

“In War...Not Everyone is a Soldier”

Using Games to Teach an Empathetic Version of History



Abbie Hartman, BA

Macquarie University

Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations

9 October 2017

Ethics Application Reference: 5201700473

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Thesis Glossary of Terms	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 – On Gaming, Learning and History	11
Chapter 2 – Valiant Hearts: The Great War	23
Chapter 3 – This War Of Mine	34
Conclusion	42
Appendix: Survey and Interview Information	45
Bibliography	47

Abstract

This thesis argues that video games present players with an empathetic perspective of history, particularly when considering experience of war. By examining current ideas of public history and extending these to include the medium of video games, I have been able to show how video games can be used to educate the public in non-academic settings in much the same way historical film is used. I have drawn academic scholarship from a number of disciplines and have married this together with two case studies in order to support my hypothesis. Ubisoft Montpellier's *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* (2014) and 11bit Studios' *This War of Mine* (2014) can both be seen as games which aim specifically to educate their players about wartime experiences and the reality of war. *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* explores how the Great War (1914–1918) affected a variety of historical figures across gender and nationality, and demonstrates the hardships of the conflict through an individualised and emotive experience. With simple gameplay and cartoon-style graphics *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* reaches a large variety of audiences. In contrast, *This War of Mine* is a dark, gritty and uncompromising depiction of life in a war-torn city, based on experiences during the Siege of Sarajevo. *This War of Mine* has been developed to force players to question what it would be like if a civil war began in their country.

Thesis Glossary of Terms

DLC (downloadable content): Usually an 'extra' part of a game which can be purchased to further or change a storyline or aspects of a game. While not a necessarily feature, DLCs are becoming more prevalent. Some commentators suggest this has a detrimental effect. Some makers of Triple A games have been accused of using DLCs to 'hide' the true endings of their games, thereby forcing players to pay more to complete the game.

First person shooter (FPS): A game in which the action revolves around shooting targets and enemies. Usually seen as ultra-violent, there are the traditional format for presenting games with military history themes.

Free-to-play games: A game which can be downloaded and played without any exchange of money. Usually found with mobile games and MMOs and will usually have an optional pay-to-play component

Games: In this context, games means video games (definition can be found below)

Gameplay: A distinct feature of video games, separate from graphics and sound effects. The way a game is played and the way the plot is presented or structured.

Game developers: The team of people responsible for making a game. This can include, but is not limited to the game designer, scriptwriter, artist, animator and the programmer.

Game mechanics: the gameplay features which operate on a practical level, such as the controls that move a character.

Independent (Indie) games: Usually a game created without the financial support of a publisher, although some differ from this. Indie games are usually focused on innovation and are usually only distributed digitally.

Kriegsspiele: The German word for 'War Game'. Kriegsspielen were regularly played in the German and Prussian armies prior to the First World War.

Miniatures (minis): A small scale gaming piece which physical represents an element of gameplay, thereby allowing players to better visualise the action of the game. In the Renaissance, these were

often soldiers, tents, vehicles and cannons but contemporary board games (and some roleplay games) also utilise this format.

MMO: the acronym for massively multiplayer online. MMOs are games that are characterised by being able to be played by a large number of people at a time.

MMORPG: the acronym for massive multiplayer online roleplay games. Similar to MMOs, but with a definite story line and roleplay game elements.

Non-player character (NPC): Any character that is not controlled by the player.

Pankration: An Ancient Olympic sport originating in the Greek states. It is thought to be a combination of boxing and wrestling where any amount of force was allowed, except for biting, gouging, and the attacking of genitals.

Pay-to-play: Usually a component of MMOs or mobile games, pay-to-play refers to optional features and boosts which can be purchased to enhance the experience of a game.

Player agency: The players' ability to interact meaningfully with the world of the game and the story through design or gameplay.

Player character (PC): Any character which is controlled by the player. This can be one or several characters.

Point-and-click game: A type of game which was popular in the adventure genre in the early 1990s, when the only way to interact with the environment was through the use of a mouse cursor.

Public history: For the purpose of this thesis, public history will be defined as any mode of presentation intended to present historical knowledge to an audience. This includes, but is not limited to, museums, film, television, historical fiction and games.

Role-play game (RPG): A game where the player takes control of a character (or characters) and plays in an immersive narrative world. Originally used to refer to tabletop role-play games, in this thesis the term denotes a particular style of gameplay in which the player is encouraged to follow the narrative development of player character(s).

Side-scroller game: A game where the action is viewed from a side-view camera angle. Usually 2D, these games have characters move from one side of the screen to the other in order to meet an objective. Notable examples include *Sonic the Hedgehog* (1991) and *Mario* (1981–) series.

Tabletop role-play games (pen-and-paper roleplay-game): Although similar to any other role-play games, tabletop role-play games rely on the players to narrate the actions of characters.

Traditionally played in groups with a 'Games Master', 'Dungeon Master' or 'Storyteller' acting as narrator, table-top role-play games have influenced generations of computer and video game developers. The most well-known tabletop role-play system is *Dungeons & Dragons* (1974–).

Originally created by Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson and Don Kaye and first published by Tactical Studio Rules, *Dungeons & Dragons* is currently owned by Wizards of the Coast (a subsidiary of Hasbro) who published the 5th edition rules in 2014.

Triple A (AAA) titles: 'Triple A' is not actually an acronym but a slang term for big budget games where a lot of time, money and resources have been spent during development. These games are usually released by well-known publishers who expect to make high levels of profit from their games. Triple A publishers included, though are not limited to, Ubisoft, Bethesda, Nintendo and Bioware.

Video game: In this context, any game played on a digital medium such as a computer, mobile or console. This form of game continues to increase in popularity as the technology to make and distribute low-budget games becomes more available to the general public. The first video game is considered to be *Tennis for Two* (1958) created by William Higginbottom. This simple, non-commercial design is said to have gone on influence Atari's *Pong* (1972) considered to be the first commercial video game.

Virtual reality (VR) games: Virtual reality games refer to a set of titles which simulate a person's physical presence in a game world. This is usually achieved through the presence of a virtual reality headset and haptic feedback systems (sometimes including a physical treadmill-style rig that players walk on, but usually including at least sensors on the feet and hands). As this technology becomes more commercially viable, game developers have begun to release more titles that utilise VR. This technology is also used in the biomedical field for both training and rehabilitation.

Introduction

In 2009, Brenda Romero, a renowned game designer, released *Train*, a board game designed to force players to think about a particularly horrible chapter in world history. The game takes place on a pane of shattered glass, next to a vintage typewriter, and requires players to compete to move yellow pawns from one side of the board to a station via boxcars on train tracks. The player who does so most efficiently wins.

As the game proceeds, players reveal the next locations that their trains must travel, until, as one journalist explains:

At some point, they turn over a card that has a destination for the train. It says Auschwitz. At that point, for anyone who knows their history, it dawns on the player that they have been loading Jews onto box cars so they can be shipped to a World War II concentration camp and be killed in the gas showers or burned in the ovens.¹

Train is not intended to be simply a game, but rather an experience that would affect people deeply.² Reactions to playing the game reveal a sense of shame as some people, once they are made aware of the historical context, cry, feel hate, feel violence, or simply walk away from the experience.³ Romero has ensured every detail of *Train* has a symbolic meaning, even down to the size of the pawns, which are too large for the boxcar openings, meaning that players have a tendency to force them into the space in order to fit more in.⁴ A pane of glass is broken as each game is set up in order to represent the Kristallnacht (the Night of the Broken Glass) in 1938, and the typewriter next to the game, as well as the paper that the games instructions are found on, are artefacts from World War Two. It is important to note that Romero has gone to great lengths to ensure that the artefacts present alongside the game were genuinely manufactured and used by the SS during World War Two in order to heighten the realism of this experience.

¹ "Brenda Romero's Train Board Game Will Make You Ponder," VentureBeat, available from <https://venturebeat.com/2013/05/11/brenda-romero-train-board-game-holocaust/>

² "TGC 2009: How A Board Game Can Make You Cry," The Escapist, available from http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/conferences/tgc_2009/6021-TGC-2009-How-a-Board-Game-Can-Make-You-Cry.

³ "Brenda Romero's Train Board Game Will Make You Ponder," VentureBeat, available from <https://venturebeat.com/2013/05/11/brenda-romero-train-board-game-holocaust/>

⁴ "Reflections on Train," Gamasutra.Com, available from https://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/SandeChen/20090714/2142/Reflections_on_Train.php.

Romero designed her game to be played in public, as an installation, rather than a game to purchase and play in private. When *Train* is played, it is usually set up in a museum, which firmly places this game in the field of public history.

When considering the historical study of war, one must look at not only the military facts and figures but also the lived human experience. The role of civilians and the use of social history has been under-examined by historians exploring military history.⁵ Raphael Samuel argues that social history is a way to bring the stories of ordinary people to the forefront of history and, in doing so, engage the passions and enthusiasm of the general public.⁶ The games I have researched for this thesis function as a form of social, as well as public, history. To extend this, the advantage of games as a medium for transmitting historical knowledge is that they can work in conjunction with the ideas of social history by promoting and exploring the lesser known stories of history and prompting a greater understanding of previously unknown histories. This thesis is therefore centred in the idea that games are uniquely suited to creating empathy and that this in turn prompts a greater understanding and interest in the historical event presented. Although little examined in the field of Modern history, the creation of empathy is already seen as an important part of teaching history in schools.⁷ This idea of educational pedagogy will be discussed further in Chapter One.

In the course of my research for this thesis, I found myself with a unique opportunity to participate in a transnational exchange of ideas. To that end, I was able to travel to Hamburg, Germany and conduct a presentation at Hamburg University about how the First World War has been memorialised in video games. As a gamer myself, when I sat down to play these games I found myself participating in a highly emotive form of learning. I became invested not only in the game itself, but in the wider history and historical agents present. I quickly learnt that I was not the only one who had experienced this phenomenon, but that the students I was speaking to also had observed the same thing. I was fascinated by the idea that the emotions and experiences I have when playing certain games were the same as my colleagues, despite the distance and language

⁵ It must be noted that this trend is changing. This change is embodied by 'New Military History'. New military history, as discussed by William P. Tatum III, expands a traditional military history seeks to expand the context of military history to examine how armies and warfare affected societies at large. Tatum (William P. Tatum, "Challenging the New Military History: The Case of Eighteenth-Century British Army Studies," *History Compass* 10 (2006): pp. 72-84) and Greyson (Richard S. Grayson, "Military History From The Street: New Methods For Researching First World War Service In The British Military," *War In History* 21 (2014): pp. 465-495) both provide interesting examples for, and arguments against, this particular form of military history.

⁶ Raphael Samuel, "What Is Social History", *History Today* 35 no. 3 March (1985), <http://www.historytoday.com/raphaelsamuel/what-social-history>.

⁷ O.L. Davis *et al.*, *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p. 2

barrier which separates our day to day lives. It is the potential of this phenomenon that I am most interested in.

Repeatedly, in the course of my research, I have observed that games, and video games in particular, have an ability to speak to a universal experience in a way that I simply have not observed with any other medium. However, it has been problematic for me to try and fit these ideas into a study of modern history. There is very little, extensive, academic work that has been conducted on the subject of how video games might tell history. This was particularly relevant when looking at work around public history. I found that although there was research on how film and television can teach the public about history, video games were regarded with suspicion. This thesis challenges pre-established historical authority and disrupts ideas about what traditionally constitutes public history and how the public is able to be informed about historical thought.

In order to build on my ideas surrounding video games as a form of public history, I will consider two games and how they can be used to explore different types of history. These games are *This War of Mine* (2014) and *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* (2014). Although different, these games represent the potential that this medium has in an academic context. I will look at not only the literature surrounding theories of public history, but also the current historiography surrounding the First World War, which is the setting for *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*, and the Siege of Sarajevo, which is the basis for *This War of Mine*. In doing this, I will be able to establish how these games present academic aspects of these time periods and how they are able to inform players of these ideas and arguments.

In terms of World War One historiography, many articles focus on the difficulty of the historiography of this period. This is a constant theme in the articles and books I have read. Notably both Frederick A. Hale in 1976⁸ and Rebecca Harrison in 2015⁹ discuss clashes between historians in this field. Although this does add a certain richness to the historiography, and indeed promotes an opportunity for debate, it does highlight the discrepancies in how the First World War is presented. These two authors, and the time difference in the publication of their work, is significant to my thesis as this research and discrepancy/conflict in historiography establishes the tricky nature of studying the First World War, thereby allowing the opportunity for alternative research to be conducted. This constant

⁸ Frederick A. Hale, "Fritz Fischer and the Historiography of World War One", *The History Teacher* 9 (1976): p. 258.

⁹ Rebecca Harrison, "Writing History on the Page and Screen: Mediating Conflicts through Britain's First World War Ambulance Trains," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, 35 (2015), p. 559.

academic seesawing between historians means it is less of an intellectual leap to understand that games may be an authentic way to examine this time period. This is because rather than presenting a radical re-interpretation of history, video games, in this context, can be seen as presenting a particular perspective of historical events.

Much of the historiography surrounding the Siege of Sarajevo has focused on the lived experiences of civilians during the conflict. Riordan provides a particularly complex portrayal of the siege through the lens of humanitarian law and history.¹⁰ Riordan provides an account of civilians' experiences during the Siege of Sarajevo and the military, historical and legal forces at play in their lives in the besieged city. This validates the decision of *This War of Mine*'s designers to focus on the civilian experiences in their game as a way to understand this event. Other academics have looked at how cultural production has addressed the memories of the Siege of Sarajevo. Jan Nederveen Pieterse¹¹ and Antonio Monegal¹² have both examined how cultural tensions were present both before and after the Siege of Sarajevo and how this event has been understood and expressed through the production of cultural items. Clearly, a game can fill this same role, as it is another item of cultural production, albeit one which has not previously been considered.

