

The American Frontier in Red Dead Redemption 2: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Media and Literary Representation

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Abstract

This research examined the portrayal of the American Frontier in the video game Red Dead Redemption 2 using an interdisciplinary approach that integrated literary studies, textual analysis, semiotics, and hyperreality. The goal was to explore how the game constructed, adapted, and reimagined classic frontier themes such as survival, violence, freedom, and cultural conflict within a contemporary digital narrative. Employing Jean Baudrillard's hyperreality theory and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic model, the researcher analyzed specific dialogues and visual elements from the game's script. The results indicated that Red Dead Redemption 2 blurred the lines between historical reality and simulation, creating a hyperreal depiction of the American West that echoed both cultural myths and modern interpretations. By framing the game as a contemporary literary work, this study highlighted the significance of video games as valuable sources of cultural expression and narrative depth. It also contributed to the broader application of literary analysis to digital media, suggesting that interactive storytelling plays a crucial role in shaping historical memory and identity.

Keywords: American Frontier, Digital Literature, Hyperreality, Interdisciplinary Study, Red Dead Redemption 2, Semiotics



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1. INTRODUCTION

Literature, traditionally defined as a body of written works valued for their artistic or intellectual merit, extends far beyond the confines of poetry and prose. It spans across languages, historical periods, and cultural origins encompassing oral traditions and modern digital forms. According to Merriam-Webster, literature comprises works of lasting importance and refined form, while Walter Pater describes it as the artistic transcription of reality. Originating from the Latin *littera*, the concept has evolved from including all written texts to specifically those with aesthetic and intellectual depth.

In contemporary contexts, literature no longer exists solely within printed pages or oral traditions. The advent of digital media has reshaped not only how stories are delivered but also how they are experienced. As Hayles (2012) suggests, digital formats blending text, sound, and visuals have transformed our engagement with narrative, bridging traditional literature with new forms of storytelling. This convergence challenges our understanding of what literature is and how it functions within society.

This transformation is especially visible in narrative-driven video games such as *Red Dead Redemption 2*, which demonstrates how interactive media can carry literary significance. Storytelling is no longer confined to books or poetry; it thrives in video games, films, comics, and other digital narratives. A game like *Red Dead Redemption 2* offers a complex exploration of themes such as morality, loyalty, and survival against the backdrop of a vanishing American frontier. It doesn't merely imitate literature it actively participates in literary discourse.

With richly developed characters, especially Arthur Morgan, who wrestles with identity, personal values, and shifting societal norms the game mirrors the moral dilemmas and psychological depth often found in classic literature by authors like Dostoevsky or Steinbeck. Its nuanced dialogue, layered storytelling, and symbolic motifs position it not just as entertainment but as a modern literary artifact. Players are not passive consumers; they engage with the story actively, making choices that influence narrative outcomes an interaction parallel to a reader's interpretive engagement with a text.

This literary quality is further enriched when viewed through theoretical lenses. This study adopts Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and simulacra, from *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), as a framework for analyzing how *Red Dead Redemption 2* constructs its narrative reality. Baudrillard argues that in postmodern society, representations in media do not reflect the real world but instead generate their own version of reality a simulation. In this light, the American frontier depicted in the game becomes a hyperreal space: not a mirror of history, but a digitally reconstructed myth shaped by previous cultural products such as Western literature and film.

Therefore, analyzing *Red Dead Redemption 2* as a literary text particularly through the complete script offers valuable insights into the intersection of literature, media, and culture. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a deeper understanding of how narratives evolve across forms and how they contribute to the ongoing dialogue between reality, representation, and imagination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section offers an overview of pertinent literature to establish the theoretical basis and contextual backdrop for the research.

2.1 Previous Studies

The study by Widodo et al. (2022) explores the architectural elements of the Al-Ahdhar Mosque using Peirce's semiotic theory, particularly his triadic model: representamen, object, and interpretant. The research aims to uncover the symbolic meanings embedded within the mosque's structure such as its dome, calligraphy, and ornaments by interpreting them not merely as aesthetic choices, but as culturally and spiritually charged signs. The findings reveal that each architectural component functions within a Peircean semiotic process, communicating Islamic values and local identity through a structured system of signs. This approach offers valuable relevance to my research on *Red Dead Redemption 2*, as it demonstrates how visual elements can be deconstructed semiotically to reveal deeper ideological or cultural meanings. Similar to how the mosque's architecture communicates religious values, the game's environment and dialogues can be seen as signs that construct and simulate a hyperreal version of the American frontier. Thus, this journal provides both theoretical grounding and methodological insight for applying Peircian semiotics in the analysis of digital narratives and symbolic spaces.

