

Game Narrative Review

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Game Title: Signalis
Platform: PC, PS4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch
Genre: Survival Horror
Release Date: October 27th, 2022
Developer: rose-engine
Publisher: Humble Games, PLAYISM
Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer: Barbara Wittmann, Yuri Stern

Overview

GREAT HOLES SECRETLY ARE DIGGED
WHERE EARTHS PORES OUGHT TO SUFFICE

AND THINGS HAVE LEARNT TO WALK
THAT OUGHT TO CRAWL

REMEMBER OUR PROMISE

WAKE UP

Signalis is a psychological survival horror game set in the distant future. It is heavily inspired by Silent Hill and Resident Evil, along with the works of H.P. Lovecraft and Robert W. Chambers. In the world of Signalis, humanity has become incredibly technologically advanced, allowing them to explore the cosmos and create biomechanical humanoids known as Replikas. The game tells the story of Elster, one of these Replika units, on a journey to find Ariane, her lost lover. Elster travels through Sierpinski-23, a mining facility that has been lost to a strange infection. The infection has corrupted the Replika units, causing them to become incredibly violent. These corrupted Replika units act as the main obstacle for the player, attempting to kill Elster as she explores the facility. While most of the game takes place in the Sierpinski station, Elster also explores a moon called Rotfront, a spacecraft called The Penrose, and various dreamscapes and flashbacks. As Elster travels through these areas, her reality begins to collapse, creating unexplainable objects in the environment and strange scenes that feel lost in space and time. There is also a great deal of lore detailing a revolutionary uprising against an authoritarian regime, as well as the discovery of a mysterious cosmic phenomenon referred to ominously as The Red Eye. At the end of the game, after fighting through nightmare after nightmare, Elster

finally finds Ariane again, asleep in a cryosleep pod aboard a ship called the Penrose. Then, depending on which ending the player unknowingly selected, one of four possible endings will occur. These endings will be covered in the Breakdown segment.

Due to the psychological nature of Signalis, along with the inclusion of non-linear storytelling, dreamscapes, time loops, and unreliable narrators, the game's main plot becomes very difficult to understand. Despite this, the game delivers an incredibly emotional experience, even if the player has no clue of what is going on. The game relies heavily on feeling and less on pure understanding. Several references and homages throughout the game are clear indicators of this intention. This unconventional story structure is clearly deliberate and succeeds in providing a profound statement on the nature of art, love, and interpretation.

Characters

- **Elster** - Elster is the playable character and protagonist of Signalis. She is a Replika, an artificial humanoid cloned from an actual human. She is specifically an LSTR unit, which is where she gets her name. The LSTR unit that the player controls was designated as the ship technician aboard the Penrose-512, a ship launched into space in search of habitable planets. Elster's sole motivation throughout the game is to find her lover, Ariane, and "keep her promise", although this promise is not revealed until the end of the game. Elster means "magpie" in German, which is reflected in her black, white, and blue colour scheme.

Elster is a tragic hero. She is resilient and steadfast, and yet she is doomed to fail. Even if she manages to find Ariane, they will not remember each other. Their relationship was lost long before the game started. It is also implied that Elster is in a time loop of sorts. This makes her comparable to Sisyphus of Greek Mythology, who was damned to repeatedly push a boulder up a mountain before watching it roll back down. Sisyphus pushes a boulder, and Elster searches for Ariane.

- **Ariane** - Ariane is Elster's lover and former partner aboard the Penrose-512. Unlike Elster, Ariane is a real human. She is distinctly recognizable by her white hair and red eyes, both of which are features unique to her. The most important aspect of Ariane's character is her bioresonant ability, allowing her to influence thoughts and even reshape reality. It is implied that this ability stems from her upbringing, one that was filled with art and creativity, unlike the other characters in Signalis, who grew up under the authoritarian regime of the Eusan Nation.

Despite being a central character, Ariane is not physically encountered until the very end of the game. Until then, she is only seen in flashbacks, dream sequences, or notes. This is because, during the events of the game, Ariane is unconscious in a cryosleep pod, kept alive after suffering severe injuries. She wishes for Elster to find her and kill her, putting her out of her misery.

