same time, I was immersed in what I was doing and put in the flow state. Therefore, due to the sandbox structure of the open-world game I had to engage with the game adopting an extra-textual perspective.

⁵⁰ Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum, “Well Read,” 273.

⁵¹ Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum, “Well Read,” 278.

This engagement allowed me to maintain my immersive state but at the same time I was alienated enough to think critically about what I was doing to better accomplish my mission.

Chapter 3.2 – Immersion in BOTW

Immersion is one of the main elements in the game. As previously analyzed, the genre of the game and my game style were pushing me towards immersion. But at the same time there were other elements that were immersive when playing. As said before, the game is extensive and allows for countless hours of explorations and gameplay. This was both immersive and alienating. The immersion feeling is connected with the central idea of flow, namely survival. The player needs to focus on the task at hand because the game-world includes enemies and surprises that obstruct the completing of the gameplay and increase the possibilities of a game over. Furthermore, it can be argued that the type of immersion presented is immersion as transportation; in fact, the player is not only immersed in the action of exploring and surviving the game but she also has a full world to explore and discover that requires her attention.⁵² Thus, this type of immersion is based not only on the haptic feedback of the game but also on the presence of the player in the simulated space.

One of the moments in which the flow state was particularly strong was when I faced the final battle of the Divine Beasts and Ganon, they are part of the main quest of the game and they are mandatory in order to finish the game (see [appendix 3](#), [4](#), and [5](#) for specific information). The Divine Beasts are four gigantic robots that helped Link fight Ganon and therefore the player has to regain control of them by solving their enigma and by defeating the monster inside them (figure 3.2).

⁵² Calleja, "Immersion," 27.



3.2 Example of a Divine Beast

The first element to take into consideration when talking about the Divine Beasts and immersion, is the fight with the final monsters. When fighting the monster that is the final level of the Divine Beast, the immersive flow is dominant, all the player can focus on is her survival and the fight. Therefore, the main focus is the action of fighting and surviving instead of the game-world. The player is immersed in the action itself and thus it is an example of immersion as absorption. It is not the game-world or the virtual space that encourages the feeling of immersion but the action of fighting itself and the game-world became a secondary element.

Once the boss was defeated, I had a complete sense of victory that was culminated by a short clip in which the monster died, and the Divine Beast was freed. In this moment the player instead of being alienated from the video that takes control away switches from an active state of immersion to a passive one. During this sequence the feeling is the same as watching a movie and therefore the state of immersion was not broken, it simply changed from active to passive.

Therefore, immersion is encouraged through the game genre and the extensive game-world that is offered. The flow state is present in the majority of the game since survival is the key to complete the game. Furthermore, there are several types of immersion that the player can feel when playing and that are connected with specific parts of the game. These types of immersion although different and sometimes tainted by alienation are nonetheless immersive experiences. These types of immersion that can be connected with alienation are linked with

the idea of engagement. In the case of engagement, alienation, though still present, is surpassed by immersion.

Chapter 3.3 – Alienation in BOTW

Beside the immersive elements that have already been outlined in the previous chapters, the game also incorporates alienating aspects in the gameplay. Furthermore, some elements that were deemed immersive in the previous chapter are analyzed through the lens of alienation since the immersion was sometimes interrupted by specific elements.

Exploration is one of the key immersive parts of the game but when playing there were also several alienating aspects that interrupted the immersive state. During the first part of the game there is no map given and the player has to explore the game on her own. The difference between a completed map (figure 3.4) and an uncompleted one (figure 3.3) can be decisive. As shown in uncompleted map, it is impossible to orient in a space that has no indication. The map is an essential part of the game since it allows the player to orient in the game and to explore. The map can be considered an alienating aspect since it requires the player to open and close it several times during the game and must be completed otherwise it is useless. The exploration part of the game is central to the type of game that BOTW represents. There are several zones and environments that the player can explore freely and roam through while moving from one quest to the other. The map reduces the feeling of being lost and the frustration the player feels when she cannot reach where she is supposed to go when exploring.



3.3 Map at the Beginning of the Game



3.4 Completed Map at the end of the game

Another relevant aspect connected with exploring and the gameplay is the main menu. Weapons break quite easily in the game and need to be changed quickly through the weapon menu (figure 3.5), furthermore, as said in section 3.1 weather can influence the vitals of the avatar therefore the materials menu (figure 3.6) is essential to restore life and avoid consequences connected with the climate (the complete menu is explained in [appendix 1](#)).



3.5 Weapon Menu



3.6 Materials Menu

It is important to notice, how the alienating aspect of the menu has been incorporated in the gameplay in way that one cannot survive the game without opening and closing it constantly. Despite this could be seen as an example of what Dunne defines as system

alienation, I argue that this is an example of aesthetic alienation.⁵³ Although the use of the menu does change the way the game is played since the objects and weapons can influence the gameplay, it is only a superficial type of alienation since when in the flow of the game and fighting to save her life, the transition between the core game and the menu is fluent and immediate and therefore, the menu does not break the state of immersion. As in the case of immersion, the alienating aspects were included in my state but instead of immersion being dominant, alienation was the main feeling. Therefore, while playing I was still immersed in the flow but instead of being absorbed in the action, what I was doing was focusing on how to best achieve the action through the use of alienating aspects. Thus, the flow state and alienation were present at the same time.

Chapter 3.4 – Poetic Gameplay in BOTW

The main moments in which defamiliarization happened is during the flashbacks and the memories that the game incorporates into the narrative. The game does not develop in a linear way, in fact, many times the game is interrupted with cinematic sequences that can both be triggered by the player or by the game. In these sequences it is possible to notice several characteristics of poetic gameplay.