Sepetci & Sağlam (2022). The study aims to explore how *Red Dead Redemption 2* reflects and reinforces the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Using a qualitative method grounded in critical discourse analysis, the researchers examine the narrative, characters, and symbolic structure of the game, focusing on Arthur Morgan and the world around him. The study applies R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity to analyze the portrayal of dominant male traits, such as emotional suppression, physical strength, and moral rigidity. The findings show

that *Red Dead Redemption 2* supports traditional masculine ideals through its male-dominated world and its passive representation of female characters, although it also offers subtle critiques of this system as it begins to decay with societal change. The study concludes that while the game primarily reinforces patriarchal structures, it simultaneously opens the space for critical engagement with masculinity itself.

The study by Ferryanto et al. (2023), from Brawijaya University, examines the depiction of Native American life during the westward expansion of the late 1800s in *Red Dead Redemption 2*, utilizing historical theory as its analytical foundation. The study highlights the game's immersive portrayal of Native American culture, particularly through the representation of the Lakota language and the struggles faced by Indigenous communities amid territorial conflicts with the US government. A key focus is placed on Chapter 6, which offers a detailed narrative of Native American resistance and survival during this period.

This research intersects with this research, *The American Frontier In Red Dead Redemption 2: An Interdisciplinary Perspective On Media And Literary Representation*, which extends the discussion beyond historical accuracy to explore how the game engages with the broader mythology of the American frontier. By integrating media and literary studies, my research examines how *Red Dead Redemption 2* constructs and challenges traditional frontier narratives, positioning it within a continuum of American cultural and literary representations of the West.

2.2 Related Theories

Interdisciplinary study is the methodical approach combining ideas, theories, techniques, and tools from several academic fields. This method aims to solve difficult problems and deepen our knowledge of topics for which a single field cannot fully justify. It goes beyond the confines of particular disciplines of study by combining data from many points of view, so allowing a more all-encompassing and complete approach to the solving of problems. When it comes to tackling the complex issues that modern society is facing, this type of study is especially vital. These issues include technology developments, social inequality, and climate change all of which usually demand a more thorough and multifarious knowledge. The definition of interdisciplinary research is "the integration of knowledge and methods from different disciplines to examine complex problems" Repko & Szostak (2016). The aim of multidisciplinary research is to create creative frameworks that provide solutions that are not only scientifically sound but also socially and economically relevant, this is achieved by combining ideas from many spheres of activity. Klein (2017) underlines that interdisciplinary research "promotes collaboration among experts from different fields to exchange ideas," so generating an environment fit for innovation and efficient problem solving.

2.3 Media

The Media includes a variety of platforms, technologies, and channels that are employed to deliver information, ideas, and messages to a wide audience. These may include both traditional forms, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, and digital media, including social media, websites, blogs, podcasts, and online streaming services. The media is instrumental in the formation of public opinion, as well as in the dissemination of information, entertainment, and education. It is a potent instrument that promotes communication across societies, shapes culture, and influences societal norms. Media is defined as "a vehicle for transmitting messages and meaning to a wide, dispersed audience" McQuail (2010), acting as a

bridge for communication and interaction.

For instance, the global consumption and sharing of information have been significantly altered by the proliferation of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These digital platforms enable individuals to engage with news, trends, and ideas in real time, thereby contributing to global conversations and viral content Castells (2009). In contrast, conventional media outlets, including BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera, continue to dominate global communication through their news broadcasts, which are now accessible on a variety of devices, including smartphones and televisions McChesney (2004).

Multimedia content, which incorporates text, images, video, and audio to generate dynamic and captivating experiences, is also a component of media. For instance, platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo enable creators to distribute video blogs, documentaries, and tutorials that can be viewed by millions of individuals worldwide Jenkins (2006). Podcasts have also become growing in popularity as a medium for in-depth discussions, storytelling, and niche topics, enabling the creation of specialized content that resonates with a wide range of audiences.