- **Falke** - Falke is the main antagonist of Signalis. She is a powerful bioresonant Replika and the commanding officer of the Sierpinski-23 facility. At some point, Falke ventured deep into the mines and found something unexplainable. She returned changed: infected with some unknown virus and plagued by a stranger's memories. Although Falke is an antagonistic force behind many events in Signalis, her motivations are not malevolent. Whatever she found in the planet's depths drove her to madness, causing her to make many of the actions she does throughout the game. She is characterized by her great height and golden halo, often resembling a Christ-like or religious figure. Falke means "falcon" in German.
- **Adler** - Adler is the secondary antagonist of Signalis and the only male Replika. He is the facility administrator for Sierpinski-23 and a direct subordinate to Falke. Adler is unique in the fact that he is the only character whose consciousness continues between time loops. Many of his actions in the game are due to this unique characteristic. In addition, he is faithfully devoted to his commanding officer, Falke, so most of his actions are spent trying to protect her and impede Elster's progress through the facility. Adler means "eagle" in German.
- **Isa** - Isa is one of the few characters who is not hostile to Elster. She can be encountered several times in the game, giving Elster key items or valuable information about the story and lore. She is in the facility for the same reason Elster is: to find a loved one. She is looking for her twin sister, Erika. Although, at first, Isa appears only to be a side character, her backstory and actions dramatically affect the narrative. She is recognizable by her turquoise, white, and red uniform. She is also the only human character that Elster speaks with, aside from Ariane.

Breakdown

On Interpretations

One of the first items that Elster comes across is a copy of *The King in Yellow*, a real book written by Robert W. Chambers in 1895. The book is a collection of short stories, ranging from horror to poetry, detailing a mysterious play called *The King in Yellow*. The play holds a strange curse, causing anyone who reads it to lose their mind. The deeper someone delves into the play, deciphering and analyzing its pages, the more their mind slips away from them. Including this book so early on in the game almost seems like a knowing wink from the developers of Signalis. They know that, like the cursed play, their game will drive players insane; presented with a story filled with allusions, homages, and contradictions, the only way for a player to understand the story is to go a little crazy.

The story of Signalis would be impossible to tell in any other medium. With such strong references to Lovecraft and Chambers, it's clear that one of Signalis' strongest themes is the descent into madness. Although this theme has been used to excellent effect in film and literature, the interactive nature of video games allows the player to experience their own descent into insanity. This is the unique ability of video games and sets the medium apart from the linear

narratives of film, television, and literature. Signalis uses this ability not only to create a compelling horror game but also to provide a commentary on art and the ability to shape interpretation. By providing the player with a web of contradictory clues that can never be solved, the game seemingly refuses to be analyzed and interpreted. If any narrative thread the player follows leads them to a brick wall, they will eventually realize that this game does not want to be solved. But then, as the player begins to abandon hope of understanding Signalis, the game provides more clues. Whether they are notes, cutscenes, or even homages to other media, the game constantly hints at the meaning behind its madness. This constant back and forth of rejection and indulgence in analysis seems contradictory but perfectly demonstrates the game's thesis. It is not that the game lacks meaning; it is that the creators do not want to be responsible for the creation of its meaning. By giving the player sufficient narrative elements while holding back anything conclusive, the creators have given the player the ability to interpret the game in any way they want. Strangely, although the narrative is convoluted, it has the power to tell a deeply meaningful story to each player. Their own experiences will inform their analysis, leading to vastly different interpretations of the game. Some will see it as a story of grief, while others may understand it as a commentary on the role of art in an oppressive society. The interpretations of Signalis genuinely are endless. This is what makes it special.

The Structure

Act 1

Although the game rejects traditional linear narrative structure, it still roughly follows the three-act structure. The first act opens *in media res* with Elster waking up in a crashed spaceship on a mysterious planet. The player is then able to explore the ship as the world and plot of Signalis are established. Through notes left on the ship, operation manuals for Replika units, and the computers aboard the ship, the player learns the game's basic mechanics and begins to understand the situation that Elster is in. By delivering the tutorial through in-world objects like operation manuals and ship logs, the player gains mechanical knowledge of the game and narrative knowledge of the world simultaneously. This allows the player to remain in the game world and creates immersion far better than a traditional non-diegetic tutorial.

Elster discovers that she is alone on the ship, with her sole crewmate, companion, and lover having ventured out onto the barren planet. Elster follows her, first coming upon a strange archway and, soon after, a large hole in the earth with a spiral staircase leading downwards. This is the first instance of descent in the game, which becomes a recurring motif, much like in *Silent Hill 2*. Like in most narratives that have a theme of descent, Signalis uses it to represent a gradual descent into Hell. Elster descends the steps and comes across a much smaller hole, one that she crawls through, leading her into the depths of the planet. On the other end, she exits into a small room filled with radio equipment and a copy of *The King in Yellow*, as discussed earlier. The player then witnesses a short dreamlike cutscene, and the game delivers its title drop. This is the end of the first act and introduction to Signalis.