As I have stated, I have chosen to focus on using specific games as case studies to explore the central themes of my research. The use of case studies is a methodology commonly used in public history. Historians as varied as Jerome de Groot, Cason Snow, Dawn Spring and Michelle Arrow use case studies as a way to support their academic analysis and to show how their ideas are generally applicable to real world situations.¹³ In this way, historians (including, but of course not limited to, those who conduct research in the field of public history) are able to draw their ideas together and

¹⁰ KJ Riordan, "Shelling, Sniping and Starvation: the Laws of Armed Conflict and the Lessons of the Siege of Sarajevo," *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* 41 (2010), pp. 149- 178

¹¹ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Europe, Traveling Light: Europeanization And Globalization", *The European Legacy* 4 (1999), p. 3-17

¹² Antonio Monegal, "Aporias of the War Story", *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 3 (2002), pp. 29-41

¹³ Examples include Jerome de Groot using the novel *Longitude* as an example of narrativized public history (Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians And Heritage In Contemporary Popular Culture* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), Cason Snow using the game *Romance of the Three Kingdoms X* to demonstrate how strategy games can be used to explore historical rulership in China (Cason E. Snow, "Playing With History: A Look At Video Games, World History And Libraries," *Community & Junior College Libraries* 16 (2010): pp. 128-135), Dawn Spring using the *Assassin's Creed* series to illustrate the potential for video games to inform players about cultures, economies and societies of the past (Dawn Spring, "Gaming History: Computer And Video Games As Historical Scholarship," *Rethinking History* 19 (2014): pp. 207-221) and Michelle Arrow using the television show *In Their Footsteps* to illustrate that to understand what military history means to contemporary Australians one must understand television history (Michelle Arrow. "'I Just Feel It's Important To Know Exactly What He Went Through': In Their Footsteps and The Role Of Emotions In Australian Television History," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 33 (2013): pp. 594- 611).

justify why they have chosen to explore certain aspects of history. In the case of my particular topic, there is a lack of research about games as a form of public history meaning that an emphasis on case studies is necessary. An interdisciplinary approach has also been taken as I am simply unable to rely on the previous research nor the methodology of other historians. Therefore I am endeavouring to reframe the research of other disciplines through the lens of modern history.

Although an elastic term, “public history” is generally defined as any practice that engages with historical meanings in the public, rather than academic, sphere.¹⁴ Public history can be considered not only as an academic endeavour but as a way to allow the public greater impact on the development of their histories.¹⁵ Sayer points out that the ‘public’ in ‘public history’ is inherently problematic due to a tendency to see the public as a monolithic entity rather than a ‘patchwork of individuals, each with their own perceptions of history.’¹⁶ Traditionally, facets of public history have included museums, documentaries, historical movies and historical fiction, amongst others and this thesis will extend this to include games. The ‘public’ that I will be addressing in this thesis means any individual who plays games of any sort.

Public history is inherently important in historical study due to the relationship cultivated between historians and the wider community. This relationship has meant that there have been significant political, professional and economic advantages to collaboration for both sides as history moves towards the forefront of people’s consciousness.¹⁷ That is to say that, bringing history into the public eye causes a greater interest in history in general and allows historians to reach a wider audience. Although not all history will take the form of public history (although there is the potential that all can), there can be no doubt that public history has become an essential aspect of the practice of history and the understanding of historical thought more broadly.¹⁸

Gaming is most closely associated with other areas of public history so it is appropriate to approach this medium in a similar way. This is because the primary sources I am considering lend themselves to textual and visual analysis, in the same way academics approach film and cinema. This approach

¹⁴ Paul Ashton, “Public History,” *Australian History Now*, ed. Anna Clark and Paul Ashton (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2013), p, 169.

¹⁵ Faye Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

also highlights the distinctive characteristics of games (as separate from any other medium).¹⁹ First, I will establish the characteristics and literature around public history and explain how video games might be situated in this by analysing the most similar form of public history. Historical films have a rich tradition of historical scholarship surrounding them and, as will be discussed, can offer the opportunity for audiences to be immersed in an historical narrative in order to improve historical understanding. Scholars in the field of public history have long since recognised the value of using audio-visual mediums in historical study. This kind of research has been prevalent since the development of public and social history in the 1960s and 1970s. During this boom of public history, film was starting to be recognised as an important avenue for academic study as not only a demonstration of historical thought but as a teaching tool.²⁰ British historian Paul Smith was among the first to see and explore this potential. His edited collection *The Historian and Film* was an international collaboration between historians from America and Europe, showing the transnational reach of these ideas.²¹ His book highlights the development of historical thinking surrounding film and the ways in which this medium can be brought into academic consciousness. The research of historians William Hughes and Arthur Marwick, collected by Smith in *The Historian and Film*, is particularly pertinent to my research. Hughes provides a valuable insight into an area of historical study that was in its infancy during the time of his writing. He specifically warns readers to be aware of tropes in films and how these factors can possibly effect the historical themes they are presenting. He systematically scrutinizes the issues with films and offers possible avenues to counter these matters.²² This methodology provides guidance for my thesis, in which I examine the tropes of games and consider how the focus of the medium being to entertain, rather than inform, affects the validity of the historical information presented in each game.

¹⁹ Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska, *ScreenPlay: Cinema/ Videogames/ Interfaces* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), p. 7

²⁰ More recent scholarship also discusses this. Although some of this will be highlighted later, of significant note is the research of Jouko Aeltonen & Jukka Kortti (Jouko Aeltonen and Jukka Kortti, "From Evidence to Re-enactment: History, Television and Documentary Film," *Journal of Media Practices* 16 (2015): pp. 108-125) and Penney Clark & Alan Sears Penney Clark and Alan Sears, "Fiction, History and Pedagogy: A Double Edged Sword," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 49 (2016): pp. 620-639)

²¹ Smith appears to have gone to significant efforts to gain a transnational perspective on historical films. On the contributor, eight were working at English Universities or institutions, one was based at an American University, a contributor is based in the Netherlands and a separate contributor was based at Ecole Polytechnique in France. Details of this can be found in *The contributors* section of *The Historian and Film* (*The Historian and Film*, ed. Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. viii)

²² William Hughes, "The Evaluation of Film as Evidence," in *The Historian and Film*, ed. Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 49.

In the same book, Arthur Marwick makes a strong case for the use of film in education. Although he presents a fairly narrow study, Marwick provides an eloquent argument suggesting that films, in spite of (and in some ways because of) their nature, as a medium of entertainment, are useful tools for historical education.²³ I have therefore been able to build on Marwick's assertions and use his research as a catalyst for my argument.²⁴

David W. Price also does a lot of work to establish how historical fiction can be used as a valid archive. This was necessary as, much like current attitudes towards gaming, historical fiction was not always seen as a 'correct' way to learn history. Price nevertheless provides an interesting insight into how history and fiction (in the case of this thesis, the fiction found in games) can be married together. His argument centres around the idea that history and fiction are both a construction and therefore not as dissimilar as trained historians may think.²⁵

A visual medium is an inherently challenging source to interpret but also a potentially more accurate one when it comes to analysing how and why history is presented a specific way.²⁶ Sayer argues that there will always be a question of authenticity when it comes to public history as all history requires interpretation of evidence and for the historian to make assertions about a past which they themselves did not experience.²⁷ However, I would suggest that this is not a negative trait as it affords the general public the opportunity to both understand and critique these historical arguments. Although historians now agree that film, and other forms of cultural production, are valid forms of public history, the aforementioned authors played a significant role in this achievement. I, in turn, aim to fill gap in the present historiography and play a similar role in establishing games as a form of public history.

Public history can also be useful when it comes to creating an emotional connection between an individual and the history portrayed. By creating this connection, empathy is then established which, in turn, promotes interest in the historical subject. This idea can be seen most clearly when looking

²³ Arthur Marwick, "Film in University Teaching," in *The Historian and Film*, ed. Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 142-156.

²⁴ It must be noted that the two authors discussed had a particular academic investment in promoting the study of film. At the time, William Hughes was a professor of History, as well as a lecturer in film, at Essex Community College Baltimore. Arthur Marwick was a professor of History and Open Universities.

²⁵ David W. Price, *History Made, History Imagined: Contemporary Literature, Poiesis, and the Past* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 25.

²⁶ Jeffrey Richards, "Film and Television: the moving image", in *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Sarah Barber and Corinna M. Peniston-Bird (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 72.

²⁷ Faye Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 14

at the rise of family history and its transition into the public forum. In Australia, since the 1970s, family history has found a unique place in public consciousness and can be seen as a pathway for new historical information, as well as a way to affirm the importance of an emotional connection with historical subject matter.²⁸ This interest has, in part, been influenced by, and has in turn influenced, reality television shows such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* Historians such as Jerome De Groot attribute this success, at least partially, to the current climate of media consumption which places emphasis on personal narrative and suggests that this form of historical documentary not only tells a story, but allows for an understanding of history to be taught.²⁹ The value of such television shows is found in their capacity to link the past (in this case, a celebrity's ancestors) to the present (in this case, the celebrity themselves) thereby promoting an emotional connection and a subsequent consumption of history.³⁰ This is significant to my thesis as I argue games create an emotional connection which serves to create empathy and, ultimately, can be used as a way to invite the public to engage with historical thought in a way that they wouldn't have done otherwise.

Given these the similarities between film and video games one could be tempted to suggest that the latter can be seen purely as an extension of the former. However, these mediums are distinct and video games require separate scholarly consideration. When considering video games, the interaction between player and a game transcends the construction of the game and meaning is then created not only by the game itself but within this interaction.³¹ A similar phenomenon is not found in films. Games, by design, must be interactive and a large part of the experience of the game centres on this interactivity. The concept of player agency also represents a significant difference between video games and films. As Leibovitz has observed:

Herein lies the major difference between video games and other media...Trained to obey the stringent dictates of a preordained digital realm, [players] regain agency by first abandoning it and then forging it anew after hours of struggling to achieve maximum grip. Such a process considerably weakens their subjective selves, but it awards them in return with a kind of unified experience that television or radio could never give them, namely the resolution of the constant

²⁸ Alan Atkinson, "History in the Academy", in *Australian History Now*, ed. Anna Clark and Paul Ashton (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2013), pp. 108–9.

²⁹ Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians And Heritage In Contemporary Popular Culture* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 80

³⁰ Ann Curthoys, "Crossing Over: Academic and Popular History," *Australasian Journal Of Popular Culture* 1 (2011), p. 11.

³¹ Judd Ethan Ruggill and Ken S McAllister, *Gaming Matters* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), p. 5.

tension urging them to connect with others and simultaneously reminding them that such connection is impossible.³²

This phenomenon is due mainly to the fact that players are forced to interact with the game. A player must obey the mechanics of the game they are playing or they are unable to interact with the game, which is inherently alienating. However, once the player masters the mechanics of the game they are able to regain this agency, even though they are left changed by the experience. The tension between these two states then is resolved and the player no longer remains aware that they can both be connected and be alienated by a game at the same time. In layman's terms, this means that a player is able to invest emotionally in a game while still being able to realise that they are not a part of it. This is useful if a game is trying to educate as there will always be a distinction between the game and the information being presented. By observing this, one is quickly able to determine that this resolution of tension, between the player and the character of their game, can easily be seen to allow the player to more closely identify with the character thereby creating an emotional connection and, ultimately and significantly, empathy. It is this empathetic connection which I believe will prove the most useful to a form of public history.

I have used oral history to collect data for this project. I conducted and analysed several face-to-face interviews and an online survey in order to gauge the public's responses to two separate areas: firstly, the ideas that my research is exploring and secondly, the pre-existing presence of ideas about history in games. In doing this, I was able to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. While conducting face-to-face interviews, I allowed the opportunity for discussion about video games, their ability to create empathetic connections, and their scope for the creation of empathy. Of course, there is an inherent limit to the number of interviews I was able to conduct. This was due to the ability to find interviewees, their location and their native language. I tried to create a wide sample pool and therefore aimed to conduct interviews both in Australia (based at Macquarie University) and in Germany (based at Hamburg University). Despite my best intentions, I was unable to gain sufficient data to further my arguments. By also conducting an online survey (via Qualtrics), I gained a wider pool of 70 respondents, although with the caveat of being unable to explore their ideas in-depth. Although this combination of approaches allowed me to gain some raw data to examine trends in approaches to gaming and in attitudes towards history in games, it has also not

³² Liel Leibovitz, *God In The Machine: Video Games As A Spiritual Pursuit* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2013), pp. 69–70.

proved as useful as I have hoped and I have therefore chosen not to use these results.³³ As stated, I have instead used case studies and supportive literature to make my argument.

I believe that as the world becomes a place of fast information and even faster media consumption, it becomes vital to keep pace with these developments. History, as a discipline, has responded to these changes (especially changes in technology) by embracing digital archival sources and, in the case of public history, by allowing a non-academic audience exceptional access to academic resources.³⁴ Exploring how video games interact with history and their potential for historical education outside of an academic setting is another way to do this. It presents a unique opportunity for historians to engage a wider audience in their academic work and inform the general public about key historical ideas, events and phenomena. As I will argue in this thesis, disseminating historical ideas to the public should be the ultimate aim of any historian, and video games offer a new means to do that.

³³ Please see the *Appendix: Survey and Interview Results* section at the end of the thesis for more information about these results.

³⁴ Historians such as Tanya Evans and Graeme Davidson both discuss the use of ancestry.com as a way for family historians to access digitalised records of their ancestors, although both do find this commercialisation of history problematic. *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales* (Tanya Evans, *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015) explores this digitalisation rather effectively.

Chapter 1 – On Gaming, Learning and History

Empathy in History

Although empathy can be hard to define, it is an aspect of learning and teaching history which is continuing to find prominence in historical study. Generally, historical empathy can be seen as a method through which to place past beliefs and events within their contexts.³⁵ Indeed, historical empathy is characterised by the emphasis on the importance of this historical context.³⁶ This allows the thoughts and feelings of historical actors to be made apparent which, in turn, allows an historian to gain insight into the behaviour of these individuals.³⁷ By doing this, one is able to gain a better understanding of the context of the historical event which can promote not only a greater level of investment in a subject, but can also encourage a more thorough examination of historical events. More specifically, the presence of historical empathy is important as it allows for a more precise evaluation of different aspects of historical situations.³⁸

Video games generate empathy. Studies in psychology make it apparent that the impact of empathy, in gaming, on an individual is extensive. Treberti et. al. claim that the presence of a player character who seeks to create empathetic connections with non-player characters (e.g. through the creation of complex inter-character narratives) has a powerful potential to effect a player's moral systems and has the potential to also shift their social attitudes in real life.³⁹ When games have historical settings and themes, it then becomes apparent that the creation of empathy within the game means the player learns about an historical event in a meaningful way and the game instils an empathetic historical interpretation.

However, this idea of historical empathy can be problematic. Low-Beer points out that historical understanding cannot be achieved alone.⁴⁰ Indeed, Low-Beer contends that:

This kind of understanding might not require empathy at all, but does require a knowledge of context which is wide and precise and can be deployed flexibly. Indeed it may in fact be difficult to empathise simultaneously with opposing

³⁵ Martyn Davison, "The Case for Empathy in the History Classroom," *Curriculum Matters* 6 (2010): p. 83.

³⁶ Tyson Retz, "Doing Historical Empathy," *Agora* 47 (2012): p. 41.

