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Reading *The Book of Joseph*

A Communication-Oriented Analysis of *Far Cry 5*

Abstract

In the game *Far Cry 5*, a book called *The Book of Joseph* plays an important role. It is the confession, autobiography and sermon compilation of Joseph Seed, the leader of the fundamentalist, Christian-inspired violent Doomsday cult called "Project at Eden's Gate". In the game, the player is tasked to defeat Seed's grip on – fictional – Hope County, Montana (USA). *The Book of Joseph* is not only found in the game, where its content is kept hidden from the player, but is also featured in a live-action trailer, called THE BAPTISM. Most importantly, Joseph Seed's book has also been published as a physical object and was distributed to the first 2,000 buyers of the Mondo edition of the game. In this article, the authors argue that the communicative function of *The Book of Joseph* differs significantly from one medial object to the next (game, trailer, book), influenced by the intertextual and intermedial relationships between those medial objects and by their exclusive characteristics. Using a communication-oriented method of text analysis, the authors investigate the various communicative processes within the different "texts", in order to establish the narrative loci of the book's materiality.

Keywords

Far Cry 5, *The Book of Joseph*, Communication-Oriented Method, Intertextuality, Cult, Intermediality, Materiality

Biographies

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Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, is a full professor of Old Testament exegesis at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology, Tilburg University, the Netherlands. He has introduced modern linguistics into Bible exegesis, resulting in his communication-oriented method. He has published extensively on notably Isaiah and Amos, e. g. "Writing and (not) Reading the Torah (and Contrasting Texts) in the Book of Isaiah", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44, 1 (2019).

In the game *Far Cry 5* (CA 2018), developed and published by Ubisoft, the player's avatar is tasked, as part of a side mission, to destroy a giant concrete statue of Joseph Seed, the violent leader of a cult called "Project at Eden's Gate". Joseph and his cult have taken over fictional Hope County, Montana (USA), in preparation for the dawning End of Days. On top of the statue, the player's avatar, a nameless junior deputy sheriff, finds a half-destroyed shrine with on it a copy of *The Book of Joseph*, the official "Holy Scripture" of the Project at Eden's Gate. This specific copy belongs to Faith, one of the high-ranking members of the cult and responsible for the production of The Bliss, a drug used to brainwash the cultists. The deputy follows the suggestion of his fellow resistance members to burn this symbolically very important copy of *The Book*, tossing it aflame from the top of the statue, never again to be seen in the game.

In the game, the content of *The Book of Joseph* remains a mystery for the deputy and for the player. In two instances, discussed below, the player can interact with the book, but only in the context of scripted events. The same uncertainty applies to the second of two narratively interlinked live-action trailers, THE SERMON (CA 2018) and THE BAPTISM (CA 2018): the book appears in the latter, but its contents again remain hidden for the viewer. However, the content of *The Book of Joseph* can indeed be accessed, although by other means. In 2018, Ubisoft published a physical (and very limited) edition of *The Book of Joseph*, serving as promotional material for the first 2,000 buyers of the Mondo edition of the game.[1] Rhetorically, this version of *The Book of Joseph* combines multiple genres such as autobiography, sermon and prophecy, while aesthetically it maintains a middle ground between a traditional Christian Bible (exterior) and an Evangelical study book (interior), combining texts with pencil drawings of apocalyptic scenes.

Across all three objects – the game, the trailer and the physical book, in both their texts and their images – the materiality of *The Book of Joseph* differs significantly, influenced by the intertextual and intermedial relationships between them. To analyse the differences and similarities between these texts, we will utilize a communication-oriented method. Intertextuality is a form of synchronic literary analysis focussing on the relationships between texts, enlarging the traditional concept of "text" from exclusively

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1   While it is beyond doubt that *The Book of Joseph* is published by Ubisoft, Montréal (Canada), the book itself bears no bibliographical information other than the name of the fictional author. We will explain this particularity in more detail later in this article.

written forms to all possible cultural expressions, such as films and digital games.[2] The related term "intermediality" denotes the narrative complex between different media, in the case of *Far Cry 5* between film, book and video game.[3]

The communication-oriented method focuses on the various levels of communication between senders and receivers (figure 1).[4] Three levels have to be distinguished:

- the level of the historical, i.e. real, author *outside* the text (RA), the one(s) who produced the physical text, and the historical, i.e. real, reader *outside* the text (RR), the one(s) who read the physical text either in the past or in the present day.
- the level of the text-immanent author (TIA), the director *in* the text, and the text-immanent reader (TIR), the ideal reader *in* the text.
- the level of the characters (C), the stage on which they, as actors, perform.

The following scheme outlines these three communication layers.

$$RA \rightarrow \quad TIA \rightarrow \quad C_a \leftrightarrow C_b \quad \rightarrow TIR \quad \rightarrow RR$$
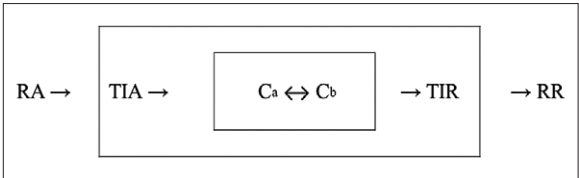
Fig. 1: Table providing an overview of the various communicative levels in texts.

The Real Author (RA) and the Read Reader (RR) are situated outside the text. By using the text, they communicate, but the text does not provide access to them. In the text we find the stage on which the characters perform (C_a, C_b, etc.). Characters communicate with each other, both verbally, by means of direct speech, and non-verbally. Characters, however, do not perform on their own initiative. A position in the text determines when a character is allowed to perform on the scene. This position is called the Text-Immanent Author (TIA). The text-immanent author communicates with the Text-Imma-

2   Kristeva 1980.
3   Elleström 2010.
4   See especially van Wieringen 2020.

nent Reader (TIR). The text-immanent author is able to act as a character in the text, e.g. in an "I"-narration. The text-immanent author is also able to address the text-immanent reader directly.