This introduction serves a few purposes. The primary purpose is to act as a brief tutorial, but it also introduces the player to the world of Signalis and, most importantly, develops motivations for both Elster and the player. It manages to accomplish all three of these purposes

simultaneously, making for a compelling opening to the game. By the end of the first act, Elster's motivation is to find Ariane. While the player has the same goal, they likely do not share the same motivation that Elster does. The player's true motivation is to find answers to all the questions that the introduction created. This means that by the end of the first act, there is a divergence in motivations between Elster and the player. While contrasting player-character motivations can be problematic in a more traditional video game, they only add to the maze-like atmosphere of Signalis. They also create a conflict between the player and Elster that is only resolved at the end of the game when their motivations have realigned.

Act 2

Act 2 begins with Elster examining her reflection in a bathroom mirror. This is another clear homage to Silent Hill 2, which has a similar opening scene. Upon leaving the bathroom, the player discovers that Elster is now in a mining facility called Sierpinski-23. There is no acknowledgment of the events that happened in the prologue and no mention of how Elster ended up at the mining facility. This only creates more questions for the player and further motivates them to explore and solve the narrative labyrinth of Signalis. From here, the gameplay becomes very reminiscent of early Resident Evil and Silent Hill games. Elster and the player are free to explore the facility as they read notes, solve puzzles, and fight through a host of enemies.

Throughout Act 2, as Elster descends the many levels of the station, horrific events begin to take place that defy reality: masses of flesh block sections of the facility, Elster finds hundreds of corpses identical to her, and items now exist that were previously only present in dream sequences. These are only a few examples of the several ways in which Signalis' reality begins to distort. Not all of these occurrences are horrific either; some reality-defying moments are just strange sequences that prompt the player to dig deeper into the meaning of Signalis. For example, there is a moment when Elster is transported to an unknown island. Attentive players will realize that the island is a combination of two paintings that Elster previously examined in the game. These paintings are *The Isle of The Dead* by Arnold Böcklin and *The Shores of Oblivion* by Eugen Bracht. *The Isle of The Dead* translates to *Die Toteninsel* in German, which also happens to be the title of a song on the game's soundtrack. This painting alone has inspired countless theories and interpretations of the game. Moments like these create even more questions for the player and often tease them with out-of-reach answers. By the end of this act, reality is indistinguishable from a nightmare, and the player has likely begun to question either Elster's sanity or their own. As mentioned previously, this is where the Lovecraftian themes of unreality and madness become apparent. These themes are present not only in the environment but also in the gameplay and the ways in which Elster is able to interact with the environment. This is often seen in the puzzles throughout Act 2. Near the start of Act 2, the puzzles are relatively standard for a horror game: flipping fuses in the proper order, adjusting valves, balancing water tank levels, or similar types of mundane tasks. By the end of Act 2, the player is examining butterfly wings, arranging moon phases, or tuning their in-game radio to a specific frequency to listen to Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. The game gradually makes its puzzles more otherworldly and obscure, to the point where the player is completely immersed in the nightmarish logic of the game's world. This makes the player similar to the protagonist of a Lovecraft story, slowly driven to madness by a malevolent entity. In the case of Signalis, the game itself is malevolent.

Act 2 concludes with Elster returning to her crashed ship and attempting to reenter it, assuming that Ariane is inside. Elster fails, loses her arm, and dies in the wasteland outside her ship. Then the credits roll. This is what the Signalis community refers to as the fake-out ending. Unlike most fake endings in games and movies, the one in Signalis is shockingly convincing. It would not be surprising if some players thought that was actually the end and stopped playing. What makes the fake-out so believable is the way in which Act 2 structures its narrative arc. Act 2 itself has its own pseudo-three-act structure with a clear beginning, middle, and end. It begins with the initial exploration of Sierpinski-23, establishing the world, characters, and motivations. The middle then further builds on those three pillars and initiates the aforementioned descent into nightmare and insanity. It then concludes with Elster exploring the deepest level of the facility and eventually finding her ship and dying. The final area before Elster dies truly feels like the end of the game; it is filled with horrific enemies, mind-bending puzzles, and an unrelentingly oppressive atmosphere. Through this area, the game has convinced the player that the game is drawing to a close. It delivers its final cutscene, Elster dies, and the player is likely convinced that the game has finished. What prevents this fake ending from being completely believable is, of course, that Elster's character arc remains unfinished. After fighting through this hellish world for hours, it is unsatisfying for Elster to die without finding Ariane. This will make most players suspicious and result in them hunting for Act 3 and the true ending.