Additionally, media has a substantial influence on the development of political discourse. The formation of political narratives and the shaping of public opinion have been greatly impacted by news outlets and social media platforms. McChesney (2004) emphasizes that media, particularly news platforms, have the ability to influence political movements and electoral outcomes, a phenomenon that has been demonstrated in events such as the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter protests.

Media is a reflection of societal trends, values, and social issues in a broader context. It functions as a reflection of society, providing a glimpse into a variety of cultures and perspectives. Nevertheless, media can also have adverse effects, such as the dissemination of misinformation or the perpetuation of unrealistic portrayals, which can result in societal polarization or mental health concerns as a result of constant media consumption Kellner (2003).

In general, the media industry is a dynamic field that is constantly changing in response to societal needs and new technologies. It remains a critical instrument for societal change, culture, and communication, influencing the manner in which individuals engage with the world and information.

2.4 Entire Script Definition

A script is more than just dialogue, it's the blueprint of storytelling. It outlines everything from scene direction to emotional cues, ensuring that every creative department, from directors to designers, aligns with the narrative vision (Johnson, 2005).

In video games, especially *Red Dead Redemption 2* the idea of a script evolves dramatically. It's not just a static text but an adaptive structure that responds to the player's choices. Set in the dying days of the American frontier, the game follows Arthur Morgan, a conflicted outlaw navigating shifting morals and fading traditions.

Red Dead Redemption 2's script weaves together a vast number of spoken lines, random encounters, and branching storylines. Every character be it gang member or stranger has a distinct voice and background. These interactions go beyond plot; they shape how players experience and affect the world. The choices players make influence Arthur's moral alignment, which in turn affects how others treat him turning narrative into something reactive and personal.

At its heart, *Red Dead Redemption 2* tells a powerful story of identity, redemption, and

legacy. It challenges players to reflect on their choices, not through exposition, but through lived experience. As such, the game's script isn't just a technical element it's a literary achievement in its own right, deserving critical analysis alongside more traditional forms of narrative.

2.5 Red Dead Redemption 2

The game set in 1899 and it captures a world on the verge of transformation. It reflects a country chasing progress at any cost. Indigenous people are pushed off their land, the wild is being tamed, and the romantic ideal of the free-roaming cowboy is becoming a relic. Through Arthur's eyes, we see not only violence and survival, but also reflection, regret, and a quiet hunger for redemption.

What makes the game remarkable is not just the story, it's how that story is told. Every choice the player makes matters. Be kind or cruel, and the world reacts. Your decisions shape how people see Arthur, and how Arthur sees himself. It's a narrative that lives and breathes with the player, where morality isn't handed down. It's made moment by moment.

Beneath the gunfights and horseback chases, *Red Dead Redemption 2* is rich with literary and philosophical weight. It questions the myth of the frontier and the cost of so-called progress. It doesn't just repeat the tale of Manifest Destiny, it dissects it, showing the damage left in its wake: broken land, broken people, and broken promises. The game walks the line between admiration and critique, never fully letting the player settle into comfort.

Arthur's transformation from a man of action to one of reflection is the emotional core of the game. His doubts, regrets, and final clarity make him feel real, and his story mirrors the larger decay of the ideals that once defined the West. His bond with the gang, especially the unravelling loyalty to Dutch, lays bare themes of trust, power, and disillusionment.

This is not just a game, it's a narrative experiment that blurs the boundaries between media. It draws from American literary traditions, echoing themes found in *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Moby Dick*: the fight between man and world, the search for meaning in chaos, and the moral fog that often comes with survival.

But it also pushes into psychological territory. Arthur's emotional unravelling gives a glimpse into the toll of violence and guilt. And the gang's dynamics loyalty, rivalry, blind faith, offer a playground for examining human behaviour in crisis. The game doesn't tell you what to think; it nudges, hints, and waits for you to decide.

In the end, *Red Dead Redemption 2* is more than a retelling of Western tropes. It's a reflection on what those stories meant, what they ignored, and what they cost. It's a study of memory and myth of how we shape the past to serve the present. Through the lens of interactive media, it reimagines the American West not as legend, but as lived experience complicated, brutal, beautiful, and fading fast.