Regardless of whether a text is written or spoken, these various communication levels are present in it. In fact, all cultural products of expression can be considered a text in which these three different communication levels can be distinguished. Let us take the example of a painting. Every painting has a historical painter, the "real author". The one who saw or sees the painting is the "real reader". The figures in the painting are the "characters", communicating with each other. In the painting a painting-immanent director, the "text-immanent author", enables the painted figures, the characters, to take their position in the painting. The painting-immanent viewer, the "text-immanent reader", is the receiver of the communication from the painting-immanent director, the text-immanent author.

In addition, we define video games as digital, interactive, playable, narrative texts.[5] As a text, a video game is an object of interpretation; as a narrative, it communicates meaning; as a game, it is playable; and as a digital medium, it is interactive in nature. The close reading of *Far Cry 5* is done by playing the game itself (multiple times), including all possible (side) missions, in what is known as the game-immanent approach.[6] We have chosen to address the different medial objects in their reversed internal chronological order, that is, to discuss the game first, and the trailer and the physical book second, even though the book describes Joseph's origin story, the trailer the growth of the sect, and the game the downfall of both. The argument for this particular order is that the trailer and the book are published as promotional material for the game, positioning the game as the core text of the three.

The Book of Joseph in *Far Cry 5*

The *Far Cry* series (CA 2004–2019) is a loosely connected series of games defined by exotic locations, likeable villains, and a massive amount of creative violence. *Far Cry 5* took the series to a fictional county in the American state of Montana, introducing a doomsday cult that bears a striking resemblance

5   Bosman 2019, 38–43.
6   Bosman 2019, 43–51.

to a group of right-wing, Christian-inspired violent extremists.[7] These creative decisions have caused huge controversy among critics, players, and the general public, especially – or almost even exclusively – in the United States.[8]

At the head of the cult, self-identified as "Project at Eden's Gate", stands Joseph Seed aka The Father. Together with his brothers John and Jacob and their adopted sister Faith, Joseph tyrannizes the valley, killing all who dare resist and mind-controlling all those who are too afraid to resist. Local law enforcers eventually take interest. The story follows a nameless deputy sheriff who fails to arrest Joseph in the middle of a religious meeting at his compound. The arrest party is captured, and only the deputy succeeds in escaping. The rest of the game consists of establishing a resistance movement made up of the terrorized citizens of Hope County and killing all four Seed siblings, with Joseph the last to die.

Project at Eden's Gate is a classic religio-fanatic Doomsday cult.[9] The game features a charismatic, but ultimately deluded leader-figure demanding absolute obedience of his followers. This leader creates a strong dichotomy between the outside world, which is considered corrupted and hostile towards the cult, and the religious community itself, as the paramount of holiness. Joseph claims divine inspiration and proclaims the urgent coming of the apocalypse that will destroy all outsiders but will enable the cultists to be the progenitors of a new, purified human race. Project at Eden's Gate uses traditional Christian religious language like "redemption", "bliss", "confession", "sin", "reckoning", and "baptism", but in a clearly violent and distorted fashion. Game critics have, not surprisingly, commented on this one-dimensional portrayal of Christian fundamentalism.[10]

At the start of the game, when the deputy tries to escape, *The Book of Joseph* is found littered all over the game map (see fig. 2). The player can find copies on the shores of the Henbane River, used in baptism rituals (see fig. 3), in houses and mansions (see fig. 4), on numerous altars and shrines (see fig. 5), and so forth. That *The Book of Joseph* is found in various locations is indicative of the book's ubiquity and Bible-like status in the religious community: devotees take it with them on their business, use it for religious ceremonies,

7   Bosman 2019, 223–229.
8   Machkovech 2017, Plante 2017, Rivera 2017, and Robinson 2017.
9   Snow 2003.
10   Green 2018 and Roberts 2018.

Fig. 2: In the first building the player finds, after escaping Joseph's men, a copy of *The Book of Joseph*, surrounded by three burning candles.

Fig. 3: *The Book of Joseph* found on the sandbanks of the Henbane River.

put it in places of reverence in both their private houses and the more public buildings used by the whole community.

In the game, the majority of the copies of *The Book of Joseph* are "white versions" of the book, a version apparently distributed in large quantities to regular members of the cult. It is an average-sized book, covered in what appears to be
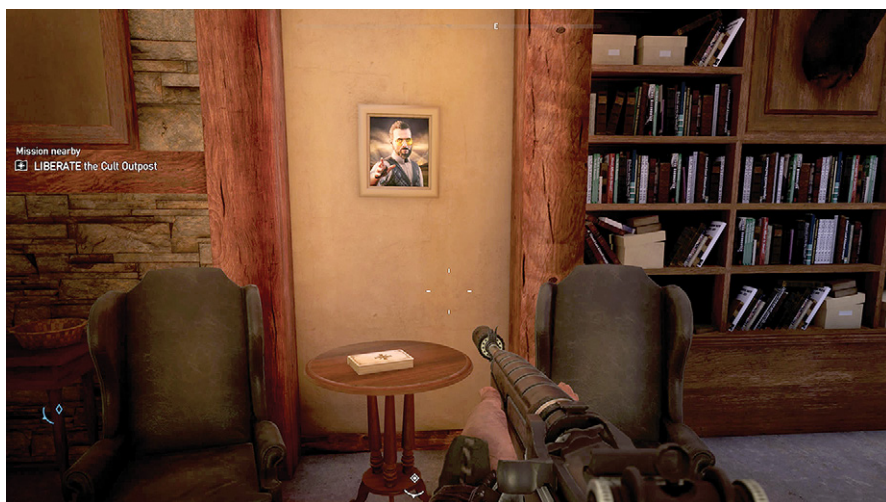
Fig. 4: *The Book of Joseph* in John's mansion.

