



The Cinematic Gameplay Experience:
Exploring Remediations of Film in
Uncharted 4: A Thief's End

Master's Thesis by Thijs Spies

2189658

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Under supervision of Elize de Mul, MA

Second reader: Prof. dr. Joost Raessens

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Name of student: Thijs Spies

Student number: 2189658

Abstract

This thesis aims to find out how the cinematic video game experience can be further understood by investigating *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* through the theoretical lens of Bolter and Grusin's theory of remediation. Combining ludology and narratology, this thesis positions itself in a middle ground approach characterized by Henry Jenkins' work and embodied by today's academic climate in the field of game studies. A game analysis based on a theoretical framework with various concepts by notable game scholars shows that the cinematic gameplay experience is formed in at least these three areas: narrative, visuals, and gameplay. It seems like a certain framework of cinematic elements, formed in the theoretical framework, are always present in a cinematic game, to a certain extent. These cinematic elements, remediated from film, can change in function or gain additional functions when incorporated into a cinematic video game. The fact that three aspects of the game are analyzed proposes the idea that the cinematic gaming experience in similar games is created through these three aspects as well. Additionally, it becomes apparent that the cinematic gameplay is formed both by the creations of the game's developer, but also by the player of the game themselves, through what I offer as the notion of the developer-director/actor and the player-director/actor.

Keywords: Cinematic gameplay experience, remediation, developer-director/actor, player-director/actor, *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*.

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Introduction

Have you ever played a video game that made you feel like you were playing through a film? Since video games rose to popularity in the 1970s, an increasing number of videogames strives to reach a level of entertainment that gives the player a cinematic experience. These games are often referred to as cinematic games, a subgenre or group of games that share certain qualities that make the playthrough feel cinematic. There is no clear definition of what a cinematic game is, since the term ‘cinematic’ has no finite meaning (Priestman, 2014). It is mostly used to describe something that is filmic, or resembles film.

‘Cinematic’ games share a filmic language that consists of elements from film. When playing a cinematic game, these can occur visually, narratively, or through gameplay. It is important to note, however, that games and film are different media because they are consumed and interacted with differently. A film is completely predetermined when it is screened and watched. A video game is interactive and therefore not completely predetermined. A game must be played for the experience to become complete (Walther, 2004, p. 1). Yet by using this shared language, cinematic games renegotiate film within the medium of video games. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call this process remediation, when a new medium takes the content and characteristics of older media and then incorporates and interprets these into its own rendition, this being the new medium (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, pp. 44-50).

Defining the cinematic gameplay experience

Many that interest themselves in cinematic video games focus mainly on visual presentation. There seems to be a notion that mostly cinematography and other visual aspects of film are what makes a cinematic gameplay experience (Priestman, 2014). This thesis aims to look further. Cinematic games are a relatively new research topic, and a term that started to gain popularity during the early 2010s. Since then, discourse started developing about the phenomenon, thinking of what exactly makes a gameplay experience cinematic (Priestman, 2014). There must be more to it than only cinematographic cutscenes.

By investigating visual aspects as well as narrative and gameplay, this thesis will build forth on research by several scholars. Bo Kampmann Walther’s research on how video games and film borrow visual elements from each other provides a theoretical foundation to find out how the cinematic gameplay experience is created on a visual level (Walther, 2004). Ivan Girina and Rich Newman argue that film is also remediated on a gameplay level, aside

from visuals. They explain how remediation has an effect on gameplay by showing how film elements gain completely new functions when adopted in video games (Girina, 2013; Newman, 2009). Henry Jenkins argues that video games can have immense narrative potential, and can vary in the way they present a narrative. These narrative aspirations can equal that of film, suggesting that film can also be remediated on a narrative level (Jenkins, 2004). This thesis groups these ideas together to form a theoretical framework that shows how remediation of film can impact cinematic video games in their visuals, gameplay and narrative. It builds forth upon these ideas by searching for these remediations in a case study of *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* (Naughty Dog, 2016), showing that the cinematic gameplay experience is formed in all three areas through remediation.

This thesis aims to position itself alongside scholars in what Joost Raessens refers to as the third phase of game studies (Raessens, 2016, p. 2). This study will perform a film language study on *Uncharted 4* to see how the cinematic gameplay experience is created. Combining methodologies and theories from fields such as film studies was shunned during the second phase of game studies (Raessens, 2016, p. 2). In today's third phase, these approaches have become more widely acknowledged and further researched (Girina, 2013; Raessens, 2016, p.2). Film is comparatively better understood than video games through decades of study in the field of film studies. A substantial framework of knowledge is the result of this, ready to be used and experimented with in the field of game studies. Like Henry Jenkins encourages, it seems worthwhile to apply this to cinematic video games, assuming that these remediate film to some extent (Jenkins, 2004). Additionally, video games are still not completely understood and perhaps appreciated on a societal level because they are a relatively new medium. A research effort like this can add to a more complete understanding of what is currently one of the most popular media and forms of entertainment.

Investigating *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*

This thesis will focus on *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* as a case study. One of today's most cutting-edge video games, this game concludes the action-adventure series that tells the story of Nathan Drake, a treasure hunter in search of secrets that are lost to human history. It is the most graphically and technologically impressive game in the series and arguably the genre. *Uncharted 4* combines film tropes, cinematography and more into a gameplay experience that is often described as truly cinematic. The player explores, climbs, shoots, fights, solves puzzles, and escapes danger throughout the game, in search of lost treasure. It employs several techniques to achieve this cinematic quality, including motion capture

performances and graphical fidelity, techniques that have increased in potential due to technological developments within the medium (Bollmer, 2019).

Uncharted 4 serves as a good representation of cinematic games. It balances story, gameplay, and video sections known as cinematics in order to present a narrative experience to the player. The game's developer, Naughty Dog, refers to the game as a playable summer blockbuster (NeoGamer - The Video Game Archive, 2020). This already hints at the fact that film is in some way present within this gameplay experience. The game is a linear experience, meaning that the player has no impact on the story and cannot choose the outcome of their game. These qualities make this game a very fitting case study to learn more about the cinematic gaming experience. A game with branching narrative paths that all need to be analyzed will prove an unrealistic amount of work for a thesis of this scale. With this game as this thesis' case study, the following research question will be answered:

How can the cinematic video game experience be further understood visually, narratively, and gameplay-wise, by investigating the remediation of film within the game Uncharted 4: A Thief's End?