When the player wins the fight against one of Divine Beast's monsters, the first characteristic of defamiliarization can be seen. In fact, the second that the monster is beaten, the control is taken away from the player and it is shown the short cinematic sequence in which the monster dies. Then, there is a monologue from the champion of the beast that pledges his/her alliance to the cause of defeating Ganon. It is not possible to face the Divine Beasts' challenges again, this is one of the few parts of the game that cannot be played twice. During this sequence the only thing that the player can do is watch the video offered but it is alienating since the sense of victory after a battle is subdued by the video. The first time it happened, my immersive state switched from active to passive but, by the fourth time it happened I was annoyed, and I felt that control was taken away from me. That feeling happened almost every time a memory or a flashback happened since there are several throughout the game. Therefore, when control is taken away is defamiliarizing.

The interesting part of the game narrative is that flashbacks (figure 3.8) and memories (figure 3.7) are embedded in the way in which the story develops, thus the game does not

⁵³ Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 91.

develop in a linear way. At the beginning of the game, when Link wakes up and the player is offered with the main backstory. Link has lost all of his memories and has to find them again if the player wants to have more background information. Flashbacks are embedded in the storytelling: they are small videos that interrupt the game and offer information about the past. There are two kinds of cinematic sequences connected with the game: the memories and the flashback (see [appendix 6](#) for information).



3.7 Beginning of a Memory – Cinematic Sequence



3.8 Example of a Flashback

The main difference between the two is that even though they are both flashbacks, the memories have to be found and activated whereas the flashbacks are inevitable. They are signaled by the framing of the video: memories begin like an old movie and then switch to a normal video whereas the flashbacks are a simple video. They both represent poetic gameplay and passive immersion based on the way in which they are structured.⁵⁴ In the case of flashbacks, they take control away from the player in crucial moments, such as when finally defeating a boss or when finally reaching one of the Divine Beasts. They undermine the player's expectation for control because there is no way to stop them from happening and they are triggered by the game itself. Furthermore, they disrupt the chronological flow of time since they interrupt the present of the game to give a sneak peak of the past, jumping from present to past and vice versa. Lastly, there is a blurring of the form. In both memories and flashbacks, the events are presented in forms of film: while the character is reliving a memory in his mind it feels like watching a movie.

Another relevant aspect of the game connected with defamiliarization is the passing of time in the game. To further deepen the immersive flow state, the game has its own time that is shorter than real time. Time passes quicker in the game and an hour of playing corresponds to several days in the game making the player lose track of time. Every few days in the game

⁵⁴ Mitchell, "Making the Familiar Unfamiliar," 4; Dunne, "Brechtian Alienation," 84.

there is what is called the Red Moon in which all the previously killed enemies come back to life and can be fought again. When this happens, control is taken away from the player and she is forced to watch this small clip in which enemies come back to life while Zelda asks Link to be careful. Lastly the blurring of the form based on the fact that there is no interactivity during this sequence. Unlike the other cinematic sequences of the game this is the only one that fully represent defamiliarization without mixing it with passive immersion. Due to the fact that this scene is cyclical and happens repeatedly in the game, it presents a majorly alienating factor since it does not offer new information or backstories, it is not a flashback and it does not tell a story unlike all the other cinematic sequences. Therefore, this is a perfect example defamiliarization based on the fact that the immersive state is completely broken during this sequence instead of being subdued like in the case of poetic gameplay.

Conclusion

The Legend of Zelda – Breath of the Wild balances immersion and alienation by encouraging them both. The same elements that could be considered alienating and defamiliarizing can encourage immersion at the same time. This idea of being immersed when alienated can be found in different moments of the game such as the memories, the flashbacks, and when fighting. In these moments the player is not only immersed in the game and in the type of immersion that is encouraged by that specific part but there is also the need to focus on strategy and on the use of specific tools such as the menu. This is a form of gameplay that could be connected with the idea of engagement as the purest form of immersion. In this case the definitions offered by Calleja and by Yellowlees-Douglas and Hargadon complete each other. Calleja claims that engagement is the purest form of immersion that happens when immersion is complete.⁵⁵ On the other hand Calleja also quotes Yellowlees-Douglas and Hargadon who claim that engagement happen when the player assumes “an extra-textual perspective from the game itself.”⁵⁶ When these two definitions are unified, Calleja claims that the result is that engagement is the purest form of immersion in which the player adopts an extra-textual perspective but that at the same time immersion is not broken. Therefore, immersion and alienation can in fact be present at the same time in the form of engagement. This form of engagement can be seen when exploring the game and when fighting enemies since the player

⁵⁵ Calleja, “Immersion,” 27.

⁵⁶ Calleja, “Immersion,” 27; Douglass-Hargadon, “The Pleasure of Immersion and Engagement,” 160.

focuses on surviving but at the same time alienation is present. In these cases, alienating elements are included in the immersive state instead of breaking it.

At the same time, it was demonstrated in section 3.3 and 3.4 that also poetic gameplay can be considered as balance between immersion and alienation. Whereas engagement has more immersive tendencies, poetic gameplay is more aligned with alienation. The main difference between poetic gameplay and engagement is that in poetic gameplay, alienation is the dominant feeling, there is a level of immersion, but is secondary. The clips are the most defamiliarizing elements of the game and even if they can be alienating, they always maintain a certain level of immersion. Therefore, both poetic gameplay and engagement can be considered the result of the co-existence of immersion and alienation but on the opposite sides of the spectrum. The same element of the game, such as exploring, or flashbacks and memories can be both engaging and poetic gameplay based on the main feelings that the player is feeling at the moment. This means that although the game does encourage both, immersion and alienation are highly personal sensations that can be present at the same time.

It is important to remember that this is a close reading of a game and therefore it is a subjective method based on my game style and my experience. Different players or game styles could find different results based on their experience. My experience as an “explorer” type of player has influenced my analysis significantly and another player could develop a different analysis.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates how immersion and alienation can coexist at the same time when playing and that they are not necessarily opposite to each other. Furthermore, this research is part of the debate around the concepts of engagement and poetic gameplay in relationship to immersion and alienation.