2.6 Peirce's Semiotic Theory

Peirce's semiotic theory offers a triadic framework for understanding meaning-making, consisting of the Representamen (the perceptible form of the sign), the Object (what the sign refers to), and the Interpretant (the concept formed in the mind of the interpreter). Peirce emphasizes that "a sign is something by knowing which we know something more" (Peirce, 1931), highlighting the indirect and interpretative nature of signs. In the context of this study, Peirce's model is instrumental in analyzing how *Red Dead Redemption 2* constructs a symbolic narrative of the American frontier. The game's visual elements, environments, and dialogues function as Representamina that reference broader cultural Objects such as individualism,

survival, or moral decay while the Interpretant is shaped by the player's engagement and socio-historical awareness. Through this semiotic process, the game not only depicts but also redefines frontier mythology within a hyperreal digital medium, aligning with your objective to examine how interactive narratives contribute to cultural and ideological discourse.

2.7 Simulacra and Simulation Theory

Jean Baudrillard, in his work *Simulacra and Simulation*, explores how reality in postmodern society is increasingly replaced by representations and simulations. He distinguishes between two key concepts: simulacra and simulation. Simulacra are copies or representations of something that once had a real reference, but over time, they lose any direct connection to the original. Simulation, on the other hand, is the process in which representations do not merely reflect reality but instead replace it, creating a version of reality that appears more authentic than the original itself (Baudrillard, 1981).

Baudrillard (1981) identifies four stages in the evolution of simulation, illustrating how representations gradually replace reality. The first stage is faithful representation, where an image or symbol is a direct and accurate reflection of an existing reality. The second stage is distorted reality, where representations begin to modify or embellish the original, introducing elements that alter its authenticity. The third stage is simulation that claims to be real, where the representation becomes so dominant that it is mistaken for reality, even though it is a constructed version. The final stage is hyperreality, where the boundary between representation and reality disappears entirely, and what people perceive as real is actually a self-sustaining simulation, detached from any actual referent.

This theory has significant implications for contemporary society, where many aspects of life are shaped by simulacra. Mass media, entertainment, and advertising create versions of reality that are often more compelling and engaging than the real world itself. Baudrillard (1981) argues that people increasingly inhabit a world where representations define their understanding of reality, often leading them to accept the simulation as more real than the truth.

Baudrillard's ideas provide critical insights into how media and technology shape perceptions of the world. For instance, in modern culture, video games, films, and advertisements no longer merely depict reality; they construct new versions of it that influence how people perceive and interact with their surroundings.

3. METHOD

This research applied a qualitative textual analysis. Qualitative textual analysis is a research method used to interpret the meaning of texts such as films, books, scripts, or dialogues by examining language, structure, symbols, and context. Rather than measuring frequency or patterns statistically, this approach focuses on how meaning is constructed and communicated. Researchers analyze the underlying themes, ideologies, and cultural messages within a text. It is commonly used in media, literature, and cultural studies, and is especially compatible with semiotic or critical theories like Peirce's semiotics and Baudrillard's hyperreality. The study focuses on interpreting the narrative and dialogic content found in the video game *Red Dead Redemption 2*, particularly how the game represents the concept of the American frontier. As a qualitative study, it does not rely on numerical data but instead explores the meaning behind language, symbolism, character interaction, and thematic elements.

4. RESULTS

4.1 American Frontier

Data 1

Dutch Van Der Linde gives a tactical command, “Micah, hide behind that wagon. Arthur, you take that old shed on the left and stay low.” this line functions as a verbal sign, instructing the characters to use their surroundings specifically a wagon and a shed as cover. The object here was the wagon, which symbolically transforms into a shield within the context of an ambush scenario.

Through the lens of Peircean semiotics, the interpretant reveals how life on the frontier is framed not just as survival, but as something deeply tactical and militarized. Everyday civilian tools, like a wagon, are repurposed as improvised combat infrastructure. This highlights how survival in the American frontier is not just about endurance but also about strategic thinking, reinforcing the notion of the frontier as a battleground.

From a Baudrillardian perspective, this moment exemplifies hyperreality the simulation of survival. The frontier experience is dramatized to resemble military manoeuvres, where even the simplest action, like taking cover, carries cinematic weight. The realism of daily survival is replaced by a heightened, stylized depiction that blurs the line between authentic frontier hardship and Hollywood-style spectacle.