³⁷ William V. Harris, "History, Empathy and Emotions," *Antike Und Abendland* 56 no. 2 (2010), p. 1

³⁸ Ann Low-Beer, "Empathy and History," *Teaching History*, 55 (1989), p. 9.

³⁹ Stefano Triberti, Daniela Villani and Giuseppe Riva, "Moral positioning in video games and its relation with dispositional traits: the emergence of a social dimension," *Computers In Human Behaviour* 50 (2015): p. 5

⁴⁰ Low-Beer, "Empathy and History." p. 12.

points of view. Although understanding might certainly be achieved via empathy, it does not seem to be essential to it.⁴¹

As will be discussed, although empathy may not be an essential aspect of the creation of understanding, it is nevertheless a present and important aspect which can be utilised by game designers to inform the public about history.

A Brief History of Games

In order to comprehend how these ideas around public history can be translated into a study of gaming, one must consider the history of video games themselves. As games become as prevalent and influential in societal consciousness as films, academic work must be conducted to reflect this trend. Although board and card games have been found in societies as far back as Ancient Egypt,⁴² the development of video games is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The traditional role-play game (RPG) found its precursor in war gaming. In *War games: From Gladiators to Gigabytes*, Martin Van Crevald suggests that war games originated as leisure activities in pre-modern societies and took the form of combat sports, such as the pankration and wrestling.⁴³ In the middle ages, these combat sports coalesced into spontaneous tournaments used to celebrate births, weddings or anniversaries or else to break the boredom of a siege.⁴⁴ However, from the mid-1400s to the early-1500s the nature of war games shifted away from being played with physical weapons in a combat scenario to being played on a board.⁴⁵ Such games were often played with pieces (like the classic game chess) or, from the Renaissance onwards, with miniatures such as the 5,000 silver soldiers that Louis XIV is said to have once owned.⁴⁶ The classic, modern, war game first began to find purchase in the early twentieth-century in Europe, with figures as diverse as Winston Churchill and H.G. Wells, a well-known pacifist, indulging in these games.⁴⁷ The education potential of games was already known at the time, as evidenced by H.G. Wells' book *Little Wars*, a set of rules about how boys

⁴¹ Low-Beer, "Empathy and History." p. 9.

⁴² Archaeologists hypothesise the first board game to have been 'mehen'. The oldest mehen board dates from approximately the end of the 4th millennium BCE. See *Ancient Egyptians at Play: Board Games Across Borders* (Walter Crist et al., *Ancient Egyptians at Play: Board Games Across Borders* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016): p. 15) for more information and details about how the game was played. There is, however, some contention with several historians arguing that 'senet' was in fact the earliest board game.

⁴³ Martin Van Crevald, *Wargames: From Gladiators to Gigabytes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 139–140.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

should play toy soldiers, which outlines the educational potential of games with toy soldiers to explain combat difficulties in the Great War.⁴⁸

A more specifically military-based war game also became popular in the Prussian/German Army with figures like Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder influencing a new generation of soldier-intellectuals such as Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen.⁴⁹ War gaming's military application in modern times and as a tabletop phenomenon is often associated with von Schlieffen during his time as the German Chief of the General Staff, between 1893 and 1905. Von Schlieffen was known to set up war games (Kriegsspielen) for his officers, in order to better prepare them for the strategic and tactical decisions they would be called on to make on the battle field.⁵⁰ Von Schlieffen's Kriegsspielen focused on the necessity for a rapid victory and a quick end to war – even a war on two fronts – and these games would ultimately serve as the basis for key ideas in Germany's war plans.⁵¹ Although von Schlieffen recognised the limitations in using games to educate, he was adamant there was no reason that these table top experiences could not be translated into reality.⁵²

The military use of war games encouraged American Charles S. Roberts to explore the leisure and hobby possibilities of war gaming and he ultimately founded the company Avalon (later Avalon Hill) in the 1950s. Avalon Hill games would, in turn, influence the emergence of narrative role playing systems such as *Dungeons & Dragons* (1974) and *Advanced Dungeon & Dragons* (1974) (AD&D).⁵³ AD&D in turn would go on to influence a whole genre of games: the multiplayer narrative roleplay game. This was a significant development in connecting players with narratives and, later, with history, as subsequent companies began to embrace this new style of game in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Gamescience with their turn-based game *The Battle of Britain* (1968).⁵⁴ Much as von

⁴⁸ Jerome De Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 144.

⁴⁹ Robert Foley (ed.), *Alfred Von Schlieffen's Military Writings* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012), p. xvi.

⁵⁰ Van Crevald, *Wargames*, p. 158.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵² Alfred von Schlieffen, *Dienstschriften Des Chefs Des Generalstabes Der Armee Generalfeldmarschalls Graf Von Schlieffen* (Berlin: Mittler, 1938), p. 118.

⁵³ Michael Witwer, *Empire of Imagination: Gary Gygax and the Birth of Dungeons & Dragons* (Michigan: Bloomsbury USA, 2015), p. 98.

⁵⁴ Although many role play games were indeed based on a fantasy system, the early influence of war games continued to be felt throughout the development of the RPG. In addition to the aforementioned game *The Battle of Britain*, White Wolf's *World of Darkness* (1991- 2004) and *New World of Darkness* (2004- present) series', as well as some second edition *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (1989-2000) campaigns retained historical elements even with a fantasy overlay. Notable examples from White Wolf include *Vampire: the Dark Ages* (1996), *Wraith: The Great War* (1999), *Victorian Age: Vampire* (2002) and *Requiem For Rome* (2007).

Schlieffen's Kriegsspielen could present possible military scenarios, a video game is able to render places and points in history to allow players to experience, first hand, lives, places and circumstances which differ from their own.⁵⁵ This ability, in turn, becomes advantageous in the context of public history, as I will discuss later.

To back track, the first commercial video game console was conceptualised in the early 1950s by Ralph Baer who posed the idea that the testing system of the Lorel brand television set could be used to play simple games.⁵⁶ Although a schematic and proof of concept was eventually developed for Sanders Associates in December of 1966,⁵⁷ 'Baer's Brown Box' (later marketed as *Magnavox Odyssey* after some developmental changes by the publishers Magnavox) was released on 22 May 1972 as the first home console.⁵⁸ As suggest, roleplay games began to emerge in the 1970s and forever changed the way that video games were created.⁵⁹ Gary Gygax, one of the creators of *Dungeons & Dragons*, held a significant interest in the war game *Gettysburg* (1958), and, indeed, his first published game was an adaptation of this called *Chainmail* (1971) – the first war game to place emphasis on individual heroes.⁶⁰ The first *Dungeons & Dragons* game was published in 1973 by Tactical Studies Rules (TSR) and was commercially available from January 1974.⁶¹ The concept of storytelling in *Dungeons & Dragons* was quickly translated by early programmers to computer games known as MUDs (multi-user dungeons) which are the ancestors of popular massive multiplayer online roleplay games (MMORPGs) such as the *Diablo* franchise (first game released in 1996), *World of Warcraft* (first game released in 2004), *Eve Online* (first game released 2003) and *Elder Scrolls* (first game released 1994), to name a few.⁶²

As technology became increasingly available, video games found mainstream commercial success with home consoles. Industry giants soon emerged, such as Nintendo, who released their first

Notable examples from *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* include the *Vikings* campaign sourcebook (1991), the *Celts* campaign sourcebook (1992) and *The Glory of Rome* campaign sourcebook (1993).

⁵⁵ Simon Parkin, *Death by Video Game: Tales of Obsession from the Virtual Frontline* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2015), p. 150.

⁵⁶ Richard Stanton, *A Brief History of Video Games: From Atari to Xbox One* (London: Constable, 2015), p. 23.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁹ Dan Ackerman, *The Tetris Effect: The Cold War Battle For the World's Most Addictive Game* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2016), p. 27.

⁶⁰ Michael Witwer, *Empire of Imagination: Gary Gygax and the Birth of Dungeons & Dragons* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2015), p. 85.

⁶¹ Shannon Appelcline, *Designers & Dragons: A History of the Roleplaying Game Industry '70-'79* (Silver Spring: Evil Hat Productions, 2014). pp. 14.

⁶² Michael Witwer, *Empire of Imagination*, pp. 228–9.

console (known in Japan as 'Famicon' and elsewhere as the 'Nintendo Entertainment System') in 1983; Sony, who released their first console PlayStation in 1994; and Microsoft, who released their first console Xbox in 2001.⁶³ Notably, Sony's PlayStation was responsible for the shift in the cultural acceptance of video games, along with aesthetic and technological transformations in the development field when it came to both rendering images and the capacity to use CD-ROMs as a mode of storage.⁶⁴ Mobile games have also proven very popular since the 2008 launch of Apple's App Store.⁶⁵ This phenomenon introduced both 'free-to-play' and 'pay-to-play' models of game development. It is estimated that mobile game downloads, downloadable content (DLC) purchases and in-game purchases accounted for 90 per cent of the revenue of the App Store Revenue in 2016.⁶⁶

The most recent trend in gaming is that of 'virtual reality' games. Crowdfunded consoles such as the Oculus Rift purport to be able to forever change the way players experience gaming.⁶⁷ There is no doubt that this new technology offers unlimited potential for player engagement and immersion.⁶⁸ Notably, virtual reality games are being used by clinicians to help rehabilitate patients suffering with a variety of ailments.⁶⁹ Indeed, the Nintendo Wii (released in 2006) helped to promote this kind of active gameplay as it implicitly addressed concerns about the sedentary nature of games by basing its system on connect functionality.⁷⁰

⁶³ Information regarding these details can be found in Richard Stanton's *A Brief History of Video Games*, pp 205-215. It is important to note that while Nintendo has since focused on handheld consoles, both Sony and Microsoft continue to be competitors in the console market. Their latest releases the Xbox One and the PlayStation 4 were both released in 2013, with Microsoft's Xbox One X expected to be released in November 2017.

⁶⁴ James Newman, *Videogames* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 93.

⁶⁵ Richard Stanton, *A Brief History of Video Games: From Atari to Xbox One* (London: Constable, 2015), p. 260.

⁶⁶ Joe Hindy, "2016 Recap: 90% Of Google Play's Revenue Came From Games (And More Fun Stats!)", *Android Authority*, 17 January 2017. Available from <http://www.androidauthority.com/2016-recap-90-percent-google-play-revenue-gaming-fun-stats-743626/>.

⁶⁷ "Oculus Rift: Step Into The Game". *Kickstarter*. Available from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1523379957/oculus-rift-step-into-the-game>.

⁶⁸ Stanton, *A Brief History of Video Games*, p. 357

⁶⁹ This is particularly apparent in physiotherapy, where consoles such as the Nintendo Wii are being used to promote movement in stroke patients. Some clinicians use movement-based games to gradually work up and expand a patient's ability to perform generalised movements. Of particular interest is the result of a study by Kelly R. Anderson, Michelle L. Woodbury, Kala Phillips and Lynne V. Gauthier the results of which can be found in the following article: Kelly R. Anderson *et al*, "Virtual Reality Video Games to Promote Movement Recovery in Stroke Rehabilitation: A Guide for Clinicians," *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* 96 (2015): pp. 973-976

⁷⁰ Michelle Arrow, *Friday on Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia Since 1945* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd., 2009.), p. 210.

Video Games as Education

There is no doubt about the value of film as a tool for education and its application in looking at representations of history.⁷¹ Films are frequently used to explore narratives of the historical past and give audiences many opportunities to analyse the historical narratives and evaluate the meanings and messages conveyed.⁷² It is my belief that these ideas about historical films and education can be applied to video games. However, outside of the sphere of media studies and educational pedagogy, the academic literature surrounding video games tends to portray them in a negative light, often highlighting issues of violence – there appears to be an obsession with the idea that not only are video games violent, but playing them is a form of participating in war itself.⁷³ Such characterisations, however, simply reflect a lack of substantive research into and appreciation of this medium. Although there has not been research conducted into this area in the modern history discipline, there has been extensive work conducted regarding the educational potential of video games in the field of educational pedagogy. This research explores two distinct facets: firstly, why this medium is suited to educate, and secondly, the practical aspects of having video games present in classrooms.⁷⁴

Gee and Hayes are quick to point out: “those of us who have made the claim that games are good for learning have meant, of course, that well-designed games are good for learning, not poorly designed ones.”⁷⁵ Gee and Hayes go on to argue that games have a particular ability to educate due to the fact that they do not force students to learn.⁷⁶ That is to say that games, by allowing players to learn at their own pace, create a greater interest in, and engagement with, the subject area. This

⁷¹ John E. O'Connor, *Teaching History With Film and Television* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1987), p. 8.

⁷² Scott Alan Metzger, “Pedagogy and the Historical Feature Film: Toward Historical Literacy,” *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 37 no. 2, (2007), p. 70.

⁷³ Joanna Bourke, *Wounding the World: How Military Violence and War-Play Invade Our Lives* (London: Virago Press, 2014), p. 213.

⁷⁴ Interesting work in this area includes, though is not limited to, the following: Jeremiah McCall’s practical guide to using video games in classrooms (Jeremiah McCall, *Gaming the Past: Using Video Games to Teach Secondary History* (New York: Routledge, 2011), Michael F. Young *et al*’s exploration of the ability for video games to teach across different educational disciplines (Michael F. Young *et al*, “Our Princess Is In Another Castle: A Review Of Trends in Serious Gaming For Education,” *Review of Educational Research* 82 (2012): pp. 61-89) and Andrew McMichael’s examination of the presence of PC games in a university setting and how they can be embraced in education (Andrew McMichael, “PC Games and the Teaching of History,” *Society for Historical Education* 40 (2007): pp. 203-218

⁷⁵ James Paul Gee and Elisabeth Hayes, “Nurturing Affinity Spaces and Game-based Learning,” in *Games, Learning, and Society: Learning and Meaning in the Digital Age*, ed. Constance Steinkuehler, Kurt Squire and Sasha Barab (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 129.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

phenomenon can then be utilised within an academic setting if video games are used to deliver historical knowledge and create historical understanding. Games offer a way for students to be able to consume and contrast historical knowledge in an easily accessible manner. Because of this, there is an increasing emphasis placed on a student's ability to construct well-researched, meaningful and critical interpretations of the past. This in turn allows a school setting to replicate the academic field of history thereby allowing a greater understanding of how historical study functions outside of a school setting.⁷⁷ Video games, and games in general, are an avenue through which to achieve this. One can easily argue that it is this immersive medium, and the narratives that it offers, which provides a unique way for students to re-enact and engage with history, and in turn be engaged with historical thought beyond what traditional methods of historical instruction can offer.⁷⁸ Games enable the distant past to be situated in a recognisable context, thereby establishing a rapport with a past event. This, in turn, erases temporal boundaries and allows for the historical context to be scrutinized.⁷⁹

As discussed, one of the aspects of video games which make them appealing is their ability to create a connection between the player and what is being presented on screen. It is my belief that this then allows for the creation of empathy, which is an aspect of history not always present in academic study. Like Kaya Yilmaz, I have to define empathy (in the context of history) as the ability to judge the past through an understanding of the "mentality, frames of reference, beliefs, values, intentions, and the actions of historical agents" on its own terms.⁸⁰ Through playing video games, an inherent empathetic connection is made due to the casting of the players as the subject – meaning that the player cannot help but literally see events through the perspective of the player character.⁸¹ By being able to engage with a life and a historical experience outside of their own sphere of being, players are able to inhabit a world which they would not otherwise be able to. When considering how this can be applied to history, it then becomes apparent that this phenomenon could find a powerful use in transmitting historical study to the general public. To analyse this ability, I will be focusing on two particular video games: *This War of Mine* and *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*

⁷⁷ Jeremiah McCall, *Gaming the Past: Using Video Games to Teach Secondary History* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 9.,

⁷⁸ Michael F. Young *et al*, "Our Princess Is In Another Castle: A Review Of Trends In Serious Gaming For Education". *Review Of Educational Research* 82 (2012), p. 78.

