The Cultural Life of James Bond

Verheul, Jaap

Published by Amsterdam University Press

Verheul, Jaap.
The Cultural Life of James Bond: Specters of 007.
Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/78229.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/78229

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2727141
Three Dimensions of Bond: Adaptive Fidelity and Fictional Coherence in the Videogame Adaptations of GoldenEye

Ian Bryce Jones and Chris Carloy

Abstract
Rare’s 1997 game GoldenEye 007 redefined the first-person shooter genre not only through its mission-based gameplay, improved enemy AI, and architecturally believable level designs, but also how it combined these features to create an internally consistent, believable Bond experience. When the game was remade in 2010, new developers Eurocom had to negotiate intellectual property restrictions and new genre developments to create a game that was both faithful to the beloved original and successful on its own terms. We explore the relationship between these games via the rubrics of adaptive fidelity (how faithfully each game operates as an adaptation of the GoldenEye film) and fictional coherence (how well their own components collaboratively encourage role-play as the character of Bond).

Keywords: first-person shooter; adaptation; GoldenEye 007; role-play; transmedia; James Bond

In 1995, Nintendo approached videogame development company Rare, Ltd. about designing a game based on the then in-production James Bond film GoldenEye (UK/USA: Martin Campbell, 1995) as a platform-exclusive title for their Nintendo 64 console. While the resulting game, GoldenEye 007 (1997), first appeared to be a routine production, comparable to releasing action figures or other merchandise to accompany a movie release, it would ultimately become a surprise critical and commercial success and a landmark both of film-to-videogame adaptation and of the emerging first-person shooter
genre. While its multiplayer mode created the biggest stir, its single-player levels are remembered today not only for their innovative mission objectives, enemy behavior, and level design, but for the way these features worked to create an internally consistent, believable Bond experience.

In 2010, another videogame adaptation of *GoldenEye* appeared, this time developed by Eurocom for the Nintendo Wii. The motivations behind this re-adaptation have very little to do with any lingering popularity for the then fifteen-year old Pierce Brosnan vehicle—instead, it had been the enduring, nostalgia-enriched reputation of the original game that prompted the return of this particular storyline from the Bond canon. A curious double-adaptation, the 2010 game serves as a case study in the adaptation and mutation of intellectual property, as well as the development of the first-person shooter genre, particularly as a medium for storytelling.

Untangling each of these issues requires a careful re-assessment of Rare’s original game alongside a careful examination of its remake, with an eye toward the latter’s mixture of borrowing and re-invention. To the extent that videogame adaptations are addressed at all within discussions of popular media franchises, they tend to be discussed as emblems of “transmedia storytelling,” defined by Henry Jenkins (2008, 97) as narrative that “unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.” Indeed, the late 1990s were a fertile era for licensed videogames that genuinely extended and expanded the stories of their source material, including such examples as *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* (LucasArts, 1996), released on the Nintendo 64 console roughly contemporaneously with *GoldenEye 007*. The two *GoldenEye* games, however, do not make unique narrative contributions to their Bond-branded source material so much as adapt them. As such, the games—as well as the various legal and brand-related considerations that shaped their development—are best investigated through critical frameworks of adaptation, particularly adaptation across media.

This chapter undertakes such an investigation, combining a historical overview of the generic and business developments that lead to the creation of each game with a formal analysis of their game design (with a narrow focus on a small cluster of levels in each game) to address how they function as manifestations of the Bond brand. Two terms that will help us along the way are adaptive fidelity and fictional coherence, which refer, respectively, to how faithfully each game operates as an adaptation of the *GoldenEye* film, versus how well their own components hold together and collaboratively encourage role-play as the character of Bond.
1997: Innovation and the Guiding Logic of Fictional Coherence

When *GoldenEye 007* went into production in 1995, the videogame medium was facing a moment of great transition. More powerful hardware had opened the possibility of real-time three-dimensional graphical rendering, significantly changing spatial representation and the possibilities of level design. The first-person shooter (FPS) genre, to which *GoldenEye 007* belonged, had been on the forefront of this technological transition when it first emerged in the early 1990s.

The classic form of the FPS, established by *Wolfenstein 3D* (id Software, 1992) and popularized by *Doom* (id Software, 1993), consisted of navigating a series of corridors that were interconnected into maze-like environments, searching said environments for inventory items and keys, and shooting enemies. A level of *Doom* was, in effect, a large spatial puzzle, the goal of which was to make it to the exit alive. Although gameplay could be slow as players learned a level, a player who had mastered a level could move quickly through the space, solving puzzles and killing enemies without much thought.