Uncharted 4 will be investigated using Clara Fernández-Vara's game analysis as a method (2015), using René Glas' and Jasper van Vught's instrumental play and free play (2017). This method will be further elaborated upon in the third chapter. The following sub questions will guide this research project and work towards answering the research question:

1. ***How is film remediated on an implicit/thematic level in Uncharted 4: A Thief's End?***
2. ***How is film remediated on an explicit/screen level in Uncharted 4: A Thief's End?***
3. ***How is film remediated on a gameplay/interactive level in Uncharted 4: A Thief's End?***

These questions will divide the analysis into three separate focus points that lead to a conclusion where all findings form an answer to the research question. The first question will look into how ideas and themes from film, certain narrative tropes and character tropes tie into or inspire what is experienced while playing through the game. This question is based on Jenkins' work where he suggests that video games have narrative potential similar to other storytelling media, hinting at the fact that film narrative may be remediated in cinematic video games (Jenkins, 2004). The second question will dive into visual aspects of the game that make it look like a film, such as lighting, cinematography, and animation. This question

is based on Walther's research that shows that film can be remediated in various different ways within video games on a visual level (Walther, 2004). The third question will focus on how the game feels like a film when playing through it and interacting with the virtual environment, characters, and situations that the player experiences. This question is inspired by research by both Ivan Girina and Rich Newman, that shows how film remediation has an impact on gameplay, making a video game's gameplay feel like a film (Girina, 2013; Newman, 2009).

This thesis is set up in four chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the academic debate surrounding video games in relation to film. The second chapter forms a theoretical framework that will be used to analyze this case and most effectively answer the research question. The third chapter explains the game analysis that will be used for this case study. Then, the fourth chapter consists of the analysis, split into three sections corresponding with the three sub questions. Lastly, the conclusion answers the research question and discusses the implications of the results, as well as further research opportunities.

Chapter 1: Phenomenon

This chapter explains this thesis' phenomenon and puts it into academic context. 1.1 tells about the concept of cinematic video games. Then, in 1.2, a historical overview is given about the academic debate concerning the study of games in relation to other media. Lastly, in 1.3, this thesis' middle ground approach is described and placed within this academic debate.

1.1 Cinematic games

Films and cinematic games are both media that present a narrative to the recipient (Priestman, 2014). Whether this is done through a scripted story, gameplay, or other elements, there is always at some capacity a story that is being conveyed or ideas that are being communicated by the game, or the person playing it (Jenkins, 2004; Priestman 2014). Academically speaking, there is still much to learn about video games on a narrative and communicative level, especially in relation to other media. There are shared narrative and thematic elements that I think can be encountered in both media, such as common character tropes or narrative structures and tropes. These can probably also influence visuals and gameplay.

Cinematic video games are not the same thing as interactive films. Film scholars used to approach studying video games with this notion, causing conflict among game scholars. These film scholars approached video games like they were films, neglecting the medium's unique properties (Girina, 2013, p. 46). All of this does not mean that the two media cannot share certain elements through remediation, though. Video game developers are aware of this fact. Some consciously attempt to remediate film, like Naughty Dog's Neil Druckmann, writer and creative director of *Uncharted 4*. After developer Naughty Dog's success with *The Last of Us* (Naughty Dog, 2013), a gritty post-apocalyptic survival-horror experience, the developer injected the final *Uncharted* game with some of *The Last of Us*' narratological and cinematic DNA, making *Uncharted 4* an even more cinematic experience than previous entries in the series.

1.2 How to approach the study of games: The academic discussion's history

Video games were studied by film studies scholars before game studies was established as an academic field (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 5). This first phase of game studies emerged due to increased popularity of video games in the 1990s. As game studies became an established field, many scholars stressed that video games needed their own tools for research in order to truly understand the medium. Using theories and methods from other fields could

result in underplaying or missing unique characteristics that video games bring forth through their ludic function (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 6; Raessens, 2016, pp. 1-2).

Determining game studies as an academic field of its own brought about a second phase of game studies that emphasized the formal aspects of video games. As such, game studies tried to distinguish itself from other academic fields with longer traditions of studying aspects like narrative, fiction, and audiovisual elements that games share with other media (Raessens, 2016, p. 2). This caused a split between ludologists studying video games' formal aspects, and narratologists focusing on storytelling capabilities and semantic research on the medium. The main focus on formal aspects prevented attention to theories and methods from other fields, because these fields had nothing to offer the understanding of video games' formal aspects (Fassone et al., 2015, p.6). There were still some scholars that focused on connections with other media (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, pp. 44-50) and video games' narrative potential (Jenkins, 2004).

While video games are a separate and different medium compared to film, there is still a lot that film theory can provide to the understanding of video games. The debate between ludologists and narratologists has faded away in today's third phase. It has never truly been sorted out, likely due to the fact that both research focus areas turned out to be crucial for game studies as a complete field (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 6). As video games rapidly developed technologically throughout these years, it may have also become apparent that big productions started to audiovisually and narratively resemble other media. This hints at the fact that narratologists were right to also focus on these aspects of the medium.

1.3 A middle ground is more fruitful

This rapid pace of technological development calls for a constant reinvestigation of this relation between video games and film (Girina, 2013, pp. 46-47). This shared language between the two media changes and evolves as technology advances and changes as well. Because technology changes, the way in which film is remediated in cinematic video games may also change and evolve. For example, advanced technology allows for a richer *mise en scène* to be created within video games, making remediation of filmic *mise en scène* more realistic and accurate.

Now that the debate between ludologists and narratologists is in the past, its absurdity becomes apparent. One simply cannot claim that either the ludic character or narrative aspirations are the fundamental, defining characteristic of video games as a medium. We

have seen explosive growth in the medium's potential, variety, and creativity since this debate erupted in the early 2000s. It is safe to conclude that video games are a layered and multidisciplinary art form with a vast number of subgenres and subgroups (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 5). There little that can be claimed about video games that applies to each and every video game. This is why cinematic video games have explicitly been chosen as the subject of this study. It is a subgroup of games (Priestman, 2014), and the results and conclusion generated in this thesis will only apply to this subgroup. Cinematic games can be both extremely ludic and narratively driven, *Uncharted 4* being an example.

In "Game design as narrative structure", Henry Jenkins advocates for a middle ground in the debate that gripped game studies in the second phase (Jenkins, 2004). While understanding the sentiment against applying film theory to video games, Jenkins stresses that there is still much to learn through meaningful comparison between video games and other media (Jenkins, 2004). Ridding the academic field of narrative as a framework for thinking about video games is extremely risky. Instead, Jenkins describes how games differ in their storytelling aspirations. Not every game tells a story, but there are certainly also games with immense narrative aspirations. Jenkins claims that some games may try to present narratives uniquely in comparison to other media (Jenkins, 2004). This means that there are also games that present narratives similar to other media, such as film. This can possibly occur through remediation on an implicit/thematic level, hence the first of the three sub questions. Themes and ideas from film narratives can probably be adopted and interpreted within video game narratives. This thesis will align itself with Jenkins' point of view that is embodied by the third wave of game studies. Focusing solely on one aspect or area of video games will not result in a further complete understanding of the medium. This is why a middle ground where both ludology and narratology are considered will prove more fruitful.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for this thesis based on works by key authors concerned with the ideas of remediation and cinematic video games. Bolter and Grusin's notion of remediation is explained in 2.1. Then, in 2.2, Walther's theory of lucidography further explores remediation of film in video games on a visual level. In 2.3, Girina's, Newman's, and Bollmer's works establish how film remediation as a cinematic language also impacts the gameplay of cinematic video games. Lastly, in 2.4, I offer the idea that both the player and developer have a role in the creation of the cinematic gameplay experience on a gameplay and narrative level.