Fig. 5: *The Book of Joseph* as the centrepiece of a devotee's shrine.

white leather, featuring golden decorative patterns on the outside of the cover and with a golden double cross, the cult's logo, in the middle. A small red reading ribbon peaks out of the bottom of the book. The contents remain hidden for the deputy (and therefore also for the player): the book cannot be opened, cannot be found opened, and is not discussed explicitly by a single non-playable character.

Fig. 6: Pastor Jerome is forced to use *The Book of Joseph.*

The Mission "The Atonement"

The player cannot interact with the book in-game other than in two scripted events, which are part of two main missions: "The Atonement" and "False Prophet".[11] The first one takes place in the Lamb of God Church in the west of Hope County. The deputy is lured to the church by John Seed to save Pastor Jerome Jeffries from harm. On entering the church, the deputy is knocked down by a cultist. When awoken, the deputy is confronted with John and a couple of cultists holding Mary May, Nick Rye, Jerome Jeffries, and the deputy himself at gunpoint. John forces Jerome to oversee a religious ceremony swearing Mary, Nick, and the deputy into the cult, including an oath taken on *The Book of Joseph* and the violent mutilation of the new recruits' bodies.

John Seed slams the Bible Jerome is holding out of his hands and replaces it with a (grey) copy of *The Book of Joseph*. John forces Jerome to oversee Nick Rye taking the oath on *The Book of Joseph*. When Jerome hesitates, he is knocked down by one of the Peggies (the cult members of Project at Eden's Gate) standing next to John. In the turmoil, Jerome manages to switch *The Book of Joseph* for the Bible he was holding earlier, which contains a secret

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11 See www.youtube.com/watch?v=svpbsQT9BK4 and www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmeAgoJhBwg respectively.

compartment with a handgun in it (fig. 6). After Nick is sworn into the cult, John forces Jerome to do the same with the player's avatar.

John says (with Jerome reluctantly echoing him): "Will you, deputy, place your hand upon The Word of Joseph [capitalization by in-game subtitles]. And renounce your sins and admit your transgression." Jerome urges the deputy to "say yes", suggesting he utilize the hidden gun in the Bible that Jerome is presenting to him but with John still under the impression that the book is his copy of *The Book of Joseph*. The deputy opens the Bible Jerome is holding and takes the gun out to shoot the Peggies attending the ceremony. In the subsequent turmoil, Nick, Jerome, and the deputy manage to escape unharmed, while John, heavily wounded, is assisted by a cultist outside the church.

John's copy of *The Book of Joseph* is visually different from the white version found elsewhere in the game. This "grey version" features a grey, not a white, apparently leather cover. While the same golden logo is used, the decorative lines are also slightly different. It seems this grey version is reserved for the upper echelons of the cult, leaving the white ones for the lower members. The grey version also cannot be read in-game, and while Jerome's copy of the Bible is opened, primarily to show the hidden compartment with the gun, the grey *Book of Joseph* remains closed throughout the whole scene.

The Mission "False Prophet"

The second time the player comes across this special version of *The Book of Joseph* is in the mission "False Prophet". When the player has liberated Hope County jail from the cultists, Tracey Lader tells the deputy to go and destroy the giant statue of Joseph Seed standing on the slopes of some hill not far from the jail. Tracey explains her wish as follows: "We gotta tear down that statue, let all those Peggies know their Father ain't fuckin' God. He's just a man. What do you say, Rook? Drive a big fuck-you sized hole in that thing?"

When the deputy approaches the statue and encounters some resistance from cultists, Tracey radios him with a second task: "If you're lookin' to cause more trouble, I got an idea. Faith keeps her personal copy of Joseph's ramblings inside that thing. Climb in that statue and burn those papers. Show what happens when you fuck with the wrong people." At the top of the – now destroyed – statue of Joseph (the deputy can still navigate through the inner structures of the hollow object), the player discovers a copy of *The Book of Joseph* in a semi-ruined shrine. When they approach the book, the player can

Fig. 7: The player burns *The Book of Joseph* after destroying Joseph Seed's statue.

interact with it, but only by setting the copy alight and throwing it, still burning, from the statue; the book is not seen again in the game (fig. 7).

This copy of *The Book of Joseph* is visually identical to the one in John's possession during The Atonement mission earlier in the game. Now, two reading options appear to the game's text-immanent reader: either it is the same (unique) book, or John and Faith have identical copies of the "grey" version apparently reserved for high-ranking members of the cult. Both options can be argued for, so it is up to the game's text-immanent reader to decide which option they want to read into the game. However, again, the content of *The Book of Joseph* remains hidden from both the deputy and the game's text-immanent reader. The choice the game's text-immanent reader has to make puts emphasis on the special grey edition of the book. In the case of the first reading option, the emphasis is even increased, as a result of the implicit uniqueness of the grey version of the book.

When the mission is concluded, with the destruction of the book, both Faith and Tracey react to the deputy's actions. Faith is disturbed and frightened: "What have you done? His words. Don't you understand what He'll [capitalization by in-game subtitles] do to me?" Tracey, by contrast and quite understandably, reacts with joy: "That was fuckin' beautiful. Joseph Seed's gonna be shittin' bricks, and Faith is gonna feel the heat now. She'll need to answer for that burning book, and that mangled effigy. Hell of a job." This statement concludes the mission scene.

Fig. 8: Joseph writing in some sort of diary that bears no visual resemblance to *The Book of Joseph*. Scene from Inside Eden's Gate (00:14:03).