By 1996–1997, the popularity of the genre had been cemented, but its basic formula had not evolved much beyond the template first pioneered by *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom* (It is telling that the moniker “Doom-clone” was frequently affixed to the genre during this period). Critical reception of games such as *Kileak: The DNA Imperative* (Genki, 1996) and *PO'ed* (Accolade, 1996) reveal fatigue among popular-press reviewers toward the genre’s increasing staleness (Glide 1996; Baran et al. 1996b). However, despite widespread perceptions of stagnation, new signs of life were emerging. *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* (Iguana Entertainment, 1997) abandoned the darkened corridors of *Doom* in favor of large, open spaces. The level design of *Alien Trilogy* (Probe Entertainment, 1996) bore the hallmarks of the landmark production design of its source film franchise (Baran et al. 1996a). Meanwhile, as previously noted, *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* (LucasArts, 1996) pioneered games’ entrance into transmedia storytelling, weaving previously-unseen story threads between two *Star Wars* feature films (Nintendo Power Staff 1996a).

In tandem with these designers working concurrently on other games, Rare used *GoldenEye 007* as an opportunity to experiment with the FPS genre. Taken in this full context, *GoldenEye 007* is perhaps not the singular beacon of innovation it is sometimes made out to be. As an *Electronic Gaming Monthly* (Funk 1997) editorial acknowledges, “Most of what you see in the game has been in other games.” What, then, explains the game’s critical and
popular success—its re-drawing of the boundaries of what a licensed game could be, and how the Bond franchise could be adapted into other media?

We propose that the “secret ingredient” here is fictional coherence. Although experiments at this time in FPS level design and AI programming were manifold, *GoldenEye 007* remains notable in the degree to which these components are unified, in a manner that seems motivated. Upon release, the game was lauded for (and its popularity likely boosted by) its successful evocation of the James Bond character and universe. It included objectives beyond pure shooting. It sported intricately-designed enemy behavior, and took place in relatively large and open space. Its historical importance, however, is cemented not just because it contains all of these components—although that is, to be clear, a feat in and of itself. It is the fact that it does all of these things while also presenting a Bond-inspired fictional world to players that feels intuitive, rather than arbitrary. The actions the player undertakes are clearly motivated. They feel less like puzzles for puzzles’ sake (as could sometimes be the case with *Doom* and its many clones), and more like analogues to behaviors that make sense within the context of Bond’s objectives. This fictional coherence was an ideal that was aspired to by many videogame developers working in this moment of transition, often referred to under the guise of creating more “realistic” virtual experiences. *GoldenEye 007* ended up being the right game at the right time.

Critically re-assessing *GoldenEye 007* two decades after its original appearance, then, requires a careful eye—one geared less toward its individual “innovations”—which, again, are less original than sometimes portrayed, having been pioneered by other games around the same time—than toward the overall gestalt of how they fit together into a coherent play-world. To best examine this, we will now take up a close analysis of the game’s early moments. The game’s first three levels—“Dam,” “Facility,” and “Airfield”—function as an augmented and extended adaptation of the *GoldenEye* film’s pre-credits sequence, with players taking the role of Pierce Brosnan’s Bond as he infiltrates and disrupts a chemical weapon facility hidden in the Arkangelsk Dam, before escaping on an airplane as it explodes. The game’s opening level, “Dam,” will be the primary focus here.

As in the opening scene of *GoldenEye*, “Dam” follows Bond’s attempts to covertly enter a well-guarded weapon facility by bungee jumping from the top of the Arkangelsk Dam. The first portion of the level consists of a succession of open spaces, functioning as a route to the top of the dam. Fictionally, the spaces serve as storage and staging areas for the dam, and as a guarded access point to the dam’s top. The level design is linear in the
sense that there is ultimately only one direction to go; each main area must be passed through, in order, to reach the top of the dam. That said, there is a significant amount of freedom to move around in the large areas, and the way players choose to navigate the open spaces has a significant impact on gameplay—determining, for example, how covertly the player moves through the space, and thus the frequency and intensity of combat.

“Dam” begins as all GoldenEye 007 levels begin, with players first reading a description of its mission objectives, in the form of a classified briefing from MI6. One genuinely unique feature of the game is the manner in which the chosen difficulty setting changes each level's objectives. For “Dam,” the only objective on the level's easiest setting is to make it alive to the end of the level—an objective familiar to players of Doom or its many clones. At the other end of the difficulty spectrum, however, players' objectives include “neutralize all alarms,” “install covert modem,” “intercept data backup,” and “bungee jump from platform.” No details are provided as to the locations within the level these objectives can be accomplished, and the game provides no map. The successful completion of these additional objectives requires close environmental observation and exploration on the part of players—a taxing task, to be sure, but one aided by a coherent net of clues provided by the game.

