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An Analysis of Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault

A thesis
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of the requirements for the degree
of
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Abstract

This thesis explores the representation of the characters and content in the electronic game *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault* first published in 2004. The thesis examines the history of conflict themed games and current academic literature on the subject of representation of ethnicity and history in these games. A methodological discussion is presented outlining the challenge of academic game study and how it was applied to this particular title. The findings of an analysis conducted under the methodology explored in the thesis, is presented. These findings conclude that in terms of representation the game has few novel aspects and that the way the characters are presented is motivated by game design decisions rather than historic revisionism.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The object of study in this thesis is the interactive game *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault*, first released in November 2004 by Electronic Arts exclusively for personal computers running Microsoft Windows. The title is the seventh developed as part of the *Medal of Honor* game franchise and the second developed for the personal computer. The franchise is comprised of thirteen titles and has been in publication since 1999. The franchise will have a new release in October 2010, which unlike the other titles in the series will be set in the ongoing war in Afghanistan rather than World War Two.

1.1 *Research Aims and Intentions*

The research aim of this thesis is to develop an in-depth analysis of the title *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault* using a focus informed by relevant scholarly literature surrounding academic game studies. On completion and presentation of this thesis research the reader will be able identify the game's mechanics that facilitate play and the design of these mechanics viewed within the context of the research aims.

The focus of the analysis sought to identify how game mechanics allow the player or audience to identify or distinguish the racially different antagonists and protagonists within game play. The analysis will show what mechanics form the perception of 'otherness' so that the player or audience is able to subsequently identify characters as antagonists or protagonists. In addition the research aimed to show how game narrative is constructed to give a perception of depth and meaning for the player or audience and what user interface options exist to mediate these concepts.

This identification will focus on the presentation of characters by creating definitions of the visual descriptions, definitions of their place and framing in the game narrative and how the audience or player interacts with the characters both, the protagonists and the antagonists. The characters of key importance are player controlled and non-player controlled protagonists portrayed in the game as belonging to the United States military, who are portrayed as ordinary US citizens fighting in the United States Marine Corps in the Pacific campaign of World War Two from 1941 to 1943. The non-player controlled antagonists are the Japanese military in the Imperial Japanese Army also for the period and setting of the Pacific within 1941 to 1943.

The texts used to analyze the characters are a study of the interface both in terms of game play and the story, the promotional material for the title, the development diaries of the game and the identification of the language and cultural cues inserted into the game by the game developers used to create and enhance these characters.

The research motivation for this is to add to the field of other like minded literature such as the work of Hess (2008), Kingsepp (2007) or Machin and van Leeuwen (2005) on the subject. The literature in question are those that focus on the franchise and related titles. These add to the continuing building of a basis for exploring this contested medium, contested because the games in the franchise purport to articulate a perception of history (Hess, 2008) or are used as a basis to indoctrinate or contest the political sphere of a region (Galloway, 2006). This researcher is drawn to cultural products like games that attempt to create such a perception because they are novel, in the case of games they have a wide appeal and could possibly inform the audience of such a product the only knowledge they have on the subject material. The rationale for this research is to develop a greater understanding of how design and interface is used to create perceptions of otherness within the title, the franchise as a whole and related titles. By doing so this thesis will contribute to the discussion of representation in gaming, test methods used for conducting research in this topic and outline key points of discussion in for further work in this field around this topic.

The game *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault* (Electronic Arts, 2004) is a first person perspective action game. It is set in the Pacific theater of World War Two with the player taking on the role of Private Tom Conlin who is voiced by David Wittenber an actor who has had numerous voice acting credits, two of which are credited to other titles in the *Medal of Honor* franchise. The character of Conlin is a United States Marine Corps soldier who rises through the ranks of the Corps and by the conclusion of the game takes part in the invasion of Tarawa in 1943. Throughout the game the player must complete mission objectives which in every case means moving from the start of a per-designed zone to the end, there are obstacles which force the player on a linear path. The most common obstacle other than physical barriers are Japanese soldiers who at every turn seek to eliminate the player's character; this provides the challenge that the player must be overcome. The player has the primary goal of survival to the designated end point but the motivation for survival is set by the game's narrative or story and is punctuated with the opportunity to learn about various aspects of World War Two history and the Pacific campaign, these information checkpoints are provided with edited news reel, stock footage, references to popular film and pop-up facts which

inform the player about the various weapons and tactics used by both sides during the conflict or the geographic setting of the particular playing arena.

The goals outlined are not new and other texts have explored this research subject in other media forms like film (Renov, 1994) and other games, an in-depth analysis can be found in the literature review. In this chapter however, a brief history of the gaming medium relating to *Pacific Assault* is presented. The purpose of this is to situate the research goal. By discussing key moments which have informed this research question, key moments in the development of the game experience that is studied in this research and by including a background on the social penetration and perception of gaming this discussion shows that there is validity in the research and the outcomes outlined later.

Exploring the philosophy and history of relevant titles allows one to understand the interface, the means of production and apply them to the title being scrutinized for this research. Understanding the foundation equips a potential scholar of the medium with the tools to understand how games are developed and played. This is crucial to grasping with a medium that requires not only a specific set of equipment and conditions to play but also knowledge of the various modes of publication and the division of that publication into different gaming conventions. These are part of the number barriers that producers and the audience must overcome in order for a game to become a usable and enjoyable experience.

1.2 *Early Gaming and the Start of the Medium of Interactive Electronic Games*

These barriers have their roots at the birth of the medium. The language and terms that are employed to describe how games are used, played and developed comes from the birth of the medium. The conventions and style of game play comes from the birth of the medium yet, this history is not very well explored academically (Murphy, 2004). When examining game history the first point of contact usually begins with titles like *Spacewar* (Russell, 1962) and *PONG* (Atari, 1972) as well as other titles which were developed as a side project for military purposes, educational institutions or as offshoots from electronic toys or machines (Kent, 2001). This is a useful method of starting this discussion, perhaps however instead of chronologically listing development of game titles or gaming genre it better to discuss the evolution of gaming space and the act of gaming itself. By doing so identifies the key terms needed to discuss games, it recognizes their potential and limitations and allows for the scope of discussing motivations within game development. By examining motivation it is easier to understand the various strands that have

created the success of the medium. The most crucial of these is, the pleasure of play or interaction and how this is patterned from development to publication and finally to the site of play.

In his discussion of developing a set of rules for describing genre in games Apperley (2006) uses the term *platform* to describe the interface between game and player. This term is useful as it describes not just the device that the game is played on, but the relationship that the user has with the medium as “the platform used will often dictate the spaces, and social relations, in which games take place” (Apperley, 2006, p.10). The first platforms that were used to play games initially were digital extensions, copies or hybrids of analog toys and electronic devices like the pinball machine. Wilson (2004) shows that the development of these interfaces was a purposeful reconfiguration of technology to create new “kinds of pictorial space, new relationships between the observing body” (p.84) and consequently “new arrangements of producer, work and audience; new relations between medium, subject and cultural practice” (Wilson, 2004, p.85). Wilson uses the example of *Participation TV* (Paik, 1963) an installation art piece where a microphone, a processing device and a television are connected to synthesize audio input into on-screen action. Wilson argues that work like this and others began to ‘seed’ concepts showing that new methods of interaction between the participant and the subject.

Arguably the actual penetration into popular consciousness was limited but the next ‘set’ of experiments in this field had far reaching consequences. These experiments were often off shoots or side projects from military or academic projects which were then given commercial funding. One such example of a developer who attempted to adapt these side projects to home usage was Nolan Bushnell the founder of Atari, who after various commercial failures was successful when Atari published *PONG* (Wilson, 2004). Created in 1972 *PONG* and its clones began the rapid reorganization “of attention and spaces of spectator-ship” (Wilson, 2004, p.96). This was a fragmented movement at first organized along experimental lines but as the commercial potential was realized the arcade platform was quickly developed and exploited.

A further refinement to this idea was when *PONG* and its derivatives were introduced into the home in 1975, this led to the creation of a new private and domestic experience, which required a new set of media sensibilities just as the television had required in the previous half of the twentieth century. A key sensibility which *PONG* and the derivatives ushered in was a new form of social pleasure, across a number of platforms is, what Wilson terms as the pleasure of interaction. This pleasure had come about because opportunities to act and resolve actions with a device, had become

technologically possible in a way that before was not possible. This pleasure is a key point to understand the appeal of the electronic game as a medium, therefore it seems logical that this concept of interaction as pleasure must be mediated by identifying the technical interface used to play and consequences of the rules that are set by the developer within the space of interaction.

To identify the technical interface, the consequence of the rules and the summation of these into the space of interaction is quite difficult. Namely because there are large barriers to entry in understanding these concepts. The focus not the source code of *Pacific Assault* or the routines used create the behaviour of characters that are present in the game. The value of that would be high for a work that seeks to understand the very stuff that powers interaction for the player, this research is instead focused on the method that the audience must use to understand interaction, the impression that the developer has used to incite this impression. For this research it is more important to understand the social background, the media sensibilities that Wilson discusses and the effect that those sensibilities developed at the genesis of the industry have on the present day, culminating for the purpose of this research the *Medal of Honor* series and *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault*.

1.3 *Sites of Play and the Implications for Game Development*

While the home is the default site for mediation of game play today, this was not always the case, the arcade and its technology led to a widespread understanding of the medium. The arcade as a term began life in the 19th century that described open spaces and then became defined as "center[s] of commerce in luxury goods" (Benjamin as cited in Guins, 2004, p.199). From here the usage of the term arcade also becomes associated with the entrance to other commercial leisure spaces like saloons and bars. The usage of this space is then appropriated by various machines and curios. There were at first analogue toys but from 1972 onwards the term became used to describe a new phenomenon. These new machines were cabinets which were fitted with devices like monitor screens, speakers and controllers and Guin (2004) argues that it was during this early period that term 'arcade game' was indelibly linked to 'video games'. The effect of arcades on early games cannot be understated, within the space of a few short years the video game had entered common vernacular and since they were "widely accessible, they were certainly the technology which most people were able to access in a 'hands-on' way" (Swalwell, 2007, p.257).

The reconfiguration of this space begun slowly at first in America, Japan and Britain with commercial public leisure spaces serving as testing grounds for this new medium (De Pueter et al.,

2003). The arcade game became adopted as the default item within these leisure spaces, soon specialist arcades were constructed and the term arcade became synonymous with the arcade game, the penetration of the market by these machines and their commercial success was high and the sales of gaming machines had reached nearly \$500 million by 1981 up from \$40 million in 1979 (Haddon, 1999). Part of the success of the arcade was the experience that it offered, opinions on what this experience exactly was differ. However the delivery of this experience is often cited as a key component to its success. The interactive nature of the games, the spectacle of play and technology and the social aspect of play are just some of the reasons the audience is drawn in (Haddon, 2004; Wilson, 2004).

1.4 *Playing War: The Development of the Conflict Game*

At this era in gaming history, a title arrived that would inform many others including *Pacific Assault*. This was the Atari game *Battlezone* (1980). The game *Battlezone* (Figure 1.1) developed by Ed Rotberg used vector line drawn graphics to depict a science fiction battlefield where the player battles several waves of tanks and other enemies, the cabinet the game was shipped in was unique as it used a periscope type system and two joysticks to depict the action on screen. When the game was published Atari was approached to re-develop the game as a training tool for the US military (Power, 2007). This training version was developed to train soldiers to operate the M-2 Bradley a vehicle used extensively in the 1991 Gulf War. This device was not exactly the success that either party envisioned and only two of the devices were created; it did however further cement the already close links between military interests, the gaming industry and warfare simulation (Figure 1.2). While this link between the electronic game industry and the military is not the focus of this thesis, it is a key moment for what drives this thesis, since even at this early stage there are moments of convergence where representation of a real world setting is integrated within the medium. A concept that is further explored when examining another important development when discussing game sensibilities and that is the creation of the conflict simulation.

The widespread adoption of the console into the home market allowed developers to create a number of new innovations. These home consoles were adapted devices designed to interface with televisions, with the initial developments being spurred by technological advances in the arcade machines market (Haddon, 1999). Most of these devices were developed by consumer electronics companies and while marginally successful, they had yet to replace the arcade game as the most common point of contact that the market had to games. The Magnavox Odyssey (1972) developed

by Ralph Baer, himself a defense contractor, is considered to be the first console ever developed which had several game titles to accompany it. In the context of this research the most interesting of these was *Submarine* (Baer, 1972). *Submarine* (Figure 1.3) in terms of game play is deceptively primitive. The game was comprised of two parts, the first is an overlay which fits over a television, the second is a type of cartridge which contained the game information which was hard-wired into the circuitry like a digital watch or calculator. *Submarine*'s game play required two players in an adversarial role, the first player controls a convoy and player two is the submarine commander. The first player must keep the convoy safe by staying on the correct path of the overlay, whilst the submarine commander tries to sink the ships of the convoy. The game is not an intensely detailed simulation of naval warfare, but the reference point to the U-boats of the Atlantic campaign of World War Two is quite clear to the informed observer and this type is almost a quintessential prototype of conflict themed games whose development history inform this thesis. Consider that within this title there is a linear path as decided by the developer, a set of rules is defined to create play and that the setting while fictional has a basis within reality. A defining statement that can be applied to every title in the *Medal of Honor* franchise. The expectations of the audience and the motivations for inclusion of these features are deeply rooted in this early period.

In parallel to the development of the console market this period saw the personal computer becoming more prevalent in homes especially in Britain and America where several domestic electronics companies developed what were known as microcomputers. These were marketed at business and various other institutions, the main use of these machines was administration and other number crunching tasks. Haddon (1999) contends that these initial forays into computing increased 'computer literacy' a term he uses to describe a theme of marketing which was to permeate the early personal computer scene, a theme which had the goals of placing domestic technology in the hands of ordinary people to accomplish day to day tasks.

These goals were ambitious as at the time personal computing was seen as a hobby rather than a serious activity. To achieve these goals of placing the personal computer firmly within the domestic sphere, companies used the game as a common bridge between the market and the product. This was so successful that at first games became synonymous with personal computing and in response companies had to develop new strategies to show that there was another purpose to personal computing besides gaming, that this was an activity that could be serious and not just for children.

The ability of small powerful computers attracted game designers to new possibilities afforded by

these hardware platforms. With the computer handling the computation and enforcing the games rules, complex simulations could be carried out on these machines in a way that was simply not possible on systems like the Atari 2600. While games that featured conflict of some form were not new, a serious simulation or war game had not yet emerged on the arcade market or home console arena. Tracing a genealogy to the earliest efforts of war games for the personal computer is not that simple, Dunnigan (n.d.) places Chris Crawford's *TANKTICS: Computer Game of Armored Combat on the Eastern Front* (1978) henceforth referred to as *TANKTICS* was the first true war game that was widely available (*Figure 1.4*) (*Figure 1.5*). First published for the Commodore PET, the game used a grid reference system, which was printed on card and shipped with counters representing the tanks. The player uses the program as a type of scorekeeper and arbiter of the rules. This type of game play and its rather esoteric subject matter in comparison to what was available at the time meant that the game was not a great success in its own right (Crawford, 2003). The success of *TANKTICS* was that it introduced concepts that are found throughout war games to this day, including elevation, modeling the effects of terrain and other abstractions to create the experience of simulation. These are core elements that are still relevant to titles today, also interesting is the nature of play being limited to set of coded scenarios, rather than an open set of rules which the player creates. The portrayal of the enemy within this title purely abstract other than knowledge of the setting there are no real visual clues in game play other than what the player creates.

The further refinement of this type of game occurred when the board game company Avalon-Hill began adapt various titles for the computer game market while controlling distribution. The earliest game published in this manner was the re-branded version of Chris Crawford's *TANKTICS* in 1981 (Crawford, 2003). Whilst Avalon-Hill became the first to publish games to the early market, others soon joined. Strategic Simulations Inc. also known as SSI was another such company which would release nearly one hundred titles during its existence. Reading an early article on the company published in *Antic* an Atari publication reveals some of the motivations about why the company was founded and outlined to the general public exactly what a war game was in the words of *Antic*:

The typical elements of a war game include statistics, a detailed combat map, statistics, charts, troop allocations, statistics, historical accuracy, and more statistics. SSI games are rated from introductory through advanced. Don't attempt an advanced SSI game if you're not a hardened combat veteran!" (Powell, 1985, p.28).

Examining this article the terminologies used show an interesting relationship between the audience and the game. The pleasures of play and who exactly plays the games are also addressed:

Some may think war gamers are warmongers-right-wing hawks with a love of weapons and

power. Billings says surveys show most war gamers are well educated and have a relatively high income. Not surprisingly, 99% of war gamers are male. Using one of his own games, *President Elect*, Billings rated himself, on a scale of 0-Conservative to 100-Liberal, as 60 overall. He was 83 on social views and 50 in foreign affairs” (Powell, 1985, p.28).

Looking at some of the early titles published by SSI the subject matter ranges from 19th century European history in *Napoleon's Campaigns* (1981) to a number of World War Two themed games like *Operation Market Garden* (1985) and several games which postulate the hypothetical hot war in Europe like *Germany 1985* (1982), *Mech Brigade* (1985) and *Red Lightning* (1989) during this period rival companies like Avalon-Hill also had a similar output (*Figure 1.6*) (*Figure 1.7*). An examination of the game play within these titles reveals some stark differences to a title like *Pacific Assault*, a title like *Mech Brigade* almost purely abstract despite its massive attention to detail and the setting being based on real narratives the hypothetical but highly likely at the time war between Western European powers and the Soviet Union. Its setting and the information used to create this setting seem so abstracted yet the game affords an opportunity like no other. Jim Dunnigan the preeminent game designer argues that a war game is really a historical account in a simulative form and that the appeal of war games are, that they allow the player to create a historical experience that is measurable and can be analyzed (n.d.). Take for example *Panzer General*, *Panzer General* (SSI, 1994) uses the setting of World War Two as the background for the player’s actions (*Figure 1.8*). The player assumes the role of a German general whose first task is to attack and conquer in 1939 Poland, if this is done successfully then the player is given the chance to attack France, Belgium and other countries in the early campaigns of World War Two. What makes *Panzer General* interesting as an example is that it rewards a player’s success, firstly with a concept called prestige which allows a player to upgrade units with unique abilities for example giving a tank unit the ‘bridging’ ability so it can attack across rivers. Secondly it allows players if they are very successful to alter the time line. So for example if the player captures France in record time, then they are given the option of attempting to invade Britain. It is moments like these that prove so rich for scholarship. Aspects of historic representation, the pleasure or displeasure of revisionism and the methods of how this is mediated is a very fertile site of study trait shared by a title like *Pacific Assault*.

These features make *Panzer General* important title in terms of war gaming but what makes it worth of further examination is that the template developed within the game reconfigures the attention of this type of stimulative form. War games developed from this model onwards form a new type of taxonomy of game. The chief aspect of interest is the ability of *Panzer General*’s game

formula, especially in regards to the structure and interface to be transplanted in many different settings across gaming platforms or using different thematic elements. In *Panzer General's* competitors like *Heroes of Might and Magic II* (New World Computing, 1996) (Figure 1.9) or more recently the *Pokémon* (Game Freak/Creatures Inc., 1996) series of thirty five titles with more slated to be published in 2011, conflict is fantastical. While there are recognizable elements there are no explicit historic clues. This shows how a general set of gaming rules can be applied and that it is vitally important to identify those rules, in order to critically study a title these interface options are key to understanding not only the place a title takes in the taxonomy of games but also the pleasure derived from playing the title.

1.5 New Game Sensibilities: The First Person Shooter and Medal of Honor

Another aspect unique to the interface of *Pacific Assault* is the perspective at which the action takes place. Within the game the interface is organized along a first person perspective, that is game space where the action can 'wrap' from one edge of the screen to the other which until the view is manipulated to that point it occurs as hidden from sight, this means the title uses not only the X and Y axis of vision but also the Z. In a game narrative context this means that the player 'sees' through the 'eyes' of the object that the player controls. The core game play sensibility for first person games arguably began with the title *Wolfenstein 3D* (1992) developed by id Software (Figure 1.10). This game confined the players to a three dimensional labyrinth which used various tricks of perspective to create a three dimensional environment, of importance was the inclusion of hands placed at the bottom of weapons, by doing so it created in the minds of the player that they were in fact exploring this environment not another agent (McMahan, 2003). Using the term trick of perspective is intentional as *Wolfenstein* while technically advanced does not operate at all in the same fashion as one would come to expect, for a start the title is not a true representation of the first person. A player cannot look up, they are forced via the interface to stay with their 'eyes forward' so to speak and this ultimately limits the level of interaction that can take place within the game. Nevertheless further developments of this concept continued in *Doom* (1993) also developed by id Software and is arguably the most influential game in the genre if not for games in general in the last fifteen years. What makes *Doom* successful as a game in terms of design is not just that its game engine afforded more opportunity to engage, while a player could not look up a game space could consist of multiple levels or floors, this feature among others creates what according to Crawford (2003) a sense of immediacy in terms of solving the tactical problems at hand, that when coupled with the first person perspective offers a sense of gaming pleasure that is unique.

Doom incorporates examples of tactical play, in that actions on screen require a direct resolution with an observable immediate response. *Doom* in itself is more relevant to this research as the template used by other games. The template of interest for this thesis is the tactical shooter, where the game objective requires a more in-depth approach to completion of the game's objectives. It could be argued that this was seen as early as the *Battlezone* arcade modification for the US Army or *Marine Doom* (1996) a modification to the *Doom* graphics engine, replacing the science fiction weaponry of *Doom* with digitized models of real weapons, and the creation of a new digitized environment simulating 'real world environments' (Penny, 2004; Power, 2007). The PC game *SEAL Team* (Electronic Arts, 1993) appears to be the first game set about to re-create a tactical war gaming experience. The game is set in the Vietnam conflict and uses a third person perspective although the player can zoom into a first person point of view. The game plays out in real time with the player controlling a team of four US Navy SEAL commandos. An intriguing feature is that some of the missions are set in friendly territory rooting out guerrilla hideouts or thwarting enemy staging points. Each team member is rated for different skills and each is able to act independently, their competency at the various tasks assigned to them is dependent on their skill rating. Interestingly the game concept of identifying the enemy in friendly territory is handled by visual cues. Vietcong wear black clothing and civilians blue clothing, when a team member spots a target a white diamond is placed on the target from memories of playing the title it is quite possible to kill both types of targets without this visual cue it would be quite impossible to identify a hostile game object. Again this type of interface design provides such a rich field for study of representation and way that a player can navigate these concepts.