⁷⁹ Stefania Matei, "Digital Cultures of Commemoration: Learning and Learning History Through Video Games," *proceedings from 20th International Conference on Control Systems and Science* (Bucharest, Romania, 2015): p. 779

⁸⁰ Kaya Yilmaz, "Historical Empathy and Its Implications for Classroom Practices in Schools." *The History Teacher* 40 no. 3 (2007), p. 331

⁸¹ Simon Parkin, *Death by Video Game*, p. 151.

(*Valiant Hearts*). These games address different historical events – *This War of Mine* is based on lived experiences during the Siege of Sarajevo, whereas *Valiant Hearts* explores various conflicts and themes present during the First World War – but both allow the player to be placed in an historical setting and contain a deliberate emphasis on explaining historical events and phenomena. In doing this, these games allow for a greater understanding not only of these events, but aim to develop an understanding of the world in general, the history of the world and an empathic connection with those who inhabit these historical spaces.⁸²

There are, of course, a myriad of issues to be addressed when introducing games to a school setting. In 2011, Jeremiah McCall published a seminal text in this field which served to both highlight and solve these issues. As a handbook for secondary history teachers looking to introduce video games into their classrooms, *Gaming the Past: Using Video Games to Teach Secondary History* succinctly outlines the games most suited to a classroom; how to ensure access for students; and how to organise lesson plans around certain aspects of these games. However, for my thesis, the aspect of this book which stands out is McCall's idea that not all historically based games can be used to study history.⁸³ He argues that great thought must be taken into considering which games will enhance students' education. Decades earlier, David Birt and Jon Nichol also defended historically-themed games against what they felt was an attack by the school system.⁸⁴ Much like McCall, Birt and Nichol dedicated their book *Games and Simulations in History* to outlining how games (in this case board games that were either commercially purchased or made by the individual teacher) could be used to augment established methods when teaching students about the majority of historical situations.⁸⁵ Despite being published nearly four decades apart, both these texts insist that games can, and should be, part of historical education in an academic setting but do not proposit that games should be the only tool for education. As I will demonstrate via my case studies, I believe that this assertion can be extended to include the general public.

It can be seen that although video games are a little-addressed medium in history, academics in education have long since realised the potential for games to transmit knowledge. Indeed, educationalists already has developed a significant body of scholarship on the ways games can be used to teach and some specifically address the question of how teaching history works in this

⁸² Simon Parkin, *Death by Video Game*, p. 166

⁸³ McCall, *Gaming the Past*, p. 22.

⁸⁴ David Birt and John Nichol, *Games and Simulations in History* (London: Longman, 1975), p. 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

situation. Cason E. Snow provided a particularly interesting argument when considering this.⁸⁶

Through case studies and an assessment of their historical accuracy, Snow argues that whether a game presents 'true' historical fact is irrelevant. Instead, he emphasises that games can and should be used to create a desire for further historical enquiry. This is incredibly relevant to my thesis as my own research does not seek to assert that games can, or even should, present an accurate historical recount but rather than they can provide an insight into an historical event that other mediums are incapable of.

There has also been significant research conducted into the necessity of historical empathy to aid learning in the classroom. Some of these ideas about empathy as a corner stone of historical education have been written about and indeed can be applied to my proposal for games as a form of non-academic education. This idea itself can be broken down into two separate aspects: firstly, the ability of games to reveal the past on its own terms; and secondly, the high level of interactivity which allows for a player to invest in the history that a game is presenting. Dawn Spring's 2014 article "Gaming History: Computer and Video Games as Historical Scholarship" take Snow's ideas and extends them in a controversial manner.⁸⁷ Spurred by a clear desire to marry the discipline of history with theories about gaming, Spring ambitiously suggests that the path of historians' works lays with game creation as opposed to traditional forms of academic delivery – essentially that instead of writing theses and books, historians should make games. By drawing on popular titles, such as the *Assassin's Creed* franchise (first game released 2007), Spring suggests that although these games are not historically accurate they do demonstrate the potential for historians to create, or assist in the creation of, accurate historical narratives within a game design. However, Spring lacks the practical knowledge to suggest how this leap between disciplines could be achieved which is of course inherently problematic. Although I don't necessarily agree that games should be applied in this way, Spring does offer a compelling argument regarding games their engagement with history and it is this idea which is central to my own thesis.

Violence and Video Games

Despite their long history, video games remain both profitable and high controversial. Many games are derided as being violent or as promoting anti-social behaviour, such as theft. Although such themes are common in video games, I feel it is important to address the narrative which suggests

⁸⁶ Cason E. Snow, "Playing with History: A Look at Video Games, World History and Libraries," *Community & Junior College Libraries* 16 (2010), pp. 128–135.

⁸⁷ Dawn Spring, "Gaming History: Computer and Video Games as Historical Scholarship," *Rethinking History* 19 no. 2 (2014), pp. 207–221.

that video games compromise a player's morality. Indeed, I believe quite the opposite. When individuals talk about exposure to video games, they often seem to hold the idea that players will become desensitised to any violence portrayed and that playing will eliminate the response to a traumatic stimulus that would otherwise be expected to elicit a response.⁸⁸ This narrative inevitably focuses on first person shooter (FPS) games.⁸⁹ This issue has become increasingly debated since the Columbine Massacre of 1999 and the Utøya Island shootings in 2012. In both these events the perpetrators had played violent FPS games (*Call of Duty* and a modified version of *Doom* respectively) and some argued these games had encouraged these attacks.⁹⁰ Since the 1990s, research has been conducted into whether or not games make people more violent and why people seem to prefer playing violent games.⁹¹ The conclusion of these, and similar studies, is that there is a correlation between the playing of photorealistic video games and an increase in violent behaviour.⁹² Even historians like Joanna Bourke point out that video games allow for a 'gamification' of war in order to not only normalise military violence but coerce those playing into aligning themselves with the military.⁹³ By doing this, there is a possibility that FPS games offer some kind of perversely violent experience for those who do not experience the violence of war firsthand.⁹⁴ Indeed, Bourke has suggested that games are directly linked to violent acts of war:

As must be obvious by now, war games are heavily freighted with ideological messages. Playing is always an interaction between self and world. Gamers and their virtual worlds are always embedded in a political space. In the case of war games... they are saturated with talk of 'our troops', habituating civilians with an

⁸⁸ Brendan Gail Rule and Tamara J. Ferguson, "The Effects Of Media Violence On Attitudes, Emotions, And Cognitions," *Journal Of Social Issues* 42 no 3 (1986), p. 29.

⁸⁹ Tom Bissell, *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011): p. 130.

⁹⁰ Tom Bissell, *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011): p. 130.

⁹¹ Notably, several studies conducted by Funk & Buchman (Jeanne B. Funk and Debra D. Buchman, "Playing Violent Video and Computer Games and Adolescent Self-Concept," *Journal of Communication* 46 (1996): 19–32) specifically examined how children perceived violence in video games. In these studies, they found that half of the children interviewed indicated that their favourite games contained some form of violence. Studies in the early 2000s could go on to suggest that there is a correlation between playing violent video games and increased argumentativeness and an increase in physical fights. Funk, Buchman & Germann (Jeanne B. Funk, Debra D. Buchman and Julie N. Germann, "Preference for Violent Electronic Games, Self-Concept, and Gender Differences in Young Children," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 70 (2000): pp. 233-241) and Bushman & Anderson (Craig A. Anderson and Brad J. Bushman, "The Effects of Media Violence on Society," *Science* 295 (2002): pp. 2377-2379) both examine this specific phenomenon.

⁹² Douglas A. Gentile, *Media Violence And Children: A Complete Guide For Parents And Professionals* (Westport: Praeger Publishing, 2014): p. 151.

⁹³ Joanna Bourke, *Wounding The World: How Military Violence And War-Play Invade Our Lives* (London: Virago Press, 2014), p. 214.

⁹⁴ Bissell, *Extra Lives*, p. 130.

armed version of themselves. Combat legitimacy is absolutely jettisoned for player proficiency. In fact, playing these games is a form of participating in war.⁹⁵

However, it is my belief that this medium, despite its flaws, offers an exceptional opportunity for the transmission of historical knowledge. By playing games a non-academic member of the public may be able to gain greater insight into an historical event by gaining a perspective of an historical event unobtainable in any other medium –namely, an empathetic perspective. This empathetic perspective is created due to the interactive and immersive narrative nature of games and ultimately serves to override the violence found in a game.

Concluding Thoughts

Although some academic work has been conducted surrounding video games, there is an obvious gap in that literature. However, by examining ideas surrounding public history, educational pedagogy and game studies, one can begin to see how video games can be viewed as a valuable academic pursuit in the field of modern history.

Historians working in the field of public history have found that there is value in using films to inform the public. This is partially due to the emotive connection which can be found by engaging with this form of media. This then enhances the audience's ability to empathise with the history being presented, which prompts an engagement with these narratives. These ideas are supported by the presence of pedagogical information and the already established practice of using video games in classrooms. This is particularly pertinent when considering narrative games, usually RPGs, as they serve to immerse players into the game world – a characteristic which can be utilised to place players in an historical setting thereby informing them about the historical context of a game.

Despite having an extensive and rich history, video games are subject to constant changes, developments and criticism. From the first commercial release of the *Magnavox Odyssey* console (1972) to the increasing availability of virtual reality games, video games have been able to provide players with not only entertainment, but also offer a way to present challenging narratives, inform players of experiences that they would not have known of otherwise and provide an understandable version of life.⁹⁶ While not all video games are the same and, as with film, not all can be used to teach the public about history, they should in no way be disregarded as a medium. In the following chapters, I will build on these ideas presented and demonstrate how *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* and *This War of Mine* can be seen as examples of games which are able to transmit historical

⁹⁵ Burke, *Wounding the World: How Military Violence and War-Play Invade Our Lives*, p. 213.

⁹⁶ Parkin, Simon. *Death By Video Games*, p. 274.

knowledge to their players and, by doing so, promote both interest in these historical events and a critique of their representation.

Chapter 2 – Valiant Hearts: The Great War

From the battlefields of World War I emerged the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Robert Graves, among others. These soldiers, caught in the middle of a devastating war, aimed to offer a way to memorialise and understand this conflict and to ensure that the lesson it had taught the world would not be forgotten. In “Repression of War Experience”, Sassoon writes:

There must be crowds of ghosts among the trees,—
Not people killed in battles, —they’re in France,—
But horrible shapes in shrouds—old men who died
Slow, natural deaths,—old men with ugly souls,
Who wore out their bodies with nasty sins.

...

Those whispering guns—O Christ, I want to go out
And screech at them to stop—I’m going crazy;
I’m going stark, staring mad because of the guns.⁹⁷

In this piece, Sassoon portrays a very real and relevant pre-occupation in popular culture about war: how can one possibly express the horrors of war, the horrors echoed throughout the rest of participants’ lives, if an individual was not there? This tradition of remembrance is firmly rooted in the traumatic recollections of ‘the war to end all wars’. In essence, popular culture remains pre-occupied with ways to remember the First World War and how this remembrance is presented.

In this chapter, I will examine how Triple A developer Ubisoft Montpellier has framed the remembrance of the First World War in their 2014 video game *Soldats inconnus: Mémoires de la Grande Guerre* (Unknown Soldiers: Memoirs of the Great War), which is marketed in English as *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* (*Valiant Hearts*). This game was designed using letters written during the war by the grandfather of the creative director, Yoan Fanise.⁹⁸ In this game, one is able to step into the shoes of participants in the First World War and understand the experience of soldiers and civilians; those simply caught in the cross-fire of global politics. In stepping into the game, players are invited to experience the First World War from a deeply personal point of view. Consequently, players are able to experience this war in an immersive and informative way. This said, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* aims to be authentic but is not entirely realistic, reflecting the fact that

⁹⁷ Siegfried Sassoon, “Repression Of War Experience”, in *The Penguin Book Of First World War Poetry*, ed. George Walter (Victoria: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 215.

⁹⁸ Joseph Leray, “‘Valiant Hearts: The Great War’ Review - In The Trenches”. *Toucharcade* 29 September 2014, available from <http://toucharcade.com/2014/09/29/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review/>.

although it aims to transmit historical knowledge it is ultimately a game and therefore subject to the requirements of that medium.⁹⁹

Great War remembrance in popular culture

In Australia, the legacy of the First World War permeates society and this pre-occupation is reflected in the popular culture created surrounding this. Australia's involvement in the Great War – in particular, the Gallipoli campaign – has lent itself to a remembrance where the associated areas are not only sites of mourning, but also symbols of sacrifice and national identity.¹⁰⁰ The events of this offensive have been mythologised and the soldiers who took part in this have come to represent the 'best' characteristics that Australians embody.¹⁰¹ This has caused Australian contemporary society to use the Anzac legend as a kind of currency not only in commercial terms, but also through an association with the political and academic spheres.¹⁰² However, this sentiment has always been apparent due to the contentious origins of the Anzac legend as a tool of propaganda during the Great War to foster support for the war effort and to spur recruitment numbers.¹⁰³ As Carolyn Holbrook argues in her book *Anzac: the Unauthorised Biography*, the remembrance of the First World War is not a static thing, but rather subject to influences from changing ideologies, intellectual fashions and moral beliefs.¹⁰⁴ However, overwhelmingly there is a presence of a narrative in popular culture which supports the exultation of Gallipoli (and therefore the First World War as a whole) as the moment when the nation of Australia was born and the shackles of British imperialism were shed.¹⁰⁵

The popularity of this kind of remembrance of the First World War can be seen in films such as *Gallipoli* (1981). After its release, *Gallipoli* earned both critical and commercial success and did a lot of work to shift the foundations of the Anzac legend from stories of military prowess and patriotism

⁹⁹ Leray, "Valiant Hearts: The Great War' Review - In The Trenches".