Once players have clicked through the mission objectives, “Dam” greets them with an establishing shot of the level, and then a fly-through of the initial area as the virtual camera seems to move from the far corner of the space up to Bond. This sweeping virtual crane shot conveys the size and openness of the space, while allowing attentive players to note the positions of enemies. Upon the conclusion of this shot, the game switches to Bond's first-person perspective, and the player is granted control. To Bond's back is a dead end. In front, a corridor bordered by towering grey cliffs curves to the left. Rounding this curve, players can catch a view along the length of the first area. At the far end, a guard tower rises on the left, and a tunnel opens on the right. Each is guarded by a pair of soldiers. If players charge out from cover, firing their weapons (a stereotypically Doom-clone-like tactic), they will draw the attention of all of the soldiers, forcing them to fight them simultaneously, likely taking damage in the process. Careful and attentive players, on the other hand, will find that they can silently kill a guard who is walking around the tower, move to the tower's rear, silently shoot a second guard, climb to the top of the tower (where they will discover a sniper rifle), and snipe the two tunnel guards from a distance.

Passing through the tunnel, players enter a second area with similar gameplay features. Stacks of boxes, towers, and bunkers form a ring around
a central open space. Again, if players run directly into the open space, they will find themselves surrounded, and fired upon by enemies using the environmental features for cover. Having learned from the experience of the previous area, however, players can also pass behind the stacks of boxes and use them for cover as they work their way around the space killing enemies, or even stay at the far end of the tunnel and clear out the space with the sniper rifle. As these first two rooms demonstrate, successful gameplay requires attention to the risks and affordances of the game’s spaces, while different players may exploit these spaces in unique but equally successful ways.

Moving forward, players enter a third open space that provides a variation on enemy behavior, as well as housing the first two mission objectives. The space is relatively empty, with a tower on the right and a gate and gatehouse on the far end. Upon entering the space, players may notice an enemy who (unlike any they have seen in the level thus far and unusually for the FPS genre up to this point) does not shoot, but rather turns and runs towards a red mark on a distant wall. If players fail to shoot the guard before he reaches this mark—which turns out to be an alarm—more enemies will emerge from a gatehouse to the right. If, alternately, they do shoot this guard before the alarm is tripped, the additional guards will remain ensconced within the gatehouse, oblivious to the presence of an intruder. Thus, the action of the running guard not only introduces a novel enemy behavior, it also leads players to their first objective, “destroy all alarms.” Upon being shot several times, the alarm will explode. Checking the list of objectives will reveal that this objective is not yet marked as “complete,” indicating that there must be other alarms. Moreover, players who have read their mission briefing carefully and have seen that they are supposed to connect a covert modem to a “satellite link” may notice a satellite dish on the roof of the gatehouse. If they explore around back of the gatehouse, players will find that the dish is connected to a small screen. Completing the mission requires the player to attach the modem to the screen by equipping the modem, aiming at the screen, and pressing the action button. If, however, players put the modem somewhere else or (following stereotypical Doom-clone gameplay), fire upon anything that can be blown up, including the screen, they will fail the mission objective, and will have to restart the level.

Readers familiar with the GoldenEye film—in which the “Dam” sequence consists of a grand total of 105 seconds (16 shots), in which Pierce Brosnan’s Bond springs out and very quickly bungee jumps down the vertical face of the Arkangelsk Dam, shooting precisely no one in the process—will have noticed a significant amount of embellishment of both setting and action in the level thus far. This embellishment continues even after the player
reaches the precise setting of the film’s opening sequence, the top of the dam. Three guard towers are now present on the rim’s right lip, as well a series of docks off of the right side of the dam. If players dash straight towards the bungee jumping point—acting, in other words, exactly as Bond does in the movie—they will miss multiple gameplay objectives. Rather, completion of the level on its highest difficulty setting requires entering each of the guard towers to destroy more alarms and descending into the interior of the dam to “intercept data backup” by interacting with a computer. While not drawn from the film, these mission objectives provide the player with more opportunity to act as Bond in the fictional space—that is, to do the types of things Bond might believably have to do while infiltrating a military facility—while the “realistic” distribution of mission objectives throughout the level (alarms in guard towers, important computers in the heavily-guarded interior of the dam) provides a believable spatial context for roleplaying. Thus, we see that in Rare’s adaptation of the scene adaptive fidelity to the source material is subsidiary to internal fictional coherence.

This is not to suggest that *GoldenEye 007* is entirely without fidelity to its source material. Indeed, the fidelity that it does exhibit is strikingly important to its overall reception as a successful adaptation and expansion of the film. In terms of space, industry press reported, in 1996, that the design team had been given access to the film’s sets and were basing the game’s level design on them (Nintendo Power Staff 1996b). As a result, many of the levels—particularly “Facility” and “Tank”—contain architecture that is readily recognizable from the film, fulfilling an immersive dream of “stepping into” the world of Bond. In terms of story beats, action sequences reappear either in the form of major dramatic scenes to which players are witness (the shooting of Agent 006/Alex Trevelyan in “Facility,” for example), or in the form of mission objectives (protecting the computer scientist Natalya while she tries to disable the satellite at the game’s climax).