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⁵⁷ All the screenshots from the game were taken by me when I played the game.

Appendix

A.1 Gameplay

This part of the appendix is dedicated to the explanation of how the game works and how the menus are incorporated in the gameplay. The game is an open-world first-person, role play game. The player assumes the identity of Link, the hero of the game that must save Princess Zelda. The player has a bird eye view of the avatar and can move him freely in the given space. This view allows the player to have a better perspective than the avatar POV and it is necessary especially when fighting several enemies at the same time. Due to the genre of the game, there is no limit to where Link can go, he can climb, swim and paraglide in order to explore the space that he inhabits, and the bird-eye-view makes it easier for the player to control the surroundings and to keep Link out of danger. Furthermore, the player must pay attention to the energy bar of the avatar and his life because both can lead to death. When Link's life ends there is the immediate game over, thus the player must try to gather as many heart containers as possible, in the image A.1, they are in the in top left corner. The stamina is the green circles next to the avatar and it signals how much energy Link has. It recharges quite quickly and in the case of running it is non-lethal but for example, when the stamina runs out while swimming it leads to drowning or when climbing it leads to death.

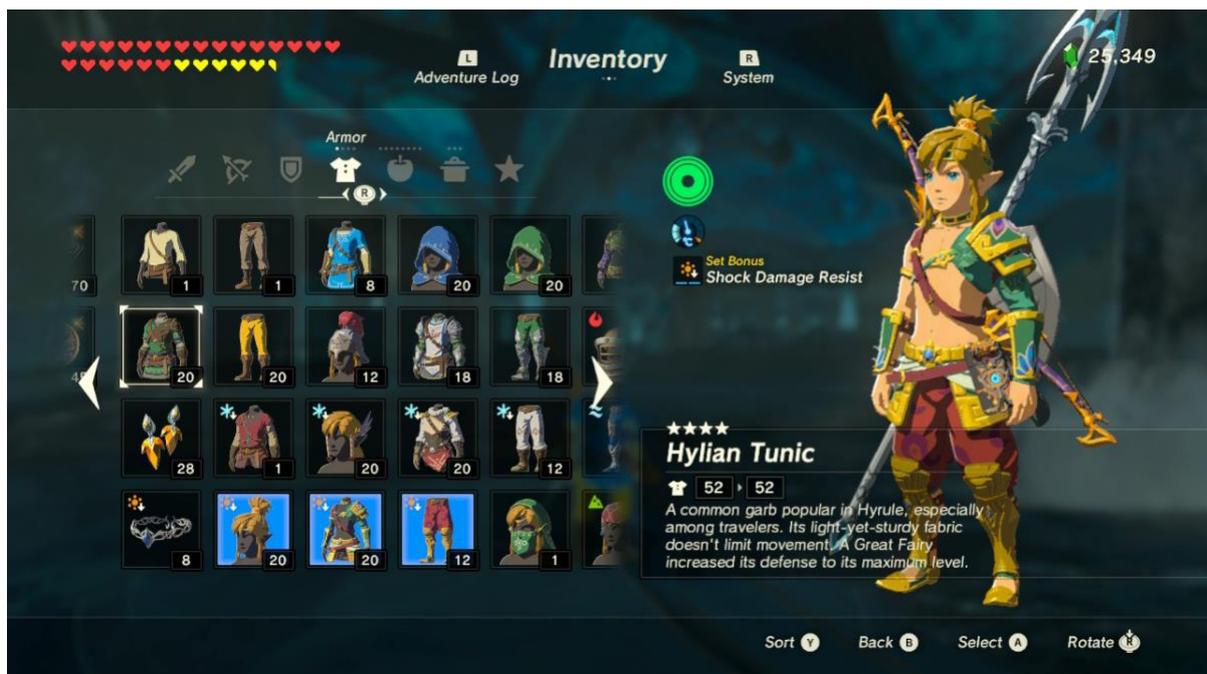
As said in chapter 3.1, the weather is also an important feature of the game. The three sensors next to the map in the bottom right corner represent, from top to bottom, radar, temperature, stealth and the bar beneath, hour and weather condition. Whereas the radar and the stealth indicators are not useful for survival the rest are. The thermometer lets the player know when Link is in optimal temperature for survival. When the weather entails a very hot or cold situation it could influence Link's health and damages him. These features are essential for survival because the player knows she has to intervene, or Link will lose health over it. There are both clothing and potions that can help Link overcome these situations in order to avoid a game over (figure A.2, A.3, A.4). The map is reduced in the circle next to the sensors and allows the player to have a glimpse at the map without having to access it from the menu. It does not give full information in the same way in which the map accessed from the menu does, but it still gives enough information to survive and explore.

The last indicators, right under the health indicator there are the Divine Beasts' gifts that Link is granted after saving them. They can help the player both in fighting or when

exploring the game and there is a number of times they can be used before they run out of energy which is signaled next to the icon. At the beginning of the game, the player does not have any of them but must earn them by freeing the Divine Beasts' champions and get their blessing. They can also be used when fighting Calamity Ganon at the end of the game



A.1 Gameplay and Basic Functions of the Game



A.2 Clothing Menu

Another relevant aspect connected with the gameplay is the menu. There are several menus that the player can interact with when playing. They are accessed by clicking on “+” and “-” buttons on the console. Through the “-” the player can access the map. Through the “+” menu the player accesses the cloths, material and food, weapons, shields, bows, key items, quest menus and settings (respectively image A.2, A.3, A.4, A.5, A.6, A.7, A.8, A.9, A.10). These are the main menus, and they are necessary for the development of the game. The weapons, bows, and shields menus are necessary for changing weapons when they break or to adapt it to the kind of enemy the player is facing. They are also necessary since weapons break easily and must be changed several times during a single fight. Furthermore, materials and food menus are necessary for the game since the food menu (figure A.4) is necessary for revitalizing and use power ups so that the avatar can face challenges easier. The materials menu (image A.3) is also necessary for revitalizing or creating power ups for the game.