The Book of Joseph in THE BAPTISM

As indicated earlier, Ubisoft has launched two narratively interconnected live-action trailers, called THE SERMON and THE BAPTISM, and one short movie called INSIDE EDEN'S GATE (Barry Battles, CA 2018), all for the promotion of the launch of the game.[12] We exclude THE SERMON and INSIDE EDEN'S GATE here because *The Book of Joseph* does not play any role in either of them. Even though the short film does feature a scene in which Joseph writes something on a page in some sort of notebook, this notebook does not resemble *The Book of Joseph* as seen in the game, in either its white or its grey version (fig. 8). The writing itself cannot – unfortunately – be read by the film's text-immanent reader and the characters in the film do not refer to it either directly or indirectly.

The second trailer, THE BAPTISM, does feature *The Book of Joseph*, and it does so twice. In THE BAPTISM, Joseph is performing a baptism on the shores of the Henbane River on a Black girl, who is later revealed to be the teenage daughter of Jerome Jeffries, the pastor of the Lamb of God Church, also featured in "The Atonement" mission in the game. During the ceremony, while Joseph holds the girl under water, he gets flashbacks of his earlier encounters with Jerome. We see Joseph meeting Jerome and his daughter in the trailer (fig. 9), where he has a notebook bearing the symbol later associated with his cult.

12 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5uHQYz-hNw, www.youtube.com/watch?v=VokeHE550_w, and www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL4hY12SGF8 respectively.

Fig. 9: Joseph holding a notebook with the symbol of Project at Eden's Gate on it. Scene from The Baptism (00:01:00).

Fig. 10: Joseph working on what appears to be *The Book of Joseph*. Scene from The Baptism (00:01:24).

We see Joseph attending Jerome's sermons in his church, but also working feverishly in his room on a manuscript that is probably an earlier version of *The Book of Joseph* (fig. 10).

Next, we see images of Joseph desperately browsing through the pages of a Bible, followed by him marching through the woods of Hope County in the company of a group of his followers. The next scene depicts Jerome's daughter holding her hand on the cover of *The Book of Joseph* while she tries to copy the logo with her other hand (fig. 11).

The trailer ends with Joseph coming to his senses only to see he has held the girl under water too long, causing her to drown: the baptism has gone terribly wrong.

Two visually very distinct versions of *The Book of Joseph* are featured in the trailer. The second one, seen in the hands of Jerome's daughter, appears to be the white version found scattered throughout the game world. The first one

Fig. 11: Jerome's daughter copying the symbol on the cover of *The Book of Joseph*.

is unique to the trailer: it is a grey notebook with a black rubber band holding the pages together, with on the cover the symbol of the double cross, later in the game identified as the cult's logo.

Although the trailer does not state so explicitly, it is suggested that this grey notebook with the rubber band is a proto version of the later *Book of Joseph*, probably consisting of Joseph's handwritten notes, which he is seen working on later in the same trailer. Eventually, these notes are transformed into the typeset printed white book seen later in the trailer and throughout the game. Just like in the game, the content of *The Book of Joseph* is hidden from everyone, including the film's text-immanent reader.

The fact that in both the game and the film trailer the *Book of Joseph* is inaccessible to both the characters (except Joseph Seed himself, although this is not made explicit) and to the text-immanent reader emphasizes the secret character of the cult of Joseph Seed. One cannot freely enter and leave the book. This restriction makes the cult a dangerous sect, where brainwashing, instead of the reading and discussion of the book on which it claims to be based, stands central. For the game's text-immanent reader, this insight even underlines the importance of their task to stop Joseph Seed by playing the game.

The Book of Joseph: The Physical Book

As stated earlier in this article, the physical *Book of Joseph* was part of the *Far Cry 5*'s Mondo edition, the most extensive edition Ubisoft made available for sale. This edition included – besides the game itself – a steel book-holder, a vinyl record with the original soundtrack, a code for the digital version of the
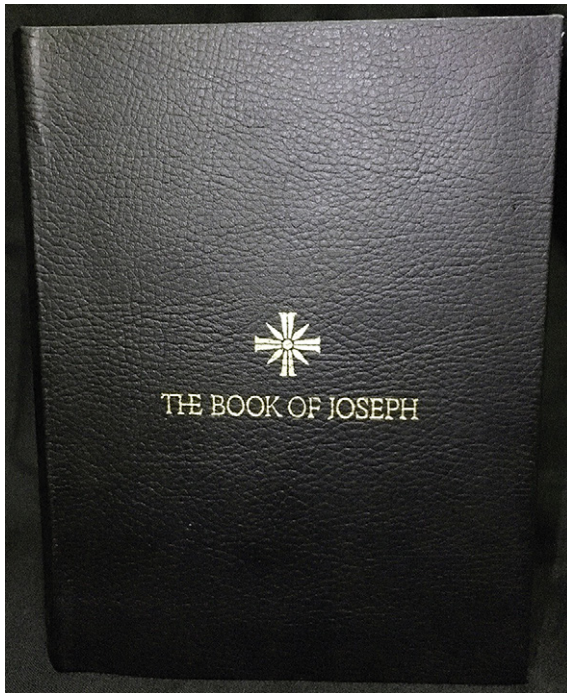
Fig. 12: The cover of *The Book of Joseph*. Courtesy of Bryanna Gillen.[13]

soundtrack, and a convenient box, all designed by the artist Jay Shaw in the style of *Far Cry 5*.[14] The Mondo edition was in itself a limited edition – only 4,000 units were made available for purchase – but the inclusion of the physical *Book of Joseph* was even more limited. Only the first 2,000 buyers of the Mondo edition received one.[15]

The average-sized book has 128 pages, the majority of which are used for printed text. Also, 14 black pencil drawings are incorporated, all but one covering a whole page. The book consists of 13 chapters, each given a Roman numeral. All chapters are preceded by short extracts from multiple "sermons from the Project at Eden's Gate", all printed in italics. The cover is made of black leather, the front featuring – in golden capitals – "The Book of Joseph" and the logo of the Project at Eden's Gate (fig. 12).