This type of game play was not revisited by major publishers till 1998 when *Spec Ops: Rangers Lead the Way* (Ripcord Games), *Delta Force* (Novalogic) and *Tom Clancy's: Rainbow Six* (Red Storm Entertainment) (Figure 1.12) all for the PC were released within quick succession of each other. All of these games draw influence from *SEAL Team* and share some of the design staff. All three titles market themselves on points of 'realism', real world environments and weapons. The primary game play for all of these titles is similar to *SEAL Team* (Figure 1.11), the player selects team members for a mission, the objectives are explained to the player, the player selects various tools like which weapons to equip and the mission commences. The game play presented here emphasizes the main points of difference between a tactical shooter and a first person shooter, that is, being very spatially aware is imperative since the enemies are numerous and are armed with the same deadly weaponry as the player. That there are some very strong game play rules which are

immutable in that in order to win the player must complete the objectives and that the setting for these games are re-imaginings of real world places. Using the term re-imagining seems to work better when describing the setting of these titles and certainly when discussing the next set of games this term seems to fit the intention of the developers or at least how the intentions are presented in game play. Around the same time that the tactical shooter was introduced to the mainstream market another title was released on the Playstation console *Medal of Honor* (1999). This title developed by DreamWorks Interactive but published by Electronic Arts, and was based a design concept pitched by film director Steven Spielberg (*Figure 1.13*). The game has since become a franchise released across a number of platforms, with the most recent title in the series being released in 2007. The *Medal of Honor* series, along with the series *Call of Duty* (Activision) and *Day of Defeat* (Valve Publications) are perhaps the most well known World War Two themed first person shooters and all follow a similar stylistic form (Kingsepp, 2007). For a visual guide to the various *Medal of Honor* titles consult *Figure 1.14* , *Figure 1.15*, *Figure 1.16*, *Figure 1.17* and *Figure 1.18*.

What makes the *Medal of Honor* series an in this research, specifically *Pacific Assault* different is the attempt to weave a narrative thread that has similarities to late 20th century dramatic war films and this provides a fertile basis for analysis. Within the genre of World War Two dramatic features there has been a gradual evolution of conventions (Westwall, 2006). The development of these conventions changed throughout the 20th century with the culmination being those developed for the film *Saving Private Ryan* (Speilberg, 1998). The conventions used in the film encourage the viewer to “think of the war according to the thread of personal experience” (Westwall, 2006, p.91). When combined with the setting, the graphic realism, cinematography and cultural cues a film in the style of *Saving Private Ryan* is now seen as authentic and real.

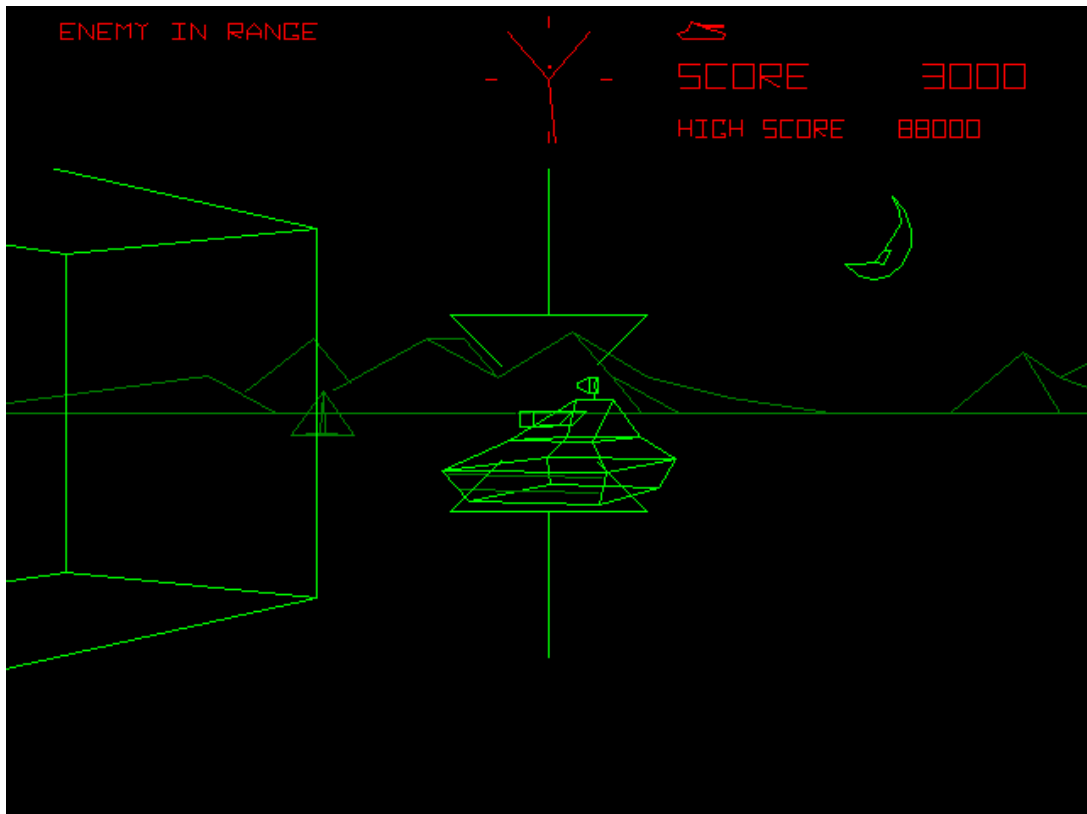
The *Medal of Honor* franchise attempts to create a representation of history. In itself this provides a justification for further study as the implications of a mass media form revising or informing history particularly conflict on the scale seen in World War Two. This representation is a specific and structured representation of a fictional account of a historic event, in this case World War Two. Bogart (2006) describes historical games as “... software systems, these games can enact one or more historiographies, representing them with rules of interaction rather than patterns of writing” Of course there is an argument as to whether the audience imparts this feeling or message, which is why this thesis has a focus on the interface, the nature of play and the construction of the history present. The title is worthy of in-depth study because it is a structured product. It is part of a wider history of games as explored earlier on. It follows a recognizable yet reconfigured template that

allows for recognition of the key elements of what makes this title work as a game, yet it is not the same as other titles in the franchise or the market. It uses specific elements of design to purposely create a setting, placing the game's narrative within the 'genre' of World War Two popular culture. There is though a difference between historical representation in cinema and that of games, since games like the *Medal of Honor* series allow the player to draw upon the fictive space of the genre while still offering a slight measure of interactivity and it is these rules of interaction that must be explored in order to understand the way the characters are presented in the game.

Historical games attempt to create an illusion of reality that is rich with cultural and social nuance, which Bogart explains, is a deliberate fashioning "after another newly politicized medium, the documentary film." It is this approach that most of the research done on historically framed games takes place, especially in regards to the *Medal of Honor* franchise. Work by Hess (2008) and Kingsepp (2007), which focus on *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun* (2003) and *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* (2002) respectively approach the game as a form of simulation and examine the work in that context. Hess in particular uses semiotic analysis to conduct the research on the franchise. This research however aims to identify the representation of the characters in the game using a methodology that identifies what game play characteristics are used to represent the characters. In doing this attention and detail is placed on the objects, surrounding environment and the game's rules. This will be in contrast to a focus on what might be the developer's intentions (Power, 2007), a focus on political economy (Kingsepp, 2007) or pure semiotics (Hess, 2008).

1.6 *Figures and Illustrations*

Figure 1.1



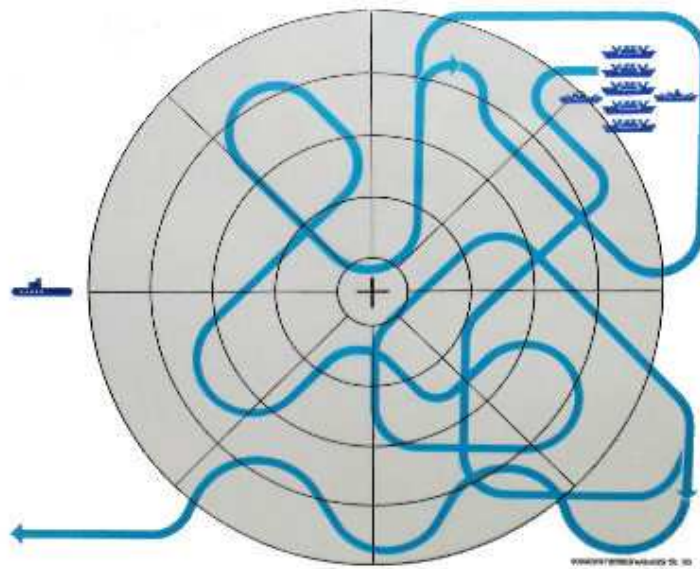
Battlezone game play screen capture

Figure 1.2



Bradley Trainer modification of the *Battlezone* arcade machine

Figure 1.3



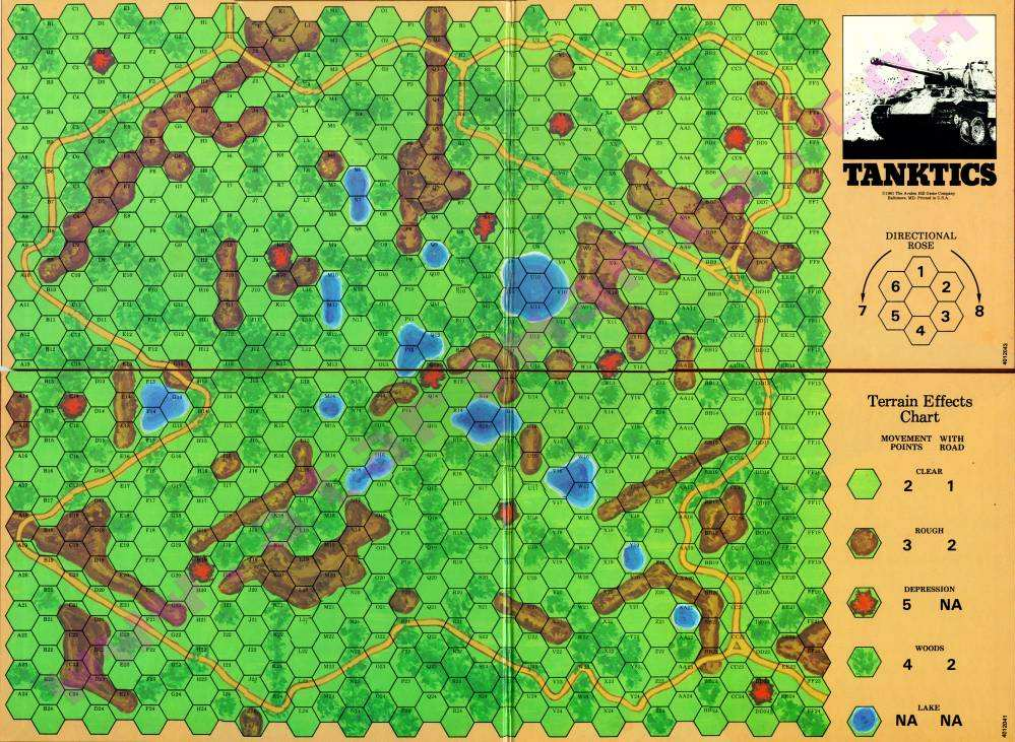
Submarine an example of the grid that was used as an overlay for the Magnavox Odyssey console

Figure 1.4



Game play screen for Chris Crawford's *Tanktics*

Figure 1.5



The accompanying physical play aid for *Tanktics*

Figure 1.6



Germany 1985 screen capture depicting a West German city on the Rhine river

Figure 1.7

AIR OPERATIONS	
Aircraft Types	Aircraft Description
Alpha, Mirage U	
A-10	
F-111, B-52	
Mirage III, Draken, F-104	
F-4, Tornado	
F-15, Mirage 2000	
F-16, F-18, Mirage F1	
Jaguar, A-7, Harrier	
F-117	
SR-71, TR-1 (r)	
Jaguar, Draken, Mirage III, Mirage U (r)	
F-4, F-16, Mirage F1 (r)	
↑ ↓ Mission Allotment Orders	
<F1><F2> Air Superiority.....00	Air Superiority.....03
<F3><F4> Strike.....00	Strike.....03
<F5><F6> Close Air Support...00	Close Air Support.....03
<F7> All rest.....674	Avionics Capability.....03
<Esc> Exit to map.	Survivability.....04
<+,n>/<-,l> Select new type.	Force Readiness.....100
Flight conditions.....poor	Total Aircraft.....674

Red Lightning screen capture depicting statistics on NATO airpower

Figure 1.8



Kampfgruppe note how an Iron Cross has been used instead of a Swastika

Figure 1.9



Panzer General screen capture of game play depicting a German armoured attack against a Soviet position

Figure 1.9



Heroes of Might and Magic II

Figure 1.10



Wolfenstein 3D

Figure 1.11



SEAL Team this screen is where the player reviews and selects the team members for a campaign

Figure 1.12



Rainbow Six game play screen capture

Figure 1.13



Medal of Honor game play screen capture

Figure 1.14



Medal of Honor: Allied Assault game play screen capture

Figure 1.15



Medal of Honor: Rising Sun game play screen capture

Figure 1.16



Medal of Honor: Infiltrator screen capture showing the marked difference in presentation and game play. The game is presented using third person perspective

Figure 1.17



Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault screen capture showing game play

Figure 1.18



Medal of Honor: Airborne screen capture of the game loading between levels

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The ambitions of Western nations have drawn them into Asia for centuries and in that time there was much conflict and misery, however the scale of conflict reached a massive point with Imperial Japan waging a war on the collective nations of China, the United States, the nations known as Commonwealth and various colonial entities of the United Kingdom, France and Holland. This conflict spanned from 1937 to 1945 (Thorne, 1986).

This war was by no means an isolated event; its roots lay in conflict that had been simmering for many years. However, in this period war was waged across such a huge area of expanse and was fought by nations who used every industrial and technological advantage to win this conflict.

Japanese ambitions for the Pacific were fueled by tensions with European powers and what began as an armed and vicious occupation of China soon spiraled into total war across the entire Pacific and much of South East Asia. On both sides of the conflict there was much cruelty, tenacity and violence. Once the conflict ended in 1945 with the atomic bombings of Japan, the region was not quiet for long and become the scene of long running colonial wars of independence and a staging ground for the Soviet Union and the United States vying for dominance in the Cold War.

2.1 *Literature Selection and Criteria*

There are two key points which were considered when conducting this review. First the works reviewed which encompass qualitative studies on history within popular culture such as that of Bodnar (1992), conflict representation in popular culture (Westwall, 2006) and conflict representation in electronic games (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2005) are written after the events.

Second there is a trend for games studies to conform to or borrow practice from other subjects, especially in terms of method (Brooker, 2001). This of course is the nature of academic work but some aspects that are borrowed definitely seem to fit better than others. A recurring theme in most of the literature reviewed, especially those that focused on narrative is an attempt to explore the topic using these borrowed concepts from linguistic study, film studies and other forms of comparative literature. This is an approach that sometimes causes tension and is a theme explored in this review. Neat reductionism was avoided due to these reasons, a similarity that Egenfeld-

Nielson, Smith and Tosca (2008) elaborate on when presenting their analysis of games research.

These two points have meant that the focus of this review is to explore how others have conducted their research in this field using similar research questions such as how is representation constructed, to what end do they privilege one group compared to another and what are the consequences of creating games using the complex often contested narrative of history. A further action is to learn from their choices and to find out what the consequences of their choices are in regards to the outcomes of their work. The method to achieve this goal was thus; to engage with, as much text on the specific topic of historic games. Then organize and systematically try to identify some of the trends presented, whether or not the authors were in favor of these trends or against them is a theme explored within this review. Then to create a solid base of understanding read, analyze and present the influences that these authors have drawn on, then analyze how they have used and articulated these ideas.

The work presented is cataloged along the following lines, there is literature which aims to explore the topic through narrative theory and this includes the development of formal definitions and the application of these definitions. Secondly there is the text which has a focus on the mechanics of play, how a game is constructed from the engine a game is built to run around to how players and the audience interface with these mechanics. Finally there are works which focus on the representation of history in popular culture, in this section the development of how various social science disciplines have approached this field are explored.

There main character Tom Conlin in *Pacific Assault* is defined as a simple man, he is according to his biography the son of "...a blue collar worker... His mother was a waitress at a small restaurant on the outskirts of town that catered to a crowd of miners coming down from the Lucky Boy Mine" (2004) and is presented as an European North American (see *Figure 2.1*, *Figure 2.2*, *Figure 2.3* and *Figure 2.4*). His wishes and motivations presented to the audience within the cut scenes portray a reluctant soldier, a person who kills out of duty and service to his country not because he is a psychopath. This character could have easily have stepped out of a film and appears to have been designed to be as identifiable as possible. What have the developers done to create a character with traits ? To determine their influences in all cases seems impossible, a game like *Pacific Assault* is not developed by one person, the creative process is split amongst a team and some tasks are quite process orientated like coding, it seems safe to presume that there is very little creative input into some of the minutiae of programming. When surveying literature on historic games most of the

research turns to other visual mediums for cues. Within this there is another strand that researchers take, that historic games are a part of the social tapestry of the public's memory. This concept was explored in a number of texts such as the work of Kingsepp (2006, 2007), Atkins (2003), Squire (2004) and others. All of these works to a degree reference the place games have within the wider social understanding of historic space, others are more critical of this idea.

2.2 *Articulating and Understanding History in Popular Culture*

In a formal discussion on the representation of historic forms, the fundamental issue on how to frame this discussion rests on the cultural sensitivities and the level of awareness that those involved in the discussion are privy to, this cultural awareness appears to form the basis for most of the authors whose work is reviewed in this chapter. The level of awareness on the part of the audience and sometimes the developer is the main focus of the research surveyed, this concept is what Bodnar (1992) terms public memory. This research cannot ignore this concept of public memory but to state that this research concept of public memory was the focus at the exclusion of all else is false. However following the underlining research, that is to follow the citations, the references involved in scholarly work on the subject. Public memory as a concept linked heavily to these items of research. By reading around concepts of public memory the philosophic underpinnings of wider game research may have been neglected but this not an exclusion to divide the field into formalized camps, nor to dismiss them. It is a tool used to critically understand their motivations. This is because their motivation, academic and some case these are personal, allow for a sense of scholarly truth that is less about finality but a tool to navigate the topic of public space and discourse. Of course this is a subjective decision, one not made lightly but consider the definition of public memory as articulated by Bodnar.

Public memory is a summation of:

Political discussion that involves not so much specific economic or moral problems but rather fundamental issues about the entire existences of a society: its organization, structure of power, and the very meaning of its past and present. (p.14)

This definition of public memory seems to fit best when describing what Hess and others draws on to create the structure and how the content is framed in the analysis of the various games in question.

When examining related texts the work of Bodnar appears to be quite influential and it is through

his work that the beginnings of the template used to examine the public perception of American history, with a specific focus on popular culture and other contemporary texts. The primary hypothesis of researchers like Hess (2007) is that public memory is a tool used by those with power to enforce or to strengthen a particular viewpoint, others like Power (2007) do not explicitly use the term public memory but refer to games as a site of public action of political engagement or indoctrination. Hess defines the use of public memory as being a way of articulating a selective memory that has a focus on violence and revenge (p.353). A similar concept is explored by Power when discussing first person shooters set in modern day Iraq or Afghanistan such as *Kuma/War* (Kuma Reality, 2006). What is interesting is to examining how Bodnar uses this concept of public memory to look at the implications of *action* for the present day understanding of history rather than assume that the main purpose of tapping into public memory was to create a specific vision of the past. Bodnar argues that the societal use of public memory is to primarily navigate the issues at hand that affect the present day, not specifically to deal with issues in the past, however there is often an element of manipulation by power brokers to articulate the most particular kind of truth.

The strength of trying to tie games as another form of public memorial is that it opens so many theoretical door ways. The concept of the hero soldier figure examined by Bodnar alone is very rich and upon first impressions seems to work so well with examining the central protagonist in a game, but the main problem is building this bridge between societal narratives that is 'public memory' and narrative as in story telling.

An example of why 'public memory' has difficulty 'playing with others' is that the concept of public memory in the popular consciousness is essentially best associated with usage to understand some concepts of the present rather than an education of the past. Bodnar argues that within the specific context of North American history, public memory adds a level authenticity to arguments and debate especially when social issues are considered (p.15). An example of public memory being used to create institutional change, Bodnar argues was the creation of the Revolutionary War hero. In particular George Washington, who served as a symbol for the establishment of a united and centralized system of government control when American society was divided on this issue (p.23).

This process of cultivating the hero figure of George Washington was not a unified one, nor were the public reactions the same, but what is interesting is that the 'memory template' of George Washington seems to be a recurring theme in North American public memory. Bodnar also stresses that these 'memory templates' were not in anyway a unified process especially in early 19th century

American history where the country was fractured along state divisions, class differences and after the Civil War some quite distinct social climates but there were none the less trends in public perception of the past which have come to influence perception of the present. So even a figure as universally known as Washington has had a long history of diverse representation.

Additionally Bodnar cautions that these templates are not to be taken on face value and the greatest political use of these templates is not to change our understanding of the past per se but to change the attitudes of the public in the present by in essence a form of revisionism. It also seems fairly obvious that the nature of an interactive game like *Pacific Assault* or *Rising Sun* is not to educate, however it appears from the analysis that if a player learns something along the way then it becomes an added benefit for the player but to whom is this mediation of the past beneficial to? This concept of education of history and culture forms the basis of Kurt Squire's work on the educative use for games is something explored later in this review.