¹⁰⁰ Rhys Crawley, "The Myths Of August At Gallipoli", *Zombie Myths Of Australian Military History: 10 Myths That Will Not Die*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010), p. 50.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Reynaud, "Gallipoli", in *Making Film and Television Histories: Australia and New Zealand*, ed. James E. Bennett and Rebecca Beirne (New York: IB Tauris & Co Ltd., 2012), p. 128.

¹⁰² Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (New South Wales: NewSouth Publishing, 2014), p. 1.

¹⁰³ Reynaud, "Gallipoli", p. 128.

¹⁰⁴ Holbrook, *Anzac*, p. 207.

¹⁰⁵ Apart from *Gallipoli*, other popular culture products which concern the First World War (both made in Australia and made internationally) include, but are not limited to: *Journey's End*, *War Horse* (2011), *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), *The Dawn Patrol* (1938), *Oh What a Lovely War* (1969), *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989) and *My Boy Jack* (2007) to name a few.

to a pro-Australian, and largely anti-British, sentiment.¹⁰⁶ This then allowed for Australia to be conceptualised as a nation on its own terms rather than a nation which was an imitation, or offshoot, of Britain. Peter Stanley argues that this film was so popular that no discussion of the First World War during the 1980s could proceed without reference to it.¹⁰⁷

This idea can also be witnessed in American and British popular culture surrounding the First World War. In both countries, cinema played a particularly large role in framing the remembrance of this conflict.¹⁰⁸ Andrew Kelly suggests that this may be for a very particular reason, namely that:

The personal witness has almost disappeared. What will remain is the art of war – the poetry and prose, the paintings, photographs and the films. And it is this art which has dominated perceptions of the war since 1918 and which continues to mould the conscience and the imagination.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, popular culture surrounding this time period aims to reveal the unimaginable loss suffered in the First World War, as well as making apparent the longing felt by soldiers and civilians across nations during this time.¹¹⁰ As I will highlight, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* also aims to speak to a particular type of remembrance of the First World War, in the same way that the products of popular culture do.

Gameplay of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*

From the title screen, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* establishes a desire to present an informative and authentic experience of the First World War. The title of this game reveals how Ubisoft has positioned players to view this conflict- namely as an event filled with bravery. Although historical discourse is facilitated, there is a large amount of moral realism present in the game, along with moral implications and ethical reasoning as a way to invite players to question their choices and their pre-conceived ideas about the First World War.¹¹¹ This then establishes an implicit idea that there will be ideological and moral conflicts throughout the game. Of course this element was present in the war itself and this affects the process of remembrance. Within the game this remembrance is presented in three ways: through the interaction between the setting itself and the

¹⁰⁶ Holbrook, *Anzac*, pp. 138–9.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Stanley, “War without end,” In *Australian History Now*, ed. Anna Clark and Paul Ashton (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2013): p. 100

¹⁰⁸ Andrew Kelly, *Cinemas and the Great War*. (Oxon: Routledge, 1997) p.15

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1

¹¹⁰ David Williams, *Media, Memory, and the First World War* (Quebec: McGill’s University Press, 2009), p. 4.

¹¹¹ Matei, “Digital Cultures Of Commemoration”, p. 779.

positioning of the player, the presence and influence of particular characters and character narrative arcs and the overt desire to impart clear historical facts and discourse.

The development process of a game, as well as the developers themselves, will always influence how a game portrays difficult themes. In the case of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*, Ubisoft's position as one of the giants of Triple A games has increased the capacity of this game to have an impact on the memorialisation of the First World War due to their capacity to reach large audiences. Ubisoft, as an umbrella company, has over 30 development studios.¹¹² *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* was developed by Ubisoft Montpellier, which is better known for the games which were released after *Valiant Hearts*, such as *Assassin's Creed Unity* (2014) and *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* (2015). Although this game, like others, can be seen as being obsessed by warfare, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* is a studied depiction of the First World War where, notably, no character engages in active warfare.¹¹³ By removing the mechanics of combat warfare, the focus of the game instead becomes focused on the narrative presented.

Much like the *Assassin's Creed* series, *Valiant Hearts* is designed within an historical setting. However, great care has been taken to frame historical experiences through the lens of remembrance. This game weaves a rich tapestry of sacrifice and courage set against the complexity of the First World War. Despite its cartoon appearance and simple gameplay, *Valiant Hearts* provides players with an emotive and informative experience. In addition, the artwork never conceals the horror of the war itself.¹¹⁴ As can be seen below, the effects of war are still made present, demonstrated in the shell-marked landscape and the smoke that fills the air. Despite this site being rendered as a cartoon, it is still apparent that the war has had a devastating effect on the places these characters inhabit. The art of the game itself also presents both significant challenges. At first glance, this game is childlike in its portrayal of war. The art is undoubtedly cartoon like, the player characters (PCs) all speak in a kind of jumbled version of their native languages and the only audible vocal content in the English version comes from a British narrator (ironic, considering that there are no British PCs). One review succinctly expresses this, observing:

Valiant Hearts: The Great War is one of the most human and sensitive games about war ever released...the game successfully couches grim truths in a story with endearing characters, gorgeous art, and moments of jubilation and

¹¹² "Ubisoft - Montpellier", *Ubisoft*, available from <https://www.ubisoft.com/en-US/studio/montpellier.aspx>.

¹¹³ Daniel Krupa, "Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review - IGN", *IGN* 24 June 2014, available from <http://au.ign.com/articles/2014/06/24/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

adventure, making its tale about how war destroys lives accessible and appealing to players of all ages while still giving the war's tremendous human cost the acknowledgement it deserves...in this game, you are not a killing machine. The war itself is.¹¹⁵



*fig 1: Walt, Anna, Emile and Freddy fleeing the devastation of the frontline.*¹¹⁶

Ubisoft Montpellier clearly wanted to create an informative game and indeed the developer worked extensively with Mission Centenaire who specifically aim to offer a way for the public to understand the First World War.¹¹⁷ In addition to this, the game draws on historical sources from several international archival repositories including: the Australian War Memorial, Filmmuseum, Ministère de la Défense Belge and the US Library of Congress. This desire to credit the archival and historical sources that have been used indicate that the developers have intended to inform players about the historical realities of the First World War and also provides a way for the developers to make a case for authenticity by presenting their credentials.

¹¹⁵ Carolyn Petit, "Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review", *Gamespot*, available from <https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review/1900-6415800/>

¹¹⁶ Keith Pagan, "Game Review: Valiant Hearts: The Great War (Draft) | Kevin Pagan's English 1102 Blog E4", available from *Blogs.iac.Gatech.Edu*. <http://blogs.iac.gatech.edu/pagankeng1102e4/2015/02/20/game-review-valiant-hearts-the-great-war/>.

¹¹⁷ Mission Centenaire is a French organisation designed to work in conjunction with the French Government to prepare and implement a commemoration program for the centenary of the Great War. Working under the supervision of the deputy minister of War veterans, the Mission Centenaire aims to promote understanding of the Great War by supporting private and public remembrance in both France and abroad. *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* was one of the games that this organisation supported. More information can be found on the Mission Centenaire website: <http://centenaire.org/fr>

This game asks the player to invest in the motivations of the characters. The common theme throughout *Valiant Hearts* is the tearing apart of families due to war and the desire to be reunited.

There are five distinct player characters (PCs) found in this game, four human and one canine: Emile, Karl, Freddie, Anna and Walt. Emile Chaillon is a French farmer who becomes a prisoner of war in 1914. Although aged, Emile has joined the war partially to find his German son-in-law who was forcibly deported. Notably, Emile is the only PC who is given a last name and is deliberately based in non-combat, military, roles for the majority of the game.¹¹⁸ Karl is Emile's son-in-law who is living in France at the outbreak of war. Due to his German heritage, Karl is quickly deported to Germany leaving behind his wife, Marie, and young son, Victor. Karl spends the majority of the game trying to return to his family although he is not a playable character until chapter 3, where he to escape a Prisoner-of-war camp.¹¹⁹ Freddie is rather an unusual character in this game as he is American but present at a time before America joins the First World War. The player eventually becomes privy to the fact that Freddie's wife was killed in a mortar strike by the German army and so he has joined the French Foreign Legion as a way to seek revenge.¹²⁰ As the only female PC in the game, Anna is of particular interest to any analysis of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*. Although Belgian, Anna has been living in Paris. When her father is kidnapped by the German commander Baron Von Dorf she enters the conflict to act as a freelance nurse, tending the wounded no matter what side of the conflict they are fighting on.¹²¹ Most unusually, players are able to play as a dog for part of the game. This dog, Walt, operates with a dual function. In terms of gameplay, Walt allows a way for all four characters to be linked and he assists in solving puzzles.¹²² In terms of supporting historical exploration in the game, Walt allows the pivotal role of animals in the First World War to be discovered. Walt proved so popular with players of *Valiant Hearts* that a mobile-exclusive interactive comic, *Valiant Hearts: Dogs of War*, was released in late 2014 which again serves to highlight the functional role that animals, particularly dogs, played during the First World War.¹²³ The presence of varied characters allows this game to present the experiences and roles of not only animals, but also women and minorities in the wartime context.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸"Emile," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Emile>.

¹¹⁹"Karl," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Karl>.

¹²⁰"Freddie," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Freddie>.

¹²¹ "Anna," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Anna>.

¹²² "Walt," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Walt>.

¹²³ "Valiant Hearts: Dogs of War," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Valiant_Hearts:_Dogs_of_War.

¹²⁴ Matei, "Digital Cultures Of Commemoration," p. 780.

Players become invested in the stories of these characters, the outrage and the fear and the grief that they feel. This builds up to the ending of the game where Emile is executed by firing squad after being court-martialled for accidentally killing his commanding officer. This event occurs because during a battle this officer refuses to stop sending men to their deaths by forcing them through the trenches, despite seeing three soldiers in a row die. Emile picks up the shovel that he has been carrying for the whole game and hits him over the head with it. It is very clear that he doesn't mean to kill the officer. The shovel has been a necessary tool for problem solving throughout the game and this is the first time in the game that Emile is placed in a direct combat role. However, the officer dies and the final sequence of the game sees Emile executed by firing squad for treachery. The game ends at this point, evoking the sudden loss when a family member is killed during war. As players are creating an empathetic connection with the characters suffering through this turmoil, and sympathise with the sudden loss of Emile, they are able to gain a broader contextual understanding of how uncertain the future of an individual was during the First World War. By including characters from various countries, acting on both sides of the conflict, Ubisoft is allowing players to empathize with the individuals who are all facing the same struggles during the war, and the same consequences of the hostilities. This conveys the idea to players that 'war is hell' not matter what side of the conflict you are on.¹²⁵ I am of the opinion that this then allows for a greater scope to present an overall idea of remembrance of the First World War in this game, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹²⁵ Matei, "Digital Cultures Of Commemoration," p. 779



Fig 2. Emile being led to his death¹²⁶

The gameplay of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* is largely a point and click puzzle game with a multitude of cut scenes. Because of this, there is a heavy emphasis on the storyline and on the historical events being presented. Littered throughout the game is the opportunity to access historical facts about the conflicts taking place as well as the opportunity to read the letters and diary entries of real life soldiers (as provided by the aforementioned archival and historical sources). There is also a list of optional facts at the beginning of each level, which serve to give an insight into the conditions that soldiers and civilians face.¹²⁷ This, as well as the presence of collectable objects, further promotes an air of historical authenticity and the promotion of historical knowledge.¹²⁸ Indeed, the game can be seen as creating a digital museum where players are allowed to view a large variety of objects and artefacts that were indispensable to soldiers and civilians during the First World War.¹²⁹

Valiant Hearts is designed to allow the player access to multiple types of characters in order to best represent the diversity of experience in the First World War. Even when characters become soldiers,

¹²⁶ Brandon Jacobs, "25 Most Tragic Deaths In Video Game History", *Whatculture.Com*, available from <http://whatculture.com/gaming/25-most-tragic-deaths-in-video-game-history?page=12>.

¹²⁷ Thomas Dennis, "PS4 Review For Valiant Hearts The Great War", *Express.Co.Uk.*, available from <http://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/gaming/564173/Valiant-Hearts-The-Great-War-ps4-review-playstation-plus>.

¹²⁸ Matei, "Digital Cultures Of Commemoration", p. 779.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 780.

they cannot be controlled on the battlefield. The aim is ultimately to express the idea that people's experiences of war were not two dimensional but varied greatly. This game goes on to engage with the experiences of ethnically diverse soldiers in the First World War, the impact of fighting on civilians, technological developments in war and the treatment of prisoners of war, among other themes.

It is clear that this game, as it stands and with the design choices that have been made, cannot always portray the gravity and impact of this conflict. The popular website 'Eurogamer' suggests that Ubisoft does ultimately acknowledge the flaw in this design via the presence of historical notes which highlight the inability of any medium to accurately portray the carnage of the First World War, while trying to enforce the presence of said carnage:

...to get to heart of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*: war is hell, and Ubisoft is more than aware that game design – that art – is rarely up to engaging with hell head on. Take a quick tour of the game's unlockable historical notes and you'll see why, of course. 70,000 were killed each month in the battle of Verdun, for example – and that battle would last 10 months. Few games, regardless of how artfully they're constructed, could make sense of that figure to an audience. Few books and documentaries have, either, and the same is pretty much true for all the wars and all the battles since.¹³⁰

This kind of self-reflection that is present within *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* supports Ubisoft's intention of combining historical education with a fun and engaging game. Indeed, this idea is widely supported among reviewers.¹³¹ However, when there are criticism of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* they tend to be due to the apparent disconnect between the gameplay itself and the unlockable archival material present in the game. I believe that this disconnect promotes a wider understanding of the First World War as it establishes an historical and contextual understanding of the events before a player is then required to play through said event.

Valiant Hearts: The Great War and representations of the First World War

One of the striking features of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* is its ability to represent different facets of the First World War. This is largely due to the way the game immerses the player in a narrative of war from the perspective of active participants in the conflict.¹³² By being able to

¹³⁰ Christian Donlan, "Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review". *Eurogamer.Net*. 25 June 2014, <http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2014-06-25-valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>.