2.1 Remediation

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin are two important scholars that put forward the idea of remediation in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, pp. 44-50), during game studies' second phase. They describe remediation as something that happens in any new medium, especially digital media. Remediation happens when a new medium incorporates features of previous older media, and makes it its own. This, according to Bolter and Grusin, can happen in a multitude of ways. For example, a film can adopt the story or narrative style of a novel it is inspired from. In this case, almost everything from the old medium is borrowed and transferred to the new medium. On the other hand, remediation can also happen when a new medium tries to move away from older media, but still has evidence of the past within itself. After all, it is impossible to create something unique and new without any type of foundation (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, pp. 44-50). Even though the field of game studies largely focused on ludology, Bolter and Grusin rightly point out the fact that new media such as video games remediate older media and thus stand in relation to each other. They also explain how remediation can take on many different forms, and can thus also happen on several levels, such as gameplay, narrative, and visuals.

2.2 Lucidography

Bo Kampmann Walther investigates the idea of remediation further in the context of video games and film in "Cinematography and Ludology: In Search of a Lucidography" (Walther, 2004). In this paper, written during the second phase of game studies, Walther argues that video games remediate film, but also that film remediates video games. Because this thus seems to go both ways between the two media, he refers to this as intermediation instead of remediation. Walther offers to think of these intermediations as a combination of

cinematography and ludology, which he calls lucidography (Walther, 2004, p. 2). He offers several terms and concepts to investigate remediations of film within video games: Focalisation, montage, and non-interactive scene-setting elements. These are all remediations that take place on an explicit/screen level, and will thus be useful for analysis for the second sub question.

2.2.1 Focalisation

Focalisation refers to the player's point of view while playing the game. Inner focalisation has the player seeing through the eyes of their character, also known as first-person perspective. Outer focalisation has the player seeing the character from a distance, allowing them to see more of the environment and character at once, similar to most films. This is also known as a third-person perspective. Thirdly, abstract focalisation refers to the point of view often employed in puzzle games that simply give an overview of the entire game, allowing for no camera control at all (Walther, 2004, pp. 2-3).

2.2.2 Montage

Montage refers to the visual editing style employed within a game. Cinematographic montage is an editing style that aims to convey a cinematic feeling through editing styles similar to that of film. Anti-montage means that there is no montage within the game, instead there is continuous gameplay (Walther, 2004, p. 4). Walther claims that this style occurs in most video games. I argue that this, especially in cinematic video games, has changed since 2004 due to technological advancements. Because of shorter load times, and more powerful hardware in gaming systems, developers have much more agency in defining their visual style on screen. Technological limits do not decide this anymore and montage can be rendered in real time along with everything else in a video game, for example when a cutscene plays in a narrative, or a replay plays when scoring points in sports or racing games. Games with a narrative focus rarely employ anti-montage these days because clever use of montage can add to the telling of a story. Micro-montage, lastly, refers to no cuts in the gameplay, instead offering the player tools to create their own, more minimalistic style of montage during gameplay by giving them the option to zoom into the screen or change in focalisation (Walther, 2004, pp. 3-4). In more modern games, this can also take shape in a photo mode, where the player can pause gameplay and move the camera around within the virtual environment in order to create their own unique screenshots.

2.2.3 Non-interactive scene-setting

Lastly, non-interactive scene-setting refers to clips of video dispersed throughout the game or that support the game's narrative, such as cutscenes and automatic replay (Walther, 2004, pp. 4-7). Non-interactive scene-setting videos today are able to be rendered in real time in many games, making the distinction between gameplay and non-interactive video increasingly difficult to determine. This is also something that technological advancements have allowed since Walther's publication. Developers are even able to incorporate interactive elements within these scenes now as they take place within the game's engine in between gameplay. Although this does not happen in every game, this has the potential to make these non-interactive scene-setting sections more interactive and less gameplay-disturbing.

2.3 Cinematic language and its influence on gameplay

Ivan Girina is a notable scholar in today's third phase of game studies, who continues to research remediation and the relationship between video games and film. In "Video Game Mise-En-Scene: Remediation of Cinematic Codes in Video Games," Girina offers readers to think of all that is remediated from film into video games as cinematic language (Girina, 2013, p. 45). Film can be understood as a language that can be adopted and interpreted within another medium, such as video games. Girina claims that film language adopted in video games takes on another form when compared to film, and has additional or different functions. This merges performance and spectatorship into one cultural object: cinematic video games. He states that remediation of film can be best understood as a linguistic influence that is unique to each video game, where a film element with one function can be remediated in a video game with a new function (Girina, 2013, p. 46).

2.3.1 Expressive lighting & scripted staging

Two example concepts Girina offers are expressive lighting and scripted staging. Both aspects serve to set a tone and factor into environmental storytelling just like in film, but their potential interactivity needs can have other effects on the game besides expression and narrative support. Lighting can determine difficulty or can be used as a tool, for example when a flashlight can be used in a dark cave level to find your way or fend off enemies (Girina, 2013, p. 50). Staging can direct where the player will move or add more options for interactivity and opportunity, depending on to what extent the prop can be interacted with (Girina, 2013, p. 48). Girina shows how remediation of film influences the visual experience and gameplay experience, showing that remediation can also take place on the gameplay/interactive level, hence the third sub question of this thesis.

2.3.2 Cinematography, rule of thirds & blocking

In “Chapter 7. Cinematography for Games” from *Cinematic Game Secrets for Creative Directors and Producers: Inspired Techniques from Industry Legends*, author Rich Newman significantly expands this list of cinematic elements that can be incorporated into games (Newman, 2009). Published during the transition between the second and third phase of game studies, Newman’s book is mostly filled with knowledge from the actual video game industry rather than the field of game studies. He describes how different camera angles and control of the camera turns the player into spectator, director, and performer at once. The rule of thirds is also explained to be important, stressing that the rule also has an effect on gameplay when correctly incorporated. It increases focus of a game and communicates to the player what is important in the moment (Newman, 2009, p. 94). It can communicate a certain level of significance on both a visual and gameplay level.

Additionally, blocking is referred to as a way for the player to be guided through a level, by blocking certain entrances or passageways. Blocking can be done very creatively as to be nearly unnoticeable to the player, making for a smooth experience to traverse through that is well paced (Newman, 2009, pp. 91-102). All these elements have something in common with Girina’s two examples. In film these elements have mainly visual functions. When remediated in video games, they serve both visual and gameplay functions. This further confirms Girina’s claim that this cinematic language merges performance and spectatorship (Girina, 2013, p. 46), as well as the fact that remediation can take place on a gameplay/interactive level aside from an explicit/screen level, once more showing how the three areas of focus in this thesis are justified.