Act 3

After the credits roll from the fake-out ending, the player is presented with an alternate start screen. The original start screen depicted a close-up of Elster's eye, colourful and alive, whereas the alternate start screen shows Elster's eye as dark and presumably dead. This, along with the player's suspicion, is the only clue that the game might not be over. The use of an eye in the main menu is also likely a subtle nod to early Resident Evil menu screens. If the player chooses to begin a new game, they will unknowingly continue their previous save file. The player will be placed back in the introductory area, further convincing them that they have begun a new game. It quickly becomes apparent that this is not the case, as the environment has changed somewhat from what the player will remember. Upon re-exploring the Penrose-512, the player will realize that the sequence they are playing through takes place long before any of the events throughout the rest of the game. They are exploring the ship before it crashes, before Elster is thrown into a nightmare, and before Ariane leaves. This sequence culminates with Elster finding Ariane. They hug, dance, and fall asleep together. It is a beautiful scene and acts as a reminder of what Elster has lost. This is when the player's motivation finally realigns with Elster's. This scene will be further covered in the Highlight section. Immediately after this brief respite, the player is presented with another cutscene that occurs back in the present. Elster is shown crawling on the ground with only a single arm. She finds a dead LSTR unit, takes her arm and armor, and then jumps into a big fleshy hole. This will seem like a standard cutscene at this point in the game despite its insanity.

The next scene opens with Elster back at the Sierpinski-23 station, examining her reflection in the same bathroom as in Act 2. This time, the bathroom is decayed, filled with bugs, and thin veins that run across the floor. Upon exploring the facility, it becomes apparent that the whole ship has become corrupted. It almost feels like a living entity; veins line corridors, and great masses of flesh pulse as you walk alongside them. After briefly exploring the facility,

Elster comes across a demonic-looking Adler, covered in the same bloody flesh that has ravaged the facility. As the player would expect, another cryptic cutscene ensues, and Elster reawakens in a new area: a moon called Rotfront. It is challenging to determine where this area is supposed to fit chronologically. The area is obviously experienced by the player at the end of the game, but the objects and notes scattered around the area are from Ariane's childhood. This area is likely some sort of warped reality created by either Ariane or Falke's bioresonant abilities. In this area, the player will read handwritten notes, political propaganda, and even report cards that all provide context for Ariane's upbringing. It also reveals Ariane's relationship with some of the other characters, such as Isa. Despite being the game's final area, it is not incredibly difficult. Its primary purpose is to add context to the central conflict and perhaps answer some of the player's questions. The player learns how Ariane grew up and ended up in the Penrose Program and why Elster has such a strong connection to her. After making their way through the area, Elster and the player end up back in the room from Act 1 containing the copy of *The King in Yellow*. The player is provided with some last tidbits of lore, along with several healing items and ammo, before confronting the final boss of the game: Falke.

The Falke boss fight is an excellent culmination of everything the player has learned mechanically and everything that Elster has experienced narratively. As the player uses every weapon in their arsenal, weaving and kiting Falke's attacks, the environment cycles through previous dreamscapes and nightmares, reminding the player of their hellish journey. Words and images flash on the screen that overwhelm the player, and the cosmic horror of the game takes center stage. After a draining fight, Elster finally defeats Falke, plunging a spear through her head. Though she has killed the most powerful enemy in the game, Elster still has one more task to complete. It may not be mechanically difficult for the player, but for Elster, it is the hardest thing she will ever have to do: she must kill Ariane.

After defeating Falke, Elster finds herself in a familiar scene: standing outside the crashed Penrose-512. The last time she was here, she lost her arm trying to open the entrance door. Now, depending on the player's gameplay style throughout the game, three different endings may occur. It is not perfectly documented what actions will ensure each ending, but it is reasonably agreed upon that playing through the game safely, killing few enemies, and not taking damage will result in the "Leave" ending, while killing many enemies and taking risks will result in the "Promise" ending. Playing the game somewhere in between these two extremes will result in the "Memory" ending. In the "Leave" ending, Elster says she cannot keep her promise, so she walks into the barren wasteland, collapses, and dies. In the "Memory" ending, Elster manages to enter the ship, where she can read some final notes and finally finds Ariane asleep in a cryosleep pod. Upon waking her, Ariane looks confused and says she does not remember Elster. Elster says that it is okay and asks if she can stay for a little while. She curls up and slowly dies beside her lover. This is the ending that most players will get. The final ending, "Promise", reveals what the promise between Elster and Ariane actually is. At some point, before they crashed, Ariane made Elster promise that she would put Ariane out of her misery and kill her if she were to end up kept alive by a cryosleep pod. To put it simply, Elster promised to mercy-kill Ariane. In this ending, Elster arrives at the cryosleep pod and fulfills her promise, strangling Ariane. She then sits down beside her and dies too.