Using 'public memory' as defined by Bodnar can mesh if the primary focus is on discovering what the latent purpose of the political content means either in its construction or investigating responses within the audience itself. The hard part of this; is building a bridge between public memory and the complexities of game play. Now this bridge is often where confusion can occur, in the works of Hess and Kingsepp semiotic analysis is used as a methodological framework, there isn't a great deal of information on how this is applied. An excellent example of this would be the presentation of seme.

2.3 *Authenticity and Legitimacy in Historic and Cultural Representation*

Is there an expectation that the historic content of public discourse be mediated in such a way that the reading of these texts reflect truthfully the *real* history if there can be such a thing? One can argue that depending on the site, the discourse in question and in the context of game studies the very means of delivery the expectations differ widely. Within games for example the platform or technical limitations may greatly impair or enhance a perception of an accurate representation of an historic entity or discourse. In a similar vein consider Haddon's exploration of the origins of games within the home, as outlined in chapter one. At first domestication of personal computers was marketed as an appeal to efficiency, the gaming aspect was ancillary but because of the growth and association with gaming, the personal computer in the domestic sphere became synonymous with games. Now consider the foundation of the arcade as a site of gaming also outlined in chapter one.

The very word has gone from a specific meaning to be one that a very generation of gamers associates only with gaming. Where can authentic accounts of history be found? For arguments sake where could a similar physical site be found like an arcade is to gaming? When discussing public memory, that is public discourse on history academic work tends to focus on the institution. The institution in question takes on many forms, although there is a critical mass around the museum. The function, political economy and evolution of this and other institutions is subject to ongoing debate, for ease of definition Klein encapsulates this as the 'memory debate'.

Klein (2000) argues that the fundamental scholarly foundations of what he terms the 'Memory debate' originate from the period where the public discourse around celebrating or commemorating historic events, especially events that were seen as key to the founding of America. This public discourse was manifested in a number of ways, Klein uses the examples of public interest in genealogy and the growth of 'museum culture' (p.127). However Klein contends that to view the public's perception of the past under the singular lens of public memory is short-sighted especially since the academic arguments around the studying of history have always taken a multidisciplinary approach. The debate around perceptions of history per se is not the focus of this review but the rather the applications of these particular ways of studying history, especially once discussions begin to use what Klein calls the confusing labels of historical perception, that is "post-modernism" and "deconstruction" (p.128). These confused terms are precisely the ones used to describe popular culture interpretations of history, especially when those interpretations begin to deviate from what is accepted as historical fact, some examples of which are explored later. Academic discussions on the perception of history by the public fall into several groups in the context of this thesis two are of particular interest namely, those around formal institutions of history and popular culture presentations of history.

Crane (1997) argues that the institution that the public would most likely turn to when looking for an authoritative representation of history is the museum a place Crane defines as "a cultural institution where individual expectations, institutional, academic expectations interact" (p.46) and that within the experience of the institution a "range of personal experiences is produced, not limited to the subject matter of the exhibits, as well as a range of collective memories around museum visitors" (ibid). The goal of these places both within the minds of the visitor and the creator of these spaces is to "place within the living memory....social codes of behavior, condition a sense of cultural literacy and instill the value of art, the past and science" (ibid). Crane argues that these expectations of museums as presentations of the past and as a site to generate public memory

are invariably filled with many pitfalls. Brockmeier (2002) situates these institutions in "...the thick layer of cultural memory" that have fused together the "naturalness of the commemoration layer and its cultural and historical character" (p.19). Museums Brockmeier argues are the case in point for this by presenting history as a concept devoid of "historical perspectivalism" and are an example of society presenting history as an exact science, that it is a process as observable and quantifiable as physical nature. Bourke (2004) is much more critical and asks if a true public memory even exists, since all messages in the public sphere are mediated beyond the control of the public thus "the collective does not possess a memory, only barren sites upon which individuals inscribe shared narratives, infused with power relations" (p.474). These shared narratives Bourke argue are far more interesting to examine and tell more about the experience of those participating in a mediated site like a museum or memorial. Bourke argues that these narratives are far more useful to the public to navigate the intricacies of history and the history of conflict. In terms of studying the history of conflict Bourke raises some interesting points, namely that the sheer horror and spectacle of conflict can never really be reflected accurately. She argues this is due to the "often-intimate institutional and financial military historians and the institution they claim to study" this creates "a situation of historical dependency in the writing of military history" (p.484). It is in this way that Bourke argues that historians have an implicit role in the production of historic narratives and memory of an event.

This relationship between the historian and history can be explored in a number of ways but in the focus of this thesis it is the adaptations of historic narratives which have entered the popular consciousness which is of primary interest.

Koseyva, Wertsch and Rowe (2002) in their work on the legitimacy of the museum as the official institution to explore history, are cited in a number of game studies contend that the fundamental working definition of narrative is a fluid one, which serves many different purposes but when applied to our perception of history particularly in the public sphere narrative is seen as a 'way of knowing' (Bruner as cited in Koseyva et al, 2002, p.98). In this way history can be explored as a whole instead of the myriad of small, often unrelated pieces that constitute 'real history', also to view history in this way allows integrations of 'small narratives' into the big picture. In other words this framing of history "can link individual life stories to the narratives of a larger group such that the former give new meaning to-but do not fundamentally challenge-the latter" (p.100). These concepts of what is 'real history' and what is not is of prime concern to all those who study history since, the very paradigm that history is perceived from depends on the collective understanding of

what history is informing the historian. The focus on story telling as a form of preserving or presenting history is useful, as the arguments presented about viewing history in this way also relate quite well to another strand of historical representation.

2.4 *The Moving Image and Authenticity*

Film as a reference point to articulating game play, or action on screen are common. As is linking film to the discussion of representation of history in games within the research reviewed for this chapter. There are some key ideas that need to be addressed to understand these references. Bartholeyens (2000) surmises that when viewing historical film there are two very useful questions to ask as a researcher, firstly whether the piece of work uses history as a dramatic backdrop in which the narrative "uses history as a pretext for its own elaboration" (p.32). Or whether the narrative exists to pursue "a teleological intention; i.e., an intention that constitutes a historical aim" (ibid). There are also some other conditions that Bartholeyens presents, in that there can be combinations of both of these questions or framing, for example when ".it is not just a setting justifying a narrative, history takes on board a cause that transcends that of the story being told and that of diegesis" (ibid). This combination of ideas is interesting, as it allows a framework to critically explore film and other visual narratives, where the presentation of history takes a modern, referential style or when the text uses history as an analogy to explore social concerns or to revise history. From these broad frameworks Bartholeyens argues that historically set films can either serve history that is the dramatic pretext notion, or more interestingly in the context of this thesis, *use* history that is, to 'transcend' the story. When an author uses history for whatever statement or purpose there appear to be a definite threshold, and this threshold is the level of attention the author gives to "events and to their material world" which in turn reflects how a film is received by the audience. Bartholeyens argues that authenticity is a very different concept than historic accuracy and that the audience generates a perception of realism and authenticity and in the minds of the audience these are very different. This idea of a film presenting a truthful representation of the past becomes more complicated when examining the structure of a film itself. Hesling (2001) contends that structure of film, that is to focus on primary characters and to create an individualist sense of story when applied to history, is a historically naïve approach to viewing the past. Importantly for game researchers that use this concept of narrative is they must acknowledge the difference in filmic narrative and game narrative. This leads to significant disadvantages when trying to create a portrayal of history that is representative of 'true' history but this focus on the individual has the side effect of creating a sense of engagement with the audience that allows the author to *use* history in

the sense that Bartholeiyens describes.

A useful way of summarizing this concept is presented by Bruner (1991) who argues that there are "specific domains of human knowledge and skill that are supported by cultural toolkits" and argues that this is why narrative appears to be so powerful in terms of exploring history, since this concept which is part of a broad set of tool kits allows complex ideas to be presented and more importantly understood (p.20). This idea of a cultural tool kit can also be applied to the moving image because these narrative explorations of history allow a myth like treatment of personal history and its place in the 'big picture'. This concept of the individual and myth merges when examining historic film, especially when looking at the prototypical World War Two film. Landon (1992) views this link as a crucial way understanding the cultural mythic status of individuals within the conflict and the conflict as a whole, when this status is then transferred to the screen (p.18). The method of trying to determine what cultural tools are being used to shape the historic reality, the representation of history and how credibility is defined can also be applied to electronic games, especially those that draw their source material from history. This is because these titles can be viewed as a product of cultural or public memory and when games draw upon World War Two as source material, the material that is considered credible or real is part of the narrative an example would be *Allied Assault* or mythic type perfectly portrayed in the *Wolfenstein* series.

2.5 *The Electronic Interactive Game Narrative in Context*

Choosing to engage with narrative discussion was a difficult choice, since it meant having to define *what* narratives are being discussed within academic research and then draw out *how* the underlying meanings presented in the texts under review. In addition to this there is much discussion of applying narrative to games. Juul (2001, 2004) and Aarseth (1997, 2004) are both vocal critics of applying conventional narrative theory to games, the primary argument being that games are not conventional narratives, so using formal theory drawn from narrative traditions leads to a situation where conclusions that are deduced are products of old paradigms. This is certainly true of the former, the latter being more concerned with time and using traditional narrative idioms to describe game time as being problematic at best. The texts chosen for this research under this grouping of narrative either do not acknowledge this debate around whether traditional narrative theory is allowed to influence game study, or they do so but still consider story telling to be of primary influence in how a game should be studied. The reason this methodology is selected by the authors is sometimes addressed other times not, but the implicit assumption in the literature is that the

application of story telling theory allows for a very rich discussion in terms of cultural meaning.

Eric Zimmerman (2004) uses an analogy to describe this difficulty to articulate an argument without running into the quagmire of the 'narrative debate'. Zimmerman argues that the terms narrative, interactivity, play and games are concepts that mean very different things depending on the context they are used. He likens them to loose school children running about without any sense of guidance or purpose and that ultimately the more the terms are used the more destructive they become to understanding the medium in a critical fashion. He argues that these four words are used without clear definition and that in order to properly produce a critical base upon which to work on these terms need to be in a word, tamed (p.154). The reasons for this are similar to why it is necessary to inform the audience about what literature and critical studies inform this research, in that these four words form a foundation of any form of understanding of games.

The common ground in terms of narrative that appears to underline the thoughts of the work reviewed is quite well surmised by Zimmerman. For narrative Zimmerman uses a definition from J. Hillis Miller's work on literary narrative and presents it thus. First a narrative has a beginning state, then this state changes and when it does, the audience gains insight into that change. Secondly a narrative is not a series of events but a personification of events through language, this point is important since other researchers like Hess (2007) use this idea to describe how games like *Medal of Honor* form part of a larger public discourse and language to navigate history.

This is not surprising, since by the definition used by Zimmerman all manner of non-conventional acts can constitute a narrative. Zimmerman uses the example of chess, which for the purposes of critical game study is good, since it allows the use of the term narrative to be applied to an activity which conventionally is understood to have certain attributes (p.157). For example with chess being described as having a *form* of narrative it gives a sense of credibility to arguments which try to link the term narrative to the game of chess. This in itself seems relatively innocent especially with the examples of what attributes of chess Zimmerman constitutes as narrative (p.157).

However in the name of utility this definition of narrative allows research to apply imbued meanings to the various facets of a game that constitute the narrative, this creates a whole level of complexity and adds layers of further meaning which require the audience to approach that work from a specific paradigm and this can be very difficult to do when the link to a specific paradigm is not clearly explained. So to be clear, often there are two strands of thought present about narrative

and in most cases this means two things. First it means narrative as the strand that allows society to explore complex issues like heroism; also it means the methodological frame work used to analyze games. That is to look at their story and try to understand what it *means* often in the context of it being part of the larger meta-narrative.

2.6 *Application and Analysis of Theory in Game Studies - Representation of History*

For Hess (2007), the subject of his analysis is *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun* (2003) a game in the *Medal of Honor* series and which shares the Pacific theater of World War Two with *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault* (2004) the two titles are not related in terms of their story, they just share the same setting. Hess uses what he describes as an interdisciplinary approach as a foundation for discussion of the game and methodologically professes to use semiotics.

Examining Hess' work into this game is a useful starting point, as *Rising Sun* and *Pacific Assault*, share the same setting and have similar game mechanics. The biggest difference is that *Pacific Assault* was published exclusively for Windows and *Rising Sun* exclusively for Playstation 2, GameCube and the Xbox. This means in terms of play *Rising Sun* is bound to controlling the player character using a fixed form of controller and importantly the title is played from a disc, it cannot be installed and therefore modified in the same way that *Pacific Assault* could be. Also the site of play is different, traditionally the GameCube and Xbox are played by plugging the device in a television, *Pacific Assault* is played on a personal computer. There are also a number of differences in terms of content particularly in terms of the story and the technology used to create the gaming experience. However these differences are not explored by Hess, nor are other titles in the series which preceded *Rising Sun* which is the fifth in the *Medal of Honor* series. It should be important to note then that the content of *Rising Sun* cannot be directly compared to *Pacific Assault* but this is not the point for selecting Hess for review, rather it is because Hess engages some of the same questions which form the basis of this thesis.

Hess begins his analysis of *Rising Sun* by arguing that the mediated form of digital games, which are enacted through increasing complexity and realism, has become a site of public memorial. What makes this site interesting and unique is that this site in particular is interactive and participatory in nature (p.340). Hess argues that there is link between story telling, narrative and the mediation of history. The terms of story telling and narrative are defined as a meta-narrative and a personal narrative respectively (p.345). These are defined thus; the meta-narrative is the historic setting that

is the genesis for the action and the personal narrative is that of the character. Both are enacted with different means. The meta-narrative draws on a representation of historic forms, symbols and history while the personal narrative is driven by the game play and the sense of immersion. The method for analysis that Hess uses is based on playing the game then using semiotic analysis to try and understand what the content of the game represents.

This method is similar to the work of Eva Kingsepp's work on other World War Two first person shooter games. In these studies it is clear that the conclusions drawn are that games are 'used' as sites to remember and re-mediate history. Hess uses examples of how other forms of media have been explored this remediation and he argues that in games like the *Medal of Honor* series this remediation is a form of 'privatized patriotism' (p.342). It is these other texts that Hess examines that appear to provide the clearest picture of what political, moral and technical standpoint he has formed. Some of the key ideas that are present in both Hess and Kingsepp's work are public memory and the presentation of memory in popular culture.

Eva Kingsepp has an ongoing interest in the representation of history within World War Two games and she uses a wide variety of titles to explore this field. Her work does not have a focus on the *Medal of Honor* game series exclusively but there is a large amount of discussion around the titles within the franchise. Kingsepp's (2006) main research focus is how history is mediated in the public sphere particularly in regards to games and within her published work there is a definite strong trend to define these games as part of an ongoing form of narrative and cites the creation of myth and notions of good and evil as a primary example of this (p.63). It is this way Kingsepp appropriates narrative theory to explore games not just in the sense of a cultural product but also in the very examination of the various games that are in question.

A good example of this is the deconstruction that Kingsepp undertakes for *Medal of Honor: Underground* and *Medal of Honor: Frontline*. Kingsepp argues is how the developers create a sense of 'reality' and while the spatial settings may not be an exact replication there are a liberal amount of cues used to lend a sense of authenticity to the game. Kingsepp articulates the dual natured definition of narrative, by arguing that "spatial historicity seems either to be used to create an atmosphere... just like the ones we can experience on film...or...to conform to a geographic site of the historical narrative" (p.68). Furthermore this dual natured concept of viewing narrative is also expressed in Kingsepp's deconstruction of *Allied Assault* and its opening sequence set in the Normandy landings. Here Kingsepp argues that by referencing the narrative structure of the film

Saving Private Ryan both in terms of story and scene construction the game gains earns its contribution to the advancement of how history is perceived (p.71).

Kevin Schut (2007) engages with this debate in a slightly different manner. His work is focused also on how games are used to explore history within a formal setting and uses examples of primary research conducted in this setting. Essentially Schut argues like Kingsepp that implicit ideology is built within the game, but differs from Hess and Kingsepp by arguing that is the rules of game play that create these situations not exclusively the story or the cultural cues contained within that story (p.215). This is elaborated by using examples from other research into the games *Civilization III* (Firaxis Games, 2001) and *Tropico* (Gathering of Developers, 2001). Schut uses the research into the economic models present in the game which the player uses to achieve the games goals, these economic models are an aspect which cannot be changed within normal play. To succeed the player must adopt, understand and become fully involved in these models.

However critically Schut argues that these adoptions of concepts does not mean that a player will actually believe in these concepts and other than using them to succeed in the game and may even abandon these when interacting with society at large. Schut also argues that to study these concepts in total isolation will often lead to a situation where research merely describes the action within a game rather than critically engaging with it, the way that Schut frames this point makes for a good justification for including other forms of media as a base of reference, or presenting games in terms of public memory (p.216). Of course however there is the problem of how can strong links be made? Schut argues that this very dilemma, the lack of cohesion in terms of explaining or understanding technology comes about from the general trends of historians and the public as compartmentalizing technology and removing the human input. This human input has become a topic for much of the qualitative research that is done on game studies and Schut mentions activities like writing fan fiction, or designing custom levels and other methods of re-configuring the game space. These aspects Schut believes are important to understand how a game is used by a player, but cannot explain how a game is *understood*. To use a cultural artifact or participate in an activity is quite different to being able to understand the inherent meanings those media researchers argue are imbued in every media product (p.216). To truly understand the cultural messages imbued within a game or the cultural bias as Schut is interested in, then the structure of a game must be understood, this includes its method of game play, publication, delivery, ideal play setting and critically for Schut the observation of others playing the game. In the case of Schut, this observation comes in the form of using games in the class room as a method to teach history. The studies that Schut has

conducted for this purpose are interesting but for this research, the primary interest is to explore how Schut has drawn meaning from game play and what kind of language is used to articulate this.

Schut uses specific game play examples when discussing messages, such as the emphasis on aggression and conflict as being the ideal state within *Civilization* where a player can accomplish all of their goals with the application of hard, masculine power rather than soft diplomacy (p.223). In regards to the representation of history and cultures, Schut argues that these messages are actively built within a game and should not be classified solely as being contested, in that in most cases the fundamental rules of a game cannot be easily changed and that games present history as a “clear chain of cause and effect, and any unavoidable nonsystematic elements of life are rendered as inconsequential or random influences.” (p.223). This means that clear distinct patterns are always observable when viewing the cultural representation of a character or the representation of history. Depending on the game these may have a slightly larger amount of leeway for the player to engage with but on the whole, the process is linear, the player begins an action and receives a canned output. There may even be a seemingly infinite amount of outputs, but within a game output can only be generated if it was included in the game in the first instance. This systemic nature of games is something that Schut is very keen to come to terms with and firmly orientates the research output as being part of the larger discussion on how games should be approached. It is perhaps a more useful way to articulate a discussion than relying purely on the political discussion that public memory draws. Schut argues very carefully that no matter what approach is taken to understand a game it should follow multiple paths and try to integrate as much research as possible to try and learn how others have approached this subject. The danger of course is that other theory underpinnings can create conflict especially where different sectors meet and cross over, for this thesis this is a concern but moreover it is the application of theory that causes difficulty.

Beth Dillon (2008) presents a very interesting analysis of *The Warchiefs* (Microsoft Game Studios, 2006) which is an expansion to the game *Age of Empires III* (2005). In her analysis instead of beginning with the political implications of playing as a Native American in the founding of the 'New World' and North America she first presents the elements that define the genre. The interface, the expectations of what should occur during play and the goals of play. What is also interesting here is that the mandate is to find other ways to describe interaction, since Dillon does not believe that the constructs of traditional Western approaches to interactivity or play, and this is in the context of games outside of the electronic medium and well as those within. This is because they may not be entirely suitable or at worst cannot generate meaningful content. Her goals are to “find

other aesthetic traditions to analyze games” which then “introduce the ludic qualities of the RTS genre, and then compares indigenous and Western perspectives of interactivity, space and time, and narrative.” (p.129). The way this is done is to first understand the conventions of the RTS genre and this is done with a description of what makes a real time strategy game work. In essence the challenge from these type of games arises from the players abilities to juggle finite resources and apply those to either denying the opposing player which in this case is the computer or AI, or to attain some other type of narrative qualifier which when met will mean the that the player wins. Another aspect that appears to be a crucial one for game studies is the acknowledgment of the terms of the genre in that “Content theme is secondary to game play in the RTS genre, but still calls for analysis, as the content largely defines a background for the design choices in the context of history of the design elements of wargames” (p.130). This is important because it allows a researcher to incorporate theoretical discussion on cultural representation or any other type social structures into games, because it is so easy to mitigate these smaller perhaps non-essential elements it gives these elements a place and a purpose. A good example of how this is applied in Dillon's work is the discussion of the resource gathering mechanics, here there are some fascinating examples of how game play is enhanced by association to cultural representation.

Regardless of whether you are playing as the colonialists or Natives, the mechanics remain largely the same: mine copper, silver and gold; chop down trees; gather berries; kill animals and collect meat; kill treasure guardians and collect treasure... When playing Natives, you do receive an additional building unique to them: “Tasking villagers on your Fire Pit invokes power for your tribe and will give you access to unique Native abilities”. The Fire Pit is a circle with blue flames that your villagers dance around (p.132).

Dillon then continues to describe the various actions that the player can take while using this unique ability. Here the analysis of these actions takes into account the duality of the game, that in order to win one must adopt the practices of the other European factions in the game, these activities are the hallmarks of colonization yet the player must engage in them even though historically they were shunned by the Native peoples. There is no other real avenue to take, but the player can incorporate some of the traditional arts into their play style. The way this is done is by enhancing the core game with other elements, different graphics for the Natives, different voice acting, speech and a unique game play device. These elements are tiny in the larger context of the games structure but their power of representation makes stand out, it makes them unique and while they occupy a small part of the experience it cries out for detailed attention. However this is itself is not enough of a justification to give a solid focus to these elements, the researcher must also understand the total

experience. They must engage with it and only this way can they outline their observations in context.