2.3.3 Motion capture & animation

Motion capture and animation are two other important elements of cinematic language to add to this list that have become increasingly popular and technologically advanced in the past years. *Uncharted 4* makes constant use of motion capture and additional animation, both during cutscenes and gameplay, once again influencing and merging both spectatorship and performance. Media scholar Grant Bollmer investigates and describes the evolution and influence of motion capture on achieving a sense of cinematic realism in video games in “The Kinesthetic Index: Video Games and the Body of Motion Capture” (Bollmer, 2019). Video games can often look unrealistic because they lack any trace of reality. After all, everything is digitally created most of the time. Bollmer claims that motion capture is a crucial element in simulating reality. It can capture real movement of the body, including the

smallest gestures and details of movement. He calls this gestural inscription the kinesthetic index. It is achieved both through motion capture as well as additional animation to increase the flow of movement (Bollmer, 2019). This kinesthetic index allows for physical acting to be remediated from film, aside from voice acting. It thus influences remediation on a visual level, but can also influence the gameplay by making it feel smoother, more realistic, and as if it has more weight to it.

2.4 Developer-director/actor & Player-director/actor

As Newman mentions, having control of the camera while playing turns the player into spectator, director, and performer simultaneously. This increases the player's feeling that they are in interaction with cinema on several levels (Newman, 2009, p. 100). Bolter and Grusin also very briefly mention this in their work, saying that the player is both actor and director through gameplay and the stylistic realization of the telling of the narrative (Bolter & Grusin, 200, p. 47). Henry Jenkins similarly stated that the narrative of a video game can be presented by the game, but also interpreted and imagined by the player (Jenkins, 2004). Players themselves can thus also in a way remediate film on a narrative level by recognizing certain narrative or character tropes. This means that the player, on a narrative level, is also able to interact with the cinematic experience as both spectator and director. I think that both of these ideas can be extended to the cinematic gameplay experience overall. By playing the game, the player is both actor, spectator, and director to some extent. I base this idea on both Newman, Jenkins, and Bolter and Grusin, but most importantly, on Adam Chapman's notion of historioludicity from *Digital Games as History: How Videogames Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice* (Chapman, 2016). When playing games set in historical time periods, both the player and the developer are in a way the historian, according to Chapman. The developer provides the player with digital historical environments and artifacts. The player, by playing the game and interacting with the digital environment, experiences, writes, and defines this history for themselves. Chapman calls these two roles that of the developer-historian and the player-historian (Chapman, 2016, p. 22).

Similarl to Chapman's notion of historioludicity, I think that both the player and the developer have a role in the creation of the cinematic gameplay experience. This can be narratively, like Jenkins mentions, and gameplay-wise, as suggested by Newman and Bolter and Grusin. The developer provides the player with a story and set of gameplay encounters that are created and designed in full detail. The player then defines their cinematic gameplay experience by playing the game, making gameplay decisions, and through gameplay and

imagination, acting and directing their playthrough of the game. Thus, there is a developer-director/actor, as well as a player-director/actor. This goes further than the narrative interpretation Jenkins mentions and the camera control Newman mentions, and can be applied to more features of a cinematic game. This notion is important to be aware of when approaching analysis and when thinking about the cinematic gameplay experience in its totality.

Chapter 3: Method

In this chapter, the chosen method for this thesis is explained, based on two methodological texts. First, the corpus for this analysis is clarified in 3.1. 3.2 discusses the main methodological foundation of game analysis by Fernàndez-Vara. In 3.3, two approaches to play by Glas and Vught are discussed to incorporate into the method. This method is then operationalized in 3.4, clarifying how this theory will be put into practice for analysis.

3.1 Corpus

For this analysis, a specific gameplay section of *Uncharted 4* will be used. This will be chapter 11 of the game, called “Hidden In Plain Sight,” which takes place roughly halfway through the game’s plot. Analyzing the full game will prove an unrealistic amount of work for this thesis, and might not even alter the findings significantly. The chosen chapter is a very well-rounded representation of the game. It features climbing and exploration, puzzling, and action and shooting. These are the three main sets of activities that the *Uncharted* games are popular for and built upon (Naughty Dog, 2016). This section also features important plot points, cutscenes, and gameplay scenarios. This means that every area of analysis is present. This chapter in the game is also among the most popular among fans, and has received the most behind the scenes commentary from developer Naughty Dog in the game’s making-of documentary, as well as in separate talks and seminars given by individual developers at several conventions (Cooper, 2017; NeoGamer - The Video Game Archive, 2020). This means that there is a lot of factual information about this section to work with.

3.2 Game analysis

To work toward answering the research question, a game analysis of *Uncharted 4* will be used as a research method. This analysis is based on *Introduction to Game Analysis*, written by Clara Fernàndez-Vara (2015). She describes game analysis as textual analysis specifically aimed at interpreting and understanding games. Just like books, films, music, and more can be regarded as texts from which meaning can be derived, video games can be as understood as texts as well (Fernàndez-Vara, 2015, p. 5). Writing in the third phase of game studies, she encourages using knowledge of other disciplines.

“In the field of game studies, we should feel free to take inspiration and poach from other disciplines that have a longer tradition in comparison. In order to innovate, the key may be to find unexpected but productive connections between our subject of

study and pre-existing approaches, or to devise our own methods by transforming pre-existing ones (Fernández-Vara, 2015, p. 174).”

Game analysis, she writes, contains any of three specific areas of study. These are the game’s context, the game overview, and the game’s formal elements. The type of game analysis that is conducted determines which area of study is involved, and to which extent. A game’s context refers to the circumstances in which the game is created, published, and then played by consumers. It also refers to other texts and communities that are tied to the game. The game overview is dedicated to the game’s content, narrative, and things the player will do in the game that sets the game apart from others. Most importantly for this thesis, it can also consist of a description of the game’s plot and characters. The game’s formal qualities refer to the components with which the game is constructed. These include the game’s rules, controls, interface design, visual style, loading times, and more (Fernández-Vara, 2015, pp. 14-17).

3.3 Instrumental play & free play

Uncharted 4 will be played using both instrumental play and free play, as defined by René Glas and Jasper van Vught in “Considering play: From method to analysis (Glas & van Vught, 2017).” Instrumental play means that the researcher plays the game as it is intended to be played by the developer, by completing the game’s objectives and progressing through its story. It is the game experienced exactly how it is imagined to be by its creators.

Additionally, free play will be used, which essentially is the opposite approach to play. The researcher takes the time to explore and test the game’s limits and capabilities, for example by moving in opposite directions than are needed to progress, or by standing still and taking in the environment and level design (Glas & van Vught, 2017, p. 5).

3.4 Operationalisation of the method

The analysis for this thesis most resembles what Fernández-Vara refers to as the “Illustration of a Theory,” since the case study in this thesis serves to support and further illustrate the theory of remediation. Using pre-existing theories discussed in the theoretical framework, *Uncharted 4* will be analyzed in order to better understand how its remediations from film create a cinematic gameplay experience. Fernández-Vara mentions that the most useful area of analysis for this case study are the game’s formal aspects. (Fernández-Vara, 2015, p. 203). In this case, *Uncharted 4*’s game overview, specifically its plot and characters, will also be analyzed to find out how film is remediated on an implicit/thematic level, in

order to answer the first sub question. This is where common film tropes and themes can be best derived from. The game's formal aspects will then be analyzed in order to answer the other two sub questions, concerning visuals and gameplay.