Other aspects of the film, however—and of the Bond franchise, as a whole—get lost in translation. Bond, as a character, is considerably warped from his more familiar incarnations. Videogame scholars have rightly pointed out that only one side of James Bond’s character is on display in the game—the secret agent, rather than the playboy—and the absurdly large body count of the game is out of keeping even with the Brosnan era’s usual violent standards (Stein and Weise 2010). (This, of course, maps onto the usual biases of the medium, as shaped by historical factors of censorship and target audience). Those actions that players do engage in beyond shooting are heavily abstracted, to a degree that reveals the limits of the game’s innovations. Already in *Doom*, players were called upon to
press buttons in the environment to open doors and progress, and had to search the environment to collect keys, weapons, and health upgrades. Much of GoldenEye 007’s non-shooting environmental interaction likewise merely involves pressing a single button on the controller. Objectives such as “neutralize all alarms” or “intercept data backup” may initially sound robustly interactive, but ultimately they boil down to destroying some of the level’s scenery, or pressing a button.

However, this lack of adaptive fidelity to the larger, transmedial fictional personage of Bond is balanced out by the game’s remarkable coherence when it comes to the internal logic of its own fictional diegesis. Much of this has to do with enemy behavior and the construction of the game’s spaces. For example, much was made at the time of the game’s release of its relatively advanced hit detection—shooting an enemy in the leg, for instance, does less damage than shooting them in the head, but causes them to stagger, slowing them down (Nintendo Power Staff 1996b). Beyond this, though, there are additional components to the enemy’s AI that together have a pronounced influence on player behavior. Enemies won’t notice players if they approach from behind, and once they do notice them, they will not run straight at the player, but rather attempt to evade them, or hide behind cover. Additionally, if an alarm is near, they will run to trigger it, causing further waves of enemies to appear and attack.

The combined effect of these behaviors is that the game rewards stealth—although a different sort of stealth of the sort being pioneered concurrently in games such as Thief: The Dark Project (Looking Glass Studios, 1998) or Metal Gear Solid (Konami, 1998). Unlike the latter games, stealth in GoldenEye 007 is not about hiding for lengthy stretches of time, but rather moving quickly and efficiently—cleaning up messes, as it were, by taking enemies out quickly with headshots (preferably with a silenced pistol) before they have a chance to retreat, regroup, and add their allies to their ranks.

The game’s environmental design, meanwhile, is tightly integrated into its systems of objectives. As previously established, players do not have to solve complicated puzzles to complete objectives. But they do have to discover the locations of these objectives, without the aid of written clues or an included map. Here, the design of the game’s levels—particularly, the way that, in being recognizably inspired by the film’s sets, they hew closer to real-life analogs than to pure mazes—provides a strong basis for environmentally-guided inferential reasoning. In the above description of the “Dam” level, this took the form of noticing the satellite dish on the top of the gatehouse, recalling that an objective was to hack the satellite network, and deducing that access to the network will likely be nearby. It could also
mean that, having discovered an alarm in one guard tower, it is worth searching other towers to see if there are alarms to destroy in them, as well.

The interplay of these features creates an internally coherent play-world, which in turn shapes player behavior, by rewarding certain actions and punishing others. We can say that, from the encouraged player behavior, a variation on the Bond character emerges. It is not precisely the Bond of the films, nor precisely the Bond of the novels, given the aspects of adaptive infidelity at work. But this Bond is not completely unrecognizable, either. This Bond is much more of a violent killer than his analogs in Fleming’s books or Eon’s films. However, he is not on a rampage. He kills as quickly and as silently as possible. He is a consummate professional, aiming for stealth and efficiency. His goal is, above all, not to be seen, and he kills people first and foremost to achieve this goal. He is clever and observant, able to deduce the locations of mission-relevant items and materials based off of logical intuition. He is resourceful, both carrying standard-issue MI5 equipment (including a special watch that serves as the game’s requisite “Bond gadget”) and procuring weapons and ammunition from the field. He is cool, collected, and violently psychotic—but he is able to fold his violent streak into service for England (“always for England”). The construction of the game’s mechanics, through their internal fictional coherence, encourage players to role-play as this variation on the Bond character—one that shares crucial overlaps with the character’s other incarnations elsewhere, while not being identical.