The book provides little to no bibliographical information: ISBN, publisher, place of publication, real author, and date are omitted. Even the name of the

13   www.wattpad.com/story/179523951-the-book-of-joseph-far-cry-5.
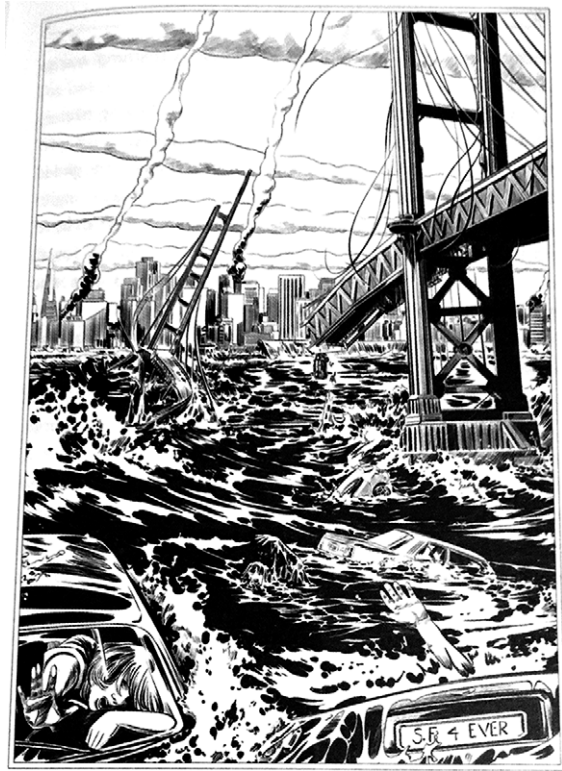14   LeFebvre 2018.
15   Gillen 2019.

Fig. 13: A drawing from *The Book of Joseph* depicting the destruction of San Francisco. Courtesy of Bryanna Gillen.[16]

text-immanent author has to be deduced from the caption below a picture of Joseph Seed on page three – "Joseph Seed, Project at Eden's Gate Guide / Hope County, Montana USA" – and the name below the prologue of the book on page five. There is no doubt, however, that this limited book was created, published, and distributed by Ubisoft in the context of the promotion of *Far Cry 5*. Because of the rarity of this collector's item, physical copies of the book are very hard to come by. Fortunately, some of the lucky owners have provided photos of the book through the Internet.[16] In terms of genre, the book is a mixture of at least four:

- it contains fourteen "sermons" in which Joseph tells his followers how to obey him, thirteen given a Roman numeral, and one the word 'epilogue'.

16 See, for example, www.wattpad.com/story/179523951-the-book-of-joseph-far-cry-5 and https://octo-chan.tumblr.com/post/172753930318/this-is-the-first-chapter-in-the-book-of-joseph-a.

17 www.wattpad.com/story/179523951-the-book-of-joseph-far-cry-5.

- it is a guide book providing new arrivals with the right state of mind needed to join the sect.
- it is an autobiography by Joseph himself, retelling his life's story from his troublesome youth until the founding of his cult.
- it is a collection of prophecies and apocalyptic visions Joseph has about the approaching destruction of the old world.

The fourteen drawings contained in the book are thematically and aesthetically connected to the American Evangelical interpretation of the Christian apocalypse.[18] It is not known who the real artists of the drawings are, and also no text-immanent artist is suggested. All but two of the pictures feature apocalyptic scenes, the majority of them located in the United States, for example in San Francisco (fig. 13), Miami Beach, or Hope County. The images' message is clear: the world is burning, people are being killed, the Evil One is roaming the earth; the Apocalypse is nigh.

From Rome to Hope County

Content-wise, *The Book of Joseph* describes Joseph's life story, from his troubled youth in Rome, Georgia (USA) until the founding of his cult decades later (unfortunately, the book does not provide the text-immanent reader with any dates or other chronological indications). Joseph and his two brothers, Jacob and John, were raised by an alcoholic and aggressive but at the same time very Christian fundamentalist father and a psychologically and emotionally absent mother. Eventually, the three are taken away from their parents by child protection and placed – first together, but later, after Jacob set fire to the farm of their abusive adoptive family, separately – in foster homes.

The brothers lose track of each other until Jacob has grown up and decides to find his lost siblings. After a number of misadventures, Jacob manages to track down his brothers: John has become a rich and influential lawyer under the influence of his new religious-fanatic family, while Jacob has lost his psychological health as a US marine in Iraq and Afghanistan. Once united, the three start their Project at Eden's Gate, first in Rome, but later, after an incident involving the violent death of a former cult member, in Hope County, Montana, the scene of the game. Joseph is the leader of the three and builds his cult from the "losers" of society: the addicts, the lonely, and the desperate, for whom he claims to offer a new family.

18   Hummel 2020.

Eventually they are joined by Faith, a young and attractive woman with a drug addiction, from which she is freed by the three Seeds, only to then lead the cult's drug production: "The Bliss" helps the Seeds to pacify any potential resistance within the cult. Finally, Joseph describes their community in Hope County as secluded and self-sufficient, ready to survive the impending apocalypse, from the ashes of which Joseph and his cultists will rise to be the guardians of a new, improved and purified humankind.

Joseph's religious inspiration comes from an entity he calls "The Voice of the Creator", or simply "The Voice". This entity speaks to Joseph on two occasions of extreme pain and humiliation: the first time when young Joseph was beaten by his father for the forbidden possession of a *Spiderman* comic; the second time when the adult Joseph is ambushed and kicked by a group of three nameless and faceless thugs outside the psychiatric hospital he is working for. Joseph renders the words of The Voice either as a textual unidentified quote or as a paraphrase:

> But let me tell you what The Voice told me: The Creator has never turned a blind eye to the distress of the righteous. He has been watching mankind and has seen those who desecrate His word, who desecrate themselves in a race toward material wealth and vainglory. Such sinners have angered Him and it won't be long until He unleashes His righteous punishment. (*The Book of Joseph*, physical version, p. 21)

This situation communicatively means that The Voice is only accessible to Joseph. All other characters and the text-immanent reader can only know The Voice through Joseph. This exclusivity underlines the unique function of Joseph in the sect. Discussion about The Voice is out of the question because only Joseph has access to it.