By combining instrumental and free play, a more complete idea of a playthrough of the game can be formed. Since the game is rather linear, as previously mentioned, using free play will not completely overthrow or sidetrack the analysis. Using free play as an additional approach to instrumental play will reveal how film is remediated when the player does not follow the directions and intended flow of the game. While using both approaches, the theoretical framework will be employed as a set of elements to look out for, and subsequently interpret and analyze. This set of elements includes focalisation, montage, (non-)interactive scene-setting, motion capture, blocking, mise en scène, expressive lighting, and more. Having the knowledge of which elements often are used in remediating film and what effects they may have makes recognizing these aspects during play more effective and efficient.

This chosen method is reliable and valid because of its theoretical framework as a foundation, and its methodological framework tried and tested in previous research endeavors of myself and my peers. It allows for an analysis of all three levels represented by the three sub questions by involving both the game's formal aspects and overview. In order to do right by the layered medium that is cinematic video games it is necessary to inspect all three of these levels in one thesis, under the premise of one research question. Ethically speaking, there are no significant concerns, since no participants or sensitive information are involved. One ethical point of notice is the fact that a textual analysis or game analysis like this relies on a carefully constructed theoretical framework, but also on personal interpretation. After all, one person may notice and interpret the results of this analysis somewhat differently than I do. This is unavoidable in research like this. If anything, I hope this inspires further research and discussion.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter consists of analysis of *Uncharted 4*, subdivided into three sections corresponding to the sub questions for this thesis. In 4.1 the remediations of film on a narrative level are discussed, followed by film remediations on a visual level in 4.2. Thirdly, film remediations on a gameplay level are discussed in 4.3.

4.1 Film remediation on an implicit/thematic level

The story in *Uncharted 4* sees Nathan Drake in a head-to-head struggle with a more powerful opponent, in a hunt for a mythical treasure in an ancient city of immeasurable wealth. Although he outwits his enemies, Nathan loses the treasure, the city is destroyed, and he realizes that his partner Elena Fisher is what he really needed all along. The plot is fairly simple, and this description also describes the stories of the other three games. Like many blockbuster action-adventure films, the plot is easy to grasp and leaves room for action and character interaction, which serves as the main attraction. This is similar to blockbuster films such as those from the *Fast & Furious* (Cohen, 2001) franchise, or the *Avengers* (Whedon, 2012) films, where the main draw is action, comedy, and entertaining characters. This shows how, in line with Jenkins' theory, *Uncharted 4* "depends on our familiarity with the roles and goals of genre entertainment to orientate us to the action (Jenkins, 2004)." The game's linear story also means that the plot is completely predetermined and cannot be drastically changed by the player, just like a film's plot is predetermined and only watched by the audience (Walther, 2004). The overall plot thus remediates blockbuster films in various ways.

The game's antagonist, Rafe Adler, is shallow and stereotypical, as in other entries in the series. He has some history with Nathan and is envious of him. Rafe is rich and uses this to win the treasure from Nathan to prove himself as superior, and to become more powerful. He is motivated by greed and jealousy, like many stereotypical villains in the genre, such as *Die Hard*'s Hans Gruber (McTiernan, 1988). Rafe's lieutenant, Nadine Ross, leads a militia called Shoreline and is a similar character, motivated by Rafe's pay. Other villains in the series are very similar to Rafe, again speaking to the repeatability of these games and a tendency to rely on genre tropes familiar from film (Jenkins, 2004).

Nathan's relationship with his brother, Sam Drake, who he long thought was dead, narratively sets this game apart from other entries. Sam is in danger and, in order to save him, leads Nathan back into a life of treasure hunting for Henry Avery's pirate treasure. This,

however, is a life Nathan swore he had left behind him. The relationship between the brothers and that with Elena are both at stake. In trying to keep the ones he loves safe; he instead greatly endangers them by going after this treasure. Nathan is placed in an impossible dilemma and has to choose to either save his brother, or be the man he promised to be to his wife.

Two noticeable film tropes in this plot are the ten-minute retirement and the dead ally that turns out not to be dead. Nathan starts the game off being retired, only for him to dive back into the action within the hour. This is a trope that can be recognized in films such as *Spider-Man 2* (Raimi, 2004), where Peter Parker hangs up the superhero mantle only to return to the role within minutes. Sam embodies the not-so-dead ally trope, with Nathan believing he died in a prison shooting many years ago, even though he never found the body. Sam appears for the first time in the series in this game to increase narrative tension and intrigue. This trope is often used in popular film as cliffhangers and tension builders. Well known examples include Gandalf's apparent death in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (Jackson, 2001) and Jason Bourne's faked death in *The Bourne Ultimatum* (Greengrass, 2007). These examples once again show remediation on a thematic level. The content of film has been borrowed, but the medium has not been appropriated or quoted, in line with Bolter and Grusin's theory of remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 44)

"Chapter 11: Hidden In Plain Sight" sees Nathan and Sully, his lifelong partner in crime and father figure, looking for a clock tower in a market in King's Bay, Madagascar. The two search for a clue to Avery's treasure, while Sam checks a second tower elsewhere in the city. Sully and Nathan banter plenty while navigating the market and exploring the tower. As Nathan unveils clues at the top of the tower, the entire inside structure of the tower collapses. The two heroes make it out of the tower alive, only to be ambushed by Shoreline mercenaries outside in the marketplace. This starts a car chase throughout the city in an attempt to reach and save Sam, to then escape an armored truck together and find the treasure. The chapter ends with the three reaching their motel safely, only to find out that Elena has found out Nate lied to her about the nature of his trip away from home, compromising their marriage and trust. Against better judgement and Sully's advice, Nathan decides to continue tracking down his new lead with Sam. This final scene serves to move the narrative forward to the next level, followed by a flash-forward.

There are plenty of film tropes, thematic influences, and references within this gameplay chapter alone. As becomes evident throughout the level, Nathan seems to be a bulletproof hero coming out on top of any unnaturally dangerous situation unscathed. Overall, Nathan's character resembles that of Indiana Jones, fitting into the trope of action survivor. He seems to be thrown into the action rather than consciously chasing it. Another link to Indiana Jones is the armored truck that chases Nathan and Sam from behind, seemingly inescapable (Figure 1). This resembles the enormous boulder that chases Indiana Jones in the treasure room in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, 1981), as well as the armored truck from *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (Cameron, 1991; NeoGamer - The Video Game Archive, 2020).