2010: Nostalgia and Evolution

During the seventh generation of videogame consoles (consisting of the Nintendo Wii, Microsoft Xbox 360, and Sony PlayStation 3, hardware released between 2005 and 2006, and retired between 2012 and 2013), the videogame industry discovered that its history—so often relegated to the dustbin in the constant march of planned obsolescence—could, in fact, be profitable. The advent of internet-based digital game distribution on consoles opened up the opportunity for games with low profit margins to remain available, leading to a gradual re-assessment of the commercial potential of gaming’s past on the part of both console manufacturers and game publishers. Nintendo inaugurated this trend with the Wii’s Virtual Console, a set of emulators of that allowed for Wii owners to download and play games from a wide variety of past game consoles, from the Nintendo Entertainment System’s Super Mario Bros. (Nintendo, 1985) and Final Fantasy (Square, 1987) up through the Nintendo 64’s Sin and Punishment (Treasure,
Sony and Microsoft eventually followed suit with their “PSClassics” and “Xbox Originals” programs, respectively. Across all three platforms, it became clear that players’ nostalgia was a powerful economic force.

No-frills emulated versions of games from past generations of hardware were only one possibility in this new commercial exploitation of gaming’s history. Another possibility was the enhanced port—a version of an older game that had been thoroughly re-worked as to fully take advantage of the new possibilities of modern hardware. On the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, the reigning mode of enhanced port was the “HD remake,” older games re-worked to run at resolutions of 720p or 1080p, so as to scale better to contemporary high-definition televisions. Nintendo’s Wii, lacking the high-definition graphics of its peers, instead relied on the introduction of motion controls as the raison d’être for its enhanced ports.

Given the hallowed place of GoldenEye 007 in the history of console first-person shooter games, it was perhaps inevitable that, during this particular moment, demand would be high for the game’s commercial re-release, either in the form of legal emulation via Nintendo’s Virtual Console, or as some sort of enhanced remake. By February 2008, rumors that such developments were in the works reached enough of a fever pitch that the gaming magazine Xbox 360 World reported that the game was, in fact, slated for a re-release on Microsoft’s console (Gapper 2008).

Sadly, for fans, the report was erroneous: in fact, there were considerable hurdles to such a re-release actually ever coming to pass. Following a close partnership with Nintendo during the Nintendo 64 era, Rare had been acquired by Nintendo’s competitor Microsoft in 2002, leaving the intellectual property rights to several of their games in a complicated morass. Eon Productions’ control over its intellectual property presented an additional hurdle. Although Nintendo held the publishing rights for GoldenEye 007 in 1997, by 2007 Eon had granted the exclusive publishing rights for all official licensed James Bond games to Activision, meaning that any re-appearance of GoldenEye would have to include Activision’s involvement as a publisher. Together, these hurdles proved insurmountable, and by 2009 both Microsoft and Rare had put forward statements announcing that any attempt to re-release the original game on contemporary hardware was dead in the water (Purchese 2008; Purchese 2009).

1 This is not to say that the Xbox 360 World report was a hoax. Subsequently leaked materials have confirmed that Rare was, in fact, experimenting with porting GoldenEye 007 to the Xbox 360 (monokoma 2010). It was simply erroneous to suggest that the legal hurdles to its release had been cleared, and that the game’s release was imminent.
Although the obstacles to a four-way agreement between Microsoft/Rare, Nintendo, Eon, and Activision proved overwhelming, the excited burst of fan nostalgia surrounding the possibility of a re-release demonstrated the continued viability of the *GoldenEye* brand—even as licensed Bond games had moved into their own respective Daniel Craig era, following the film franchise, with the actor's visage and voice appearing in the game adaptation *007: Quantum of Solace* (Treyarch, 2008). Soon after, Activision set out on its own to completely remake the game from the ground up, for exclusive release on the Wii.\(^2\) Creating an entirely new game, with development duties handed over to Eurocom (who had previous experience developing licensed Bond games in the long interim between the two *GoldenEye* games, having made 2002's *James Bond 007: Nightfire*), neatly sidestepped the legal hurdles of re-releasing Rare's original game, leveraging a powerful license while abandoning the quagmire of the game's particular history.

The Bond franchise is certainly no stranger to remakes, and the twisty games of legal give-and-take that can result. Most famously, Kevin McClory's IP disputes with Ian Fleming gave the world *Never Say Never Again* (UK/USA/West Germany: Irvin Kershner, 1983), the Sean Connery-starring remake of *Thunderball* (UK: Terence Young, 1965) that stands as the most high-profile non-Eon Bond film. The McClory estate successfully kept Ernst Stavro Blofeld from Eon's hands until 2013, but *Never Say Never Again* was denied Monty Norman's iconic James Bond theme music and Maurice Binder's equally-iconic opening “gun barrel” sequence—arguably much stronger assets when asserting the Bond brand (Gardner 2013).

The *GoldenEye* remake enacts a very different dance between deference to the brand and strict adherence to IP restrictions, between nostalgia and re-imagining. Two major components of the original game remained legally out of reach for Activision and Eurocom: the original game's level design, and the visage of Pierce Brosnan. The geometry of the original game's levels, as well as the placement and behavior of the AI denizens that populated them, had been Rare's signature contribution to the *GoldenEye* license, and therefore could not survive adaptation. Meanwhile, from a licensing perspective, the contract to play Eon's Bond had transferred from Brosnan to Craig, meaning that the latter's likeness had to be substituted for the former.