After gaining the knowledge of what the promise is, many players see the “Promise” ending as the “good” ending, while the other two are considered “bad”. The beauty of this game is that any ending can be regarded as good or bad depending on the player and their interpretation. Some will see the “Leave” ending as beautiful, while others will fiercely argue that Elster failed her goal. The game can be interpreted in any way the player would like, and so the endings are incredibly open-ended, more so than in the vast majority of video games. This is the game’s true strength: to be able to provide a meaningful narrative to each player despite their differing backgrounds, beliefs, or interpretations. It is one of the most narratively accessible games while simultaneously being an absolute labyrinth of a story. It is paradoxical and contradictory, and yet it is one of the most profoundly emotional games that a player can experience.

Strongest Element

As previously discussed, Signalis’ ability to foster analysis is what makes it unique from contemporary games in its genre. One of the ways Signalis achieves this is through references, homages, allusions, and real-world art, music, and literature. While many pieces of media use references, they can often feel out of place or forced, especially when used in large quantities. This problem does not occur in Signalis because, unlike other pieces of media, all of Signalis’ homages have precise narrative functions. Films and TV shows might use a reference as a form of comedy or as a bit of fan service, but Signalis uses them to progress the narrative and add depth to its themes. For example, as previously discussed, the inclusion of *The King in Yellow* strengthens the metacommentary on interpretation and the role of the artist in directing it. Another way this can be seen is in the aforementioned painting, *The Isle of The Dead*. Upon doing further research on the painting, the player might stumble across the fact that the painting was redone five times by the same artist. While it is not incredibly rare for an artist to recreate their artwork, this information can take on a whole new meaning when analyzed through the narrative lens of Signalis. This could be an indicator of the cyclical nature of Signalis, that the world the player inhabits will go through several iterations before coming to an end. It may also be further commentary on the artistic process and the nature of artistic expression. Even without any of these homages, Signalis holds a vast amount of depth that will be analyzed for years. With them, Signalis’ depth becomes unimaginable. Much like a Lovecraft monster, Signalis is an unknowable and ambiguous entity. For these reasons, it will likely be studied and analyzed for years to come.

Unsuccessful Element

While Signalis’ labyrinthine story will be engaging for players interested in forming their own interpretations, players who would prefer an easily digestible story will be very disappointed. Players will perpetually be confused, and some will likely completely give up on understanding the story. As the game industry has evolved, games have tended to become more and more accessible, not just difficulty-wise but also narratively. In games where the story is vague or ambiguous, they often have a main character who is equally confused as the player. This helps the player feel connected to the character and prevents them from getting lost in the

world's lore. Signalis refuses to do this. The player is not given any sort of outline of the plot, so they are likely to feel disconnected from it. There is also a lack of player autonomy regarding the narrative. There are no choices or branching dialogue trees, just one set linear path. Some players will enjoy this style of cryptic storytelling, but many others will strongly dislike it. While the medium of video games is often praised for its ability to tell player-driven stories, Signalis simply is not that type of game. It is a tailored story that can only be told in a linear fashion. The player's autonomy is found in their freedom to analyze and interpret the game however they like.

Highlight

There is a scene near the end of the game, after the fake-out ending, where the player finally gets to see Elster and Ariane interact with one another. Until this point, the player has never met Ariane and probably does not fully understand the context of Elster and Ariane's relationship. The build-up is the first part of this scene that makes it so memorable. While exploring the area, the player will realize that they are actually in a flashback and are likely to meet Ariane. Instead of immediately allowing the player to talk to Ariane, the game forces the player to complete a series of mundane tasks before entering her room. This gradually builds anticipation with each completed task before delivering its beautiful payoff. As Elster enters her room, Ariane runs into her arms, and they share a kiss. Ariane tells Elster that she's missed her and that today is their 3000-cycle anniversary. To celebrate, they turn on their record player and dance to Franz Schubert's *Ständchen*. The music continues and swells as the screen fades to black, and the player sees Elster and Ariane asleep in each other's arms. It is such a simple scene, yet it conveys so much emotion. Up to this point, the player has no idea what this relationship means to Elster. Now they do, and they will do anything to get it back. It perfectly aligns the player and Elster to share a common goal. It is also the only moment of happiness in the entire game and is taken away from the player in just over a minute. From the dialogue and movements of the characters to the beautifully nostalgic music, the scene is simply masterful. It only lasts a minute, but this scene is the heart of Signalis' entire experience.