The key items menu (figure A.8) is where the player can check the key items that she has collected during the game that she can use. It is not necessary to access them through the menu since they are also displayed in the main game interface (figure A.1). The last menu that is part of the main game is the quest menu (figure A.9) in which the player can look at the quests she has complete and decide what she needs to do to complete the quests. As shown in image A.9, completed quests are signaled by being greyed whereas the ones to be completed are put at the top so that they are easy to see and complete. All these menus are part of the aesthetic alienation that was discussed in section 3.3 of the analysis along with the map menu.

On the other hand, there is also a system alienation menu that is accessed in the same way of the other menus. In image A.8 it is possible to see that in the top corner is signaled the system menu. The system menu (figure A.10) is the most alienating menu of the game since it is the one necessary to change the settings, to save and to change the command buttons to play the game. It also contains the basic information and commands to play the game and the basic moves that can be used when playing. Unlike the other menu, this is the only one that is only alienating and has no part in the immersive part of the game. When the player accesses this menu, she is pulled out of the simulation and immersive state of the game since there is no connection with the gameplay but only with the system of the game.



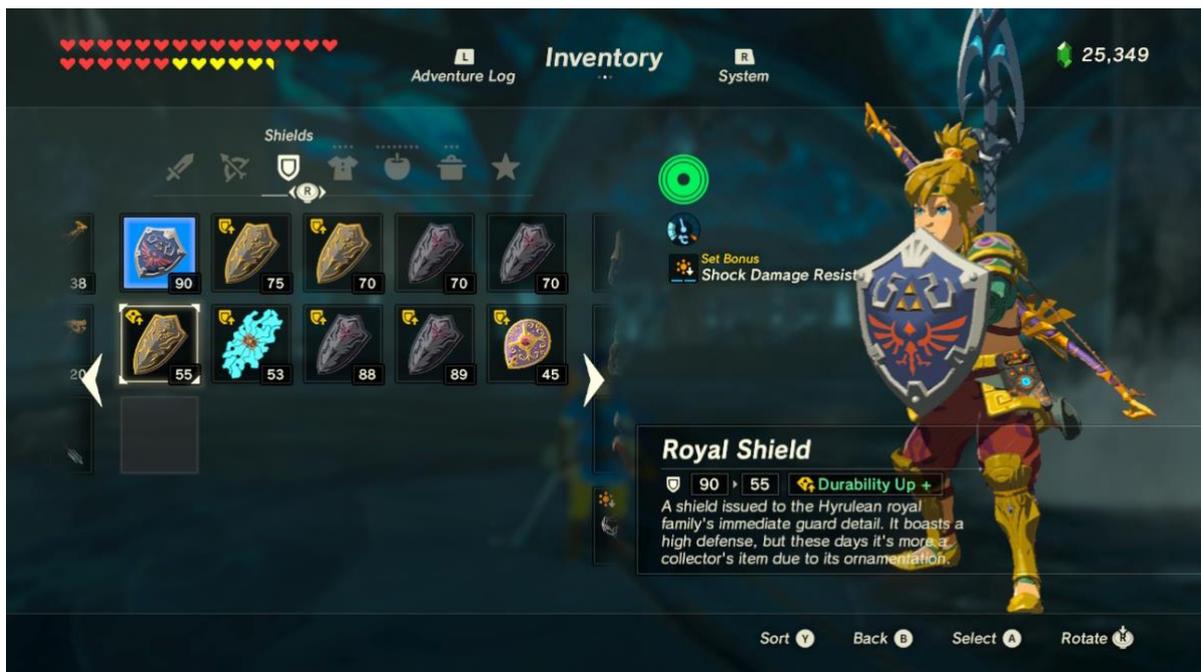
A.3 Materials Menu



A.4 Food Menu Dishes



A.5 Weapons Menu



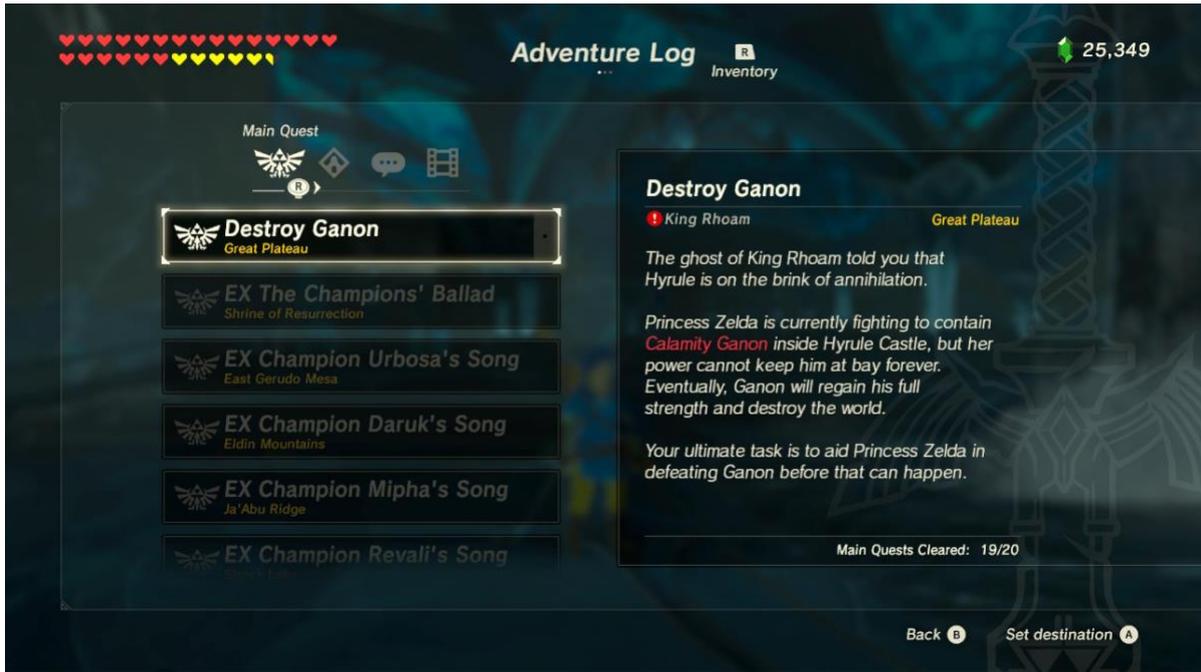
A.6 Shields Menu



A.7 Bows Menu



A.8 Key Items Menu



A.9 Tasks Menu



A.10 Setting Menu

A.2 *The Legend of Zelda – Breath of the Wild* Summary

The narrative of the game develops in a non-linear way. The events start in medias res as Link wakes up from a hundred-years slumber. Through the game the player discovers that Link and Zelda already tried to fight Calamity Ganon in the past, but they have failed. During the fight, Link was deadly injured and was put into a slumber so that he could regain his strength to fight Ganon again. While Link was sleeping, Zelda kept Ganon contained in the castle so that he would not destroy the kingdom.

When Link wakes up the player starts to move him around the space and exploring the plaintiff he is stuck on. During the exploration of the plaintiff the player meets an old man, which will turn out to be the deceased king, that tells Link some details about what happened in the past and the danger Zelda is in. The king asks Link to prove his worth and complete some challenges that will bring him all over the small section of the map that is available for him. During this part of the game, the player is confined in the plaintiff and she cannot explore other parts of the game-world until she finishes this tutorial.

Once Link has proven his worth to the king, the player is allowed to leave the plaintiff and has to go to another village to discover how to save Zelda. Once the player has reached the village, the substory concerning Link's lost memories is introduced. The elder of the village explains that Link has lost his memories and that during his voyage he should try to remember as much as he can of what happened a hundred years ago. The elder explains to Link that he has to go and free all the Divine Beasts and their champions so that he will have the necessary strength to fight Calamity Ganon.

From that moment on, the player has to explore the game world and help the villagers control the Divine Beasts through a series of fights and enigmas. There are four Divine Beasts that must be freed, and they are positioned in four different corners of the map. The player has to reach the different villages that are connected to the Divine Beasts and complete missions in order to gain the villagers' trust. This is better explained in [Appendix 3](#) and [4](#). Once a Divine Beast is freed, it gets into position and it is ready to strike Calamity Ganon when Link will engage a fight.

Once all the Divine Beasts have been freed, the player can proceed to the castle to fight Calamity Ganon and free Princess Zelda. The castle has a map of its own and represent a level that the player must survive in order to reach Ganon. There are several enemies and weapons hidden all around the castle and it is up to the player to survive until reaching the center of the

castle and fight Ganon. Once Ganon is beaten, Zelda is freed and the Reign of Hyrule can flourish again. Zelda and Link will reign over Hyrule now that peace is restored.