Beyond these mandated changes, however, Eurocom remained acutely aware that nostalgia was the primary currency of the *GoldenEye* brand, and

---

\(^2\) The 2010 *GoldenEye 007* was eventually ported to the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 as *GoldenEye 007 Reloaded* in 2011, adding yet another wrinkle to this saga of remakes and re-releases. For the purposes of this article, however, only the Wii release of *GoldenEye 007* is being considered.
therefore aimed for fidelity in other areas. The 2010 *GoldenEye*’s screenplay (penned by Bruce Feirstein, one half of the screenwriting team that produced Eon’s original *GoldenEye* screenplay) thoroughly reworks both the original film’s and game’s events, transplanting them from the 1980s and 1990s into the 2010s (Leader 2010). But it pointedly retains the major set pieces of the original game, even if this means tossing the (relatively) gritty and grounded persona of Craig’s Bond into scenarios borrowed from the more excessive Brosnan era, including a tank chase through St. Petersburg (Although the intricate contrasts that can be drawn between Brosnan and Craig’s star personas—and the shift in tone that marked Eon’s Bond franchise during the transition from the former to the latter—are not the primary concern of this chapter, this particular subject is handled in greater detail by David McGowan (2013)).

From a gameplay perspective, the game remains a first-person shooter through and through, influenced by other major milestones in the genre that had appeared in the dozen years since the original’s debut, but containing no attempts to re-invent the license. Game cutscenes are now fully voiced acted (by Craig and Judi Dench, alongside less-famous voice performers), replacing the text-based exposition of the original game, and adding an extra dimension of adaptive fidelity to the Eon film franchise that the original *GoldenEye 007* lacked. However, dialogue options of the type pioneered by espionage role-playing game *Alpha Protocol* (Obsidian, 2010), released months earlier, are notably absent. Also absent is any real attempt to leverage the rougher physicality of Craig’s particular take on Bond. Craig’s debut in the Bond role, *Casino Royale* (UK/Czech Republic/USA/Germany/Bahamas: Martin Campbell, 2006) held a key role in the introduction of *le parkour* into contemporary action cinema, with its fluid chase scene through a construction site standing as one of the high points of the discipline’s representation in film. *Parkour* experienced a roughly contemporaneous burst of popularity in action videogames such as *Assassin’s Creed* (Ubisoft Montreal, 2007) and the first-person *Mirror’s Edge* (DICE, 2008), and one could imagine a more ambitious take on the license integrating such elements. Eurocom’s *GoldenEye*, however, is resolutely not that game. It is, instead, an adaptation that prioritizes fidelity to Rare’s original game—including all of the leeway said game had with its license—over any genuine attempt to re-imagine the possible fidelity an updated Bond game could show toward its cinematic source material.

Tasked with remaking beloved levels, with a certain amount of change necessitated by legal mandate, what does one do? Eurocom chose what is perhaps the most obvious route: to re-evaluate the decisions Rare’s original design team made in terms of the needs and expectations of contemporary
Three dimensions of Bond game design. The gap from 1997 to 2010 had been a long one, and the expectations of players had changed drastically in the interim. Rare’s *GoldenEye 007* is a series of mid-sized levels that must be scoured patiently and cautiously, as players struggle to maintain a finite pool of health until they achieve their objectives and reach the designated exit point. Eurocom’s levels are much longer, but they are also much more modularly designed. Frequent checkpoints in which the game auto-saves players’ progress allow for shorter play sessions, and player health that re-generates as long as players can avoid being fired upon for a small amount of time removes the possibility of a tough firefight at the end of a level evaporating all of one’s progress. This leads a distinct “pause/burst/pause” rhythm to the proceedings: Players walk down an empty hallway, in which their health regenerates and their game auto-saves; they then enter and clear out a large, arena-sized room full of enemies; following this, they discover another long, safe hallway where the game again saves, and their health again regenerates. As several reviewers noted at the time of the game’s release, it is a rhythm and pace that owes much more to 2000s-era first-person shooters such as *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* (Infinity Ward, 2007) than to the original *GoldenEye 007*.3

Along with adding distinct architectural pauses to the tenser flow of the original game, Eurocom also punctuate their *GoldenEye* with moments of cinematic spectacle. The basic components of moving and shooting are broken up, at irregular intervals, by more elaborate sequences in which control is partially wrested from the player, and the possibilities of interaction are narrowed so as to better allow a very particular action set piece to take place.