¹³¹ Reviews from Eurogamer (<http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2014-06-25-valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>), Polygon (<https://www.polygon.com/game/valiant-hearts-the-great-war/14850>) and Touch Arcade (<http://toucharcade.com/2014/09/29/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review/>) all support this assertion

¹³² Matei, "Digital Cultures Of Commemoration", p. 782.

interact with different social actors, the player is able to gain a better understanding of the significance of the historical events – a characteristic of the game which is supported by the different liminal spaces that the player characters inhabit.¹³³ By doing this, a greater scope of the First World can be covered. Although it is contrived that at least one of the player characters would be present at every major conflict, this game mechanism allows for players to gain a wider insight into the historical events of the conflict.

Valiant Hearts presents a specific perspective of the events of the Great War. Stefania Matei suggests that this game was developed, and therefore can be understood, as a critique of war, because of the contrast between the depictions of violent, destructive weapons and the raw humanity of the characters themselves. She argues the game creates a narrative where ‘friendship and love are set in opposition with war crimes and betrayal.’¹³⁴ Matei outlines the way *Valiant Hearts* asks players to remember the Great War a certain way:

The game invites players to remember WWI as a tragic event in which thousands of innocent people lost their lives. It creates a discourse of war as a place of suffering, endurance and hardship all of which are experienced both by civilians and soldiers.¹³⁵

It is this discourse which permeates *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* and allows the game to both remain a gripping and engaging video game as well as successfully demonstrating the horror of World War One.¹³⁶

Not all players of *Valiant Hearts* have seen its educational and empathetic power and potential. Daniel Krupa, for example, points out that the game itself does go to great lengths to demonstrate the horror of war and how this has effected people of all nationalities but has clear flaws. Krupa finds this intention at odds with the portrayal of the game’s main villain, Baron Von Dorf. Krupa states that “to have a bratwurst-chomping, pretzel-loving villain as the only identifiable character

¹³³ Matei, “Digital Cultures Of Commemoration”, p. 781. Although all conflict presented in this game takes place on the Western Front, players find themselves in both suburban and rural contexts, as well as in a variety of countries.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 778.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 779.

¹³⁶ Matt Kamen, “Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review – An Emotional Gutpunch”, *The Guardian*, 20 July 2014, available from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jul/20/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>.

seems at odds with the rest of the experience.”¹³⁷ Despite this, Krupa does admit that this game presents a very human perspective of the war.¹³⁸

Concluding Thoughts

Although *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* is presented as a simple and rather quaint video game, it has the ability to inform those playing it about the lived experiences of the Great War. Notably, this game places the player in the position of five separate player characters each of who represent a different aspect of civilian or soldier experiences. *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* strives to provide accurate historical information to its players while still presenting an entertaining game. This is due to the collaboration between Ubisoft Montpellier and Mission Centenaire, and is furthered by the historical archives and pictures of objects presented within the game itself.

Valiant Hearts: The Great War presents a particular way of remembering the First World War. In presenting this war as a terrible event with a universally horrific outcome, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* positions players to transcend the view of the First World War as a war of glory and instead presents the characters as ordinary people caught in the crossfire of global politics. As one reviewer put it:

Valiant Hearts: The Great War is significant in many ways. It not only gives us a rewarding and engaging way to see the horrors of war as it pertains to this particular likeable cast of characters, but it also educates us on one of the most significant events in history. Ubisoft Montpellier could have just delivered a good game and called it a day, but they went above and beyond the call of duty to add context to the proceedings, and that is quite the commendable effort.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Daniel Krupa, “Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review,” *IGN* 24 June 2014, available from <http://au.ign.com/articles/2014/06/24/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Chris Carter, “Review: Valiant Hearts: The Great War,” *Destructoid*, available from <https://www.destructoid.com/review-valiant-hearts-the-great-war-277017.phtml>.

Chapter 3 – This War Of Mine

When trying to bring his experience of being in Cairo at the beginning of the Arab Spring into popular consciousness, Mitch Swenson faced a dilemma: how was he going to make people in America care about an event so far removed from their own lives? He found that simply telling the experience of him being a 26-year-old journalism student travelling with the Sham Falcon Brigade, a group opposed to Syria's then-president Bashar al-Assad, failed to hit a nerve with his colleagues at Columbia University. He had wanted to not only express the details of his experiences but also the emotions he had felt during that time. To combat the apathy he encountered, Swenson developed the game *1,000 Days of Syria* – a free-to-play game. Swenson reasoned:

if readers struggle to engage with stories of the lives of ordinary people living in fear and anguish on the other side of the world, perhaps they will empathise if asked to live out a day or a week in their shoes. Maybe a video game, which moves the player from passive spectator to active protagonist, would communicate something of the urgency that [I] had felt there, running across that field.¹⁴⁰

A similar desire to promote empathy drove the Polish company *11 bit studio* to develop *This War of Mine*. The studio set out to make a type of game that they felt had never been made before; a game that had the potential to matter, to make a difference and to strike an emotional chord with its players.¹⁴¹ Since its release on 14 November 2014, *This War of Mine* has achieved both player and industry praise and has consistently been a top seller on Steam, one of the most common game distribution platforms. It has won over 100 development awards, which is no mean feat for an independently developed (indie) game.¹⁴² However, while the game is ostensibly about war, *This War of Mine* is not a glossy, fast-paced first-person shooter (FPS) game, like so many successful war games are. *This War of Mine* is dark, gritty and monotonous, stripping away any glory or glamour and leaving players instead with the realisation that war is not an event to be won but rather a constant struggle to survive. Game reviewer Rob Zacny summed up the developers intent: "Games can be ridiculously reductive portrayals of complex problems...war, politics...they're all 'winnable'...*This War of Mine* is a different – and far more honest – kind of game."¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Simon Parkin, *Death by Video Game*, p. 148.

¹⁴¹ "About Us – 11 bit studios", *11Bitstudios.Com*, available from <http://www.11bitstudios.com/about-us/>.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Rob Zacny, "This War of Mine Review- IGN". *IGN* 15 November 2014, <http://au.ign.com/articles/2014/11/15/this-war-of-mine-review>.

Of course, the representation and enacting of violence is, of course, a wider concern in *This War of Mine*. Actions, no matter how necessary or seemingly needed, will always have consequences. *This War of Mine* specifically asks players to understand the implications of their actions. Furthermore, this creation demands an understanding of the kinds of choices, emotions and consequences experienced by people who lived through the Siege of Sarajevo- as the developers of *This War of Mine* did.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, *This War of Mine* reflects the typical narrative of the Bosnian War. The Siege of Sarajevo is a particularly relevant event to examine in a game, due to the highly emotive forms of cultural production that have developed from the trauma experienced. Indeed in many works of fiction, *This War of Mine* included, the Siege of Sarajevo has come to represent a multitude of wartime experiences.¹⁴⁵ Veraet suggests that written media surrounding this specific historical event recreates the past in order to preserve the memories, and therefore the lessons, of the Bosnian War as a whole.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, it appears as if memories of this event were being solidified even as the area was under siege.

The question then becomes what to do with these memories, as well as the large amount of archival evidence created during the Siege of Sarajevo, and how they can be used to inform the general public about the trauma of this event in a way that does justice to the accounts. Although a game may be seen as an inappropriate way to memorialise such an event, games and other, similar forms of media, allow not only an opportunity to experience lives which are not our own but can also make sense of trauma and invite others to experience that and, hopefully, learn from it.¹⁴⁷ If we extend these ideas to look specifically at *The War of Mine*, it becomes apparent that this game fits into this same didactic outline by making use of contra-ludicity (counter play) to emphasise that war is not a game.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Evan Narcisse, "This War Of Mine: The Kotaku Review". Kotaku Australia, November 2014, available from <https://www.kotaku.com.au/2014/11/this-war-of-mine-the-kotaku-review/>. Although this is the only review that I have found to support this, Narcisse states that the developers lived through the Siege of Sarajevo and therefore are able to lend a particular type of authenticity to the development of a game such as this. Although I attempted to contact the publisher to verify this, no response was received.

¹⁴⁵ Antonio Monegal, "Aporias Of The War Story", *Journal Of Spanish Cultural Studies* 3 no 1 (2002), p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ Stijn Vervaet, "Writing War, Writing Memory. The Representation Of The Recent Past And The Construction Of Cultural Memory In Contemporary Bosnian Prose", *Neohelicon* 38 no 1 (2010), p. 5

¹⁴⁷ Simon Parkin, *Death by Video Game*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁸ Elisabeta Toma, "Self-reflection and Morality in Critical Games. Who is to be Blamed for War?," *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 6 no 1 (2015): pp. 214–15. Contra-ludic elements in *This War of Mine* are found in the portrayal of war as a series of instances within a game, and the subsequent realisation that war cannot be broken down and compartmentalised into discreet aspects but is rather overwhelmingly present and real.

The Gameplay of *This War of Mine*

This War of Mine places the player in control of a group of civilians during a civil war and is based on civilian experiences during the Siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian War of 1992–1995. The Siege of Sarajevo itself began on 6 April 1992 and ended on 29 February 1996. *This War of Mine* is uncompromising in its depiction of life in a worn-torn city. Despite clearly being about the Siege of Sarajevo, the decision was made to remove this game from a distinct historical setting as the developers wanted to deliberately design a game which had an ‘everyman’ kind of feel, as if the war in this game could be any war, at any time, happening to any person.¹⁴⁹ Although at first glance this may seem to affect the authenticity of an historical experience I believe that *This War of Mine* is able to communicate a universal war experience. It enables players to place themselves in the situation of the characters and question what they would do if a civil war suddenly started in their own country. *This War of Mine* “feels like it’s happening somewhere right now, somewhere where boots just stomped and bombs just fell.”¹⁵⁰ In doing this, *This War of Mine* creates an understanding within the player that the Siege of Sarajevo was a traumatic and horrifying experience, transfers this understanding to a broader historical context and encourages this understanding to be applied to all wars. While this game is not intended to allow players to walk away with a working knowledge of the Siege of Sarajevo, it does allow an empathetic connection to be established in relation to the experiences of civilians in war in general. Essentially, by bringing this question of perspective to the forefront, historical empathy is created and an historical narrative can emerge. The developers place the players in the active role of a protagonist in a story that then allows the creation of their own agency. This player agency comes with a decision-making ability and limited freedoms, which in turn allow the player to experience lives, places and circumstances that differ from their own in a more powerful way.¹⁵¹

The playable characters (PCs) in *This War of Mine* are ordinary people, a far cry from the super soldier seen in game series like *Halo* (2001) and this emphasises the resilience that civilians must often show during war. As one reviewer put it: “Not every civilian is gifted enough to be an unstoppable pair of hands with a healing factor stolen from Wolverine...It takes a special kind of person to survive war. It quite honestly takes a bastard who is willing to do anything to live another

¹⁴⁹ “‘This War of Mine’ - The Pain of the People”, *Tay.Kinja.Com.*, available from <http://tay.kinja.com/this-war-of-mine-the-pain-of-the-peope-1728536771>

¹⁵⁰ Narcisse, “This War Of Mine: The Kotaku Review”.

¹⁵¹ Parkin, *Death by Video Game*, p. 150.

day.”¹⁵² Players are assigned up to five characters who are all very distinct from each other. These characters each have their own personality, backstory and addictions, building on the idea that these are just ordinary people trying to survive during the war. Characters range from the elderly mathematician Anton who wants nothing more than to return to teaching his students; to the reporter Katia who is desperately looking for her parents in the wreckage of the city that she once loved; to Cveta, a school principal who finds herself largely useless in a war where her skills as an administrator and educator are irrelevant. Depending on how a player approaches the game, the majority of characters will have one of three endings: a survival (good) ending, a survival (bad) ending and death ending. Some characters have a fourth ending but this is usually due to their running away or committing suicide and is, without exception, heart wrenching and reflective of the loss that war causes to both the individual and their community. 11 bit studios has deliberately emphasised not only the pre-war life of these characters but also the consequences of their deaths. For example in both the death and suicide endings for Cveta, the loss of the contributions she might have made after the war is lamented. Players getting either of these two endings will view the following text: “What answers could have Cveta found for all the difficult questions her pupils could pose, had she lived to see the end of the war? Now the children will have to find them on their own” or “Bitter, unable to face the harsh reality of war any longer, Cveta committed suicide. Her students will have to rely on someone else to help them recover from the trauma of the war.”¹⁵³ These kinds of endings emphasis the far-reaching consequences of war on civilian lives and communities and forces players to understand that every action or event in a war has intense ramifications in the future.

¹⁵² Darryn Bonthuys, “This War Of Mine Review – I’mma Let It Shine”, *Criticalhit.Net.*, available from <http://www.criticalhit.net/review/this-war-of-mine-review-imma-let-it-shine/>.

¹⁵³ Steam Community Guide, This War of Mine, available from <https://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=360637077>.



Fig 3. Characters in *This War of Mine* reacting to the death of a group member with depression.¹⁵⁴

To enhance the dark emotions it portrays, the gameplay of *This War of Mine* is deceptively simple. During the day, the civilians work to improve their shelter and to keep each other healthy and happy. These days last only ten (actual) minutes and choices must be made about what actions the characters will be directed to take at each moment. At night, the player can choose whether to send one civilian out to scavenge for the few contested commodities left in the city and have other members of the group guard their new home from raiders. Opportunities are given throughout the game to assist non-player characters (NPCs) with both material items and labour. Although doing this will improve the mood of the player characters (PCs) this is done at the risk of limiting the supplies of the shelter and therefore possibly causing harm in the future. Conversely, scavenging PCs can be directed to kill non-aggressive NPCs and steal their supplies which causes all controlled PCs to spiral into depression but does allow them to equip the shelter with more supplies.

It is in this scavenging night phase that *This War of Mine* displays its genius and where the moral challenges of war are most clearly portrayed. Players are able to choose where to send their character and are able to see how much danger they may be in if they go there; whether there is the possibility of trade; and what type of resources can be found at that location.