Critical Reception

PCGAMER - 92/100

Dominic Tarason praises Signalis' worldbuilding. Despite the bleak setting of the science fiction narrative, he states that the "stories are hauntingly human" and create a "rich, layered dessert of despair". He also notes that if the game lacked this depth in worldbuilding, the surface-level storytelling would not be adequate due to its fractured nature. He believes that the superb worldbuilding fills in these cracks and ties the game together. He also mentions that the game's storytelling creates replay value since the player will better understand the world on a second playthrough. [1]

DESTRUCTOID - 9.5/10

Eric Van Allen similarly praises the game's world. He says that as he began to understand what was happening in the game, he was "magnetized" to the setting. Eric also enjoyed the analog feeling of the game and the shifts in style and perspective. He acknowledges the game's influences, like Resident Evil and Silent Hill, and states that "it feels like a glowing callback to the golden era of survival horror". [2]

EUROGAMER - No Score

In Sam Greer's review of Signalis, she calls it "an intentionally hazy nightmare". Despite this, it made Sam feel "clear as day" and caused her to think of little else after finishing it. She praises the depth of the game and suggests that fans of the game will be analyzing it for a very long time. At the end of the review, she concludes that Signalis is a beautiful and unmissable experience. [3]

Lessons

Analysis can be fostered by alluding to other media and withholding information from the player. As this paper has extensively discussed, Signalis' main strength is its ability to promote analysis. Designers can improve their work by studying the ways in which Signalis accomplishes this. The primary way to achieve this is to withhold information from the player. By making the players search for their own answers, they are forced to piece together the narrative puzzle that the designer has created. If pieces of the puzzle are missing, the players will fill that space with their own interpretation. The more missing puzzle pieces, the more room for interpretation there is. The challenge will be figuring out the balance between giving and withholding information; the player needs enough puzzle pieces to see the bigger picture. The second way designers can foster analysis is through the use of allusions. Paying homage to other pieces of media will add depth to the narrative and will also act as cultural touchstones to help familiarize the player. A simple allusion or reference to a book, film, or even a painting may spark new interpretations that the designer never anticipated. This is a beautiful way to make a game more narratively accessible.

Experimentation with style and perspective can create a more memorable experience. While most video games decide to use a single camera perspective or type of cutscene, experimenting with other styles can be incredibly beneficial. Signalis uses both third and first-person perspectives and several cutscene styles ranging from in-engine animations to anime-esque visual novel scenes. Designers should leave their comfort zone and try using unfamiliar styles. The most important part of making this work is ensuring that each style or perspective fits the narrative and atmosphere of the game. This will guarantee that the final product feels cohesive. Switching to a different camera perspective, even for just a single scene, can significantly impact the player. It will renew interest in the game and can temporarily shift it into another genre if intended. Many games will switch to a first-person point of view for a horror section, but this trick can be used in countless other ways. Designers should be encouraged to explore different styles and experiment with alternative storytelling methods.

Summation

Signalis can only be described as a labyrinth. Its twisting, fragmented structure is a maze that beckons to be explored. Many who enter it will become lost in its corridors of allusion and horror, but those who successfully navigate the game's depths will be rewarded with one of gaming's most profound experiences. Its open-ended approach to worldbuilding and storytelling creates an experience that feels rich and detailed but also open to be interpreted in a multitude of ways. This makes Signalis a prime target for narrative analysis. Its story beats and themes may be interpreted in thousands of ways, but the consistent element of Signalis is its metacommentary on the role of the artist in shaping interpretation. It is a violent, horrific game, and yet it is also a reflection and meditation on art. For all of these reasons, Signalis is profound. It masterfully weaves every aspect of narrative and storytelling, taken from a vast range of artistic mediums, to create an unforgettable experience that will be analyzed for years to come.

Along the shore the cloud waves break,
the twin suns sink behind the lake,
and at last,
I am awake.

Citations

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3. Gree, S. (2022, October 25). *Signalis review: A sumptuously atmospheric survival horror*. Retrieved November 28, 2023, from <https://www.eurogamer.net/signalis-review-a-sumptuously-atmopsheric-survival-horror>