2.7 *Application and Analysis of Theory in Game Studies - Race and Cultural Representation*

Jeffery Ow (2000) provides an example of work which examines the minute but who could engage more deeply if the entire spectrum were to be examined, now this is not to say the Ow does not have something useful to say but his work is quite typical from those studying or commenting on games without a clear method which also includes the elements an analysis of game rules. The background to this article is built on the foundation of cyborg theory. That in an industrialized society the individual can be fused with technology or have a new entity born out of technology which allows them to reject the society that has enabled them or restrained them depending on the theorist involved (p.52). It is this context that Ow examines the game *Shadow Warrior* (GT Interactive, 1997). First this researcher has played *Shadow Warrior* as a teenager, it is for lack of a better word a crass game and hollow. And like the Ow, only the demo level was played was played by the researcher ten years ago.

The main focus of Ow's analysis, is Lo Wang the protagonist in *Shadow Warrior* (see *Figure 2.5*, *Figure 2.6* and *Figure 2.7*). He is according to the developers an amalgamation of all things stereotypically Asian, he is a ninja, he speaks with a highly affected accent reminiscent of *Fu Manchu* or Mickey Rooney in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* causing Ow to dub him the Yellow-Faced Terminator (p.55). Ow casts the player as an actor in a game, with the player subsuming the role of Wang, a role which both exploits and causes harm. Harm itself is a common motif in early game studies it seems. In this instance the harm is the pollution of the medium where there is an opportunity to generate a positive experience. That is probably wishful thinking but Ow argues that just because a medium is set to entertain does not mean it does not have to engage with the issue of offense (p.60). All these points have validity, after all if everyone argued that 'it's just a game' then this thesis would not exist. However to examine a game from the frame work of message first and game structure later means that as a researcher this limits the amount of tools you have to conduct analysis, let alone providing a means for interpretation. What tools are available come from other forms of media studies, film criticism being the prime example and this is a problem when wanting to conduct a similar project. It is already so hard to know what elements are important to the audience when playing a game, as an academic certain elements poke out clearly but others do not,

confusing the situation with film theory just adds even more layers of distraction rather than introspection.

Another work that is commonly cited by those concentrating on race representation in games is that of David Leonard whose work forms a substantial amount of backdrop to Dean Chan (2005) and Anna Everett. Leonard in his article “*High Tech Blackface -- Race, Sports Video Games and Becoming the Other*” first published in 2003, has a focus on the representation of characters in sporting games, because Leonard believes that “sports games represent a site in which white hatred and disdain for blackness and its love and adoration for blackness is revealed through popular culture” (p.2). Furthermore it is a site of exploration with the primary thesis that;

...these games reveal white supremacy in the form of both contempt and desire. The contempt materializes in different ways, but in reflecting an oppositional binary, sports games legitimize stereotypical ideas about black athletic superiority and white intellectual abilities. The adoration materializes in the approval and value we offer black athletes, whether through financial rewards, posters on our walls, or imitation. Video games fulfill our desire to not only emulate Allen Iverson's killer crossover, Shaq's thunderous dunks, Barry Bonds' homerun swing, or Barry Sanders spins, but allow the virtually occupation of black bodies (p.2).

This is a common theme that is found in both the work of Leonard and Everett. The reading of a game text in this fashion is based on a number of aspects. First there is empirical evidence this is found in the study “*Fair play? Violence, Gender and Race in Video Games*” published in 2001, this document is produced by the California based advocate group Children Now. The study involved surveying a total of seventy games which is in itself quite a respectable number of titles, the methodology is less clear however and the heavy reliance on this document by researchers is a little unsettling as the feature on race and representation within this document only cites other publications produced by the advocacy group Children Now. It is also unclear how the representation was measured within the study or if the basis of measurement was adjusted for the type of game. Also it is important to mention that the game was played for the first level of play if applicable, there are number of titles that were not structured in this traditional narrative so how these were coded is not outlined. The other form of evidence is mainly drawn from investigative journalism and this is true of Everett as well, where articles in Salon, The New York Times and The Village Voice are referred a number of times. One article to note is the 1999 technology piece ‘*Blood, Gore, Sex and Now: Race*’ by Michael Marriot in the New York Times. It is used by Leonard in a number of works and so does Everett. These articles are mainly focused on talking to

game developers about their experience of designing characters and the perception of those characters by gaming, most of the content is anecdotal or journalistic in fashion so it should be treated as such, but thematically what is brought into the fold of Leonard's work in these articles are that African-American game characters are explicitly outlined as 'the other', that they are desirable to the player because the majority of players are not African-American and thus part of the gaming pleasure is to perform as that character. This is what he terms as the 'pleasurable stereotype' in "*Not a Hater, Just Keepin' It Real : The Importance of Race- and Gender-Based Game Studies*" (2006). This stereotype more so than others is dangerous because of its subversive nature, especially within an electronic discourse and the cost of ignoring this subversive nature is high as;

...White nationalists are celebrating video games for not only their truthfulness of representation, even as they produce their own games (*Ethnic Cleansing, White by Law*) that resemble mainstream games in a number of ways, we must begin to take games seriously. The fact that video game producers and scholars render games as "pure fantasy," "explorations of space," or "mere entertainment" amid discourses of color-blindness at the same time that White nationalists and fans praise games for elucidating the savagery of people of color, whether in South Central Los Angeles or Iraq, demonstrates a need for a serious undertaking regarding virtual gaming reality. The cost and consequence is not just the reification of stereotypes but legitimizing, normalizing, and sanctioning state violence, inequality, and despair (p.6).

A very sobering thought indeed yet other than the example of *Ethnic Cleansing* (Resistance Records, 2002) whereby the message of the game is clear, it would be interesting to see Leonard focus on what the audience perception of 'hi-tech black face' is. It seems vital in fact that this is explored not just to create a stronger, more credible argument but since the consequence is quite dire especially when examining a title like *Ethnic Cleansing*. In relation to the goal of this thesis which does not engage with the audience it is tempting to use material that Leonard has developed after all the discussion of political economy is fascinating and creates a sense of urgency, or at least a moral obligation to acknowledge this factor. However this is slightly problematic because intent must be acknowledged, if not from the design team then at least with an accurate detailed description of play so that those examining the researcher's discourse are able to experience a small part of what the game is about. Intent and use of a discourse is vital to form an objective piece of research and it is objectivity that Everett (2005) struggles to grapple with.

A personal story begins Everett's work allowing a window into her world as a gamer, a woman and

an African-American (p.311). The introduction to gaming whilst in young adulthood and the disillusionment that to date there have been no serious African-American characters introduced into gaming lexicon as familiar as Mario, Doom Guy, Duke Nukem or more recently the Chief from *Halo*. She outlines her struggle for objectivity when writing on this field, but the justification and exploration are not served well in the paragraphs that follow this, this researcher feels that the real solution to her struggle with subjectivity is contained on page 316 where she outlines that;

If we have learned anything from semiotics, structuralism and post-structuralism's influential demystifications of linguistic and imagistic signifying functions, as Nielson illustrates, it is that cultural inscriptions acquire meaning only as a part of the intact language systems that more or less rely on reader's varying fluency in diverse media literacies.

This is the most important statement in the work without a doubt. It acknowledges the nature of gaming, the nature of text and the use of games as text. However how this is applied by the author is by no means completed according to this thesis at all. The primary reason for this is that two of the key game texts discussed *Imperialism* (SSI, 1997) and *Civilization III* (Firaxis Games, 2001) are discussed in a manner that leaves an impression of ethical instruction rather than ethical questioning. Take for example the analysis of *Imperialism* and as stated prior published is by SSI, a company discussed in chapter one. Everett postulates that the title is a new mythology of colonialism, a revisionism of the horrors of conquest (p.316). In a sense this is correct, the game does allow a player to conduct the conquest of the new world, exploit the environment and gives the player the role a of 19th century European power using their technological advantage combined with a sense of divine entitlement to disenfranchise whole cultures. What is not divulged however that when playing the title each European power has the capacity to fail, that their mercantile economies are susceptible to failure and that a culture like France in most scenario types has to receive a virtual leg up or else it cannot compete. These functions of play reveal a much deeper meaning than an attempt at straight revision or racist day dreaming as in *Ethnic Cleansing*. By playing the title one could potentially learn about this time period, one can potentially draw a meaning of the inequalities of the time period and the lack of freedoms. Within *Imperialism*, a title this researcher played extensively in yesteryear, the act of imperialism is not the sole motivation for the player, the goal is to win against the AI. Doing so requires exploitation of resources similar to other games of the type and conflict. Does this mean that the game is not for lack of a better term racist? No, not inherently it requires an audience perception to create that reading, it requires a wider discourse to acquire that reading. It would have been a much stronger position to take to focus on that wider reading, analyze more than the game manual, check for perception of players and see what game rules assert as the

preferred reading. Which leads to the second main title analyzed *Civilization III*, one must assume that it is this title since there are no citations to indicate which version of the game it could be, but at the time of publishing *Civilization III* was in publication for four years, it could be *Civilization II* (MicroProse, 1996) or *Civilization* (MicroProse, 1991). In this section we are introduced to a gamer who takes ownership of the code and re-creates society according to a dominant African-American female. In all *Civilization* titles a player chooses a leader that represents that particular culture, starts the game on a randomly designed map or one can select Earth at 4000BC with a number of knowledge points. In this instance the player selects the Zulu culture, the avatar that the player represents is Chaka Zulu and creates a destiny or empire that not only shows the dominance of an African culture as a reversal to the reality but also a total re-coding of the game rules set by the developer. In this instance the player Rebecca Hall outlines her strategy;

...the Zulu are not scientific. So what I do (and this is where the resistance part comes in) is, I take the military advantage that is there, but then I focus more of the resources on the scientific. By the time I get to 1000 B.C. they are both the strongest militarily and the strongest scientifically, which positions them in a way that is stronger than the other groups... There is also the telos... After you've done enough research you go into different ages, like the Barbarian Age, the Premodern, the Enlightenment, whatever. And by the time you get to the 1800's, and the way I play it the Zulus have the railroad by 1000 A.D. You see Chaka in a suit, with the bone piecing in his ear-you know. So, its got the Western telos-right, but, it's a little bit subversive. p.318.

A player following this action here so that one can “...effectively resist or transgress programmers' tyranny of the bit” is not at all doing that in this instance (p.319). This is coded behaviour in the game, there is no transgression taking place here and to champion this as an example is simply not quite right. Having played all *Civilization* titles extensively, modified them and used multiple custom modifications truly transgressing would installing one of the numerous modifications that allows radical terraforming of the planet, or a deeper sense of different forms of government, or play a World War Two scenario where the player controls Nazi Germany and can win or even ally with Britain. That would be a much better choice to focus on those modifications, since doing so allows for discussion of altering the player narrative they develop during play, the consequence of developing such a modification and monitoring how the wider community receives these modifications say on the Civilization Fanatics Center website. Since doing so addresses the core point stated in Everett's work earlier, being “...that cultural inscriptions acquire meaning only as a part of the intact language systems that more or less rely on reader's varying fluency in diverse media literacies” to focus on how a reader might acquire a reading and what they do with this would

allow a much greater argument to be made on a particular meaning's penetration into the consciousness of the audience.

2.8 *The Unique Challenges of Game Development*

A component not explored very well are multimedia texts that mine the same subject matter but are cross platform a good example is Machin and van Leeuwen's (2005) focus on the film *Black Hawk Down* (Scott, 2002) and its game counterpart *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* (Novalogic, 2003) is a good example of how approaching this synergistic media relationship can be explored. Their work is part of a larger set of discourse and research on navigating political representation in popular culture. Essentially the interest of Machin and van Leeuwen is the convergence of media forms as a mandate for public policy in the United States.

Where there is a positive message to be presented in a film or game, the state will oblige with support, openness and information. Where it is the opposite those media forms can expect no institutional support. The analysis starts by examining documentary footage that intersperses the introduction to both the game and film, both of these divide the scenes into a description of the visual elements on screen and the audio that accompanies them with comments describing the thematic elements of the audio. The language used for both sequences are the same they divide the screen in shots, frames and perspectives. It is a well written segment the authors outline the points of difference between the film and the game in that;

Movie audiences are addressed individually and imaginarily identify with the heroes...the elite soldiers are not only attractive Hollywood stars they are also shown as individuals. The film takes time to introduce them as people, with a past, with loved ones back home, with feelings and with individual character traits. Their emotions, especially when fellow soldiers are hurt, are shown in close up. We experience the war with and through them. None of this applies to the other side. In the game on the other hand, players participate vicariously in the war, looking at the game's images along the barrel of their guns, involved, not in an emotive experience but in the adrenaline-rush action. (p.130).

This is a useful clarification; it outlines the difference between the two mediums in terms of structure, style and execution. It is interesting to see that the differences between emotions experienced by the film-goers are seen as being different to the game player. Surely it is not a long stretch to argue that emotions are emotions, they might be stimulated by different acts but still at

their core they affect the audience in a similar way. After all it would be foolish to say that the sadness from the death of a pet was any less valid or real than the sadness felt when a character dies in a film, the real world consequences may be absent but the feelings are still present.

Representation of the enemies is quite well covered within this research, Machin and van Leeuwen argue that in society it is often necessary to collectivize a group of people, groups rather than individuals are easier to talk about and to articulate in the visual medium. Machin and van Leeuwen point to the contrast between death of the individual soldier and the death of the militia men who are the antagonists in both the game and film. In the film the emphasis is that “they are not a regular army, but a motley collection of individuals, all differently dressed and armed. However the shots are too distant and too brief to allow us to perceive individual traits” within the game this is also true and in the game “...it is possible from time to time, to view individual militia members, for instance after they have been 'killed', but they remain generic and never become individuals in the sense of having specific individual facial and bodily characteristics” (p.133). It is so interesting to see the points of convergence between the film and the game, in terms of how the antagonists are shown. The problem is that there are some key differences, the author of the film has made a deliberate choice to show or to hide the faces of the characters in the film. The audience must accept that, they can pause the experience and examine them in detail depending on the mechanism used to view the film. The game on the other hand has plenty of opportunities to stop and look, screen shots can be taken, cheats can be used to ignore death and get close to an enemy. The decision to not have a diverse group of enemies is also a deliberate one, but probably for different reasons technology for example, a game must be able to be published on a standard format and this limits the size available to package content. It is easy to reduce an observation in a game based on content alone, but there is merit in understanding and affording recognition to the technical and design aspects of a game.

Chan (2005), chooses to focus on the relationship between on the re-write of history and the real consequences of this, however his work only really provides a fragment or summary on this topic, really to find weight to his argument it is much better to examine the literature Chan has cited which provides some telling points. Early in his work Chan cites Gerald Greenfield, whose work published in 2004 explores how representation of the Vietnam war in gaming ultimately will reflect the future representation of the current War on Terror. It is an interesting work but is published as an opinion piece rather than an article, so should not be considered objective. It does not cite any reference of how privilege is constructed or how game play mechanics construct this so Chan choosing this was probably not the best choice, on the other hand however he also cites Dean Takahashi (2004) who

has a very interesting exploration on game design and the ethics of game design questions the developers of *Men of Valor* (2015 Inc., 2004) about their choices of the inclusion of ethnic slurs, profanity and violence. Here Takahashi interviews lead developer John Whitmore on the inclusion of ethnic slurs;

...the team also had to clear that decision with the publisher, which in turn, checked with the retailers. The decision passed muster. Whitmore said the team decided to censor itself from using racial slurs, saying they carried too much emotional weight for modern audiences. Instead of outright slurs, the team substituted profanity laden stereotypes and creative curses, which they considered to be less offensive than the hot-button words of racial prejudice.

A fascinating insight into the methods of production and the way that this has changed the representation of characters within the game. Sadly this title was not played in research so personal comment cannot be made on what 'soft slurs' are used. Authenticity is also something mentioned by game developers in a similar fashion to the endorsement by an official government department like is the case with the titles mentioned by Machin and van Leeuwen. This authenticity of those 'who were there' provides a stamp of legitimacy for the developers, almost as if the inclusion of this input is necessary to have created a good game. Here Takahashi poses this question and gains a telling response on the nature of this title and perceived reception;

The depiction of drug use might have been justifiable as historically accurate but it wasn't central to recreating the sense of real combat, Whitmore said. The game has plenty of violence and blood. Players can bleed to death from wounds because that adds to the realism. If the battleground were littered with health packs, Whitmore said that would have been a "dishonor to the war." It would also have changed tactics, motivating players to charge head-on rather than seek other ways to win. On the other hand, if the game showed dismemberment, executions, and torture, then it would not have been "respectful of the audience" which includes veterans, he said.

An interesting example of why finding developer intentions is very useful for exploring the reception and place of a title.

Finally an example of heavy semiotic analysis, Ouellette (2008) draws comparisons between the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as represented in *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun* and the terrorist attacks of September 11th in the United States. The presentation of history in *Rising Sun* is seen as a simplified and selective response that is designed to redraw the moral justification for intervention on the part of the United States. Ouellette argues that this process will indeed occur again with the

presentation of the September 11th attacks in popular culture. The links between the two events are a little tenuous, as a researcher examining the origins of the Pacific war, the motivation for Japanese aggression are numerous and the response from the United States is complicated but to compare the two has its problems. Thematically Ouellette explores the veneration of fire fighters post 9/11 and the staging of the first level in *Rising Sun*, where the player must run up and down stairs while the ship burns and ultimately sinks (p.8).

This feels weak, but the comments about Japanese suicide attacks is interesting, as is the commentary on the modeling of the missions as being less about defending America but more about defending the American way of life. Seminal images are placed within the first few levels of the game; a baseball field due to the conflict becomes militarized and is transformed into an anti-aircraft position for example. In another example the player has to interact with a field agent who is recruiting native troops to fight against the Japanese and reject tyranny (p.8). The representation of the *banzai* style suicide attacks are linked to the representation of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the role of honorable suicide in combat, this is all very well and good but again it seems tenuous to argue that *Rising Sun* is a direct response to the terror attacks. It does make a compelling argument that American angst and imperialist ambitions are enacted in popular culture, that can be justified, but to argue that the revisionist setting of *Rising Sun* is a direct response to that does not really work. While the American administration has drawn links to Pearl Harbor, it does not seem logical that this position has filtered deeply into the game developer's psyche or motivation. To classify *Rising Sun* as a revenge fantasy (p.10) would probably fit better with a title like *Kuma\War* (Kuma Reality Games, 2004) where players *can* actually partake in fights in Afghanistan or Iraq. Ouellette acknowledges that might be a criticism of his reading of *Rising Sun*, this researcher does not believe his work is without merit but in order for his thesis to feel true, some further research is definitely needed on the audience response to the game, Ouellette should examine fan made videos and forum chatter to see how other users articulate their place in the game.

2.9 *Summary and Conclusions*

Games formed the core subject matter for the books and articles reviewed here, the method of approach differed widely however. There is a spectacular amount of scope in the topics that are covered by academics in the field. The core method for understanding games in the majority of this material was either witnessing play or the researcher playing the game. The difference of course is *how* this process went about and there were three main threads running through the material

collected. There were those that viewed games as an extension to the 'memory machine' a kind of digital artifact, the idea being that games were another expression of the individual trying to find a place in history and society and the pleasure that comes from that. The primary concern is that often a sense of revisionism occurs and not always in the spirit of creative license. Then there are those that view games as a method to teach others a particular way to understand history and other cultures, again of concern was the motivation of those behind the manufacture of the game. Finally there were those that are interested in applying theory to a particular reading of a game, for example the political ideology of a game or the developers. All of these types of studies have had useful information. Some more so than others, what is clear though is that understanding representation in a game requires an understanding of the genre, the game play and in certain circumstances namely the research goals, the audience.

2.9.1 *Figures and Illustrations*

Figure 2.1



Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault screen capture, here the characteristics of the game's protagonist changes depending on the difficulty selected as evidenced in figures 2.1 to 2.4

Figure 2.2



Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault screen capture

Figure 2.3



Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault screen capture

Figure 2.4



Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault screen capture

Figure 2.5



Lo Wang, the titular 'Yellow-Faced Terminator'

Figure 2.6



Shadow Warrior game play screen capture

Figure 2.7



Shadow Warrior game play screen capture

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

The goal for this chapter is to outline the research practice that were implemented that ultimately lead to the findings discussed in chapter four. These practices were informed by examining other work on game studies and investigating their goals, motivations and outcomes. The end result was a desire to ascribe to a methodology that possessed the trait of accessibility, modularity and operational flexibility.

3.1 *Operational Outcomes and Goals*

Accessibility was essential because without a methodology being open to examination and critique it becomes very difficult to replicate a study. If this is not possible then to at least gain a sense of how these results came into being. Furthermore possessing maximum accessibility means being able to gain access to the mindset, research paradigms and method that the researcher. This was seen as crucial when discussing complex texts like games, even more so when that discussion is qualitative in nature.

Modularity means that the methodology is easy to use and manipulate, that while the entire method is a cohesive whole, the various 'parts' can be used in a number of situations and can be adapted to fulfill a specific task tailored to the research goals.

Flexibility means that the methodology is free of bias towards one type of study. That the mechanics and implementation of the methodology is not limited to one subject or title alone, that the methodology can be used across a number of genres and game play types without too much adaptation or change. Modularity and flexibility sound similar, but they have one key difference. A highly modular method is able to be adapted to a large or small section of a research project yet still be able to provide a high level of depth. In comparison flexibility in method means that it can be applied to various subjects and allows a sense of coherency in the reporting of the results. When consulting research on games studies methodology one thing was readily apparent there were a number of approaches being used to study games qualitatively but a consensus on how do this research has not yet been reached. Objectivity was a common theme with the caveat that there needs to be an acknowledgment of the inherent subjectivity of play. One cannot play a game without being involved, even in observation there is a sense of involvement and judgment but

researcher's like Malliet contend that there is nothing wrong with this as long as there is a sense of acknowledgment (2007).