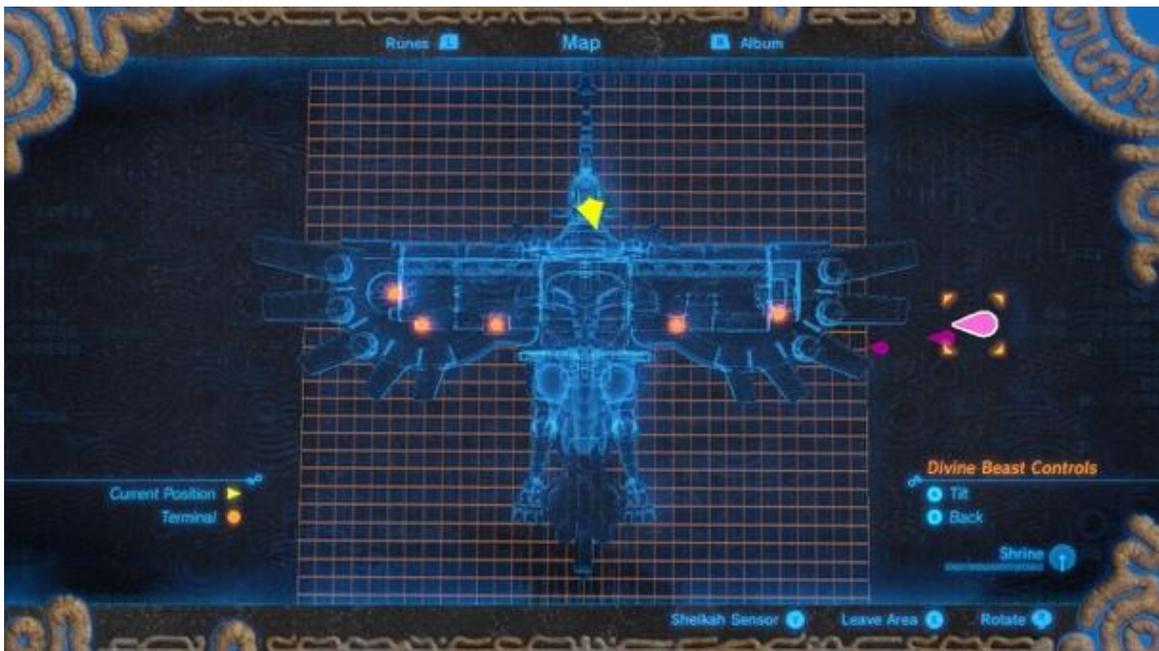
A.3 The Divine Beasts

The Divine Beasts are gigantic robots that will help Link fight Ganon and therefore the player has to regain control of them by solving their enigma and by defeating the monster inside them in order to free the champions that will fight Ganon alongside Link. There are four of them in total: Vah Medoh, Vah Ruta, Vah Rudania and Vah Naboris (respectively A.11, A.13, A.15, A.16). The game does not offer extensive background on them but positions them with an older civilization that built them to help them fight Ganon in the past. Princess Zelda decided to use them in the battle against Ganon, but he was aware of them and since he was defeated by them the first time, Ganon was not inclined to be defeated in the same way again. Therefore, he kills the champions that controlled the Divine Beasts and took control of them. Each one of the Divine Beasts is now in Ganon's control through a monster that the player must face. The importance of regaining control is stressed by the villagers that complain how the Beast has been causing them problems and their incapacity in facing it.

The player must fight each Divine Beast in order to gain back control and free the champion from Ganon, the order in which they must be faced relies on the player strategy and choices. To gain control of a Divine Beast the player must first fight it on the outside and then enter it and complete the puzzle using the map that is given, for a more detail table of the challenges and individual divine beasts [see appendix 4](#). Once inside a map is given and the player must activate all the terminals (the orange dots signaled in the maps) by exploring the map and completing the puzzles (see image A.12, A.14, A.16, A.18). The map given allows the player to have an idea of the Divine Beast is structured and how to proceed. Once all the terminals have been reached and control is gained the Divine Beast's final boss appears. It must be defeated for the Divine Beast to be freed and Ganon's emanation to be removed. Once the boss is defeated the Divine Beast is freed and can be used in the final battle against Calamity Ganon. During the final battle, the Divine Beasts shoot a beaming laser to Ganon and halved his life force (which still was a lot) so that Link has a better chance at winning the fight.