Morality in *This War of Mine*

From a gaming perspective, one of the most tempting areas in *This War of Mine* is undoubtedly 'The Quiet House.' Players are informed that this house contains surplus amounts of both food and medicine – two of the hardest, but most necessary, things to find in the game. However, the house is

¹⁵⁴ Gilles Roy, "This War Of Mine: Human Survival And The Ethics Of Care | Play The Past", *Playthepast.Org.*, available from <http://www.playthepast.org/?p=5618>.

occupied by an elderly married couple who immediately ask players what they are doing there. Players then have a choice: they can steal from or kill the couple and gain their much coveted resources, or they can leave. If players choose to begin to steal the couple's supplies, the wife will flee in terror and the husband will begin to question them asking: "Do you have to do that? Where is your conscience?". It is important to note that, unlike other NPCs, he does not try to physically stop or harm you and it is up to the player to decide what course of action to take. However, if a player chooses to return to the quiet house after looting it they will find the old couple have died due to a lack of supplies – the very supplies that were stolen. If the old couple are not robbed or killed, they will continue to live and ultimately survive the war. One reviewer wrote extensively about their experience of encountering this dilemma:

An old man opened the door, telling me his wife is sick, and they cannot share. He stood there, chastising my silent character. And I then had to weigh my group's survival versus terrorizing an old couple's home. Four hours later, I returned home with enough supplies to eat for a week straight. A week and a half later, my scavenger still hadn't forgiven himself...Remorse is actually a tangible, ugly thing to visit upon the survivors in *This War of Mine*. Remorse causes characters to move slower, hang their heads, decide not to perform simple tasks due to the pointlessness of it all...And that's perhaps the ultimate point of *This War of Mine*: it doesn't stop. Survival when you're so disconnected from the things that right now make us full, happy, and human is monotonous. It's boring, and sad, and ongoing.¹⁵⁵

In that scenario, there is no right decision. In game play terms, if you choose to leave the couple alone you risk running out of the supplies which serve to sustain your characters and inhibit your ability to 'win' (survive) the game. Although this may be the 'right' decision, your characters will suffer psychological consequences which may push a character into depression or death.¹⁵⁶ *This War of Mine* creates a moment of difficult ethical choice under the guise of procedural, and necessary, gameplay.¹⁵⁷ But why is this an important phenomenon? In my opinion, this key moment forces a player to consider exactly what they would do if placed in this exact situation in real life and asks them to understand that such choices are part and parcel of life in a wartime situation where resources are deathly scarce. This in turn offers the opportunity for players to empathise with the reality of historical events, such as the Siege of Sarajevo, where such choices are not only found in the realm of video games but in real life and come with real life consequences.

¹⁵⁵ Justin Clark, "This War Of Mine Review", *Gamespot*. available from <https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/this-war-of-mine-review/1900-6415963/>.

¹⁵⁶ Toma, "Self-reflection and Morality in Critical Games", p. 214.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*.



Fig 4. The text that faces players when the choose to enter the 'Quiet House'¹⁵⁸

Empathy and Historical Education

Games are designed to produce a learning experience.¹⁵⁹ This said, a game which aims to portray an historical event will inevitably be unable to be completely accurate in its portrayal of the event due to the nature of the medium itself. However, this inherent flaw can be used as a way to critique history: by challenging a flawed interpretation of history one is able to apply a lens of historical critique and potentially learn from that.¹⁶⁰ Even disregarding this, video games offer a unique opportunity to make the past 'come alive' for players through revealing the motivations and consequences of past events and historical characters.¹⁶¹ This idea can also be translated in non-academic settings. This is because of this notion that all games involve learning, and so when a game is looking at military history, it has the ability to present the realities of war and thereby impart this knowledge to the players.¹⁶²

As discussed in the introduction, games are uniquely placed to create empathy between the player and the characters and events presented. Of course, this is partially due to the intention of the game. When one is playing *Pacman* (1980) there will not necessarily be the same level of emotional engagement as exists in *This War of Mine*. However, video games can be created specifically to

¹⁵⁸ "Quiet House", *This War Of Mine Wiki*, available from http://this-war-of-mine.wikia.com/wiki/Quiet_House.

¹⁵⁹ James Paul Gee, *Games, Learning, and Society: Learning and Meaning in the Digital Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), foreword, p. xvii.

¹⁶⁰ McCall, *Gaming the Past*, p. 30.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶² Rusel DeMaria, *Reset: Changing the Way we look at Video Games*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc., 2007), p. 47.

enhance knowledge (particularly cognitive, metacognitive and socioemotional skills) and this potential for education in both formal academic as well as non-academic contexts will continue to become more apparent to wider society.¹⁶³ A player of a video game cannot help but experience the narrative of a game through the perspective of the player character, which generates empathy. This forces the player to empathise with the event presented and so creates a powerful storytelling situation.¹⁶⁴ When applying this specifically to teaching history, the presence of empathy assists in the acquiring of knowledge and the understanding of the historical event by promoting students' sense of "the mentality, frames of reference, beliefs, values, intentions, and actions of historical agents."¹⁶⁵

Concluding Thoughts

This War of Mine is able to create an empathetic portrayal of civilians' experiences in war because of 11 bit studio's intention to create a game that reflects the experience of civilians during the Siege of Sarajevo and, by extension, war in general. *This War of Mine* presents an unrelenting version of history which serves to draw players in and forces them to emotionally connect with the player characters. In my opinion, by being contra-ludic this game provides a high level of accessible historical understanding and therefore can be used to educate the general public in non-academic settings. There is no doubt that this game doesn't present a fun experience, but it does however provide a sobering look into a side of war not often presented in the medium.¹⁶⁶ This in turn reflects the way other mediums look at the Siege of Sarajevo and allows the players to understand how war impacts those caught in the crossfire of global politics. As one reviewer put it:

This War Of Mine is difficult, unrelenting and just waiting for the right moment to kick you down to the ground and curb-stomp your face as you try to survive just one more day. It's the ugly side to the mega-popular big blockbuster side of warfare, the starving civilian to the super-soldier on the battlefield of tomorrow. It is quite simply one of the hardest games you'll ever play, and not because micro-managing every aspect of it feels like a dark version of the Sims. But despite all that constant misery, you might just find that you do have a heart.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Ute Ritterfeld and René Weber, "Video Games for Entertainment and Education," *ResearchGate* (2006): p. 404.

¹⁶⁴ Parkin, *Death by Video Game*, pp. 150–151.

¹⁶⁵ Kaya Yilmaz, "Historical Empathy and Its Implications for Classroom Practices in Schools." *The History Teacher* 40 (2007): p. 331

¹⁶⁶ Justin Clark, "This War Of Mine Review."

¹⁶⁷ Darren Bonthuys, "This War Of Mine Review."

Conclusion

As a medium, video games provide an opportunity for new types of historical engagement. In particular, some video games can be seen, and therefore utilised, as a form of public history. This is due to the inherent ability of video games to create empathy in players, which then, in terms of historical empathy, allows a greater contextual understanding of the actions of historical actors and of the events they engaged in to be created. Although this idea cannot be extended to all video games, there are some which are developed specifically to engage with historical understanding and historiography and so are able to educate players about the historical events being presented. Indeed, educational pedagogy has suggested that this is possible in a classroom setting, and historians researching film have allowed for a base of knowledge to be created regarding how visual sources can be utilised to inform public historical consciousness. Although historical understanding cannot be achieved by empathy alone, it does enrich the experience of historical learning.¹⁶⁸

In order to examine these ideas, I have produced a case study of two games: *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* (Ubisoft Montpellier) and *This War of Mine* (11 bit studios). *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* provides players with an opportunity to experience the conflict of the First World War from a personal perspective. Players are required to engage with a multitude of player characters and by including characters of various nationalities, genders and profession, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* inherently implies that each character is united by their experience of being caught in the cross-fire of global politics. Although the varied natures of these characters seeks to portray an accurate account of different groups of individuals in the First World War, there is a disconnect from this authenticity when considering the presence of Walt the dog. As a playable character, Walt represents the role and sacrifice of animals during the First World War, although this does remove the action of this game from the realm of lived possibility.

The game acquires a sense of authenticity from the presence of digital archives and photos. These historical elements are included at the beginning of each section of the game and give a detailed, historical, account of different aspects of life during this war. This information has been found by accessing archives from various sources (as stated in Chapter One) and is included partially due to the fact that this game is made in conjunction with Mission Centenaire. In so doing, Ubisoft Montpellier has created an entertaining game, but has also deliberately informed players about the lived realities of the First World War.

¹⁶⁸ Low-Beer, Ann. "Empathy and History," *Teaching History*, 55 (1989): p. 12.

As a production of popular culture, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* does aim to present the remembrance of the First World War in a certain way. The game is preoccupied with presenting opportunities for the players to empathise with the characters. In doing this, empathy is created for all participants in that historical event. This, in turn, promotes players to conduct further research and deepen their understanding of the Great War. Despite this, there have been criticism of *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*, especially when considering the unrealistic nature of the antagonist Baron Von Dorf. Overall however, *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* allows players to explore a version of World War One which is stark, emotive and devoid of glory.

In a similar way, *This War of Mine* seeks to present the lived experience of civilians during the Siege of Sarajevo. 11 bit studios has made a distinct effort to remove this game from an identifiable historical setting. This is due to their desire to reflect all wars across all nations, thereby presenting a unifying gaming experience. Although this way, at first, appears to remove this game from the realm of historical study, it in fact allows for a more universal interpretation of war experience.

Thematically, this idea also fits into other forms of cultural production about the Siege of Sarajevo (and the Bosnian War in general) which is generally designed to speak to a wider audience and context then just that particular conflict.

This War of Mine is designed to constantly challenge the player and force them to contemplate how they would react to a civil war beginning in their own context. This is done by constantly reminding the player that they control how their characters interact with the world and that there is an effect because of this. A prime example of this, is the moral choice that players are given about looting non-aggressive non-player characters. By forcing the player to consider the implications of every one of their actions, players are afforded a great understanding of the nuances and pressures of life during a civil war. Although *This War of Mine* does not leave its players with a working knowledge of the Siege of Sarajevo itself (as *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* does with the First World War) it does allow for an appreciation of the horrors of civil war and how these have been experienced. It is this phenomenon that has lead *This War of Mine* to be a commercial and critical success, as well as what enable the general public to be informed about historical thought.

Although it cannot be said that all games are appropriate for a study of history, this thesis has argued that some are able to engage the public with historical thoughts and events. First person shooter franchises like *Call of Duty* (2003), *Modern Warfare* (2007) and *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (2012) will not be able to educate the public in the same way that I have argued that

Valiant Hearts: The Great War and *This War of Mine* can. However, in general video games are a valuable way to transmit knowledge. If we accept that the aim of public history is to inform the general public about an historical event, that this ability is enhanced through the creation of empathy, and that video games are able to create this empathy particularly well, it becomes clear that video games which contain historical content hold a powerful potential as a form of public history. There is much work to be done in the field. It is my opinion that further research should be conducted in this area and that there is an opportunity for video games to reach, and impact, a public usually unconcerned about history. It is my hope that historical knowledge and understanding, as well as historical scholarship, will be able to be brought to the public and those without my own academic background will be able to engage in the forming and expressing of their histories in a meaningful way.

Appendix: Survey and Interview Information

Survey

I did not include the collated survey results in my thesis due to the limited information they revealed gained. Although they did not prove as foundational to my thesis as I had thought, I will briefly highlight the thought-provoking responses to my survey:

Gaming habits of respondents:

52% described themselves as avid gamers

18% play more than 25 hours of games per week

13% play 15–25 hours of games per week

30% play 5–15 hours of game per week

37% play 0–5 hours of games per week

Responses to empathy, education and history:

33.8% of respondents felt that empathy is a very important characteristic for players to have towards a character

91% of respondents have played a game based on an historical event

33% of respondents feel like games can always be used to educate the public

33% of respondents feel like you can always learn through playing games

59% would play a game about an historical event for the express purpose of education

Of the respondents who had played *This War of Mine* (17% of respondents)

83% of respondents thought that *This War of Mine* accurately represented experiences of civilians during the siege of Sarajevo

91% of respondents then felt an empathetic connection with the characters presented in *The War of Mine*

Of the people who have played *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* (10% of respondents)

71% of respondents believed that it accurately represented the experience of soldiers and civilians during World War One

71% of respondents felt an empathetic connection to the characters presented

Although not extensive, these survey results do indicate that, among respondents, there is a strong understanding of empathy and how it can be experienced in video games. Although this survey has provided me with some ability to support my arguments with empirical evidence, a wider range of respondents must be accessed in order to impact the methodology present within this thesis. Because of this, I chose not to include these results in the body of my thesis.

Interviews

Although the interviews did present interesting findings and quotations, I do not believe that I was able to gain enough responses in order to effectively demonstrate any conclusive evidence.

Although the interviews presented interesting discussions around why the interviewees played games and which historically based games they had played. However, not many had played the specific games that I am focusing on. Among the interviewees who I spoke to, only half had played *This War of Mine*. Only two individuals had played *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*. Because of this, there was simply not enough data to draw upon to make accurate conclusions regarding the value of these games to an individual's experience of historical study. Although I would like to continue drawing on this methodology in my future research it proved ineffective as a method for this thesis.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Games

- Francis, Yoan and Paul Tumelaire. *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*. Ubisoft Montpellier, 2014.
- Drozdowski, Michal. *This War of Mine*. 11bit Studios, 2014.

Poetry

- Sassoon, Siegfried. "Repression of War Experience." In *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, edited by George Walter. Victoria: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 215.

Secondary Sources

Articles

- Aeltonen, Jouko and Jukka Kortti, "From Evidence to Re-enactment: History, Television and Documentary Film," *Journal of Media Practices* 16 (2015): pp. 108-125.
- Anderson, Craig A. and Brad J. Bushman, "The Effects of Media Violence on Society," *Science* 295 (2002): pp. 2377-2379.
- Anderson, Kelly R., Michelle L. Woodbury, Kala Phillips and Lynne V. Gauthier. "Virtual Reality Video Games to Promote Movement Recovery in Stroke Rehabilitation: A Guide for Clinicians," *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* 96 (2015): pp. 973-976.
- Arrow, Michelle. "'I Just Feel It's Important To Know Exactly What He Went Through': In Their Footsteps and The Role Of Emotions In Australian Television History," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 33 (2013): pp. 594- 611.
- Clark, Penney and Alan Sears, "Fiction, History and Pedagogy: A Double Edged Sword," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 49 (2016): pp. 620-639.
- Curthoys, Ann. "Crossing Over: Academic and Popular History," *Australasian Journal Of Popular Culture* 1 (2011), pp. 7-18.
- Davison, Martyn. "The Case for Empathy in the History Classroom," *Curriculum Matters* 6 (2010): pp. 82-98.
- Funk, Jeanne B and Debra D. Buchman, "Playing Violent Video and Computer Games and Adolescent Self-Concept," *Journal of Communication* 46 (1996): pp. 19–32.