3.2 *Textual Awareness and Acknowledgment of Subjectivity*

When conducting the research into the literature, it seemed quite common for the introduction to explain some of the personal reasons or experiences for approaching the topic in the manner they had. In Nornes and Fukushima's preface to *The Japan/America Film Wars* (1994) the personal experience of curating an exhibition of films produced at the height of World War Two and then watching footage of the first Gulf War on television are contrasted by the authors. In *Screenplay: Cinema/videogames/interfaces* (2002) the editors refer to the industry of game and film production from describing auteur to narrative form. In the first instance that is Nornes and Fukushima, the focus on being involved in trying to understand conflict and how it affects every aspect of society including art. This helps the reader to understand some of the criteria for the selection of the articles in that book. In the second instance the focus on the institution and the practice in these institutions are what form the basis for discussion criteria, from formal qualities to analysis of specific cultural activities or products. In this thesis the criteria for selection is on one hand personal and on the other hand also specifically linked to the application of formal theory to understand various game titles of significance, interest or relevance.

To read a game like *Pacific Assault* means having to engage it as an active and aware player. The experience that this researcher brings is quite different to what was required because, it is not a genre or type of game this researcher often plays. Instead this researcher's passion is for war games, where the ideal is historical 'accuracy', scope to emulate some of the challenges faced in historic and future conflict and an attention to detail. Those aspects make a perfect game for this researcher. In the context of personal research interest though, this has changed several times from interests in specific genre to social effect and an interest in game form. Now and what informed this research was a desire to see what elements make a game compelling, novel and able to transfer meaning from an author to the audience. The literature reviewed on methodology also has a focus on this and consists of research on games that focus on why a game *works* or is entertaining and then formally describes the context of a game, preferably from a perspective of viewing a game as a cultural artefact.

The use of the word artefact is a deliberate one, as it opens many avenues for discussion but

importantly allows discussion to be focused clearly on use of these objects and or their intention. An artefact being an unnatural, inorganic thing contrasts with something that has evolved to fulfill a survival function. It is this nature that makes studying artefacts so intriguing. Viewing an artefact as a product of human action and therefore not being related to nature, feels like a useful way to examine games. In addition the purpose of an artefact can change through out a span of time, across cultures and the institution it is used in. The word artefact also evokes an image of age and the obsolete, two ideas which seem to frame a large amount of literature which investigates historically themed film and other explorations of historic narratives. In the context of developing a methodology by viewing a game as a cultural product to be studied it allowed this research to borrow and adapt ideas from research into other forms.

The dichotomy between reality and virtual reality becomes a fascinating and very fertile ground for exploring the chosen subject of this thesis, the game *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault*. The focus on the human input, that is ideas around authorship are also important as it allows for questions to be raised around the intentions, the methods and the relationship that exists between author and audience.

The first impressions of *Pacific Assault* for the researcher are heavily linked to previous titles in the series. Due to having played all of the titles available for personal computer and many other titles which are *Medal of Honor's* competition. Personal gaming interests meant that the *Medal of Honor* titles have not had much longevity in terms of play time for the researcher. Unlike other World War Two first person shooters the *Medal of Honor* series has not hit some benchmarks that make it an indelible title in terms of gaming experience. Yet there was something about *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* (Electronic Arts, 2002) that made it an interesting and memorable gaming experience, that made it worth returning to and this experience helped to point to the title *Pacific Assault*. *Allied Assault* created an environment where the player felt that there was a sense of authentic danger. Within this environment there was an over arching sense of drive to completion not just related to winning the game but also to advance the narrative. This narrative in *Allied Assault* was one that viewed the American intervention into Europe in World War Two as just, heroic and necessary. A player subsumes the role of a member of the 'greatest generation'. As a researcher there was a desire to see if and how this feeling was mediated in *Pacific Assault*. The Pacific Theatre was a different space of conflict, the enemy was defined in a different way. How would the title make the player feel and more importantly how would it accomplish this?

The term obsolete was used before and there seems to be no place in the gaming world for obsolete hardware except for the genre fan, six years ago as a gamer, the technological power of the *Allied Assault* engine allowed for a sense of virtual reality that seemed intricately linked to the experience of being a soldier in World War Two, but upon revisiting the game a few years later this connection was faded and examining the game critically the sense of experience seemed quite hollow. The very set pieces that enthralled years before seem tame compared to the frenetic pace of other titles that have since been published. The gaming environment seems constrained and far too closed to feel authentic not to mention to nature of the action feeling rather unrealistic. More importantly the story and the nature it was carried out felt woefully tame compared to other games that were released in 2003 but *Pacific Assault* negates some of those feelings by matching the setting very well to the game engine, the close jungle levels have aged much better than the bocage in *Allied Assault*. With this in mind it is pertinent to discuss how others have treaded this ground, although formalism for methodology in gaming is not complete and some cases rejected there are some trends that have emerged.

3.3 *Game Studies Method - Debate, Arguments and Trends*

Empirical work has been split roughly into two main approaches namely, studies of the game audience or of the games themselves. Within these two categories some works use exclusively quantitative or qualitative methods. While others use a mix adapting or borrowing methods and terms from many different schools of thought. It is this process of borrowing methodology from other disciplines that generates some of the weaknesses and strengths that are present in the myriad of academic output on games. It is this situation that Consalvo and Dutton have attempted to mitigate with their work into game methodology, the result of which is not a 'how to' or a specific exclusive ideologically based method, but rather a transparent one and one that allows a scope to replicate those studies. Within their work on game methodology they explore other work that has grappled with this very issue and some of these works in themselves are worthy of further investigation.

Brooker (2001) begins his discussion of game methodology examining the literature available, then seeks to define the medium and crucially the implications of that definition. He argues that early game studies are valuable and offer interesting insights into the medium, but often their style is journalistic in nature or unfocused, therefore limiting their usefulness in a rigorous academic context. Examples of this can be found in the literature review in the second chapter. All of this is

not new, in an interview conducted by Michael Abbott about his early work, Mark Wolf describes the position that he was in when publishing early materials on game studies in 1997, without an independent peer reviewed outlet, it was a difficult process to publish game studies material. The solution to this was to publish material with comparative links to other mediums. This of course leads to the unfocused or wildly divergent nature of early game studies, that causes the frustrations that Brooker writes about.

For this researcher though, it his definition of 'game' that is the most important aspect for developing a methodology. Brooker draws a distinction between games released for dedicated consoles, dedicated solid state units like arcade machines and games for computers used for home or business. The unifying aspect in all of these categories are that the game is powered and run by a digital computer, but that each also has its own oddities and particular way of interacting with the audience (p.3). This is an important aspect for methodological considerations because at its core; it means that a common shared language can exist across various platforms, but in order to attain results that are consequential there needs to be an acknowledgment of the structure and form of a game. That means both of these aspects need to be built into the analysis process.

Brooker provides an example by studying the character Jetman, Brooker begins with a section entitled institution, under this heading he describes the creation of *Jetpac* and the fate of its publisher Ultimate Games. Within this section context is provided on the creation of the game or games as Brooker changes the context at times. He also outlines the personalities involved and the development atmosphere. He uses articles from gaming magazines, websites and interview snippets from the development team to articulate the sense of where the game is situated. The next heading authorship, concerns the style and format that the *Jetman* and the Ultimate Games library of titles used. This is used to frame the context of the game series and that to understand a game, the researcher must understand the format, the structure, the presentation and the typical challenges of a game. If this can be done then cross-references to other games can be made even if they do not share direct thematic elements. In terms of narrative Brooker believes that there are two parts to narrative. A synchronic layer which is the background plot, often the motivation for action and a diachronic layer the description of the in game action, this can mean exposition or character action. This context of narrative is so useful for game studies because it helps to divorce game theory from other media studies, not because they are not worthwhile but because to try and adapt them causes confusion, rather than the strength one would expect from intertextuality.

The application of this in Brooker's work is focused on the character Jetman. Jetman for example may have a back story that is explored in the game manual and this is a key component of the structure of the game. But also what makes Jetman, the Jetman is the actions that the player takes when playing the game. These actions make the character, understanding and writing about these actions is very important. Although Jetman may be a simple character on the face of it as simple as say Pac Man or Mario. His actions are not, they are challenging because of the games environment. This gives the character depth and more importantly provides the connection to the player so that they will return to play the game once again. Interpretation of the results gleaned from these observations are more complex, but one aspect is clear as a researcher. What a character does, is what the character most likely is, we can as researchers add more to this but do so will often result in a limited outcome, dispute or miscommunication and combinations thereof (p.15). As for the description of game play Brooker is quite brief instead focusing on how game play mechanics are adapted from the original *Jetman* titles to various remakes and imitators.

Lars Konzak (2002), provides a much more direct engagement with this problem of game play analysis. Konzak's work on developing a game analysis typology identifies several terms, dubbed layers. Layers are structured points of difference that are organized into a hierarchy.

The first layer, hardware is a technical description of the actual machine hardware used to run and play the game in question. The reasoning being that understanding the medium that enables the game play experience allows the researcher to comment on way that the game operates. It is quite true that these technical details are important, the platform is a marketable point of difference and each platform has capacities that others do not. In a way this is a similar idea to Brooker and examining the institutional background to a games development. However Konzak defines this layer as a purely descriptive, ideally the exact details of a piece of equipment would form the basis of this layer, in essence this would be the technical specification engineers would document.

The second layer is similar to the first, this is program code. The justification for examining the code is to understand the various relationships between the input that the player provides and how this then corresponds to the action portrayed on screen or however the medium fosters interaction. This layer has some problems with implementation as it requires a knowledge of several aspects of privileged information, first is access to the code of the game, a completed and compiled game is very different to the code on which it was developed. Second even if this information is freely available to be able to conduct this form of analysis would mean that the researcher would need to

have knowledge within that particular type of code and how it works.

The third layer is functionality the way it is described is quite dense and some of the terms used are quite hard to understand especially in context of generating a form of analysis . The easier terms to grapple with are transiency, perspective, access and linking (p.92). Transiency is simply a state where a text does not require immediate input in order for action to be created, the opposite of this means that the user must be prompted or engage with the text in order to receive further interaction opportunities. Perspective is simply the role the player has, if they play as a character or not. Access is the ability to engage at any time, this parameter is called random access its opposite, is controlled access. Finally linking is the ability for the player to follow links within a text to other actions or options. Note that all of these parameters use the term text, sometimes Konzak will use the term hypertext. This is due to these aspects being able to be transferred across a number of different multimedia settings this is very important to keep in mind.

The language used to describe the other aspects of functionality are a little confusing and really do beg the question as to how will they be applied. Dynamics are the first concept to understand, within dynamics there are states of change and states of consistency. In both of these cases the fundamental 'stuff' that forms events, this is the script and is the focus of interest. Within these two states there are other layers of formal change. Konzak uses the terms *intratextonic* and *textonic* change, these are terms that are referenced from Aarseth's work on agency. There will be no exposition on these theories of agency in this text, but there needs to be some working definitions in order to describe the methodology that Konzak has developed.

A simple definition would be that intratextonic changes do not change the information that the script is acting out, and textonic changes are the opposite. This means there can be a number of combinations, the script can 'act' in a different way but the information can stay the same this would be called a dynamic intratextonic change for example. Determinability is another difficult term to describe fully in an easy manner, but Konzak's explanation is very good, a determinate application is one where an action can always be engaged following a command, indeterminate applications are the opposite. Finally the last aspect that needs to be addressed is user function. The biggest problem with this layer is that as described by Konzak it is heavily reliant on other aspects explored in the other upper layer levels. The unique problems of those are explored later, but essentially user function is the measure of the interface that the player uses.

The next layer is game play, this is fairly self-explanatory in what it covers and the criteria for exploring play are very good. In this layer the researcher examines the resources the player must manage, the space where the game takes place, how time is measured and implemented, what the game goals are, what obstacles there to the player, what knowledge is needed or gained by play and finally what rewards or penalties there are for winning or losing. Again all of these are useful terms and well defined.

The next three layers while marked as distinct have some serious problems in regards to actual game critique. These layers in order of the hierarchy are meaning, referentially and socio-culture.

Meaning is perhaps the most troublesome because Konzak argues that semiotics is the preferred method to draw meaning, this researcher does not agree. Not because semiotics is not useful but that in order to effectively use semiotics requires a specific skill set, and privileged information that is often not easy to get.

For example in game studies, in order to fully understand the same present in a game every potential icon or sign should be covered, since language as a whole is dependent on every character present not just the sections that are interesting or have an impact on the viewer. In a game this would mean capturing every potential sign within the game, a task that can be done. After all everything that is in the game was done on purpose. One could for example take screen shots of every frame during play, but then how are the signs cataloged? There is no easy answer to these questions and by not having an answer it becomes very difficult to set research objectives that are either attainable or meaningful.

Also the way it is worded, referentiality and the socio-culture layers overlap with the 'meaning layer'. If this is the case then it is difficult to argue that the earlier layers had aspects of exclusive data that made them particular and worthy of exclusion. Referentiality is defined as really another superlative way of describing meaning, because the goal of the referentiality layer is to find semiotic links to other forms of human activity. Additionally at the very top the socio-culture layer sits as another level of textual analysis. This layer seeks to understand the culture surrounding game play, in itself a good idea and some researchers like Schut would argue is an essential step, but since this is a hierarchy it is interesting to see this as the top most layer, it would be interesting to see how the results of using this method would be if the steps of analysis were conducted in this exact order rather than simultaneously or after the fact.

There are certain aspects that make implementing these ideas difficult. Namely that there are some ambiguities and within qualitative research this often leads to problems. Aarseth (2003) expands on the work of Konzak. His first comment is that by creating division and then applying equal worth to each division creates a situation where it can be hard to fully assimilate the data, Aarseth argues that for many games not every division will need equal amounts of time. That is certainly true, some aspects just will not be that relevant in terms of discovering the research goals. Instead of looking at these terms in isolation, Aarseth argues that one should examine a game in terms of what are the general attributes of what the audience would consider, game-like. This statement by Aarseth is key in the conduct of this research. In this way there are three points, the first is game play since without play there can be no game, this is certainly true. Second is a structure, without a structure there is nothing to build a sense of representation to makes a game different to the real world. Finally there are rules to make actions possible, without some rules these actions are not game like at all (p.2). Aarseth then argues that these concepts could then be further divided and made into even more categories but this would still not answer the fundamental question, how can this be implemented? The answer lies in three activities. Observation of play, investigating the origins and structure of a game and an example of talking to developers is used here. Thirdly the researcher can actively and routinely engage with the game. To examine the observations that are gained from play Aarseth argues that identifying play style is a useful tool kit for analysis and discusses the work of Richard Bartle as a starting point. Another point to examine is the integration of theory to analyse the results. This is a point of considerable concern since;

Importing and applying theories from outside fields such as literature or art history can be valuable, but not always and necessarily (sic); and other non-theoretical, critical observation can contribute more the field than a learned but theory-centred discussion (p.7).

While in principle this makes for a sound judgment, when conducting research careful attention needs to be paid as to how these links are drawn. What practical measures can be taken from the information in these studies? Fundamentally the most important action is to actually play the game and this play must be augmented by careful analysis of the various components of itself.

The key question here when examining a game is, can a game be examined in the same fashion as other forms of text like books, film or other visual media? The researcher ascribes that they can but in doing so, there needs to be a certain awareness of the uniqueness of what 'makes' a game.

Malliet (2006) outlines the two terminologies which seem to have defined game studies. That is ludology, where a game is treated formally as a game, in that it is enclosed, has rules some of which the player can mutate others that he or she cannot. When examining a game in the context of ludology care must be taken to treat the game in this mindset.

The second terminology Malliet mentions is narratology, which is closely related to traditional reading of texts and in the case of visual games, uses similar conventions to reading visual text like cinema.

Malliet argues that the two are not mutually exclusive and that to examine a game in exclusive terms like this can lead to errors. Instead openness and an approach which incorporates both methods is desirable, openness is the key in that “within the context of video game studies, the issue of the interpretative position of the researcher is even more relevant than it already was in the context of traditional text analysis”. Importantly “...a researcher not only makes an interpretation of the audiovisual output that appears on the computer or console screen, but also contributes actively to the message that are conveyed”.

In this research narratology and ludology are not mutually exclusive and that in order to develop an analysis of the games within the franchise it is important to examine other texts. Since the titles examined acknowledge an attempt to reference film like conventions it seems logical that material written about cultural portrayals in war cinema are relevant to this research. Codifying the content of the games according to this manner though is not simple and importantly strict narrative coding cannot gain an insight into the intentions of the game, or how the game is ‘used’ by players.

3.4 *Application of Theory*

Consalvo and Dutton (2006) have examined game studies done by other researchers and through this analysis have developed a useful tool-kit to study games. This methodological approach takes into account the uniqueness of video games but also leaves room to examine narrative and social sense. There are four primary components to Consalvo and Dutton’s approach and below are the particular questions related to this research proposal within the framework they have devised.

In no particular order the first item is the object inventory. This is a log of the various items that are

used within play and what their purpose is. In the context of the *Medal of Honor* series this includes the weapons, devices and tools which are needed to advance through the game. The reason this log is useful is that allows conclusions to be drawn about the nature of the items and what they convey and what assumptions the player must have in order to use the item successfully and navigate the game.

To create this inventory was a difficult matter since it meant having to clarify what exactly was an object, how to order the inventory and what kind of language should be used to describe each object in the inventory. Each object was defined as a game play tool which is needed to advance normal game play, in this sense this applies to all the objects that a player can interact with in the game. The term interaction is defined thus, an interactive object has a state of change, and this change must be evident at some point. These changes are divided into two groups physical changes and aesthetic changes, a physical change must allow the player to alter the game environment or to act in the game environment in some way. Whether or not this is meaningful is another matter but whatever the object does it must be observable. An aesthetic change is when an objects perceptible appearance changes. This means that an object might not have a direct effect on the game play per se but rather is a change in how it is perceived. An aesthetic object is not a 'useless' object merely an object that could be described as a memento or curio, its worth is related to the emotional attachment rather than an economic value.

The focus on object changes is derived from research that Fernandez-vara, Hochhalter, Lichte, Matea and Zagal (2005) conducted into developing a set ontological tools for game analysis. They use the term entity to describe objects in much the same way as is portrayed here, however they define an entity as much more than those 'things' which can be used but rather refer to entities as being the fabric of the of a game's reality (p.8). However what allows for an entity to be categorized is its ability to be manipulated. These manipulations are described as either having abilities or attributes, abilities are described as enabling the player to act in a different way whilst attributes are described as altering the acting out of these abilities (p.8). So an object's abilities would be say if an object can fly or jump and their attributes might be the velocity it travels at, how much damage it can deal to another object and who or what owns the object in the game.

With these definitions in mind the process of creating the inventory was to first note the game inventory presented to the player.

This is important because in *Pacific Assault* a player can only carry four combat orientated objects at once with the binoculars taking the fifth slot. It is this opportunity cost of limited space that defined how the inventory was structured. When an object was given to the player during a play session, given an object at the opening of a level or the player picks up a non-duplicate object then it was noted in the inventory log. The duplication aspect is linked only to weapons or health packs, weapons were added in the order the player gains access to them, if the player gains access to the same object later in the level it was not recorded. This is because at points in the game you might kill say five riflemen who all drop the same weapon it did not seem worthwhile recording that five were dropped as it did not really effect any of the game choices that needed to be made. When a new object was found or made available the game was paused and the object was entered into the inventory using the following questions to create the entry.

Firstly is the object single or multi use? In this instance can the object be used a number of times or just once? This was a way to separate objects like weapons which are single use like grenades and objects like rifles which are multi use; in that when they run out of ammunition they can still be used at a later time by refilling the personal ammunition inventory. This aspect was chosen to identify what the purpose of an object is and to give hints as to what the opportunity cost of using that object over another.

Second what are the interaction options? The interaction options for the objects in *Pacific Assault* are quite limited and the language used reflects that. The interaction options are generally in two groups, options that can affect other active entities such as game enemies or puzzles and options that allow the player to modify the usage of an object. So for example in *Pacific Assault* for weapons there are usually three options of use that affect other game objects shooting, using the weapon in melee as a club or spear and reloading the weapon to make it 'useful' once more. Modification of an object includes actions like using the scope to get a close up view of an enemy or to deploy a machine gun to enable it to fire.

Thirdly if they have multiple uses what are they? This section was where a greater emphasis was placed on the way that an object affected play or the gaming environment. For example when a player uses a fixed machine gun for an extended period of time a visual blurring effect occurs which makes it hard for the player to aim and use the weapon.

Fourthly do those uses change over time? Integral to understanding the opportunity cost of choosing

one object over another is looking at what other uses the object can afford to the player and how these uses change over a period of time. Within *Pacific Assault* these changes did not take place over a long period time; they were more situational and thus are recorded in this way.

Fifthly do the objects have a purchasing cost or opportunity cost? Every object within the game carries an opportunity cost because the inventory is quite limited. This was mainly the concern here, to learn how the game created a situation where hard choices would need to be made because of the nature of the inventory.

Sixth how is the object “physically described”? Essentially describing what an object looked like in a manner that did not require too much a privileged reading, which was quite difficult. This was also accompanied by a screen shot to create a more clear sense of presentation.

The second aspect of the tool kit is the interface study. This is a log or description of the way the game is played by the user, and is important because it allows the researcher to comment on “...the information and choices that are offered to the player, as well as the information and choices that are withheld”. It allows the researcher a measure to see if the text of the game can be subverted and what actions by the player are privileged or encouraged by the interface (see *Figure 3.1*).

Importantly Consalvo and Dutton note that “a careful examination of the interface reveals clues about the ideological assumption the game”. Since one of the research goals of this work is to discover these aspects it becomes clear that a careful examination of the interface becomes quite important. To complete this goal the entire game was played to completion and on subsequent play sessions a map of the interface was collated with descriptions based on the presentation of hardware and software (Fernandez-vara et al., 2005). Essentially the presentation of hardware is a formal physical description of the visuals, sound and haptic effects of which there are none for *Pacific Assault* but some motion effects are modeled within the game through software, it is this software presentation that formed the majority of the interface study. The purpose of including this section was to create a clear understanding of the game rules that function as a bridge between hardware and software (p.6).