A.11 Divine Beast Vah Medoh



A.12 Vah Medoh's Map



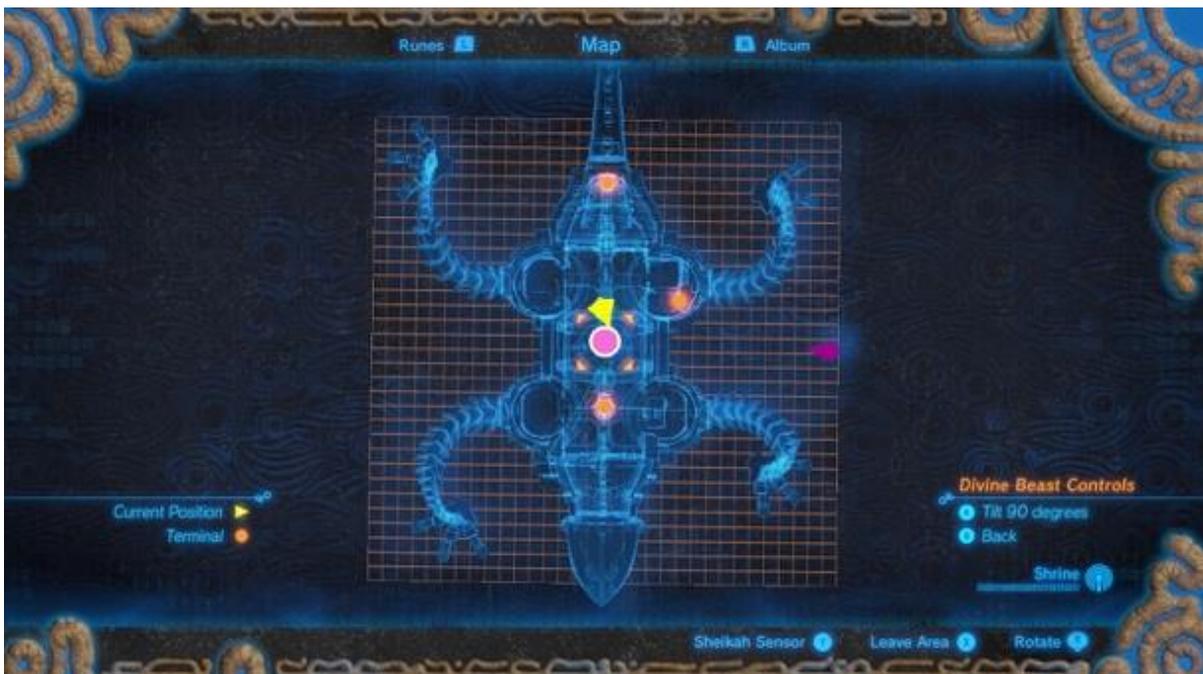
A.13 Divine Beast Vah Ruta



A.14 Vah Ruta's Map



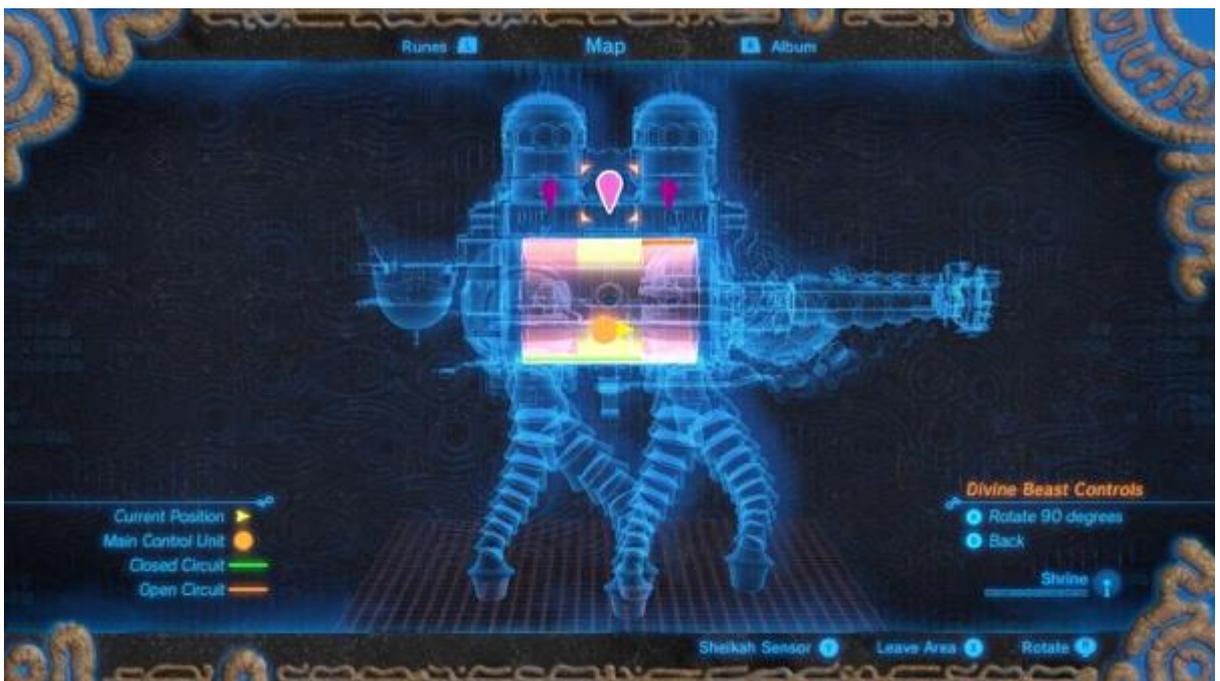
A.15 Divine Beast Vah Rudania



A.16 Vah Rudania's Map



A.17 Divine Beast Vah Naboris



A.18 Vah Naboris' Map

A.4 Table of the Divine Beasts and Fights

	Vah Naboris	Vah Rudania	Vah Ruta	Vah Medoh	Ganon
Challenge to the village	Heat during the day that reduces the health of the character, Only women can enter the village, so I had to find female clothing to be allowed to enter.	The village is on a volcano, so I need to fireproof myself to avoid a horrible death by fire.	I had to walk a really long way to get to the village under the rain with electric monster around me: death by electrocution was a major risk.	There was not a particular challenge per se, beside the freezing cold, it just took a really long time.	Reaching the castle is very hard because there are several enemies that are very strong and dedicated to the eradication of intruders.
Village chief request	A group of thieves has stolen an important relic from the village, and Link needs to find it before he can face the Divine Beast.	Find and save the elder's grandson from a mine nearby the village.	Go on a mountain nearby and steal some arrows from monster without being seen and electrocuted to death.	Save the village and prove my archery skills through a skill's test.	Zelda asks for Link's help saying that she cannot hold Ganon much longer.
1 st cinematic sequence	After speaking to the village chief, a flashback starts in which Link remembers the dead champion and Zelda talking about Calamity Ganon.	After speaking to the village elder a flashback starts in which the champion pledges his alliance to Zelda.	After speaking to the village's king, Link remembers the dead champion and the fact that she had a crush on him.	After speaking with the elder Link remembers the dead champion and his eagerness to fight Ganon.	When Link enters the castle ground Zelda asks for his help and the video shows Ganon acting up.
External challenge	The Divine Beast must be stopped before I could enter it, I collaborated with the village chief to defeat it.	The Divine Beast has a shield that must be blasted with the help of the elder's grandson.	I had to work with the village's prince to be able to get near the Divine Beast without dying.	With the village's hero I had to use my archery skill to hit targets and disable the shield.	Surviving the multitude of enemies present in the castle.