Ultimately, this scene contributed to the mythologization of the frontier as a space of constant warfare and ambush. It fed into Western genre tropes that portrayed the American frontier as an unforgiving, ever-hostile environment one where violence was expected, and every object became part of a larger, ongoing conflict.

Data 2

When Micah Bell said, “Arthur, there’s body in the wagon”, he’s not just pointing out a disturbing sight he’s setting the tone for something much deeper about life on the frontier. His words acted as a signal, warning Arthur (and the audience) that there’s something wrong. The body inside the wagon became the centre of that sign, representing more than just death it revealed the darker, hidden side of what frontier life was really like.

Looking closer, the wagon is not just a way to move things around anymore it turned into a symbol of how death and violence quietly travelled with people in this harsh world. If we saw it through Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality, the wagon became a macabre simulacrum a twisted version of something familiar, hiding something horrific. On the outside, it looked like a normal vehicle used for trade or travel, but in truth, it carried death and danger, messing with our sense of safety.

From the lens of the American Frontier, this moment cut through the heroic or adventurous image that people often associate with it. Underneath the everyday things like wagons were secrets, dead bodies and the constant fear. The frontier is not just about freedom or opportunity, it’s a tough, unforgiving place where violence is part of daily life, even when it’s hidden in plain sight.

Data 3

When Arthur Morgan said, “This is a big country. We’ll find somewhere to lie low,” he reflected the old myth of the American frontier as a place of freedom and reinvention. This idea, rooted in Turner’s view of the frontier as a force shaping American identity, it had been echoed in films, novels, and games like *Red Dead Redemption 2*. But as Baudrillard argued, this image

was a romantic illusion a hyperreality that hid the real costs of escape and starting over. Arthur's words revealed not just personal hope, but a larger cultural fantasy that often strays from reality.

4.2 Violence

Data 4

In the line "You stop right now or you're dead," Arthur Morgan showed just how dangerous and intense life in the world of *Red Dead Redemption 2* really was. His words were not just a warning they're a threat that meant immediate action or death. This showed that in his world, violence was a normal part of solving problems.

He's not asking or negotiating; he's taking control with force. From a deeper point of view, Arthur's threat reflected a kind of fake authority a hyperreality, where threatening to kill someone is not shocking anymore, it's just how people survive and gain power in a lawless world.

At that moment, where there were no real laws or police, men like Arthur became powerful because they were feared. His words represented how people in the Wild West used violence to stay alive, led others, and protected what was theirs. So even though the sentence was short, it told us a lot about Arthur, his world, and how violence became a normal part of life on the frontier.

Data 5

"Put a god damn bullet in him. Now! Take him down." The intensity of frontier violence was brought to the forefront. This statement was a direct order to kill, marking it clearly as a sign of ruthless aggression. The object of the statement was the intended elimination of an enemy likely someone standing in the way of the gang's objective. The interpretant reveals that, in Micah's worldview, violence was not a last resort but the default solution to any obstacle. There's no hesitation, no negotiation, just execution.

From the lens of Baudrillard's hyperreality, Micah's order reflected how normalized and even performative violence had become in the outlaw world. The act of killing was treated not as something shocking or traumatic, but as a routine part of outlaw life. The urgency and casual tone in which he demanded it highlighted how violence had shifted from a moral crisis into a moment of entertainment or tactical necessity something expected rather than questioned.

This moment also exemplified the frontier depiction, where the value of human life was minimal, especially when weighed against survival, power, or profit. In the lawless world the characters inhabit, killing became procedural, a means to an end. The line underscores how the frontier myth glamorizes toughness and decisiveness, even when it meant taking a life. Micah's words were not just an order to kill they're a window into a violent, desensitized culture where pulling the trigger was just part of the job.

Data 6

In the line, "I think so. Just keep your head down. Let's finish them." we witness a tactical moment embedded within an ongoing gunfight. This dialogue functioned as a sign of coordination in the midst of violence an urgent cue to stay low and push forward with lethal force. The object here was the combat scenario itself, a chaotic shootout where decisions were made rapidly and survival depends on aggressive action. The interpretant of the line revealed a calculated choice: the speaker acknowledged the risk but insists on finishing the fight, showing how violence was willingly embraced as a necessary path to resolve the conflict even at the expense of personal safety.