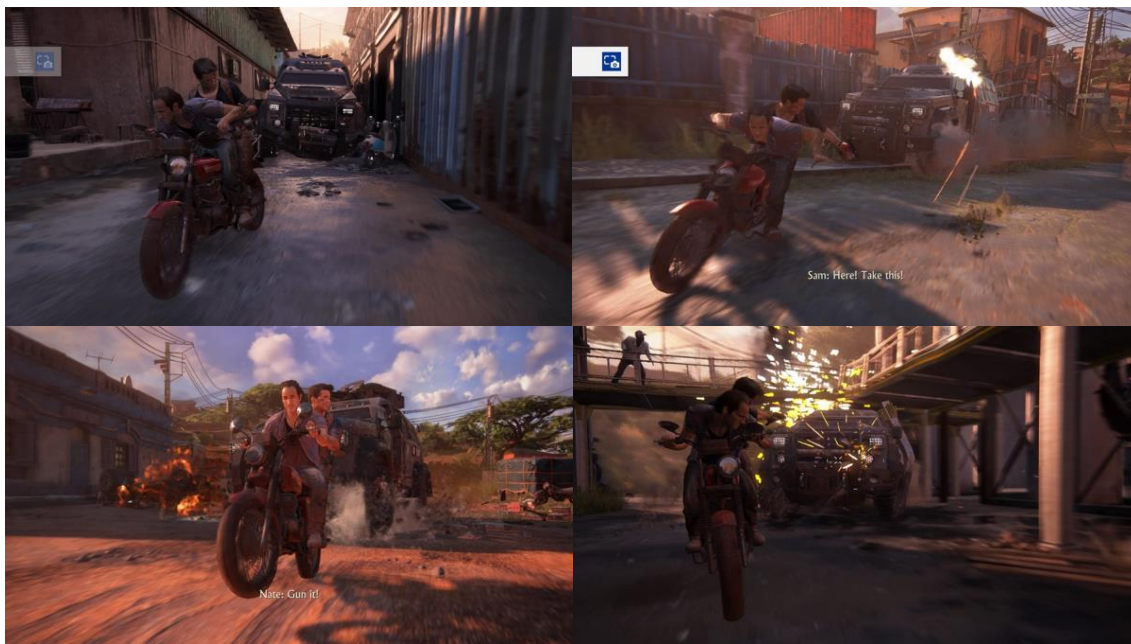


Figure 1 (Spies, 2021)

Further familiar tropes include the buddy cop dynamic between Sully and Nathan, familiar from films such as *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994) and *Rush Hour* (Ratner, 1998). Also similar to these films is the comic relief the banter between the two delivers in between the action that would be traumatic and extremely graphic in reality. This, again, is similar to the conventions of genre entertainment orientating the viewer to the action (Jenkins, 2004). The idea that the player becomes part of a cinematic narrative is enforced through these tropes and references. Bolter and Grusin also stress that “this feeling ... is generated in large part by the player's expectations derived from the medium of film (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 98).” Remediation thus takes place on this level in the presented film tropes and references, relying on the player's familiarity with popular film.

4.2 Film remediation on an explicit/screen level

Uncharted 4 makes use of outer focalisation (Walther, 2004, p. 3). The entire game is experienced in a third-person perspective. The player sees the character they control during gameplay, and in cutscenes the camera may shift to other characters who are talking or are important in the scene. This is similar to most films, where the viewer can see the leading characters and side characters rather than see from their perspective (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 97). Depending on the situation in the game, the camera may be closer or further away from the player character, for example to communicate a constricted feeling when squeezing through a narrow passage, or to give the character an insignificance compared to the elaborate set pieces and environments (Newman, 2009, p. 92). This can also be used to bring a point of interest to the attention of the player through a guided camera. When the Shoreline mercenaries appear onto the marketplace, the camera slowly pans towards the trucks they emerge from. The player character remains in the center of the screen so as to not make the player feel lost, in line with Newman's description of the rule of thirds (Newman, 2009, p. 94). Similarly, the armored truck is mostly in the middle of the screen during the end of the chase (Figure 1), and the escape route to take with the car before that is also near the center of the screen. Unless the player wanders, the objective often remains in the middle of the screen. This guides the player through the level using the rule of thirds, aside from making cinematographic compositions look better (Newman, 2009, p. 94).

This guided camera provides some cinematographic montage during actual gameplay. In addition to this, a motion blur is present when the player moves the camera around while playing. This is an artificial effect to emulate the use of real cameras in filmmaking, where motion blur is often present in quick camera movements (Newman, 2009, p. 92). It happens because objects move during the time it takes to expose the photo or the frame, and the movement gets recorded as a blur. Similarly, when explosions occur, the camera will shake and blur to communicate a sense of chaos and disorientation (Newman, 2009, p. 92). In between gameplay and cutscenes, as well as during cutscenes, cinematographic montage is very consistent and similar to film, as proposed by Walther (2004, p. 4). The player can barely tell if gameplay transitions into cutscenes and vice versa because there are no loading screens during the entire game. Should the player die, then it takes a maximum of three seconds of black screen time to place them back into the action. Even this barely disrupts the

filmic montage style. Cutscenes take place within the game's engine and are rendered in real time, causing no disruption at all in visual art style. In the last cutscene of the chapter, the game seamlessly moves on to the next level through clever montage as well, as the game loads during cutscenes so that the player does not have to wait. Just like a film would move on to the next scene through cinematographic montage, *Uncharted 4* does this as well (Walther, 2004, p. 4).

On an interface level, *Uncharted 4* actively keeps it as minimal as possible in order to best mimic film. The only visual information the player sees on screen during gameplay is the equipped weapon of the player and the ammunition they have left. Button prompts will occasionally pop up on screen in a very minimalistic way, merely using small button prompts that do not block the view. For example, this happens when Sully and Nathan try to get out of the clock tower and have to lift debris from its collapse. A single button appears on screen, showing the player what they have to do to get out. In this aspect, the player barely can see that they are playing a game (Figure 2).



Figure 2 (Spies, 2021)

In this gameplay chapter, expressive lighting is very noticeable and effective in setting certain moods during gameplay (Girina, 2013, p. 50). In this chapter it only serves visuals, however, and is not incorporated into gameplay. When calmly exploring the market and searching for the clock tower, vibrant colors indicate a sense of happiness and the busyness of the market. Once inside of the clock tower, which turns out to be abandoned, the color palette changes to a darker blue, to give the player a dark and gloomy feeling to correspond with the old silent abandoned tower that harbors old secrets. As the shootout erupts and the chase throughout the city starts, the color palette changes to a sinister orange that goes along with the destruction of the town caused by the chaos that is the chase. It is reminiscent of the napalm and fire that embody this same chaos in *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979). Expressive lighting is used in film to convey certain feelings and moods

(Girina, 2013, p. 50; Newman, 2009, p. 97), and this is no different in this gameplay chapter of *Uncharted 4*.