Internal challenge	I used the map of the beast to solve the enigma.	Use the map to incline the Divine Beast to solve the enigma.	Control the water intake of the Divine Beast through the map.	Use the map to incline the divine beast to solve the enigma.	The map is quite useless, so I had to roam a lot before reaching Ganon.
2 nd sequence	I freed the champion by defeating the Beast and she gave a long speech about her commitment to the upcoming battle.	After the monster was defeated and freed the champion, he gave a speech on the importance of stopping Ganon.	After I freed the champion, she gave a speech about how she will not let Link down in the battle against Ganon.	After I freed the champion, he thanks me and promise his help when the time comes.	After the first victory the sequence shows Zelda, after the second one Hyrule is saved and Zelda can govern. <u>See appendix 5.</u>

A.5 Ganon and The Final Fight

Ganon is the villain of the game. It is both addressed as Calamity Ganon and as simply Ganon. According to the legend he is pure hatred and evil incarnated and he plagues the reign of Hyrule cyclically. Link and Princess Zelda are part of the legend as the ones that will defeat him like the hero and the Princess did the last time Ganon attacked Hyrule. The legend explains that is only through the collaboration of the hero and the princess that Ganon will be destroyed. When Link wakes up, Ganon has already been ruling over Hyrule for a hundred years and that is why there are so many monsters in the game, but he has not conquered the entire game-world because Zelda keeps him contained in the castle. During the entire game, Ganon is never free to leave the castle and so is Zelda, thus it is up to Link to gather all the help and the resources he can to fight Ganon. In the memories that are shown, Princess Zelda expresses her fear of failing to different heroes and champions and how determined she is to protect her people.

When all the Divine Beasts have been freed the player can proceed towards the castle to face Ganon and complete the game. The player has to fight Ganon twice, once inside the castle where it is in Monster form and a second one in the open air where he is in Dark Beast form. They are both demanding battles that require the full attention of the player and the use of the menu since Ganon is very powerful and weapons break easy.