From a hyperreality perspective, this dialogue demonstrated a simulation of bravery. The

choice to continue fighting was portrayed as both heroic and rational, a performance of courage that masks the grim reality of killing. Violence became routine strategy rather than emotional trauma it's no longer shocking, but expected, structured, and even encouraged as the smartest move in the heat of battle.

4.3 Survival

Data 7

As Charles and Arthur approach an unfamiliar area, a simple exchange "There's a camp up ahead." "Be careful." reveals more than just caution. According to Peirce's semiotics, their words acted as signs pointing to deeper meanings: danger, uncertainty, and the constant tension of frontier life.

This moment also reflected Baudrillard's hyperreality. The camp might be empty, but their reaction was shaped by imagined threats more than reality. The idea of danger became more real than what's actually there.

In the frontier, survival depended on reading signs. Perception often outweighs fact, and instinct became a way of life. Their cautious behavior showed how, in this world, meaning was built as much from fear and expectation as from the physical world itself.

Data 8

As tension raised, someone yelled, "Careful! It's a trap!", a clear sign of danger, triggering panic. But Arthur stayed calm, offering reassurance and taking charge. From a Peircean view, the warning reflected shared fear, while Arthur's response counters it with control and reason.

Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality applied here too, the fear of a "trap" might feel more real than the actual threat. Arthur was not just reacting to danger, but to the powerful symbol it represented.

This moment showed how survival on the frontier depended on reading signs and managing emotion. Arthur led by balancing fear with clarity, navigating not just reality, but how it's perceived.

4.4 Clash

Data 9

"You've finally lost your mind," reveals deepening distrust, marking Dutch's descent into erratic leadership. Dutch fires back, "Among these drunks, country bumpkins, and slavers... honest, good-hearted thieves like us... we're bound to be moralizers," reframing their crimes as virtue in comparison to greater corruption.

Through Peirce's semiotics, Arthur's line signals Dutch's moral unraveling, while Dutch's "moralizers" became a twisted self-justification. Baudrillard's hyperreality added another layer, Dutch crafted an illusion of righteousness to mask his descent, blurring truth and performance.

This moment captures a central theme of *Red Dead Redemption 2*: in a collapsing world, morality was redefined not by ethics, but by who controlled the narrative. Dutch clung to a heroic image, even as his actions betray it.

Data 10

In this short but revealing exchange, Archibald MacGregor asserted control by saying, "There's a chain of command here," signalling his belief in a structured hierarchy. Arthur's sarcastic reply "There is?" followed by "Hey, Archibald wants to remind us that he's in charge

here” undermined that authority with irony and resistance.

Peirce’s semiotics framed Archibald’s words as signs of symbolic power, while Arthur’s interpretation challenged their legitimacy. Baudrillard’s hyperreality came into play as Archibald performs leadership more than enacted it authority reduced to simulation.

This clash reflects the broader tension in *Red Dead Redemption 2* between institutional order and frontier individualism, where power often relied more on presence than principle.

Data 11

Hosea and Arthur clash over more than just a disguise. When Hosea said "Now we’re inserting ourselves in his blood feud. We’ll need something" he accepted their role in someone else’s story, while Arthur’s refusal “I ain’t playing dress up. You know how I feel about that” rejected the false identity the situation demands.

Peirce’s semiotics frames “dress up” as a sign of performance and manipulation, which Arthur resists. Hosea’s sarcastic jab “You’re clown’s idiot brother.” reduced Arthur to a mock symbol, erasing his seriousness.

In Baudrillard’s terms, Arthur resisted entering a hyperreal world of staged roles, while Hosea embraced illusion as strategy. This moment highlighted the frontier as a space where identity was fluid, and survival often requires playing a part even if it meant losing oneself in the act.

Data 12

Arthur’s discomfort with pretending to be someone else clashes with Hosea’s pragmatic embrace of deception. Hosea mocks Arthur “I’m the clown. You’re the idiot” reducing them both to roles in a larger scheme, where identity was performative, not genuine. Arthur’s resistance showed his unease with abandoning authenticity, while Hosea pushed him to adopt visual cues a hat, a pipe, a sad face to complete the illusion.