The Seeds as Monks

The drawings in *The Book of Joseph* are principally apocalyptic, but there are two exceptions: one drawing is of the face of Joseph himself, printed before the prologue (p. 3), and the other is of the Seed family, printed before the epilogue (p. 124, fig. 14). From a communicative point of view, this second picture is very important.

In the drawing we see the four Seeds, from left to right John, Joseph, Faith, and Jacob. All male characters are dressed in (probably) white clothes with
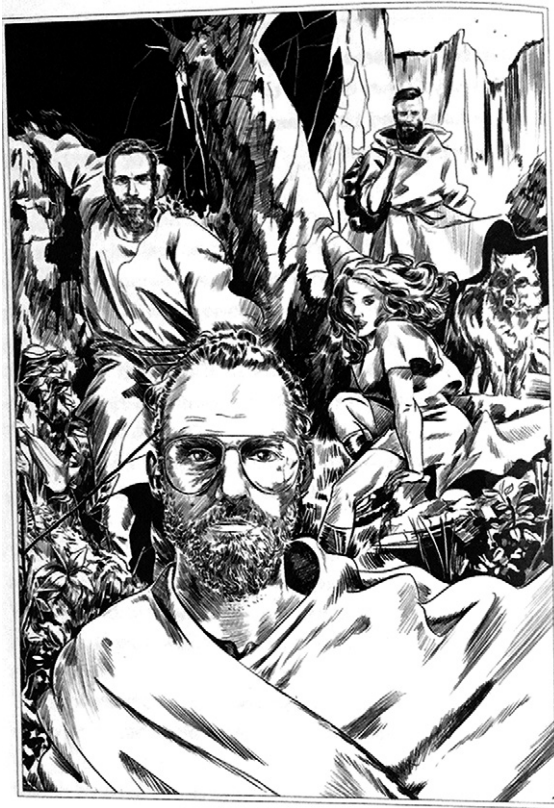
Fig. 14: A drawing from *The Book of Joseph* depicting the Seed family as peaceful monks amidst blossoming flowers. Courtesy of Bryanna Gillen.

ropes for belts. Jacob wears a backpack on his right shoulder and what appears to be a hood folded back on his back. Faith, the only female character in the drawing, is dressed in a short skirt and narrow-fitting boots, accentuating her feminine features. All four human characters, especially Joseph, who is in the forefront of the drawing, look directly at the drawing's text-immanent reader. Joseph's large spectacles, his visual trademark in game and trailer, intensify this even more.

The position in the drawing of the character Joseph Seed in particular creates direct communication with the drawing's text-immanent reader, inviting them to become a member of the cult by reading the book. This summons implies that the text-immanent reader of the drawing takes up a position that is different to that of the text-immanent reader of the game. The game's text-immanent reader is never invited to join the cult; conversely, indeed, they are called to stop the cult. The physical book, and especially its drawings, creates

a huge tension between its own text-immanent reader and the text-immanent reader of the game world (the video game itself and the related trailers).

A detail in the drawing supports this difference. On the far right we see a wolf, apparently gentle and kind. All characters are positioned in a field of blooming flowers, adding to the serenity and peacefulness of the scenery. Both flowers and wolves, however, are featured in the game, but in a very different capacity. The flowers are used to make the drug The Bliss, which the Seeds use to maintain a constant mental influence over the more independent members of their cult. The Bliss is also used for experimentation on animals, among whom are wolves, in order to create more reliable and even more fearsome biological weapons. The Bliss-infused wolves, called "Judges" in the game, are indeed ferocious enemies of the deputy and the members of the resistance.

The Materiality of *The Book of Joseph*

After introducing and describing the cultural objects featuring *The Book of Joseph* – the trailer and the digital game – and the physical book itself, we can look into the materiality of the different versions of the book found throughout the discussed medial objects of game, trailer, and physical book (fig. 1).

There appear to be at least four versions of *The Book of Joseph*, each in its own context and with its own visual identity markers. First, there is the "white" version. This version is seen in the trailer and abundantly in *Far Cry 5*. The covering is of white leather, with golden decorative lines on the front side along with the cult's logo, a double cross. This version is apparently for the lower members of the cult. Its contents remain a mystery and cannot be interacted with in-game.

The second version can only be seen in the game, and more precisely in the two aforementioned missions, "The Atonement" and "False Prophet". Whether or not the two books are actually one and the same, this version of *The Book of Joseph* clearly differs visually from the white one, not only in colour (grey instead of white) but also in the pattern of the decorative lines, which has been slightly altered. The logo is also present. This version is apparently for higher ranking members of the cult: Tracey speaks about Faith's "personal copy of Joseph's ramblings".

The status of the grey version is seemingly higher than that of the white one: whereas the white ones are interchangeable with one another, the grey

Version	Visuals	Appearances	Interaction?
White	Logo + decoration 1	Game + trailer	No
Grey (John + Faith)	Logo + decoration 2	Game	Yes (scripted)
Grey (Joseph)	Logo + rubber band	Trailer	No
Black	Logo + title	Physical book	Yes

Fig. 15: Table providing an overview of the different versions of *The Book of Joseph* in the various medial objects.

one, or ones, is (are) unique and attached to a specific Seed. That is probably why Faith reacts with shock when she discovers that the deputy has destroyed her copy. Yet, the grey version is equally unwilling to share its content with the deputy or the player, but it can at least be interacted with, although only in a strict and scripted way.