The first time the player has to fight Ganon (is in the castle and requires strong fighting skills and the use of all the gifts that the player has collected during the main quest of the game because otherwise it is very difficult to defeat Calamity Ganon. In my case, it took me quite some time to learn how to attack Ganon properly since he had a strong shield that I could not get through with normal weapons and I had to figure out how to wound him when he was protected. I did not encounter any game over when facing this challenge, but I had to open and close the menu constantly because I kept getting wounded and I almost died two times. Once the fight was finished there was a small clip in which Ganon gets free from Zelda and flees the castle.

That is the final challenge and fight of the game. Ganon assumes its Dark Beast form. During this fight the player has to ride a horse and use a special bow and arrows to wound Ganon. It is not a difficult challenge like the one in the castle, the main concern is to avoid being crushed by Ganon in Dark Beast form and therefore die immediately. In my case, I was not skilled enough to fight on my horse because I did not have the skills to control the horse and shoot Ganon at the same time. Thus, I ditched the horse and used a potion to make my

avatar move faster so that I could fight Ganon on foot without any complication. Once I ditched the horse, the fight became easier for me and I managed to complete the task and kill Dark Beast Ganon relatively easily. Throughout the fight Zelda encourages Link and asks him to give it his best because he is the hero that Hyrule needs. Her talking was a distracting feature that sometimes confused me when playing because it pulled me out from the state of immersion.



A.19 Calamity Ganon



A.20 Calamity Ganon in Dark Beast Mode

A.6 Memories and Flashbacks Table

	Trigger	Form	Effect
Memories (figure A.21)	They are triggered by the player, there is a sign on the floor and the player can activate it (A.24).	Like watching a movie.	Passive immersion Blurring of the form.
Falshbacks (figure A.22)	They happen in specific parts of the game and the player has no choice but to watch them.	Like watching a movie.	Passive immersion. Poetic gameplay (blurring of the form, undermining expectations for control and disrupting chronological flow of time.

Dialogues (A.23)	Generally, is the player the one triggering them but something they act like a flashback.	Player still have some control, but the dialogue will block the game.	Undermining the expectations of control. Sometimes it can be alienating since the dialogues can be boring.
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These are the main defamiliarizing elements of the game. I have also included the dialogues to better understand the difference between them and the memories and flashbacks. In the case of memories and flashbacks the player completely loses control over the game and is forced to watch the clip that is presented. On the other hand, during the dialogues the player still maintains some level of control over the game due to the fact that it is her that decides when to move to the next line of the dialogue. Without the interaction of the player with the game, the dialogue is blocked and does not proceed. Furthermore, sometimes during the dialogues the player can actually interact and pick her answer in between the given options, the outcome not always changes based on the player's answer but at least there is some form of interaction instead of being a passive viewer (figure A.23).

Furthermore, through the menu is also possible to re-watch the memories and flashbacks that were previously discovered if the player wishes to watch them again to gain more information (figure A.25). The memories menu allows the player to have all the memories in one place and access them at any moment she wishes to.



A.21 Beginning of a Memory



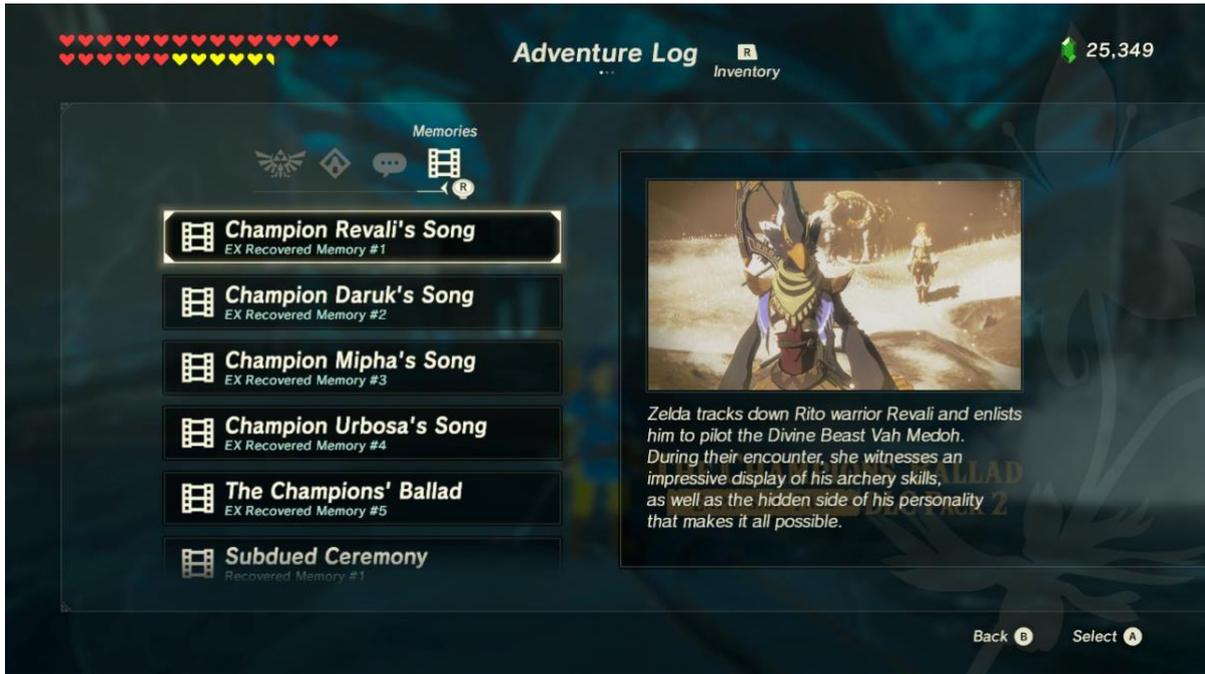
A.22 Example of a Flashback



A.23 Example of a Dialogue



A.23 The light indicates the point in which Link can recall one of his lost memories.



A.25 Memories Menu