Through Peircean semiotics, these props became signs of a fabricated identity, while Baudrillard’s hyperreality revealed Arthur’s transformation into a simulation no longer himself, but a constructed image. The frontier, once a space of raw survival, it became a stage where roles were played, not lived. This moment reflected the fading line between who these men were and who they must pretended to be in a world ruled by appearances.

5. DISCUSSION

In this analysis, this research explored the American frontier theme contained in *Red Dead Redemption 2*.

5.1 The representation of the American frontier constructed in the game Red Dead Redemption 2.

Red Dead Redemption 2 depicted the American Frontier not only as a historical backdrop, but also as a hyper-realistic and ideologically complex environment. Applying Peirce’s semiotic theory, elements such as landscape, dialogue, and character development serve as signs representing broader themes of identity, power, and morality. In the game, the frontier was more of a symbolic construct than a physical location, continually evolving through celebration and critique of a myth that begins to unravel through characters like Arthur Morgan, who faced a crisis of idealism and identity.

Violence permeated the game’s dialogue, with characters frequently using words as commands, threats, or encouragement to violent action. From a semiotic perspective, these

utterances acted as representations leading to concrete actions, while Baudrillard argued that violence became a cyclical performance devoid of moral meaning, akin to acting out a pre-scripted role rather than stemming from ethical choice.

Survival was depicted not only through physical actions but also through the psychological and social turmoil caused by constant threat. The characters existed in a reality where phrases like "be careful" lose their meaning and merely signify collective trauma. Arthur raised as a leader not through genuine authority, but by embodying the archetype of the Western hero. The game's depiction of nature was also romanticized, creating an illusion of peace that never existed.

The narrative's conflicts highlight the disintegration of shared values and identities. Characters communicated through symbols rather than facts, upholding the illusion of power through empty phrases like "chain of command," which frame authority as performance rather than reality. In this context, relationships, trust, and power dynamics were constructed through symbolic representation rather than lived experience.

In short, *Red Dead Redemption 2* transcended the realm of mere action games, functioning as a modern cultural artifact that integrates literature, history, and interactive media. The game recreated the myth of the frontier as a digital space that felt more authentic than history itself a realm where violence, fear, identity, and meaning were generated and experienced through signs and images. The game encourages players not only to engage but also to reflect on how collective realities, memories, and aspirations were shaped and interrogated in hyperreal contexts.

5.2 Red Dead Redemption 2 interprets and modernizes traditional themes of the American Frontier to resonate with contemporary audiences.

Red Dead Redemption 2 reinterpreted the mythology of the American Frontier by translating its traditional themes such as survival, violence, and clash into a fully immersive, digitally constructed world. These themes, long rooted in American cultural narratives, were not only replicated but also reframed to reflect the moral ambiguity, complexity, and disillusionment of the modern age. Through the lens of Peirce's semiotic theory, the game's dialogue and character arcs can be understood as signs (Representamen) that refer to broader cultural objects such as rugged individualism, colonial expansion, or capitalist power structures while the player's interpretation (Interpretant) gives these signs contemporary relevance.

For example, the decaying towns, technological change, and social unrest depicted in the game serve not only as historical simulations but also as indexical signs of America's transition from untamed wilderness to industrial society. This aligns with Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, in which the game constructs a simulated version of the American West that feels more coherent and "real" than history itself. In this hyperreal space, violence is both glorified and questioned, freedom is both personal and illusory, and morality becomes increasingly fragmented reflecting contemporary anxieties around identity, power, and memory.

Consequently, *Red Dead Redemption 2* transcends its role as a historical re-enactment by reimagining the frontier as a digitally constructed narrative space where past and present intersect. Through its fusion of traditional Western tropes and contemporary storytelling techniques, the game emerged as a form of digital literature that not only preserved but also interrogates ideological structures and collective cultural memory.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In today's digital era, media such as video games, especially games that present stories and narratives, they were very attractive to players, not only because of the stunning graphic pampering but also games with story themes had a plot so that they became a special attraction in the eyes of story game enthusiasts. Traditional views saw literature only in the form of writing, poetry, or drama and the like, but actually in today's era we could also made modern media such as video games as examples of literary works through narrative stories which were then packaged with audio-visual media such as *Red Dead Redemption 2*. Life in the American Frontier at the end of the 19th century was realized throughout the story in the game, also decorated with several events such as violence, survival, and clash. As values that support elements in the game script.

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