To fully understand the way these modifications are set upon the blueprint of Rare’s original *GoldenEye 007*, game, it is perhaps best to begin at the beginning—that is, “Dam,” the very first level of Eurocom’s *GoldenEye 007*, and a clear analogue to the opening “Dam” level of Rare’s game. Following our mission briefing (which, here, is delivered in video form, complete with voice acting by Judi Dench as M and Rory Kinnear as Bill Tanner, in contrast to the original’s comparatively sparse text screens), we are greeted with a fly-through view of a level that, initially, looks strikingly like its Nintendo 64 counterpart. The bridge, the guard tower, the mountain tunnel: each is exactly where one would expect it to be. However, rather than simply drop players into space as a single

---

3 Previewing Eurocom’s game, Christian Donlan of *Eurogamer* writes, “[D]oes it feel like *GoldenEye*? Actually, it feels more like *Modern Warfare*: the pace of the encounters is very reminiscent of some of Soap’s adventures” (Donlan 2010). In a full review of the game, Jon Wahlgren likewise notes that, “It’s a game much more in line with *Call of Duty* in both feel and pace [...]” (Wahlgren 2010).
figure surrounded by hostiles, “Dam” instead eases them into the character of 007 by making them privy to a first-person conversation with 006, with voice acting by Daniel Craig and Elliot Cowen (filling in for Sean Bean as 006/Alex Trevelyan). Control is granted to players gradually—the game initially handles movement for them, with interaction initially limited only to making the necessary gesture with the game’s motion controls on cue when a guard is to be silently subdued. Once players finally gain complete control of Bond, Cowen’s voice remains on the soundtrack, offering advice, alerting players to converging enemies, and generally giving a sense of genuinely working with a partner that was entirely absent from the 1997 game’s opening levels. In the original game, players’ “guide” to the level was simply an inanimate truck, the seemingly unmotivated movement of which serves as the game’s primary instruction to players of where to go, and where to look. By 2010, the possibilities of voice acting and much more advanced character animation have allowed a non-player character to much more organically take this role. This allows for the truck itself to serve a different function. After an auto-save checkpoint (a distinct “pause” in the game’s pause/burst/pause pacing), players are invited to climb into its passenger seat, at which point control of movement is again wrested away from them. For a few beats, the player is invited to sit and listen as Trevelyan, driving the vehicle, delivers exposition. Then, upon being recognized by guards, the game launches into a distinct “spectacle” phase. With forward movement still controlled by the game, rather than the player, the game transforms into a busy shooting gallery, with players tasked with taking out the gunmen of various trucks that swerve into view, with explosions and other bits of miscellaneous action happening at the margins of the screen. Throughout this brief section, players are given a precise prescription of what to do by the various means the game has at its disposal, either via audio (at one point, when a gas tanker is backing up in front of the truck, Trevelyan barks “shoot the tanker!”) or visual cues (when a Russian soldier jumps onto the side of the truck and attempts to pull Bond out of it, the game offers up an explicit icon instructing players to shake the Wii remote). The proceedings are entirely scripted, and players’ inability or refusal to play their part on cue will result in swift failure.

Given that this sort of elaborately-scripted spectacle, with the game frequently using non-player characters to tell players what to do, is very much the bread and butter of the Call of Duty franchise, a question arises. The elaborate feats of fictional coherence on display in Rare’s GoldenEye 007 lead it to rightly be recognized as something other than a “Doom clone.” Is the 2010 GoldenEye 007 content with being a Call of Duty clone? As has already been noted, this seems to have been the consensus of contemporary
reviewers. Martin Hollis, director of the original Rare *GoldenEye*, has laid down similar charges. Do the charges stick? To fully investigate the validity of this accusation, it is useful to move on from “Dam” to the following level—here, as in Rare’s original, named “Facility.”

Whereas Eurocom’s re-imagining of “Dam” leaned heavily on recognizable landmarks from Rare’s original level, “Facility” finds the team striking out on their own. Gone is Rare’s indebtedness to the chemical weapon facility set from the film. Also gone is the residual indebtedness to *Doom*-like mazes that marks Rare’s design. If Rare’s game was already a milestone in the generic transition from mazes toward more recognizable, intuitive architecture, the functional (even *boring*) walkways and cubicles of Eurocom’s “Facility” mark a moment further down that evolutionary path.

Along with being less twisty, Eurocom’s “Facility” is also more rife with alternate routes. Air vents—a mainstay of stealth games such as *Tom Clancy’s Ghost Recon: Chaos Theory* (Ubisoft Montreal, 2005), but not something used to any real effect by Rare—consistently present less direct, but also less risky paths through enemy-populated areas. Compared to its predecessor, players wandering through Eurocom’s “Facility” are more encouraged to find routes through the level that keep them out of patrolling enemies’ lines of sight, to sneak up behind them and take them out with a quick melee attack, or perhaps simply avoid them altogether. This play style becomes a particularly feasible option—even, arguably, the most encouraged option—immediately following the level’s fifth checkpoint. Here, cameras and patrolling guards dot the central hub room, but the smaller rooms around its perimeter are occupied by staff distracted by their computers, rendering them easy to sneak up on from behind. Linked together by air vents, these perimeter rooms allow cautious players a chance to explore safely, gradually winnowing down the facility’s personnel and take control of the map before they enter the center, shoot out the cameras, and make their final strike at the patrolling guards.