Thirdly there is the research goal of the interaction map was to identify and create an accurate decision tree of the interaction options that occur during play in a similar fashion to that described by Consalvo and Dutton in a manner they call the ‘micro-method’ because due to the complexity of most games. Classification of these interactions is crucial Galloway (2006) provides four categories

of interaction to classify the various ways that a game is used by the player. Galloway divides the actions into operator actions and machine actions. Actions are not so much verbs, but rather a combination of noun in one context, adjective in another and adverb in another. Potentially confusing but Galloway defines it thus, "...if photographs are images, and films are moving images, then video games are actions. Let this be word one for video game theory. Without action, games remain only in the pages of an abstract rule book" (p.2). Actions can be further divided and classified in order for the reader of an analysis to understand the nature of the action, there are the operator actions these are defined as being preformed by the active player. Then there are the machine actions and this is preformed by the hardware.

However it is important to note that the relationship is not exclusive nor does separation necessarily need to be true in order for a gaming moment or action to occur. This is because action does not always entail a verb, an action can also be a state of being. This is because a game is both a man made object and a procedural set of attributes these attributes are determined by the object and the intention of the game. A further refinement is to sub-divide the actions into diegetic and non-diegetic machine and operator actions respectively. Thus there are four categories of action that can be in an number of states of being, be they innate, programmed, active or reactive and by no means is this list of descriptors exhaustive. In diegesis, researchers are interested in the narrative function of a game, this can be the actual plot of the game or the framing. Discussed earlier was the case of *Jetman*, whilst the in-game plot is non-existent in terms of the action on screen, due to elements present in the game manual *Jetman* is centred around a description of what narrative trait *he would possess* if he were then transplanted into a more plot orientated title. In essence narrative in diegetic play consists of the explicit and the the implied narratives. In this form running from point A to point B constitutes a formal narrative just as a character discovering an inner demon and then exorcising this within the story. Non-diegetic actions are those which are not related to an overall narrative, they can be the interface that forms a bridge towards play or they can be direct actions that define play. Galloway uses the example of pressing pause in a game, an action that has no narrative context yet is part of the overall gaming function, it does not contribute towards diegesis but must be classified in order to understand the nature of play.

In the *Medal of Honor* games there are particular interactions that are important, to understand the research question and the way the game is constructed. These formal game elements allow a perception and creation of who or what are protagonists of the game, the antagonists and also the environment itself. For this research, the most diegetic material with the explicit intent of character

creation or description was examined first in detail. This meant looking at the dialogue, options and player choices where there are points of divergence. Examples of this would be screens which provide briefings to the player, conversations the player has with non-player characters and so on. However in play there was very limited dialogue, none which had real consequence. This does not mean that there are no interactions that promote diegetic activity, but does mean that this research needed to carefully frame interaction such as possible to kill enemies, issuing orders or calling for help.

Then there is the game play log, this is a log of how the game itself progresses, the set pieces and how the game is built. What can be done and what cannot is what is recorded in the interaction map, but in the game play log how things are done and where are what is important. For this research an examination of how the chapters are divided, where characters are situated and most critically how “intertextuality... is constituted with the game”. This log is the amalgam of the other tools and is designed to provide a larger picture. Attempting to create a systematic approach to this section was quite a challenge and in the end the adoption of the research methods of Bartle and Aarseth as explored by Steven Malliet (2007) were used in this section. This involved playing the game multiple times and logging events as they happened with the mindset of the four gamers as described by Malliet namely the killers, achievers, explorers and socializers (p.3). Killers are players who seek to dominate and kill or defeat other game objects the outcome of which is for personal enjoyment, Malliet adapts this principle from Bartle who actually uses the term to describe players who actively cause distress or grief to other players, but in this context works well especially since *Pacific Assault* does keep score of how many soldiers the player has killed. Achievers are players who seek to gain prestige or unlock content within the game and within *Pacific Assault* this type of player can be rewarded by the hero system, which is content that can be unlocked when the player completes hero moments which are optional mission objectives which when completed will reward a player with a non-usable item that is visible from the games loading screen. Explorers are players, which gain pleasure from uncovering secrets present in the game world. In *Pacific Assault* the paths that the player can take are completely linear there are some puzzle sections where certain areas of the game environment are locked out until a player completes a puzzle but other than there is a limited amount of exploration, however there are hidden objectives which can be found by exploring buildings and locations along the linear path which seem insignificant and thus there is an impetuous to explore. Socializers are not at all catered for in the single player experience and thus are not included in the log. The decision to adopt these player profiles to help manage the content of the game play log was reached when examining the research

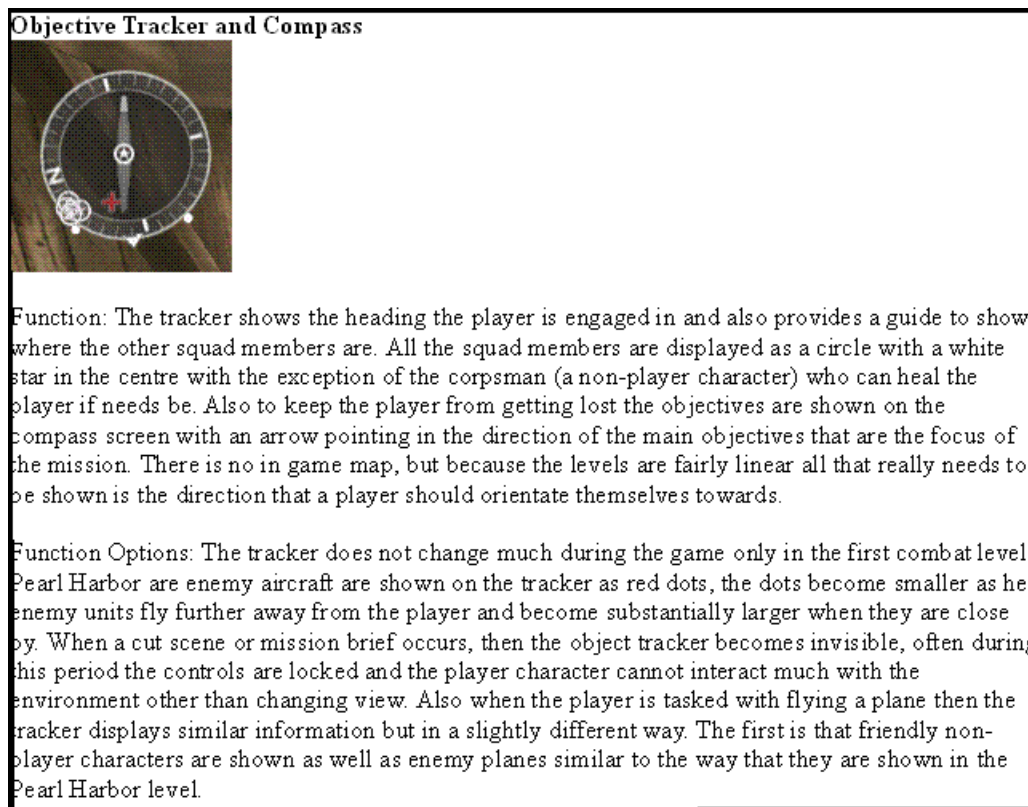
goals, to understand representation within the game. To define presentation there needed to be an understanding of how the game worked in a systematic fashion, so while the log may not have every aspect of play included by adapting this concept of profiles it became easier to dissect what material was being presented and understand some of the motivations for the content within the game.

3.5 *Conclusions*

To conclude the difficulty of games studies is trying to divide and understand the multitude of messages present in a game. Within this research the development of a methodology was integral to gaining meaningful results and fulfilling the research goals. The process of methodological selection has been an act of attempting to balance the various contested arguments that have been raised when discussing game research and then justifying those methods in their implementation. Ultimately though this process has been one of trial and error, with many corrections needed along the way in order to reach a consensus. There are weaknesses but the researcher has attempted to mitigate some of those with a spirit of transparency.

3.6 *Figures and Illustrations*

Figure 3.1



Screen capture of analysis in progress

CHAPTER FOUR

Outcomes and Presentation of Findings

The outcomes are presented in this chapter as a discussion of the observations present in *Pacific Assault*. These outcomes are categorized as intention, presentation and criticism. These outcomes present the game mechanics that facilitated play, they are categorized to demonstrate the patterns that allow a player to differentiate between the racially distinct antagonists and protagonists. The definitions of these categories follows the underlying methodology that was used in the study of this title. Intention examines the basis for the creation of this particular title. It presents the method, motivation and goals of the developers. This is contrasted with the central questions of this thesis, this cross-examination of sorts is a re-framing of the expectations, it seeks to present a discussion on the game from inception to the core diegetic and non-diegetic narrative that is presented to the audience. Presentation is the description of the interface that is used to create this diegesis with respect to the research question. It is a procedural discussion of the player and machine actions present in the title. Criticism is a formal engagement with the core ideas present in the over-arching game narrative. This means a multidisciplinary approach is used to gather what information is present in the title that relates to the founding research questions, how this compares with intent, audience expectations and wider societal dialog both within the historic time period and at the time of publishing.

4.1 *Intentions*

Galloway (2004) articulates an argument that was vital in the discussion on the intention of *Pacific Assault*. Within the developer diaries, there is a desire to state to the audience that this title represents an accurate and true form of history. The executive producer uses the term realism a number of times. This term 'realism' has a number of meanings and Galloway sums this well;

If one is a Hollywood filmmaker, the challenge is simply to come up with a realistic representation of reality. Or if one is a realist filmmaker, the challenge is to capture the social realities, in some capacity, of the disadvantaged classes. But because of the congruence requirement in gaming, if one is a realist game designer, the challenge is not only to capture the social realities of the disenfranchised but also to inject the game back into the correct social milieu of available players where it rings true. From this one may deduce that realism in gaming is about a relationship between the game and the player. Not a causal relationship, as the Columbine theory might suggest, but a

relationship nonetheless. This is one of the primary reasons why video games absolutely cannot be excised from the social contexts in which they are played. To put it bluntly, a typical American youth playing *Special Force* is most likely not experiencing realism, whereas realism is indeed possible for a young Palestinian gamer playing *Special Force* in the occupied territories. This fidelity of context is key for realism in gaming. p.81.

The title in question is a title published by Islamist paramilitary group Hezbollah in 2003 where the player takes the role of a member of Hezbollah fighting the Israeli army. Realism it seems not just a formal exercise but a social exercise informed and made more valid by the political economy of the audience and developer. This researcher's argument is that realism in *Pacific Assault* is not an attempt to immortalize or recapture history. In a title like *Special Force* the reality presented is a forceful rejection of perceived subjugation, in *Pacific Assault* the reality presented is a model based on the spirit of duty and sacrifice. An insight to this intention can be gained from the development diaries released as promotional material for the game. After reading these diaries it is clear, although there are aims by the developer to create a sense of believable historic action, the main goal here was to create a financially viable title. The developers release of these diaries in 2004 to the gaming website Gamespot.com were designed to show some of the features of the game, the game design process and some of the concepts that were the primary design motivations. To the researcher, they provide a fascinating insight into the aspects of the game that the designers want the player to focus on. There are four parts to this diary. The first is some background on the *Medal of Honor* series and describes the various design choices made to create the game world. This is explained by executive producer of the game Rick Giolito. The second diary entry written by Brady Bell the senior producer is about the attempts of the developers to craft a sense of authenticity and historic realism. The third and fourth entries cover the day in the life of a game designer and the technical aspects of creating the multiplayer experience of *Pacific Assault* and are less relevant for this research.

Giolito's entry begins with a brief history of the franchise, he describes that its genesis was in 1997 when film director Steven Spielberg delivered a brief to DreamWorks Interactive, a game developer associated with the media conglomerate DreamWorks. This brief resulted in the publication of *Medal of Honor* for the Playstation system in 1999 and was published and distributed by Electronic Arts, who subsequently acquired DreamWorks in 2000 and the franchise. Gioloti describes the focus of why the *Medal of Honor* games are so successful, this is primarily because the narrative is placed at the centre of the game. Using an example from *Allied Assault* the predecessor to *Pacific Assault* Giolito describes this conceptual basis for the game with the acronym D.I.C.E or deep

interactive cinematic experience. It is interesting to note that this franchise feature D.I.C.E is still marketed today and is a primary selling point of the most recent *Medal of Honor* game published in 2010. The implementation of this system runs across the entire spectrum of the game development process, including marketing and sales. This conceptual basis is as much a marketing buzz word as a philosophy. The term visceral is used a number of times by Gioloti to describe the sense of atmosphere but also the action. The inspiration for this sense of viscera is explained in the second diary entry where the development team meet Pacific Theater veterans. This then lead to the development of game play mechanics called “the verge of death”. This mechanic is explained in greater detail later in this chapter, but essentially it allows the player to experience a sense of tension when they are mortally injured but not killed and thus need to wait for a team mate to revive them. Another aspect that is mentioned in the diaries is the endorsement by the Medal of Honor society. Despite best efforts the criteria for this endorsement could not be found, nor was there response from Electronic Arts but it appears that the original endorsement was in 1999, despite being used a marketing point up until 2005 there are no recent mentions of this. Just what this represents is open to interpretation, it's perception varies but in the case of the institutional frame work of game development the realism presented by association this researcher would argue is one of patriotism and soldiery duty. A perception of how the society perceives itself those it has bestowed the award to can be found by examining the art work present on its site these can be found in the figures presented in this chapter. Another factor mentioned in the brief for *Pacific Assault* from its inception was the focus on the uniqueness of the setting for the game audience. Unlike *Allied Assault* where the opening battle is often compared to the opening scene in *Saving Private Ryan*, *Pacific Assault* had no such obvious reference points and in the mind of a gamer or the consumer and Gioloti states that these kinds of popular culture references had to be created in order to deliver a rewarding game experience.

Gioloti also provides a description of the reference points that were used to create the two factions present in the game. These differences are presented in the different cultural mores that are unique to the Americans and Japanese. Gioloti explains that the Japanese soldier of World War Two is a follower of bushido and a foe that fought along these ritualistic lines. Gioloti describes the war in the Pacific as “two entirely different cultures going at one another, not to mention very different fighting styles and tactics”. He continues by explaining that the “Japanese were not well understood by the Americans. In fact, until Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, most of America thought little of the Japanese as a ground-fighting force. Were we ever wrong!” This cultural difference is also the key to understanding the way the Japanese are presented to the audience. Gioloti describes the

motivations for American troops as being “the support of their loved ones back home and the squad mate in the foxhole they were sharing” the Japanese on the other hand were “driven by the infallible code of Bushido (literally translated it means “Way of the Warrior”): they were literally programmed to fight” in addition to this the Japanese were “inspired by their emperor and emboldened by the honor of their families and country, they would stop at nothing and do anything to gain honor” and “only cultures borne of fanaticism that can produce such things as the kamikaze (divine wind), suicide attacks and a code of conduct that makes it more shameful to surrender than die”. These concepts outlined how the antagonists would be represented in game play. This form of representation creates a gaming atmosphere where killing an antagonist with a human form has a limited moral consequence. This lack of consequence is something that Hall (2006) argues is an inherent aspect of the first person shooter and that the very evasion of moral ideology is part of the pleasure derived from play. This lack of consequence is what makes the game work, since it creates a gaming space where action not only complies with the rules of the game, but with play and the sensibility around play. Hall's primary argument though is that this form of play is an attempt to groom society for a harsh state where real violence is much easier to digest because of the soft violence acted upon in play. She uses the example of 'rail shooters' where the player has no access to the game other than the linear path set by the developer. The stage construction of *Pacific Assault* are relatively linear there are no moments of choice which ultimately affect the overall narrative and it is almost impossible to become lost in the game world, tracks and trails are carefully developed. This linearity is also in the behavior of antagonists to act in a similar way, to be disconnected from interaction other than combat. So is this a design decision that can be construed to fit with this idea that Hall presents. Within the development process however we have a different perspective on what this title means for players and the intention behind development

The role of research in developing the game is explored by Brady Bell a senior producer; in essence the focus for this research was to create an authentic game play experience. According to the developer diaries this meant creating a believable setting, tools for the player to use and understanding the experience of a combat soldier. This was done by watching stock footage, reading various documents, meeting veterans and hiring technical experts. The stock footage Bell explains was used to provide the development team with knowledge of the war in the Pacific of which the team had very little experience. There are some very interesting moments in game design that are discussed here for example when Brady is questioned on historic accuracy he replies:

...is everything in Medal of Honor Pacific Assault 100-percent authentic? No...and we will never make that claim. First and foremost, we're game developers, so our number

one priority is making the best possible game, period. Quite often, we're faced with the decision of authenticity versus gameplay, and with few exceptions, gameplay wins--no contest. Historical liberties are part of any entertainment, and *Pacific Assault* is no exception. What's really important, however, is arming ourselves with a breadth of historical knowledge so we can understand the implications of those decisions.

Reading material from the period and watching this footage allowed the team to understand the main narrative focus for *Pacific Assault* that being the ordinary soldier in the United States Marine Corps. This aspect seemed crucial to create more of the cultural cues present in the game that the player would need to engage with to understand the dramatic underpinnings of the narrative.

4.2 *Presentation*

Studying the interface actions within *Pacific Assault* shows how the diegesis of the title is formed. The common player interface (see *Figure 4.1* and *Figure 4.2*) that *Pacific Assault* uses should be very familiar to anyone that has played a first person shooter title. This interface is defined as the information visible on-screen that provides the player the game status of the player character for example how close the player is to death, menus that allow the game experience to be changed such as altering graphics options or adjusting the difficulty and guides that are used to assist the player such as written information on how to use an in-game tool or a visual aid which directs the player in the correct direction to complete the game. In *Pacific Assault* there are several diegetic options, that a player can choose to initiate but there are none that a player can refuse to initiate. The interface brokers the connection between the player and their personal avatar that navigates the game. The game play objective outlined in the developer diaries is to create a realistic, visceral tone. The interface must be able to meet these needs.

This mandate is most likely the reason that there are a number of features absent in *Pacific Assault* that are often present in other titles in the genre. For example there are no means for a player to become invulnerable for period of time or increase a weapons damage. Contrast this with another World War Two themed game *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* (2001) where drinking a bottle of wine or beer can give you a temporary stamina boost. Also in *Pacific Assault* there are no healing packs, instead the player must rely on the corpsman to heal their character. These healing opportunities are limited by the difficulty level on the highest level, titled "realistic mode" (see *Figure 2.4*) these opportunities are limited to twice per level on this setting. A similar mechanic is present in the title *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* (Codemasters, 2009). In this title a player can stabilize their

condition when they are wounded with a health pack, if this is not completed the screen slowly fades to black and the player dies, this feature in *Pacific Assault* is the titular 'verge of death'. Similarly in *Dragon Rising* a non-player character occupies the role of a corpsman who can heal wounds, these wounds affect in-game performance most commonly movement speed. Once these are used the player must make do with the health that they have in order to complete the level, managing this resource aspect becomes a very important part of game play. Another resource that a player must manage within most first person shooters is ammunition in *Pacific Assault* is also rather scarce. Although Japanese and American non-player characters use different weapons, that is they have a different visual presentation or method of operation, it is possible to use the same ammunition for both nationality's weapons. Since once a set of ammunition is picked up it is added to a pool of ammunition for the player to use rather than being tied to a specific weapon. Using either Japanese or American weapons confers no penalty to the player, no non-player characters make comments about the inventory contents the player has.

Possibly the most important interface in *Pacific Assault* is the objective tracker and compass. The tracker (see *Figure 4.3*) shows the heading the player is engaged in and also provides a guide to show where the other squad members are. Critically it provides a direct influence over game-play, that cannot be subverted. Not using the tracker is not possible, unlike some other features it is always present. In addition it provides a visual cue to stimulate motion. All the squad members are displayed as a circle with a white star in the centre with the exception of the corpsman (a non-player character) who can heal the player if needs be. The objectives these are usually a location when reached triggers a signal that ends the game level, these objectives shown on the compass screen with an arrow pointing in the general direction of the objective. There is no in game map, but because the levels are fairly linear all that really needs to be shown is the direction that a player should orientate himself or herself towards. In terms of this particular object changing the tracker does not change during the game. However in the "Pearl Harbor" sequence, enemy aircraft are shown on the tracker as red dots, the dots become smaller as the enemy units fly further away from the player and become substantially larger when they are close by. When a cut scene or mission brief occurs, then the object tracker becomes invisible, often during this period the controls are locked and the player character cannot interact much with the environment other than changing view. There is one game sequence when the player is tasked with flying a plane, then the tracker displays similar information but the way the player interacts with the environment is much the same (see *Figure 4.4* and *Figure 4.5*).

Previously discussed there are two resources a player must manage and the health status indicator (see *Figure 4.6*) shows the current health level for the player, when the level reaches zero the player's game is over and must be reloaded. The health bar is degraded in chunks dependent on what object is causing damage to the player, this is a variable factor. Sometimes a bar becomes so quickly degraded that the game initiates a slow ongoing damage effect, the in-game tutorial describes this as bleeding, and on easy and medium difficulty this function is not active. Once the player is bleeding if a key (default B) is not held down then the player will eventually lose all health and die. While holding down this key, weapons cannot be used and if the health level is low what appears to be ten per cent of the total then the screen changes colour slightly. Slowly fading out the primary colours to leave the screen with a black and white monochrome effect. This mechanic is also replicated in other titles such as the previously mentioned *Dragon Rising*. When a player's health level reaches zero from a single action say a particular weapon hits the player, then the game enters what the developers call the 'verge of death'. In this mode all the function bars are not displayed and if the player character is not healed by the corpsman squad member then the game ends. One can imagine this sequence with the removal of the interface bars, to be a form of miniature narrative that exists to articulate what the developers term D.I.C.E, the so called deep interactive cinematic experience. There are other situational activities the player can engage in as well. One very interesting aspect of this verge of death, is that if a corpsman is not close by and a Japanese soldier comes across the player character they will deliver a coup de grace, in the form of bayonet stab. One can also see Japanese soldiers also experiencing this as well, usually indicated by the body of the character being prone and moving irregularly. If a Japanese corpsman reaches that soldier they are resurrected as you are, thus an important tactic on the harder difficulty modes is to eliminate these corpsman or deliver a coup de grace quickly. A friendly corpsman will never heal an enemy soldier.