The third version of *The Book of Joseph* is exclusively found in THE BAPTISM trailer. It is also grey, like the special version in the game, but here it appears to be a notebook, including a rubber band, containing what would probably later become *The Book of Joseph* seen in the other medial objects under inquiry in this article. This proto version of Joseph's book has no decorative lines, only the logo. No interaction is possible because of the nature of the medial object (film instead of digital game).

The fourth version of *The Book of Joseph* is the physical limited edition delivered as a part of the Mondo edition of the game. It has a black cover with no decorative lines, but with logo and title in golden letters. The black colour of the cover and the occurrence of the title are unique to this version. Interaction with this version is very much possible.

The book's materiality is summarized in figure 15.

	Far Cry 5	The Baptism	Physical book	
			text	drawing
Real Author	(Ubisoft)	(Ubisoft)	(Ubisoft)	
Text-Immanent Author	"director"	"director"	Joseph Seed	"artist"
Characters	Various characters, including the player's avatar	Various characters, <u>not</u> including player's avatar	Various characters, including Joseph: $3^{rd}/1^{st}$ ps. singular + 1st ps. plural	The characters Joseph, Jacob, John and Faith
Text-Immanent Reader	"player"	"viewer"	2nd ps. singular/plural + 1st ps. plural	2nd person perspective
Real Reader	player	viewer	reader/viewer	

Fig. 16: Table providing an overview of the different types of communication in game, trailer, and physical book.

The Text-Immanent Communication

After discussing the materiality of the different versions of *The Book of Joseph*, we can concentrate on the textual communication evoked by the book in the various discussed medial objects. The table above (fig. 16) shows the different communications for each of the four medial objects:

Far Cry 5 and The Baptism: The Avatar Character

To start with *Far Cry 5*, let us first establish the text's real author, i. e. the game's development team, consisting of directors (Dan Hay and Patrik Methe), producers (Darryl Long), programmers (Cedric Decelle), artists (Jean-Alexis Doyon), writers (Drew Holmes, Dan Hay and Jean-Sebastien Decant), and the teams of co-workers they led and oversaw. The text-immanent author is not visible in-game, but functions nevertheless as a kind of invisible director, leading the sequence of scenes as the player ventures through the game.

The characters on the stage, the ones featured in the game, can be divided into two categories: the NPCs ("non playable characters") and the player's avatar. Not only are Joseph, Faith, Jerome, and Tracey, for example, characters in the game's story, directed by the text-immanent author, but the player too is a character, or more precisely, the player's avatar (in first-person perspec-

tive). Even though the player experiences a considerable degree of freedom, especially in an extended open world game like *Far Cry 5,* the number of possibilities of ways to act is ultimately limited to those allowed technically by the real author, but communicatively by the game's text-immanent author. The player's avatar is a character in the story of the game.

This means that the game's text-immanent reader is, like the game's text-immanent author, not visible in the game. Only their in-game representation, their avatar, being in fact a character, is. It is through the avatar that the game's text-immanent reader influences the course of events in the game, within the technical and communicative boundaries. Through the player's avatar, the text-immanent reader's position in a game can be much more complex than in a written text: there is the possibility that the player's avatar, as a character, will interlock with the game's text-immanent reader, but only when the gamer, i.e. the game's real reader, is interacting with the game's world without an avatar. And finally, we can identify the game's real reader, a real person playing the game on their console or PC.

When we concentrate on THE BAPTISM trailer, we see a familiar pattern. The real author of the trailer is an unknown production team, consisting of directors, script writers, technicians, and so forth, employed by Ubisoft to create promotional material for the upcoming game release. Just as in the case of the game, we can identify a text-immanent author, a "director", leading the sequence of scenes as the viewer, i.e. the trailer's text-immanent reader, watches the story unfolding.

The characters in the trailer are more or less the same as in the game, with a focus on Joseph, Jerome, and Jerome's daughter, but with one very important communicative difference: the trailer does *not* feature a player's/viewer's avatar as the game does. Technically, this variation is caused by the non-interactive quality of the film medium versus the necessary interactive quality of the game medium. From a communicative point of view, this quality makes clear that the freedom of the text-immanent reader is greater in a game than in a text or film. And the trailer also has a real reader, the historical viewer, a real person watching the trailer.

The Book of Joseph: The Text-Immanent Reader

The communicative analysis of the physical version of *The Book of Joseph* has two sections, one concentrated on the analysis of the text of the book, and one on analysis of the images in the book, especially the one featuring the four Seeds as monks.

The real author of *The Book of Joseph* is an anonymous and (as of yet) unknown writer, employed by Ubisoft to write the book as part of the promotional material included in the Mondo edition of the game. Here, the text-immanent author is clearly distinguishable (unlike in the cases of the game and the trailer). Even though Joseph is nowhere in the text identified explicitly as the author of the text, we have an abundancy of rhetorical clues to argue in favour of this reading option, among which the strongest is the appearance of the name of Joseph below a picture of himself (p. 3) and beneath the prologue (p. 5).

Interestingly enough, Joseph also appears, besides many others, such as Jacob, John, and Faith, as a character in the text of the book itself. The text-immanent author writes about himself as a character in his own story in three different grammatical and communicative forms. In the majority of these cases, Joseph writes about himself in the first-person singular: for example: "I am the messenger" (p. 5), "I wouldn't give up" (p. 85), and "I tell them what The Voice told me, again and again" (p. 115).

However, in some other cases, although not very often, Joseph appears as part of a collective "we" (first-person plural). To give some examples: when Joseph describes how the Seed family survived under the rule of their abusive, alcoholic father – "We lived off a patchwork of welfare, food stamps, charity, and soup kitchens" (p. 24); or when Joseph has finally found his brother John and they become – quite literally – a collective again – "When we were reunited, John even hated himself" (p. 77).