- Funk, Jeanne B., Debra D. Buchman and Julie N. Germann, "Preference for Violent Electronic Games, Self-Concept, and Gender Differences in Young Children," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 70 (2000): pp. 233-241.
- Grayson, Richard S. "Military History From The Street: New Methods For Researching First World War Service In The British Military," *War In History* 21 (2014): pp. 465-495.
- Hale, Frederick A. "Fritz Fischer and the Historiography of World War One", *The History Teacher* 9 (1976): pp. 258-279.
- Harris, William V. "History, Empathy and Emotions," *Antike Und Abendland* 56 no. 2 (2010): pp. 1-23.
- Harrison, Rebecca. "Writing History on the Page and Screen: Mediating Conflicts through Britain's First World War Ambulance Trains," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, 35 (2015), pp. 559-578.
- Low-Beer, Ann. "Empathy and History," *Teaching History*, 55 (1989): pp. 8-12.
- McMichael, Andrew. "PC Games and the Teaching of History," *Society for Historical Education* 40 (2007): pp 203-218.
- Metzger, Scott Alan. "Pedagogy and the Historical Feature Film: Toward Historical Literacy," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 37 no. 2, (2007): pp. 67-75.
- Monegal, Antonio. "Aporias Of The War Story", *Journal Of Spanish Cultural Studies* 3 no 1 (2002), pp. 29-41.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. "Europe, Traveling Light: Europeanization And Globalization", *The European Legacy* 4 (1999), pp. 3-17.
- Retz, Tyson. "Doing Historical Empathy," *Agora* 47 (2012): pp. 40-46.
- Riordan, KJ. "Shelling, Sniping and Starvation: the Laws of Armed Conflict and the Lessons of the Siege of Sarajevo," *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* 41 (2010), pp. 149- 178.
- Ritterfeld, Ute and René Weber. "Video Games for Entertainment and Education," *ResearchGate* (2006): pp 399- 413.
- Rule, Brendan Gail and Tamara J. Ferguson, "The Effects Of Media Violence On Attitudes, Emotions, And Cognitions," *Journal Of Social Issues* 42 no 3 (1986): pp. 29-50.
- Samuel, Raphael. "What Is Social History", *History Today* 35 no. 3 March (1985), available from <http://www.historytoday.com/raphaelsamuel/what-social-history>.
- Snow, Cason E. "Playing with History: A Look at Video Games, World History and Libraries," *Community & Junior College Libraries* 16 (2010), pp. 128–135.

- Spring, Dawn. "Gaming History: Computer and Video Games as Historical Scholarship," *Rethinking History* 19 no. 2 (2014): pp. 207–221.
- Tatum, William P. "Challenging the New Military History: The Case of Eighteenth-Century British Army Studies," *History Compass* 10 (2006): pp. 72-84.
- Toma, Elisabeta. "Self-reflection and Morality in Critical Games. Who is to be Blamed for War?" *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 6 no 1 (2015): pp. 214–15.
- Triberti, Stefano, Daniela Villani and Giuseppe Riva, "Moral positioning in video games and its relation with dispositional traits: the emergence of a social dimension," *Computers In Human Behavior* 50 no. 5 (2015): pp. 1-8.
- Vervaet, Stijin. "Writing War, Writing Memory. The Representation Of The Recent Past And The Construction Of Cultural Memory In Contemporary Bosnian Prose", *Neohelicon* 38 no 1 (2010): pp. 1-17.
- Yilmaz, Kaya. "Historical Empathy and Its Implications for Classroom Practices in Schools." *The History Teacher* 40 (2007): pp. 331- 338.
- Young, Michael F., Stephen Slota, Andrew B. Cutter, Gerard Jalette, Greg Mullin, Benedict Lai, Zeus Simeoni, Matthew Tran and Mariya Yukhymenko. "Our Princess Is In Another Castle: A Review Of Trends in Serious Gaming For Education," *Review of Educational Research* 82 (2012): pp. 61-89.

Books

- Ackerman, Dan. *The Tetris Effect: The Cold War Battle For the World's Most Addictive Game*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2016.
- Appelcline, Shannon. *Designers & Dragons: A History of the Roleplaying Game Industry '70-'79*. Silver Spring: Evil Hat Productions, 2014.
- Arrow, Michelle. *Friday on Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia Since 1945*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd., 2009.
- Beaumont, Joan. *Australia's War 1914-18*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995.
- Birt, David and John Nichol. *Games and Simulations in History*. London: Longman, 1975.
- Bissell, Tom. *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.
- Bourke, Joanna. *Wounding the World: How Military Violence and War-Play Invade Our Lives*. London: Virago Press, 2014.

- Brose, Eric Dorn. *History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Consalvo, Mia. *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009.
- Crist, Walter, Anne-Elizabeth Dunn-Vaturi and Alex de Voogt. *Ancient Egyptians at Play: Board Games Across Borders*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- Crogan, Patrick. *Gameplay Mode: War, Simulation, and Technoculture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Davis, O.L., Elizabeth Anne Yeager and Stuart J. Foster. *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.
- de Groot, Jerome. *Consuming History: Historians And Heritage In Contemporary Popular Culture*. Oxon: Routledge, 2008.
- DeMaria, Rusel. *Reset: Changing the Way We Look at Video Games*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, 2007.
- Ellison, Cara. *Embed With Games: A Year on the Couch with Game Developers*. Edinburgh: Polygon Books, 2015.
- Evans, Tanya. *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015.
- Foley, Robert. *Alfred Von Schlieffen's Military Writings*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012.
- Gee, James Paul. *Games, Learning and Society: Learning and Meaning in the Digital Age*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Gentile, Douglas A. *Media Violence and Children: A Complete Guide For Parents and Professionals*. Westport: Praeger Publishing, 2014.
- Goldberg, Daniel and Linus Larsson. *Minecraft: The Real Story of Markus 'Notch' Persson and the Gaming Phenomenon of the Century*. London: Virgin Books, 2014.
- Holbrook, Carolyn. *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*. New South Wales: NewSouth Publishing, 2014.
- Kelly, Andrew. *Cinemas and the Great War*. Oxon: Routledge, 1997.
- King, Geoff and Tanya Krzywinska, *ScreenPlay: Cinema/ Videogames/ Interfaces*. London: Wallflower Press, 2002.
- Leibovitz, Liel. *God In The Machine: Video Games As A Spiritual Pursuit*. West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2013.

- Lévesque, Stéphane. *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Maček, Ivana. *Sarajevo Under Siege: Anthropology in Wartime*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Malaby, Thomas M. *Making Virtual Worlds: Linden Lab and Second Life*. United States of America: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- McCall, Jeremiah. *Gaming the Past: Using Video Games to Teach Secondary History*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Mukherjee, Souvik. *Video Games and Storytelling: Reading Games and Playing Books*. England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Newman, James. *Videogames*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- O'Ballance, Edgar. *Civil War in Bosnia, 1992-94*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1995.
- O'Connor, John E. *Teaching History with Film and Television*. Washington: American Historical Association, 1987.
- Odgers, George. *100 Years of Australians at War*. Sydney: Lansdowne Publishing Pty Ltd, 1999.
- Parkin, Simon. *Death by Video Games: Tales of Obsession from the Virtual Frontline*. London: Serpent's Tail, 2015.
- Price, David W. *History Made, History Imagined: Contemporary Literature, Poiesis, and the Past*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Ruggill, Judd Ethan and Ken S McAllister, *Gaming Matters*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011.
- Sayer, Faye. *Public History: A Practical Guide*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Van Crevald, Martin. *Wargames: From Gladiators to Gigabytes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Vinen, Richard. *A History in Fragments: Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Great Britain: Abacus, 2002.
- von Schlieffen, Alfred. *Dienstschriften Des Chefs Des Generalstabes Der Armee Generalfeldmarschalls Graf Von Schlieffen*. Berlin: Mittler, 1938.
- Stanton, Richard. *A Brief History of Video Games: From Atari to Xbox One*. London: Constable, 2015.
- Williams, David. *Media, Memory, and the First World War*. Quebec: McGill's University Press, 2009.

- Winter, Jay and Antoine Prost. *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies 1914 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Witwer, Michael. *Empire of Imagination: Gary Gygax and the Birth of Dungeons & Dragons*. Michigan: Bloomsbury USA, 2015.
- Wolf, Mark J.P. and Bernard Perron. *The Video Game Theory Reader*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Book Chapters

- Ashton, Paul. "Public History." In *Australian History Now*, edited by Anna Clark and Paul Ashton. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2013, pp 167-180.
- Atkinson, Alan. "History in the Academy", in *Australian History Now*, edited by Anna Clark and Paul Ashton. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2013, pp. 107-121.
- Crawley, Rhys. "The Myths of August at Gallipoli." In *Zombie Myths of Australian History: 10 Myths That Will Not Die*, edited by Craig Stockings. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010, pp. 50-69.
- Gee, James Paul and Elisabeth Hayes. "Nurturing Affinity Spaces and Game-based Learning." In *Games, Learning and Society: Learning and Meaning in the Digital Age*, edited by Constance Steinkuehler, Lurt Squire and Sasha Barab. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 129-153.
- Hughes, William. "The Evaluation of Film as Evidence," in *The Historian and Film*, edited by Paul Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 49-79.
- Marwick, Arthur. "Film in University Teaching," in *The Historian and Film*, edited by Paul Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 142-156.
- Reynaud, Daniel. "Gallipoli." In *Making Film and Television Histories: Australia and New Zealand*, edited by James E. Bennett and Rebecca Beirne. New York: IB Tauris & Co Ltd., 2012, pp. 128-132.
- Richards, Jeffrey. "Film and Television: the moving image", in *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, edited by Sarah Barber and Corinna M. Peniston-Bird. London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 72-88.
- Stanley, Peter. "War Without End." In *Australian History Now*, edited by Anna Clark and Paul Ashton. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2013, pp. 90-106.

Conference Papers

- Matei, Stefania. "Digital Cultures of Commemoration: Learning and Learning History Through Video Games," *proceedings from 20th International Conference on Control Systems and Science* (Bucharest, Romania, 2015): pp. 777-781.

Websites

- "About Us – 11 bit studios", *11Bitstudios.Com*, available from <http://www.11bitstudios.com/about-us/>.
- "Anna," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Anna>.
- Bonthuys, Darryn. "This War Of Mine Review – I'mma Let It Shine", *Criticalhit.Net.*, available from <http://www.criticalhit.net/review/this-war-of-mine-review-imma-let-it-shine/>.
- "Brenda Romero's Train Board Game Will Make You Ponder," *VentureBeat*, available from <https://venturebeat.com/2013/05/11/brenda-romero-train-board-game-holocaust/>.
- Carter, Chris. "Review: Valiant Hearts: The Great War," *Destructoid*, available from <https://www.destructoid.com/review-valiant-hearts-the-great-war-277017.phtml>.
- Clark, Justin. "This War Of Mine Review", *Gamespot*. available from <https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/this-war-of-mine-review/1900-6415963/>.
- Dennis, Thomas. "PS4 Review For Valiant Hearts The Great War", *Express.Co.Uk.*, available from <http://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/gaming/564173/Valiant-Hearts-The-Great-War-ps4-review-playstation-plus>.
- Donlan, Christian. "Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review". *Eurogamer.Net*. 25 June 2014, <http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2014-06-25-valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>.
- "Emile," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Emile>.
- "Freddie," *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Freddie>.
- Hindy, Joe. "2016 Recap: 90% Of Google Play's Revenue Came From Games (And More Fun Stats!)", *Android Authority*, 17 January 2017. Available from <http://www.androidauthority.com/2016-recap-90-percent-google-play-revenue-gaming-fun-stats-743626/>.
- Jacobs, Brandon. "25 Most Tragic Deaths In Video Game History", *Whatculture.Com*, available from <http://whatculture.com/gaming/25-most-tragic-deaths-in-video-game-history?page=12>.
- Kamen, Matt. "Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review – An Emotional Gutpunch", *The Guardian*, 20 July 2014, available from

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jul/20/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>.

- “Karl,” *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Karl>.
- Krupa, Daniel. “Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review,” *IGN* 24 June 2014, available from <http://au.ign.com/articles/2014/06/24/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review>.
- Leray, Joseph. “‘Valiant Hearts: The Great War’ Review - In The Trenches”. *Toucharcade* 29 September 2014, available from <http://toucharcade.com/2014/09/29/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review/>.
- “Oculus Rift: Step Into The Game”. *Kickstarter*. Available from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1523379957/oculus-rift-step-into-the-game>.
- Pagan, Keith. “Game Review: Valiant Hearts: The Great War (Draft) | Kevin Pagan’s English 1102 Blog E4”, available from *Blogs.iac.Gatech.Edu*. <http://blogs.iac.gatech.edu/pagankeng1102e4/2015/02/20/game-review-valiant-hearts-the-great-war/>.
- Petit, Carolyn. “Valiant Hearts: The Great War Review”, *Gamespot*, available from <https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/valiant-hearts-the-great-war-review/1900-6415800>.
- Narcisse, Evan. “This War Of Mine: The Kotaku Review”. Kotaku Australia, November 2014, available from <https://www.kotaku.com.au/2014/11/this-war-of-mine-the-kotaku-review/>.
- “Quiet House”, *This War Of Mine Wiki*, available from http://this-war-of-mine.wikia.com/wiki/Quiet_House.
- “Reflections on Train,” *Gamasutra.Com*, available from https://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/SandeChen/20090714/2142/Reflections_on_Train.php.
- Roy, Gilles. “This War Of Mine: Human Survival And The Ethics Of Care | Play The Past”, *Playthepast.Org.*, available from <http://www.playthepast.org/?p=5618>.
- Steam Community Guide, *This War of Mine*, available from <https://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=360637077>.
- “TGC 2009: How A Board Game Can Make You Cry,” *The Escapist*, available from http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/conferences/tgc_2009/6021-TGC-2009-How-a-Board-Game-Can-Make-You-Cry.
- “‘This War of Mine’- The Pain of the People”, *Tay.Kinja.Com.*, available from <http://tay.kinja.com/this-war-of-mine-the-pain-of-the-peope-1728536771>.
- “The Mission,” *Mission Centenaire*, available from <http://centenaire.org/fr>

- “Ubisoft - Montpellier”, available from *Ubisoft.Com*. <https://www.ubisoft.com/en-US/studio/montpellier.aspx>.
- “Valiant Hearts: Dogs of War,” *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Valiant_Hearts:_Dogs_of_War.
- “Walt,” *Valiant Hearts Wiki*, available from <http://valianthearts.wikia.com/wiki/Walt>.
- Zacny, Rob “This War of Mine Review- IGN”. *IGN* 15 November 2014, <http://au.ign.com/articles/2014/11/15/this-war-of-mine-review>.