A situational change can also be made by changing the physical space the player occupies within the game world. The stance icon (see *Figure 4.7*) shows when a player is one of the three different stances that the player can assume. The first and default stance is to stand, the second is to crouch and the third is to become prone. A player cannot become prone while in water. This affects how much room the player character takes up in the game space, by crouching for example the player can travel through a tunnel where as if they were standing they could not. Stance also affects movement speed, and aiming accuracy. The lower the stance, the slower the player moves and the more accurate their fire is. Also in theory by going prone it makes the player harder to hit but due to the nature of the game this rarely is useful because whilst prone it is often difficult to see and move

rapidly. There is no way to configure or change the health status indicator or stance status, however when the game switches to flight level the status bar becomes a measure out of one thousand indicating how much damage can be taken by the plane before it explodes. There are also visual cues to show this, for example if the plane is hit then the wings will trail smoke and flames (see *Figure 4.8*). The status indicator bar also changes in this level and is not present. When the character is required to ride in a vehicle like a boat or a car this stance can sometimes be changed. This is only useful so that a player can fire over the heads of friendly non-player characters or to get a better view point, the opportunity cost of this is to expose the player to more enemy fire. When controlling a vehicle of any kind the player character can never go prone.

So far this section has covered the indirect communication that the game presents to the player, the message window is direct instructional communication. This informs the player on interaction options are available (see *Figure 4.9*) and provides the player with status messages. The message window is not so much a window per se in that it has no frames but rather a floating text box. The text appears when the player enters causes an action and this can cover a number of scenarios. Taking screen shots or saving the game are just two examples of this. Incidental interaction such as picking up ammunition, an action that happens automatically when a player walks over the object is also noted in this function (see *Figure 4.10*). There is only one other item which when picked up and are displayed in this menu, are health kits which restore health by a fixed amount. These are present in easy, medium and hard modes and with each difficulty increase these health kits become more rare. Instructional text also appears on screen during play and this is always near the centre of vision. This text is in a different font, it is slightly bolder and the colour is a much stronger more contrasting white rather than grey. These messages are cues for interaction, such as using a machine gun emplacement, picking up a non-combat item (only one of these exists in the game, the fire axe) and picking up wounded soldiers for the purpose of fulfilling an objective.

Direct communication is presented through dialog, although in terms of how the game works this is almost of no consequence. In saying this there is a form of communication that is used on almost every sequence of the game this is presented in the squad orders box. This is used to show what orders the squad leader has given to the squad, the four options are advance, assemble, covering fire and fall back (see *Figure 4.13*). These commands are issued using the arrow keys however at the start of the game the player cannot issue orders, but orders are still issued by the non player characters. When an order is issued it is punctuated by an audio cue then a visual cue on screen. Failure to comply to these orders has no game consequence. the game will not end nor are

there any further visual or audio cues to comply. Once the player has been given the ability to give orders, this occurs late in the game, giving an order does not always guarantee that it will be followed. Most of the time the non-player characters will follow a linear path. Usually this is the same one that the player follows. They will attempt to kill enemies along the way, but will hardly execute in-game action with respect to the order issued, if indeed they are doing this the effect is negligible and almost of no consequence. Non-player characters do interact with the environment, notably by firing their equipped weapon. It does not appear that they ever run out of ammunition nor will they pick up an enemy weapon, their ability within the game is poor they sometimes will kill off a weak enemy but they cannot complete an objective or clear an area of enemies without the intervention of the player character. Hence these squad mates form an auxiliary role within play they again to foster the over-arching narrative outlined in the developer brief. As a side note each order has a pictorial reference attached to it and when no orders have been given the boxes appear empty. Sometimes during play all the orders can be present creating a very confusing experience for the player.

A visual cue is presented to the player about what object is currently selected (see *Figure 4.11* and *Figure 4.12*). The object often takes up a large section of the screen and if a weapon object has an aim mode it can occupy nearly the entire screen. The cross hair is used to aim a weapon, the lower the stance that a player is in then the closer the lines move together, this signifies that there is an increased level of accuracy. The way accuracy appears to work is that the cross hairs indicate how much deviation there is from the from player to the target and the further apart the lines, the more deviation. This deviation is exacerbated by moving and shooting or shooting continuously with an automatic weapon, the interface shows this by widening the distance from the centre of the cross hair. This system of visual cues does not change much through play however when using the aim mode of certain weapons and fixed weapons that is weapons the player cannot move such as those mounted on vehicles or buildings. Then the screen changes so that the weapon being used becomes the primary focus of player. In this mode there is still a cross hair however for certain objects this disappears completely. For example when using the sniper rifle or a fixed machine gun emplacement. During some cut scenes the main object can be seen and moved but cannot be used or manipulated.

In addition to the object in use appearing in the centre of the player's vision there is also silhouette picture (see *Figure 4.14*) of the object that is being used by the player and the current ammunition tally that is available to the player. That total is the entire stock of ammunition for that weapon type.

So for example if the player has two machine gun type weapons they will share the same ammunition. However this is where some confusion comes into play as detailed in the object inventory. Take this example, if an American weapon say a rifle is issued to the player then no ammunition can be picked up from a dead enemy. However a weapons ammunition stock can be re-supplied from Japanese ammunition crates. Now if a player picks up a Japanese rifle and exchanges it for an American one, then it can use the ammunition supply that already exists and the pool that it comes from, in addition if the player walks over the corpse of an enemy then they are able to pick up ammunition from that enemy. This leads to some curious situations where ammunition totals can be increased by dropping an American weapon picking up a Japanese weapon and then collecting the ammunition from enemies killed and then picking up the American weapon if the player prefers. Another interface option that is present here are the little bars on the extreme right of the screen this is a quick reference to how much ammunition is left in the weapons clip. When reloading a weapon the game will simply give the player as much ammunition as is available and every reload brings a weapon up to the maximum level of whatever ammunition is available in the same amount of game time every time. For example if a player has three rounds left in total it takes no longer or quicker to reload if say they had five hundred rounds. As stated prior non-player characters and enemies never appear to run out of ammunition.

4.3 *Critically Understanding Characters in Pacific Assault*

Within *Pacific Assault* there are two sets of characters that the player interacts with. Friendly soldiers see (*Figure 4.15, Figure 4.16, Figure 4.17 and Figure 4.18*) provide the richest relationship for the player. Within almost all of the levels these characters are a persistent feature, which means that they cannot die due to enemy action but can be incapacitated. A player cannot kill a friendly non-player character either so for all intents these are almost like persistent inventory objects like a rifle or gun, there is no mutable control over these aspects. There is the ability of a non-player characters to become incapacitated. They gain the visual appearance of being wounded, represented by the character writhing in agony on the ground until the medic heals them back to fighting strength. When this happens they cannot fight and need to be protected from enemy fire in order to be restored to fighting strength, but since these characters cannot die it often means that the player becomes more interested in self-preservation rather than 'watching the backs' of his or her squad mates. This contrasts quite heavily to other team based first person shooter games like the *Rainbow Six* series (Red Storm Entertainment, 1998). In this title weapons fire is extremely deadly, with one shot being the norm to kill either a friendly or hostile game entity, friendly fire most definitely not.

There is also a persistent death system, if a character dies in one mission they are unavailable for the entire campaign, this does not happen in *Pacific Assault*. Speaking from a personal view this is a shame as it would have added a much greater reliance on protecting these squad mates and given them a greater sense of being less a game object but more of a fully fledged artificial being.

The introduction to these characters occurs when the game is loaded. The loading screen is an interface constructed using the in-game engine, this interface is structured as an enclosed space with limited navigation which is accomplished by clicking the mouse on a object..

This setting creates a narrative that Brooker would describe as being intertextual, in this case a formative layer of narrative that creates a base for further character exploration and representation. These scenes change as the player progresses through the game, so at the start the scene might be set on a tent at Makin Atoll and then change to Henderson airfield once the player starts the Guadalcanal campaign. Populating these settings are other soldiers, which consist of the regular members of the squad the player fights along. Their pose is relaxed, often they are animated to be cleaning weapons or listening to the radio. These radio broadcasts also change and are time context sensitive. For example if a player returns to the menu after completing the Pearl Harbor sequence, then a radio will play a looped message with Roosevelt announcing the surprise attack by the Japanese in 1941. These set-pieces are the beginning of the framing of the protagonists within the title as being presented as citizen soldiers an informed, volunteer fighting for freedom a victim of Japanese aggression.

The time line that play takes place is not quite linear. When a new game is started you are thrust immediately into action initially this was a little confusing as there is very little orientation provided for the in terms of navigating and using game objects. The objective of the first level, titled 'Tarawa' is to move from the landing boat to the beach and then face unlimited waves enemies and the level only ends once the player dies, which when first played was very confusing and caused the researcher to restart the level a number of times, once you 'die' the game officially begins with a jump in time from 1943 to 1941. This narrative loop is explored further in this analysis but first it pays to examine some of the dialogue and set-pieces from 'Tarawa'.

In 'Tarawa' the player is introduced gruffly by the Sergeant of the squad Frank Minoso (the player will only know his name several levels later) as a landing craft packed with soldiers streams towards a beach under artillery fire. From here the camera pans from the third person perspective

and zooms through the helmet of the lead character and from then the camera assumes the viewpoint from the eyes of the Tommy Conlin the player's character. As this takes place the music recedes and a narration over takes place, the voice is that of Conlin who is voiced by television and videogame voice actor David Whittenburg. This section of dialogue is interesting, it is very somber especially since this is the first level and contrasts with the background which is full of action orientated vignettes such as naval gun fire blasting at the beach and other landing craft being attacked. There are no puzzles to solve in the first level and no exploration so this dialogue as the first thematic element heard from the games narrator.

Three week wonders. That's what we called the new guys. That's all the training they got and it wasn't enough. They usually didn't last very long, no matter how much training you got or how strong you are. When you strap up and stand on a battlefield for the first time, it changes you forever. Tarawa was just another strip of sand out in the middle of nowhere, but for many of us it would be the last thing we ever saw.

A sobering message that is broken by a return to game play, where the next action the player must take part in to navigate up the beach while hostile fire is directed at the player. When the player 'dies' at the end of the first level and then the player is returned to the beginning of the story, boot camp. It is here that the player first meets, the rest of the squad although their names are not known yet to the player and their various personalities are not yet fleshed out. However one aspect is described during this section and that is the portrayal of the various characters as being citizen soldiers. They are ordinary men who become soldiers, the ability to kill and act as soldiers is not innate to them they must learn that. Although their programming within the game means that they act at maximum soldiering effect from the moment they are given a rifle, despite this the effect is carried at least to the researcher.

'Tarawa' is set in 1943 and the war did not end at this date, it would be nearly two years before the end of the war. This open ended aspect does not appear to be a result of a desire to create a sequel or expansion pack for the game, this never appeared to be mooted. The open situation allows for an almost endless cycle of conflict should the developers wish it to be, there is in effect an unlimited sandbox. Stallabrass (1993) contends that the conflict themed game is popular due to this aspect, the reason the game has real economic power is the sense of viscera derived from play. He uses a comparison to cinema arguing that the nature between viewer and cinematic text can be seen as the immediate predecessor to the audience and the interactive game (p.86). The gaming examples he uses to illustrate his point like the full motion video game have long fallen out of favour, but this does not mean that the argument is invalid. Political economy within gaming Stallabrass argues is

the powerful force behind gaming, since in essence most games require a sense of work and labour that has no financial reward for the common player. This labour requires the player to conform to a role or a character, they have skills which are coded in the game and Stallabrass contends that this role is a fictive opportunity to define a personal morality, heroism being common. In *Allied Assault* or the original *Medal of Honor* the player assumes the role of a special agent, an operative whose method of action is the covert world of special operations where brutal and fast strikes are used to accomplish the objectives. *Pacific Assault* views the characters in *Pacific Assault* in a humanist manner possessing an almost humble streak to them, more *Saving Private Ryan* and less *The Dirty Dozen* type antics of the first *Medal of Honor* title. The reward for this kind of play is the mastery of the political economy the title due to the player gaining "the feeling of being in a discrete world where unchangeable truths may be learned" (p.93). These feelings of accomplishment are what drive a player to completion but are augmented when a player can truly relate to the form of representation during play. It is questionable whether this humanist streak is the catalyst to a deeper engagement with the text for this particular genre, Machin and van Leeuwen argue that a game themed with the elite soldier motif adds legitimacy to killing and intervention. Since these soldiers are presented as a unique tool, a professional within their chosen job they are part of a special discourse which absolves them of moral duty but in turn can be used to enhance their moral duty if this fits within the particular narrative (p.136). Therefore this framing of a protagonist allows for an inherent narrative that allows an action based game multiple liberties with respect to actual events so as to either produce an alternate political reading or simply because of the limits of action afforded by the game engine.

The instruction on how to play in *Pacific Assault* is not so much didactic but rather procedure based. A player is confronted by an obstacle they are likely to encounter in the game and given the solution to complete this. After the completion of 'Boot Camp' the player is whisked away from the soldiers who will form the nucleus of the squad and shows up at Pearl Harbor, moments before that base is attacked instigating the entry of the USA into the war. This sequence doesn't have much character interaction but again here there are moments showing the contrast between peace and war. The disruption of every day routine is caused by the arrival of the Japanese fleet and the scripting of the non player characters is very reminiscent of 'Boot Camp' in that they appear rather awkward and rather unsurprised by the attack and instantly transition to a war time footing. It is clear that while there is an attempt at creating a credible sense of fear, this game is primarily about combat and the use of the engine does not allow for much beyond that. However there are some interesting artifacts for want of a better term that are inserted to generate this feeling of peace time these are discussed

in detail later.

The next major and perhaps the most important piece of exposition comes prior to the player beginning the fourth level 'Makin Atoll', this level is the first conducted with other squad mates and the first that the goal is based on an over arching narrative, rather than the survival aspect as is the case for the first three levels. Deploying from a submarine, the player along with the squad is tasked with destroying a Japanese radio tower and then leaving to return to the submarine, conducting an objective raid. While on board the submarine the player is reintroduced to the squad encountered in boot camp and whilst panning from character to character this narration occurs:

Maybe the best part about me joining the Raiders is, I'm with my buddies from boot camp again. They weren't at Pearl but they're been through their own hell at places like Bataan and the East Indies. Don't know how much of that news has made its way home. Anyway you'd love these guys Dad. Frank Minoso's from Jersey he's about the size of a truck he's always clamoring on about his way with the ladies but if there's such a thing as a natural leader its him. Jimmy Sullivan's a corpsman from Illinois who dropped out of med school to join the Navy. I get the feeling he comes from money but none of that matters where we are, and then there's Willy Gaines... Willy is a five foot country boy from North Carolina who can't weigh but a buck ten soakin' wet, but he is an ace with a rifle. They're all solid guys. I'll write again soon, my love to everyone. Tom.

Once again, the thematic element of duty is placed at the forefront of the character development within the title. A group of soldiers, from diverse geographic locations within the United States. They also occupy a diverse ethnic background with Minoso and Sullivan representing Italian-American and Irish-Americans respectively. This characterization is more deliberate in non-game material.

While not included in any of the game manuals or material distributed with the game, Electronic Arts released several press kits surrounding the game one of which concerns the characters. The press release begins by stating that 'Every war has its heroes. Heroes that were regular people at one point' (2005). It continues with :

It seems the new way of adding even more of a personal touch is the addition of characters that have personalities and backgrounds that normal folks like us can relate to, therefore making the fact that you're fighting and dying alongside of them of much greater consequence.

Along those lines, Electronic Arts has passed along the bios of four of the characters, including the player character, that will make an appearance in their newest shooter,

Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault, which also happens to be one of the first high profile shooters set in the Pacific theater of World War II. So read on and get to know the players in this drama before the game releases come November.

What follows is this biographical information quoted verbatim commentary follows some of the excerpts:

Tommy Conlin (Player Character)

Thomas Conlin was born in Blue River, Oregon in 1922. A small community on the outskirts of Eugene, his father was a blue collar worker - employed as a logger, as was many in the community. His mother was a waitress at a small restaurant on the outskirts of town that catered to a crowd of miners coming down from the Lucky Boy Mine, which was virtually dried up of gold.

Tommy often fished with his father on Blue River Lake. The outings usually included his father teaching him how to make the most out of nothing - including Tommy making his father's favorite fishing rod after his dad taught him in the summer of 1934, when he was twelve.

Tommy excelled in high school sports and was interested in continuing at the University of Oregon in Eugene, but was saddened to learn that he couldn't afford to attend the University on a logger and waitress's salary.

Like his father's penchant for adaptability and creativity, Tommy continued furthering his studies at the local library while saving money to enter the University. Because he was not officially enrolled at the university, it was at this time he was drafted and entered the training facility in San Diego, California for boot camp.

As a character study the theme of an ordinary citizen drafted runs throughout the promotional and game material presented, here however this concept is much more fully formed. A working class background, forms the basis of the character, but more important is the characterization of civility traits which are not traditionally associated with martial duty.

William Gaines

William Gaines was born in Gates County, North Carolina in 1923. His father was a small-time farmer, peddling his chickens to the local Foil and Sons grocery store. 'Willy', as he is known by most, seemed born with a gun in his hand. Frequently accompanying his father on hunting trips - the Gaines family often lived off the fruits of their hunts in order to make ends meet.

Willy was not much of an educated boy. He would go to school during the week, only so he could get to the next weekend when he could take his gun out and go hunting. By the time of his sixteenth birthday, on April 1st, Willy had become such a crack shot with his rifle, that his raw skill had turned into an exceptional talent. Something of a city treasure, Willy's talent often landed him in the local paper as the frequent winner of the local Turkey Shoots in surrounding counties. It was clear that Willy's precision with a rifle was as natural to him as breathing or blinking.

After asking for his father's permission, Willy lied about his age so that he could enlist in the war. The pride of Gates County, before he boarded a train for boot camp in San Diego, William was invited to City Hall where his rifle was retired and he was given a key to the city for his talents.

A stock character, one could compare Gaines to the soldier and film star Audie Murphy, whose life story closely mirrors that of Gaines. Raised in a rural setting, enlisted by lying about his age, even the physical slightness is present. Gaines represents the rural aspect of American society prior to World War Two, note the emphasis on self-sufficiency and self-determination.

James Sullivan

James Broderick Sullivan was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1918. His father was a successful textiles businessman and his mother was caretaker to the Sullivan estate - primarily his younger brother and two sisters. Due to the wealth of the Sullivan family, they were treated like royalty in most parts of Oak Park, although James never felt particularly at ease with the extents by which they were catered to.

Mostly to get away from that uneasiness, James would often immerse himself into his scholastic studies. He was an academic decathlon finalist in high school. He was reserved in school, tempered by his own sense of self-worth and the want to - if only for a moment - have people forget he was a Sullivan and know him only by his outstanding work ethic. With his advanced placement classes and the Sullivan wealth, James entered Northwestern University and moved into the university's prestigious Fienberg School of Medicine.

About the time of his junior year, James unexpectedly dropped out of school and enlisted in the Navy. His family was naturally shocked to learn that their older, educated son had moved to join the war but any of James' classmates would tell you that he was clearly years above the schooling they were being taught. Whether it was the boredom

of the curriculum or the sense he was not far enough from a family name adored by so many, enlisting in the Navy to become a Corpsmen seemed like the most natural thing to do. James could disappear in the swell of enlisted men and, as a part of a medical team, help those who needed him most.

After some preliminary medical verification by the Navy, James was moved to San Diego to participate and monitor the required boot camp for all enlisted personnel.

Frank Minoso

Francis Evan Minoso was born in Trenton, New Jersey, September 20th, 1912. Francis (or 'Frank' as he likes to be called) is a hulking brute of a man. He's as thick skinned as he is muscular and his Jersey accent only makes him stand out more.

Frank is a street-smart man, a machinist who had no real aspirations past high school if only to start working so he could one day build his own machine shop. He can bend your ear as easily as he bends the metal in his shop - with no topic unable to be commented on. Frank is a locomotion of strength, of voice and of character. A man that's built like a truck and can build you one at the same time.

After out-talking the recruiter at the local YMCA, he decided that he would enlist in the war. As Frank put it, "I'm a little bit older, but a lot more bolder than anyone you'll find outta high school, sir." Frank's claim to fame before he dropped into Boot Camp in San Diego was that he rode up front with the train engineers after helping them fix the train engine that broke down in Arizona.

Since none of this detailed information appears within the game, it is presented merely to provide further exposition into the nature of the characters this information would be a part of. Whilst this document is not part of the game experience at all, it is a vital aspect of the narrative of the game. It creates a layer of representation that fulfills the synchronic that Brooker describes. However when taken as part of the dialogue presented to the player in the narration preceding 'Makin Atoll' it seems that one of the developer intentions was to either pay homage or follow a familiar film convention from World War Two films. That being representing the squad as being a union of the spectrum of American society an idea that Westwall (2006) explores heavily (p.35). In *Pacific Assault* the squad consists of an Italian-American in the form of Minoso, a wealthy upper class American represented by Sullivan and a character from the southern United States represented by Gaines. While homage to these conventions is possible, the representation of the protagonists feels very much like an adherence to the typical Hollywood conventions for the World Two movie

created for the time period from 1941 to the early 1950's that is the soldier represents two aspects of warfare. The first is that these soldiers are civilians who through exceptional circumstances are transformed, it is not their *will* to fight rather they fight because it is *right*. This is alluded to many times within films of this period (p.36). But what is very different in *Pacific Assault* is that none of the angst that is present within the film representations of World War Two are present, there are no incompetent officers, there are no 'friendly fire' incidents and the squad does not have to overcome personal divisions. All of these things are not part of the game, *Pacific Assault* creates this cluster of characters to add an extra level of immersion and challenge. The behavior of the other soldiers is not crucial to the players survival as in *Rainbow Six* or other tactical shooters where every member of the squad is completely necessary. Also there are very limited options in terms of interaction within the game, other than asking for help or reorganizing the squads formation there are no other ways to interact with the other squad mates in a meaningful way.