In one instance, in the first chapter (and only there), the text-immanent author writes about himself in the third-person singular. The second section of the chapter tells about "a child of about ten" (p. 9), delaying the explicit identification of the text-immanent author with the character of the same name somewhat more. Only in the third section is this tension lifted: "The father thrashed his arms furiously while the boy, young Joseph Seed, stood with his head bowed, contrite and seemingly fixated on the floorboards" (p. 9).

This movement from a third-person representation to a first-person representation results in the merging/coinciding of the text-immanent author's and character's positions. Owing to this movement, the position of Joseph Seed is strengthened. Joseph Seed occupies all possible positions, removing the difference between the positions of author and character. He becomes the centre of the textual world as he is the centre of the sect.

A similar thing happens with the text-immanent reader, who is addressed by the text-immanent author in two grammatical and communicative manners, which are more or less equal in number: a second-person singular/plural

and a first-person plural. Both have complications. In the English language it is often difficult to distinguish between the second-person singular and plural, both for "you" and "your". However, even more, the form "we" is used by the text-immanent author to address both the characters in the text (including himself as such) and to address the text-immanent reader (who is *not* a character in the text). This use of the first-person plural is known as an inclusive "we", distinguishable from an exclusive "we" that only indicates the one speaking.[19] Therefore, this inclusive "we", incorporating the text-immanent reader as well, could be called a "text-immanent we".

To give some examples: right at the beginning of the text, in the prologue, the text-immanent author addresses the text-immanent reader – "You will hear …", "People will tell you …", "If you want to live, you need …" (all on p. 5), and "You belong in the next world, the new world" (p. 122). The text-immanent "we" (as different from the character "we") is found throughout the text whenever the text-immanent author starts to preach to the text-immanent reader(s): "We who were once so pure.…", "We have been created in in His image.…", "We have enraged God and will pay the price sooner than we think" (all on p. 17), or "Concealed in shelter that we have dug ourselves, we may experience deprivation and scarcity" (p. 122). This "inclusive we" bonds the text-immanent author and text-immanent reader. This direct influence of the text-immanent author, Joseph Seed, on the text-immanent reader accords with the drawing's direct communication between the character Joseph Seed and the drawing's text-immanent reader described above.

Also, *The Book of Joseph* has a real reader, but now in two forms. In the first form, the most obvious form, the term denotes a physical reader who reads the physical book page after page. The second form is purely theoretical. We could imagine there are real people who are so attracted to *The Book of Joseph* that they consider themselves part of the (originally fictional) Project at Eden's Gate. No reports have surfaced suggesting that "Seedism" is considered to actually exist. However, such a scenario is not impossible, since examples have emerged in recent years of the existence of belief systems with a fictional source.[20]

Let us now focus on the images used in *The Book of Joseph*, and especially the last one, depicting the Seeds as friendly monks in harmony with humankind, flora, and fauna. Again, the real author, the artist, is an anonymous artist, employed by Ubisoft to contribute to a piece of promotional material

19   Lewandowski 1994, Vol. 2, 790.
20   Davidsen 2013.

for *Far Cry 5*. The artist, the drawing's text-immanent author, is not visible on the drawing and exists only theoretically. The image-characters are, as said before, the four Seeds and a "Judge" wolf. However, a text-immanent viewer can be identified by following Joseph's stare, as we have already indicated above. The cult's leader is looking, as are the other three humans, directly at the viewer, by which the viewer becomes a part of the text of the image, in what could be described as a "second-person perspective" or a "visual you". Finally, there is also a real viewer, but, as was the case in the text of the book, either as a real-world communicative instance or as a theoretical devotee of the (still to be) de-fictionalized cult of Seedism.

Concluding Remarks

First of all, we would like to draw the obvious conclusion that communication takes place via and within all medial objects, drawings, films, games, and texts alike. A communication-oriented method provides the tools not only to make this communication visible, but also to make clear the differences in communication in the various medial objects.

When comparing the different communications in the texts of game, book, drawing, and trailer, we can identify three shifts. The first is the shift in text-immanent author: in the game, the trailer, and the image, this communicative instance is only theoretically present, while in (the text of) *The Book of Joseph* it can be easily identified. The same applies to the shift in text-immanent reader: in game and trailer the game's and film's text-immanent readers are invisible and only theoretically present, while in the book (text and image) the text-immanent reader is spoken to in multiple ways (first-, second-, and third-person singular, and first- and second-person plural).

This communication-oriented analysis of the intertextual and intermedial complex of various medial objects connected to *The Book of Joseph*, as a part of the fictional universe of *Far Cry 5*, illustrates clearly that the materiality of Joseph's book differs according to the communicative process in each individual medial object, as the table below shows.

In the cases of the game and the trailer, the materiality is found on the level of the characters witnessing and interacting with the book without being able to discover its content, while in the physical book, the materiality is found on the levels of the real author and real reader, who can actually and physically take the book in hand in order to read it. (This includes those real readers who read the book through digital reproductions, as we have.)

Medial object	Communicative level
Game	Level of the characters
Trailer	Level of the characters
Physical book	Level of the real author and real reader
Physical book's drawing	Absent

Fig. 17: Table providing an overview of the materiality of *The Book of Joseph* in the various medial objects.

The transition to the physical world does not just change the materiality of the book, for it also changes the communication based on the book. In the case of *Far Cry* 5, it is far from an innocent transition. Whereas in the imaginative world of the game and trailer, the text-immanent reader is positioned in contrast to Joseph Seed, the dangerous leader of a violent cult, and encouraged to stop the fictional Seedism, in the physical world the text-immanent reader is invited to join Joseph Seed, as if it were a positive thing to become a member of (still to be) Seedism. Communication is exciting. Transitions in medial objects make communication even more exciting.

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