Film is also visually remediated through the level's mise en scène, especially in the market and during the chase. As Girina writes, mise en scène serves “a set of tools to direct the attention of the spectator and make sense out of space (Girina, 2013, p. 48).” Walking through the market, the player will see an enormous amount of detail through scripted staging that makes the environment feel lived in and real. The marketplace bustles with people perusing the wares on offer, cooking food, dancing, and singing, similar to extras in a film. As the shootout starts in the marketplace after exploring the clock tower, the people flee from the danger and the entire marketplace becomes destructible. During the chase, many people can be seen fleeing indoors as well to escape the danger brought by the militia and the two heroes, and food stalls and traffic are realistically present throughout the entire town to convey the feeling that the player is disturbing the peace and wreaking havoc in a lively environment. Thus, as Girina writes, “the environments reflect/interpret/inform/affect the avatars' inner worlds and provide a more detailed characterization (Girina, 2013, p. 48),” and actively take part in narrating the experience. Not only does mise en scène serve to decorate, but it actively moves in tandem with the player, adding to believability, just like mise en scène does in film (Girina, 2013, p. 49; Newman, 2009, pp. 100-101).

While playing through all of this, the motion capture and animation make this whole cinematic look complete by having an immensely accurate and true to life kinesthetic index, as defined by Bollmer (Bollmer, 2019). Nathan moves through crowds of people as any real person would, gently shoving people out of the way and squeezing in between. While climbing in the clock tower, Nathan also moves incredibly realistically, as all movements of the character are directly taken from real recorded human movements. Whenever a door is opened by Nathan or Nathan and another character, the animation with which the doors are opened are completely unique, to further add to this sense of realism (Cooper, 2017). Incorporated in both gameplay and cutscenes, this motion capture and animation make the two even harder to distinguish. Additionally, in combination with the high graphical fidelity that the PlayStation 4 allows, the characters look extremely lifelike from both far away and extremely up close. This is especially apparent in cutscenes and during dialogue, when facial muscles even correspond with the lines of dialogue that are spoken. This means that acting, as it appears in film, is completely indistinguishable from the acting present in the game, and has the same level of detail and nuance. When Nathan, Sam, and Sully walk into their motel

room at the end of the chapter, you can see that Nathan is extremely surprised by Elena's presence, despite the fact that he barely utters a word. Similarly, you can see that Elena is both furious, sad, and disappointed with what is going on behind her back. Thus, *Uncharted 4*'s kinesthetic index allows for physical acting to be completely remediated from film (Bollmer, 2019).

Lastly, on a visual level, film is remediated in the non-interactive scene-setting (Walther, 2004, pp. 4-7). I argue that many of these scene-setting elements are far from non-interactive in *Uncharted 4*, and thus more actively immerse the player into a cinematic playthrough and experience of the game. Many cutscenes, flashbacks, and flashforwards keep the player in the action, dispersing gameplay in between the actual cinematic through quick-time button prompts and movability of the player character during cutscenes. Naughty Dogs refers to this approach to cutscenes as In-Game Cinematics, which, in addition to being interactive, are rendered in real time in the game's engine (Cooper, 2017). This once again blurs the line between gameplay and cutscene even more and constantly keeps the player in an active state. In this gameplay chapter specifically, a great example occurs when Nathan crashes his car and ends up underneath it. What seems like a cutscene turns into time-based gameplay in which the player has to make their way from underneath the jeep before a gas leak blows up the car with Nathan under it. By moving the left stick and thereby grabbing hold of handles and the jeep's doors, the player has to escape by themselves, after which the cutscene continues. Having moments like this dispersed among cutscenes that require no input from the player keeps them active at all time, because they may be needed to progress (Cooper, 2017). Active and passive participation are constantly interchanging. Through these scenes, tension is built even further, and film is remediated on both a visual level and gameplay level at the same time.

4.3 Film remediation on an interactive/gameplay level

As Girina and Newman rightly claimed, many remediations that happen on a visual level also impact the gameplay of a cinematic game (Girina, 2013; Newman, 2009). When playing through *Uncharted 4* this turns out to be no different. As mentioned above, the interactive cutscenes throughout the game merge visual spectacle with participation. What is often non-interactive in games is interactive here, plunging the player right into the cinematic experience through active gameplay, keeping them active at all times (Cooper, 2017).

In addition to interactive cutscenes, the *mise en scène* also has an effect on gameplay. The player can interact with most of the environment when first exploring the market. For example, the player can buy an apple on the street that is stolen by a lemur seconds later. The player can also barter with a vendor for an antique compass. When the shootout starts later on, the entire marketplace becomes destructible, forcing the player to switch between cover as it is destroyed by the armored truck's machine gun. Grain flows from big grain bags that serve as cover when shot by the enemy, for example (Figure 2), and wooden market stalls collapse when they have endured enough damage. During the car chase, the player runs through market stalls with the car, and can destroy fences, shacks, and clothing lines on the way. Again, on a gameplay level, the *mise en scène* provides a detailed characterization of the moment the player experiences (Girina, 2013, p.48), and through its interactivity, lets the player "have some control over both the narrative itself and the stylistic realization of it, in the sense that they can decide where to go and what to do (Bolter & Grusin, 200, p. 47)." All of this interactivity works in favor of creating a feeling of chaos and destruction, and is part of the *mise en scène* in both the visual and gameplay experience.

The scripted staging and *mise en scène* further influence the gameplay through blocking. The level is blocked off naturally by other vehicles, vending stalls, crowds of people, and vegetation. "The ultimate goal of [blocking] is to believably convey the illusion of free will while channeling the player's activity on a predetermined route. ... [It] is used not only to provide spectacle, but it is instead functional for the creation of a believable path and contained environment (Girina, 2013, p. 49)." This is exactly the case in this gameplay chapter. During the car chase the player can choose between several escape routes from the chasing armored truck, but all roads lead towards the same point, where another fake choice is presented. The armored truck itself is completely scripted in its behavior and determines which way the player should go by constantly reappearing in front of the player and blocking the road the player is driving on, in line with Newman's idea of blocking by way of non-playable characters (Newman, 2009, p. 101). Through this clever design, the player will never notice the boundaries of a level, blocked by things that make sense in the narrative context. This linearity can also be interpreted as a cinematic quality the game exhibits. Even free play will not bring the player in an area they should not be, as every area is designed as part of the narrative experience. The player overall has no ability to halt the game, except by literally standing still. All other actions push forth the narrative. In this way, every action in the game is paced through level design, similar to pacing in film.

Another visual element that influences gameplay is the motion capture and animation. Especially while climbing, the control of the character can be decided by the player in extreme detail. Which ledge Nathan grabs next, and how fast he traverses the climbing segments are in full control of the player. Outside of climbing this also adds a certain feeling of weight and effort in movement. The slightest tilt of the left stick will make Nathan move slowly, as if he is shuffling forward. The timing of important jumps as well as certain attacks can also be dictated through this detailed control of the player character. It makes playing as them feel incredibly realistic and filmic, thanks to the advanced kinesthetic index (Bollmer, 2019). It makes the player feel like they are in full control of the main character, and thus are the main character themselves in a way. This sense of agency speaks to the idea of the player-director/actor, because the player often has control of the pacing and stylistic realization of the narrative this way (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 47).

There are also film remediations that purely exist on an interactive gameplay level. These include the optional dialogue as well as the occasional dialogue choices. There are moments where the player can choose to engage in extra conversation with other characters. Although this portrays a sense of choice and expression towards the player, all dialogue is predetermined and moments like these do not affect the story in any way. This also goes for dialogue choices. The only thing the player chooses is the order in which certain topics are discussed by the characters. It mostly works to make the player more invested in the story that the game tells, but it also furthers the idea of the player-director/actor while they play the game. They actively take part in the telling and defining of the game's story (Jenkins, 2004).