This is not to say that Eurocom’s *GoldenEye 007* is a stealth game. Long-running stealth franchises such as the aforementioned *Metal Gear Solid* and *Splinter Cell* generally rely on a varied array of AI alertness states, for instance allowing guards to lose interest in finding the player if they have hidden well enough, for long enough. *GoldenEye 007* lacks such robust AI. If a hostile NPC detects the player, the player has a few seconds to kill them as silently as possible, or else all enemies in the area will immediately become

---

4 In an interview, Hollis reports of the remake, “I thought that it is really close to *Call of Duty*, more, in its gameplay [...] the rhythm of the enemies, the rhythm with which they come to you, the way you approach them [...]” (Hollis 2013).
alert and open fire. As in Rare’s original, the emphasis here is not on patient hiding, but on the careful isolation and quick dispatching of enemies. The end result is a hybrid of contemporary stealth level design tricks with the original game’s “ruthless efficiency” version of stealth.

The fictional coherence on display in Rare’s GoldenEye 007 was one of that game’s most striking innovations. Any expectation that Eurocom’s GoldenEye 007 would be equally bold in its innovations would have been naïve. After all, Activision’s entire motivation for funding Eurocom’s endeavor was the commercial exploitation of nostalgia—by no means the best of circumstances for inspiring progressive design. Ultimately, however, Eurocom’s GoldenEye 007 does at least distinguish itself from contemporaries such as Call of Duty. It does so by utilizing the same trick that allowed Rare’s game to distinguish itself from its own contemporaries: the creation of a fictionally-coherent interlocking systems that gradually encourage players to adopt Bond-like behaviors.

Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter, we announced an intention to avoid leaning too heavily on the framing of “transmedia storytelling,” and to focus instead on the broader frame of adaptation. Part of the reason for this is that neither of the two GoldenEye games contribute genuine expansions to the narrative tapestry of the Eon Bond franchise, and therefore fail to meet Henry Jenkins’ (2008, 97) definition of texts that make a “distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.”

More broadly, we can also say that the frame of “transmedia storytelling” is limiting because of its explicit focus on “storytelling.” Rare’s GoldenEye 007 is, indeed, an adaptation of the story of the 1995 GoldenEye film. But, more broadly speaking, it operates as an adaptation of the Bond character—as persona, and as attitude. Through elements such as the spatial design of levels, mission objectives, and the behaviors of AI opponents—elements contributing to a “fictional coherence” that goes beyond the mere recounting of causally-related events—Rare’s GoldenEye encourages play styles that bring player behavior in line with the fictional Bond. Moreover, Rare’s approach to these elements suggests a concern not only with the unique affordances of the videogame medium but with contemporaneous genre-wide trends—both of which contributed to the 1997 game’s commercial, critical, and artistic success.

Tasked with designing an adaptation of Rare’s GoldenEye, Eurocom had to evoke the experience of the original enough to capitalize on fan
Three Dimensions of Bond

nostalgia—the ultimate purpose of the adaptation—while doing without prominent features of the original to which they lacked the rights thanks to the breaking down of industry negotiations, and deciding how to manage changes to genre conventions that had taken place since the original game’s release. While the finished product did encourage fan nostalgia through the recreation of particular story beats, objectives, and set pieces from 1997’s GoldenEye, Eurocom successfully adapted Rare’s game—as opposed to merely recalling it—by remaining faithful to the original’s emphasis on fictional coherence and role-playing the “James Bond character.” In doing so, Eurocom’s game—like Rare’s before it—demonstrates that the toolbox of adaptation in games extends far beyond fidelity to story beats.

Works Cited


McGowan, David. 2013. “Some of This Happened to the Other Fellow: Remaking GoldenEye 007 with Daniel Craig.” In Game On, Hollywood!: Essays on the


About the Authors

Ian Bryce Jones lives in the Chicago area, where he has taught at the University of Chicago, De Paul University, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and also serves as a grant writer for Storycatchers Theatre. His previous writings and video essays on videogames and the player/character relationship have been published in New Review of Film and Television Studies, The Velvet Light Trap, and [in]Transition. He blogs at intermittentmechanism.blog.

Chris Carloy received his PhD in Cinema and Media Studies from the University of Chicago with a dissertation titled “‘True 3D’: The Form, Concept, and Experience of Three-Dimensionality in 1990s Videogames.” His research focuses on videogame history and theory, theories of space and place, genre history and theory, reception studies, and the embodied experience of play, and aims to place videogames within longer traditions of art, media, and architecture. He currently teaches at the University of Chicago.