Another remediation on a gameplay level is the puzzle interface. Puzzles have the player rely on the notebook which is an interface that is completely grounded in the game world and thus does not interrupt the flow of gameplay and story pacing. It is a notebook that Nathan keeps in his back pocket and makes notes in, for the player to read again if they need to solve a puzzle. The puzzle in the clock tower also furthers the narrative through gameplay. Nathan and Sully closely inspect portraits of pirates that have founded the pirate colony of Libertalia, the location of the hidden city and treasure. As the player solves the puzzle, looks in the notebook, and inspects these paintings, Nathan and Sully discuss what they see and make sense of the information along with the player (Figure 3).

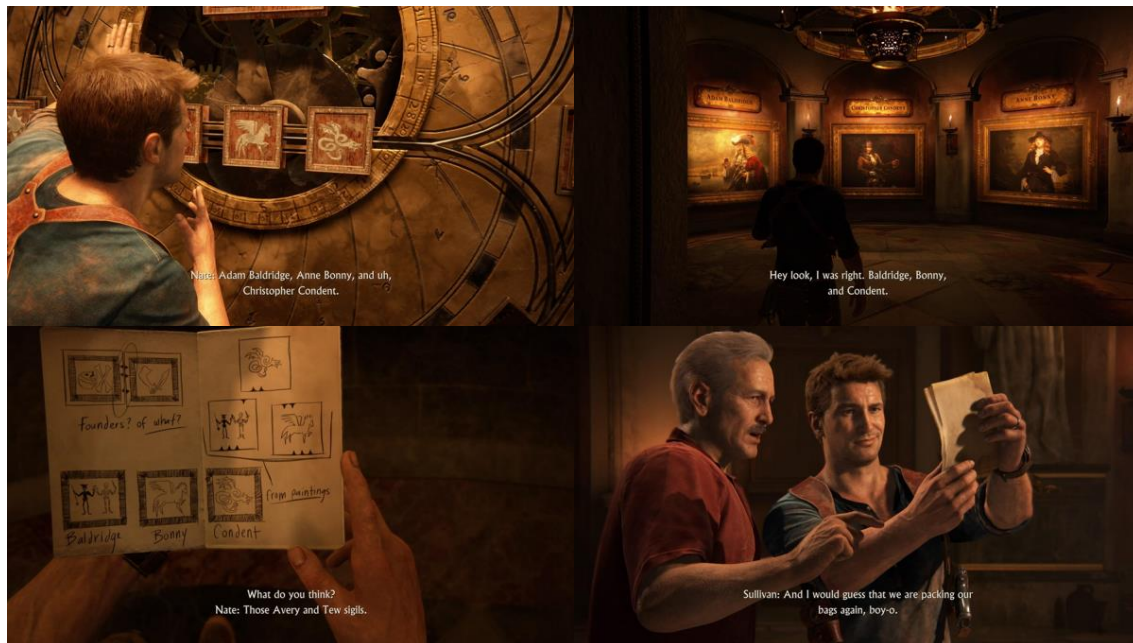


Figure 3 (Spies, 2021)

The player will learn the pirate sigils of each respective captain, and thereby uncover the next clue towards the treasure. The puzzles are injected with narrative content, making the gameplay feel significant and part of the cinematic experience, just like when Indiana Jones solves a mystery in his films, or how Tony Stark solves seemingly impossible puzzle-like scenarios in the *Iron Man* films (Favreau, 2008).

Lastly, there are also small gameplay features that remediate film tropes and work them into gameplay. For example, when the player's magazine is empty, Nathan will automatically reload the gun himself. If a gun runs out of ammo, Nathan will switch to his secondary weapon and throw the empty gun away. Not only does this create a sense of flow and take away a sense of stress from the player, it also fits into action film tropes, where the hero is constantly amidst the action and does not worry about reloading or ammunition. Another example is that Nathan is nearly bulletproof as long as the player keeps moving. This keeps what is seen on screen as well as the gameplay engaging and spectacular, while also actually giving the player an advantage. This feature actively makes the gameplay feel and seem more cinematic and spectacular. In this case, the game relies on familiar roles and goals of genre entertainment to improve the flow and continuity of gameplay. The tropes used on a thematic level are also incorporated into gameplay to fully realize and remediate them. With these two features, active and passive participation constantly take turns again in order to make way for what will be experienced as most cinematic.

Conclusion

When playing through *Uncharted 4*, it becomes clear that film is remediated on several levels, not just visually. Every layer of the games in some form serves the telling of a story and the formation of a gameplay experience that can only be described as cinematic. The player is constantly switching between passive and active participation for these cinematic elements to take center stage. Thematically the game is full of narrative and character tropes that are present in many popular films from similar genres. Some aspects of the gameplay chapter are direct references to specific films, such as the chasing truck. The game is consistent in its visual style between gameplay and cutscenes, making the two visually indistinguishable. Cinematography is present in both and utilized to stylistically be similar to action films. This also goes for dialogue and the overall plot, that both resemble the style of big budget blockbuster productions. Gameplay serves to further the narrative and is similar to a film in its linearity, realistic movement, and spectacular, action packed shootouts and exploration.

When asking how the cinematic video game experience can be further understood by investigating the remediation of film within *Uncharted 4*, this analysis shows that the cinematic gameplay experience is formed in at least these three areas: narrative, visuals, and gameplay. Formal and thematic elements from film are remediated to serve various purposes in the medium of cinematic video games, on different levels of the video game in question. This case study has shown how the cinematic gameplay experience that is specific to *Uncharted 4* is constructed. Other games can offer a cinematic gameplay experience that is somewhat differently formed, but it seems like the list of elements discussed in the theoretical framework are always present to a certain extent. What may vary is on what level these remediated elements have an impact. The fact that several experiential levels of the game were analyzed proposes the idea that the cinematic gaming experience in similar games can be understood by looking at these three aspects of a game as well.

A limitation in this thesis is the fact that only a portion of the game is analyzed. Many more references and specific gameplay scenarios could be further inspected to find new or different remediations. Other aspects of the game in general remain uninspected as well, such as the game's music. This can be explored in further research. Additionally, other games in this genre such as *Tomb Raider* (Crystal Dynamics, 2013) or *The Last of Us* (Naughty Dog, 2013) can be analyzed, as well as this specific game in its entirety to possibly find more

results. Aside from this, other cinematic games that do involve a branching narrative with player choice can be analyzed to see how the cinematic gameplay experience is constructed there. The notion of the player-director/actor may be far more present in games like these, for example. More studies like this are needed to solidify the findings of this thesis, and will then hopefully result in a concrete understanding of what it is that makes a cinematic game truly feel cinematic.

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All images used in this thesis are personally recorded screenshots from gameplay of *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* (Naught Dog, 2016).

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