This limitation does not mean that the game is devoid of other signposts to understanding who are 'fighting the good fight' and who is the enemy. An example of these are some of the reminders from home, these little sign posts pop up from time to time consider the following pictures from 'Makin Atoll' and 'Pearl Harbor'.

In the image *Figure 4.19* a character from the game is reading a magazine, this screen shot is taken from the cut scene prior to beginning 'Makin Atoll' and features the medic Sullivan reading a magazine while listening to the other non-player characters engaging in idle banter. This particular shot was immediately engaging to the researcher as a point of interest. Firstly it jumps out immediately as a decal that is not combat related at all. Although the player cannot use this object its appearance is very unusual because nothing like it is ever encountered again (contrast this with *Figure 4.21*). The second image *Figure 4.20* and is from 'Pearl Harbor' in this shot the player is driving in a jeep being escorted to the rallying point, at one point the driver of the jeep a non-player character stops to ask three sailors a question. The three sailors are all clustered around a magazine which presumably is some sort of pin up magazine since their programmed reaction in the dialogue is to act embarrassed and to try and hide the magazine. This scene does not last long as a Japanese plane flies overhead and the attack and mission begins.

There are some other decals that the player will see upon careful examination of the game environment but nothing that serves as a link to peacetime or anything outside of the game experience. There are no artifacts present in the game that serve as a link to the outside world,

Pacific Assault is a very insular game play experience, and that is probably a design decision to create a tone that this game takes the subject matter and the setting seriously. The reference that these images portray seems like an obvious homage to images from the Second World War propaganda machine, with names like 'Rosie the Riveter' and J. Howard Miller's 'We Can Do It!' being obvious examples. Surprisingly though there are very few other signposts within the game, there are no corporate products visible, characters don't smoke or eat or drink. And other than a few cut scenes, the most prominent being a feature to the memorial to the raising of the flag over Mt. Suribachi no American flags either.

Whether the game succeeds up to debate, this researcher argues that it is not, not because the images and decals used to give the game a sense of colour are wrong or inaccurate, they do not add much to the experience. This perhaps is also linked to the game design which feels very claustrophobic and insular which forces confrontation rather than creating a game play experience where the player can fight on their own terms, say for example avoiding a strong point entirely and relying on stealth. This has already been implemented in several other titles like *SEAL Team* (see chapter one for more details) and the 2001 release *Operation Flashpoint*. Within the *Medal of Honor* series this feature has been implemented within *Medal of Honor: Airborne* where the player can choose where to land and start to fight from there.

4.4 *Antagonists in Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault*

The Japanese in *Pacific Assault* are universally hostile, there are no defectors, deserters or prisoners. An interesting contrast to the previous *Medal of Honor* game set in the Pacific theater, *Rising Sun*. Within *Rising Sun* there is a larger meta-narrative at work where the main character Joseph Griffin is not simply a mere soldier whose main goal is survival but also wishes to find his brother who has become missing in action. Hence in order to complete this game goal there is a motivation to act in a manner that is personally retributive rather than operating within a military set of defined parameters. So for example an antagonist in *Rising Sun* the rogue General Yamashita is profiteering from the war by enlisting slave labourers, as a player you are afforded the opportunity to rescue these labourers. Hess argues this is a form of revisionism that fulfills a fantasy, retribution on a personal level for the audience and retribution for the American psyche (p.346). In *Pacific Assault* there is no personal narrative based on retribution since the protagonists involved are not evolved in this manner. Interestingly enough there is a secret area within the game that one can rescue American prisoners of war, doing so unlocks a 'hero moment' but doing so adds nothing to

the overall outcome in the game.

Within *Pacific Assault* the audience interacts with the antagonists almost immediately. Japanese soldiers will fight to the death in every instance and appear to make use of the same game play mechanics that friendly soldiers do. They are always encountered in groups often with a medic who can heal other soldiers who have been wounded or put out of action. They hardly ever speak, although there are occasions when a player is able to hear them talk amongst each other, this audio always appears on a loop and is interrupted as soon as the player enters the zone at which they detect the player or when the player initiates contact by firing a weapon. They do exhibit some behaviour that is quite culturally significant though and this is exhibited on a number of occasions. The most memorable being in the Guadalcanal and Tarawa missions, in both of these there is a last stand of sorts where the player and some allied units will face waves of troops assaulting their position. In terms of actual game play it is quite a difficult section, as the waves of enemies that approach often exceed the amount of ammunition needed to kill them. In these sections, we are presented with the Banzai charge, in these sections an audible scream of “Banzai!” is directed at the player (see *Figure 4.22*, *Figure 4.23*, *Figure 4.24* and *Figure 4.25*). Antagonists doing this action will never run away or retreat. In essence the Japanese in *Pacific Assault* as very much the mindless killers present in every other first person shooter. The only way to interact with them is to shoot at them and kill them. There are instances where the player can watch an enemy mortally wounded 'die' or if they wish finish them off. When this happens an enemy keels over, his eyes glaze and there is no longer any movement from that particular entity.

There are no other types of enemy troops visible, no collaborators from China or Korea but on occasion there are Japanese war machines that act as either physical barriers, or a tougher physically faster adversary, the most notable being armoured tanks. The tank, which at the start of the game functions as a monster type creature, an obstacle to be overcome with smart tactics and game play. Later in the game these tanks come in groups posing quite a challenge at times. If a comparison to other games were to be made, it would be fair to say that these objects in the game could be termed as a 'boss'. That is, it is significantly more capable of killing the player although still unable to kill the player character's squad mates.

One aspect that seems strange is the lack of moralizing that occurs within *Pacific Assault*. Never once are prisoner massacres mentioned or the various cruelties suffered by all parties mentioned. This attitude is reinforced by the second entry in the developer diaries where Bradley Bell the

producer for the title extolls that history is the setting, rather than the site of play so this could explain this. Interestingly unlike *Rising Sun* where there numerous scenes of interview footage from veterans in *Pacific Assault* there is just black and white footage interludes between levels that will segue into the level using the game's engine to create that link. Within *Pacific Assault* the orientation of history is a sandbox, it is not a process orientated title so it does not "permit a radical re-framing of the familiar events and extend the the user's intervention to such things as the control of the genesis of an episode" as Urrichio defines a title like *Civilization* (2005, p.335). Urrichio contends that all forms of history, especially in the context of games whether it is a simulation or a sandbox for the user to re-align history, there is a form of limitation. For *Pacific Assault* the exclusion of explicit morality on the actions of both parties in the conflict points to reading where this is discarded this is a deliberate action, it is the limitation not only along limits of the game engine but also the narrative the game chooses to portray.

Instead the Japanese in the game are treated as worthy honorable foes and there are two very interesting examples from the game that appear to illustrate this. The first of these examples occurs before the beginning of the Pearl Harbor mission, at first we see a group of US Marines conducting ceremonial drills in front of a memorial to the raising of the flag on Mt. Suribachi, it then shifts out to the ocean to 1941 where the player sees the Japanese fleet in preparation to strike at Pearl Harbor. The point of view begins at the keel of a carrier and soon the entire carrier is framed in the shot. From here we shift to the ready room of a Japanese pilot who is preparing to take off on the mission. The pilot is wearing a flight suit and puts on a bandana which at the centre is a red disc, the symbol of the rising sun. Interestingly enough this researcher has seen a number of photographs where the symbol worn on the headpiece is not the traditional Japanese flag the *Hinomaru* but rather the war flag of the Japanese military, a red disc with red rays emanating from the centre. The reasons for this is unclear and could perhaps be a deliberate attempt to avoid controversy or association with Japanese imperialism in South East Asia. This changing of symbolism is not unheard of for example in the game turn based World War Two game *Steel Panthers: WW2* (2000) one can exchange the swastika that the German units display for the Iron Cross if they wish or if required to by law if the game is played in Germany for example. The pilot (see *Figure 4.26* and *Figure 4.27*) then fills a cup and drinks from it, this is perhaps a reference to the ceremonial drinking of water before battle or *mizu sakazuki* (Hogg, 1976). Finally the camera shifts from the ready room to the deck of a carrier where the planes are seen taking off by cheering crowds of sailors. What is so fascinating about this entire sequence is the contrast between the Japanese naval aviator and the American marine, both are engaging in a ritualistic martial activity each having a

tradition which stems centuries. The juxtaposition of the iconic symbol of the raising of the flag, perhaps the most easily recognized images of the Second World War and the Japanese aviator invoking the samurai traditions of old are both potent symbols. The scene of the memorial is potent because it invokes a selective powerful reading of American history both at the time of the event and by the modern audience. The raising of the flag historically was a rallying point for a war weary populace in America, as the capture of Mt. Suribachi marked not only the successful conquest of Iwo Jima, the first Japanese territory to be taken but served as a symbol for victory in the Pacific. The temporal narrative shift from the future to the past is cemented by the player character's narration who states the legend of the United States Marine Corps was forged in the hell of the Pacific and that hell began at Pearl Harbor. When viewing this sequence the multitude of times done so for this analysis, a different reading was drawn by the researcher. This reading is a very much a subverted one, completely removed from the conceptual basis that was the intention of the developer, but still curious none the less. It seemed interesting that the modern rituals of the Marine Corps seemed timeless yet the presentation of the Japanese has a nuance of the obsolete. Upon further thought and introspection it seemed that this personal reading was perhaps influenced by Japan's now pacifist constitution that by being known to having renounced war forever it only seemed fitting for the Japanese warrior stereotype to be outmoded and almost unneeded in a way.

Another section of the game where the Japanese soldier appears on equal footing with the protagonist and his squad mates occurs in the final 'Tarawa' level. This being the final level is a particularly difficult one with many human wave attacks conducted by the enemy this the researcher suspects is the feature of the level. Although there are a few moments where this type of attack takes place. In 'Tarawa' it forms as a device to create both dramatic tension and serves as a game play device. The final moment before victory is of course a massive Japanese banzai charge which takes the player to the limit of their endurance in terms of their skills, this particular sequence took the researcher a number of times to complete. Once this sequence is complete the game shifts to a cut scene which uses the in-game engine. It is here that the game shows another facet of representation of the enemy without moralizing. In this sequence Conlin begins a narration about the sacrifice of the Marines at Tarawa. All the while however the camera pans over the beach and the focus of the camera then shifts to the casualties of the assault. At first there are a number of dead Japanese in view but as the camera continues to move along the beach there are American casualties in sight, some of them intertwined with Americans. This was an interesting decision to take again because both sides are presented in a manner that seems to be evoking the spirit of sacrifice or at least a message about the futility of war. It could also be reflection on the nature of

war in that death and destruction is visited upon all humans. However it seems more likely that the portrayal of the bodies are to pay homage to the notion of sacrifice within war, especially within the fighting of a just war, because the camera then stops at the summit of a bunker. This on the edge of the beach is the sight of the final battle and as the camera reaches the top of this complex, the color scheme changes to black and fight with the exception of one item, an American flag. At this point Conlin's narration then addresses the motivation for the conflict between America and Japan, thus the impetus for the entire campaign. This dialogue then informs the player that freedom is not free and that tyranny must always be fought.

4.5 *Programmed Artifacts*

Earlier in this chapter some attention was paid to the cultural artifacts present in the game used to signify the nationality and identity of the games protagonists. Within *Pacific Assault* there similar moments that identify the antagonists as well. They are few in number but they are present. First there are the uniforms that the Japanese soldiers wear, this is not unusual but some of the decals used to enhance these uniforms are. First are the large numbers of swords seen in the game, many Japanese soldiers in *Pacific Assault* are armed with a sword and pistol. With this they will charge at a player or the rest of the squad once they are close. The sword is an interesting martial symbol, to this researcher it epitomizes brutality but also references the ancient customs of the samurai and thus serves as a lynch pin to identify the antagonists as distinctly Japanese. While conducting research for this thesis a number of still photographs depicted Japanese officers with swords so in terms of 'realism' it would seem to fit the theme of the game. Other than swords and uniforms there are very few other pieces of artifacts that can be seen. In any of the Japanese settlements one can find chopsticks and food bowls, the chopsticks are the only personal effects seen within the game, there is no equivalent to the magazines that the American characters will browse.

The language used to describe the enemy in *Pacific Assault* is an interesting prospect to examine. On one hand there are no serious racial epithets used to describe the Japanese and certainly none of the animality used within World War Two propaganda (see *Figure 4.30*). Japanese soldiers are not called 'apes' or 'nips' but they are referred to many times as 'Japs'. Within the development diaries never once is the debate on the term 'Jap' ever mentioned but it would have been interesting to see if any thought was paid to using the term. Within the context of the game calling the enemy 'Japs' is probably not intended to carry a racist 'sting' in itself. The situational context usually happens like this, as the player and his/her squad mates approach an enemy position a squad member will shout

“There’s a Jap!” or if defending against an attack “Japs inbound!”. Similar game play is used within *Ghost Recon* (Ubisoft, 2002) but these take on a more sardonic in nature, the phrase “Goodbye” is uttered when a Russian soldier is killed for example, perhaps a little de-humanized but 'Jap' in *Pacific Assault* feels a little more uncomfortable to hear during play. Certainly it would have been intolerable for the developers to use some of the language that US soldiers and the public back home actually used during the campaign and *Pacific Assault* does not have any reference to some of the propaganda issued to US troops at the time.

Renov's (1994) work on Japanese stereotypes during the war shows that there was a major attempt to draw a line in the sand separating the Japanese civilian and soldier as something other than human and more animalistic. *Pacific Assault* mentions none of the atrocities committed by the Japanese as an impetus for the protagonist to fight, this of course is administered by being present the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. So in this regard it would be difficult to justify using some of the slurs present in other forms of World War Two media such like the film *Bataan* (1943). And in reality to refer to a Japanese person during the war as a 'Jap' was acceptable so to use the term in an attempt to mirror history probably is acceptable too, but in this context as an electronic game it seems clumsy and odd.

4.6 *Conclusions*

Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault conforms to the generic conventions for the first person shooter, it does this in a World War Two setting, specifically the Pacific campaign from 1941 to 1943. As a game it is a linear experience. As a cultural product its primary objective is not to inform but to entertain. While someone could learn something from playing *Pacific Assault* about history or culture or to take part in an experience that others have this learning experience will probably not ignite any form of passion to find out more or to try and understand some of the complexities of the situation. In terms of representation of the protagonists and antagonists, the games presentation is fairly shallow and viewed within the context of other first person shooters this is expected, but within this there are number of interesting aspects which have been interesting and beneficial to research.

The developer diaries provided an interesting insight into the creation of the game, although they are written as part of the games formal press releases there is more information in the diaries than is

usually present in a preview written for a gaming magazine or website. The diaries are a mediated form, they are edited so the information that they contain should be treated as such. To conclude the analysis of this material, it is fair to say that the game development process presented by the authors is a complex one. Not just in terms of the technical aspects, but also in terms of the investment of creativity. It was a useful process to analyze how ideas about the Pacific conflict were assimilated into the game to create the final product. Critically though they show the level of specialization of tasks required for game development, in addition the diaries present a particular window into the mindset of the creator and provide justifications for the design choices made within the game. It shows the origin of the material used to create the characters that inhabit the game; American military consultation, American historic documents and interviews with American experts. It outlines the history of the development house, the roots of which are within the film industry and that the genesis of the *Medal of Honor* project was derived from this field. It outlines the formula used to create a *Medal of Honor* game. It shows that Japanese input into the game seems minimal and that the information used to portray the Japanese is martial in origin.

The interface study provided a tool to articulate what actually happens during play within the game. Within *Pacific Assault* the interface is typical to that of other first person shooter games. There are few moments of deep interaction where there are multiple paths of interaction to be followed. Interaction within *Pacific Assault* is binary in nature, it consists of attacking or not attacking an enemy and that the challenge of the game is derived from scarcity of necessary items, overwhelming numbers of enemies and understanding the physics that the game engine uses to build the game world. The game environment allows little options for interaction or deviating from the path defined by the game developers. The major site of interaction the squad orders box, allows the player to define certain behavior routines for the non-player characters to follow. These routines allow the player to use the non-player characters as another tool in order to complete the game. The behavior of these non-player characters are defined and not interchangeable, the squad members cannot die. The items that can be obtained during play are all related to finding and using new weapons, the player is never penalized for using Japanese weapons. There are a few items within the game that are not used for combat but these do not detract or add to the experience of playing the game, neither do they detract or add to the unique cultural identity of the non player characters. Realism within this game is limited to the scarcity of ammunition and carrying a limited amount of inventory. The physics within the game portray a game world where physics are absolute and these rules cannot be changed, they are enforced strictly like the boundaries of the game space.

The characters are further defined within the in game cut scenes and in game decals used to create a richer playing experience. Within the cut scenes the player learns that the soldiers within the squad are meant to represent a spectrum of World War Two American society. These soldiers are primarily citizens first, who fight because they are compelled to by virtue of their personal values. The protagonists do not want war, but are willing to fight in spite of the personal cost and are motivated by the *esprit de corps* and traditions of the fighting force that they are part of. The Japanese are represented as highly martial and ritualized fighters, whose motivation is never entirely made clear. They exist to fight and in this respect they encapsulate the perfect enemy. The traditions that the Japanese partake in are ancient in nature, although the game never describes this. There are no speaking Japanese characters to interact with and when confronted their immediate reaction is to attack.

4.7 *Figures and Illustrations*

Figure 4.1



Screen capture of typical game play

Figure 4.2



Screen capture indicating the elements of the interface

Figure 4.3



The Objective Tracker, the white circles represent objectives and friends

Figure 4.4



Screen capture from the 'Pearl Harbor' game sequence

Figure 4.5



Screen capture indicating interface for plane sequence

Figure 4.6



Screen capture indicating stance and health

Figure 4.7



Screen capture indicating stance icon change

Figure 4.8



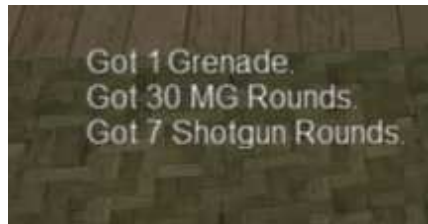
Capture showing the fixed gunner sequence

Figure 4.9



When an object is capable of binary interaction the object is highlighted

Figure 4.10



Message window indicator

Figure 4.11



Screen capture of the object in use

Figure 4.12



An object in use by the player

Figure 4.13



Screen capture indicating the squad orders box

Figure 4.14



Screen capture indicating the silhouette of an object in use

Figure 4.15



Capture from a animated cut scene after the 'Matkin Island' Level, this image shows squad member Frank Minso

Figure 4.16



Capture from a animated cut scene after the 'Matkin Island' Level showing the player character

Figure 4.17



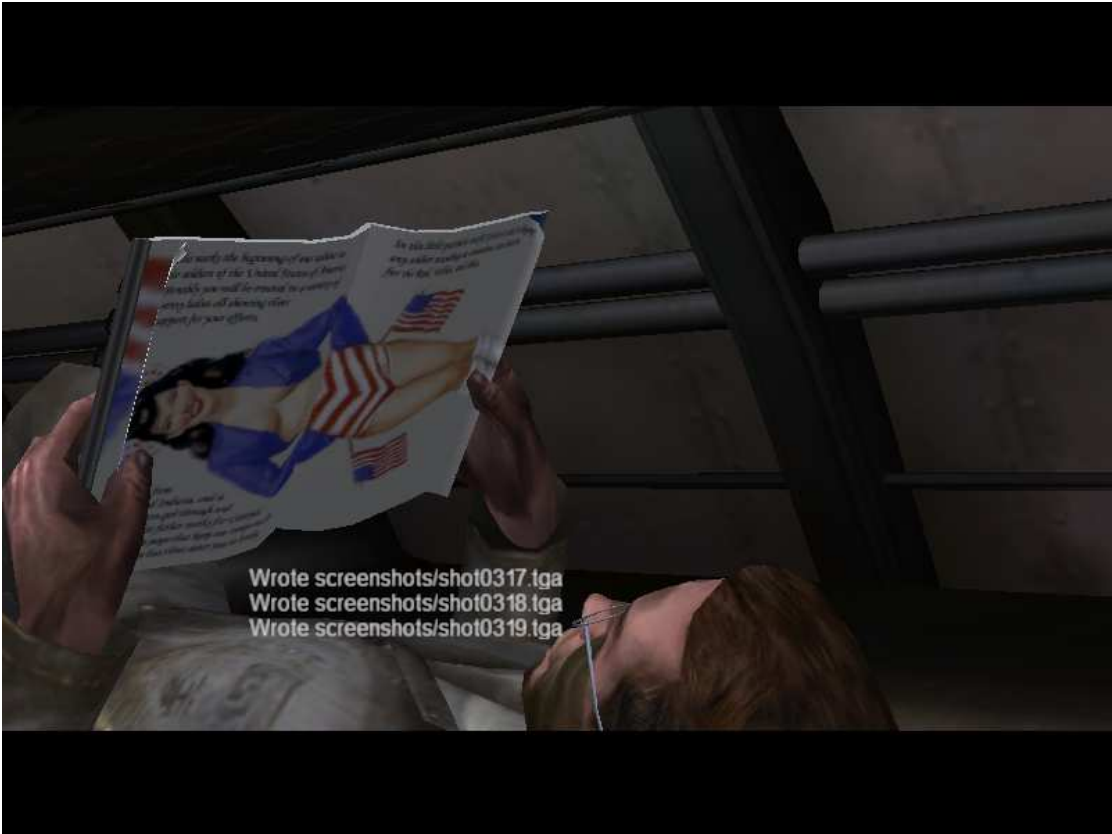
Another screen capture from the animated cut scene this time showing squad member Willy Gaines

Figure 4.18



The same set-piece showing James Sullivan

Figure 4.19



Screen capture featuring of American cultural artifact used to flourish the scene

Figure 4.20



'Pearl Harbor' opening set-piece screen capture

Figure 4.21



An example of Japanese martial artifacts present in play, in this instance a ceremonial sword

Figure 4.22



Combat taking place at close quarters

Figure 4.23



Using cover Japanese troops move closer to assault this position

Figure 4.24



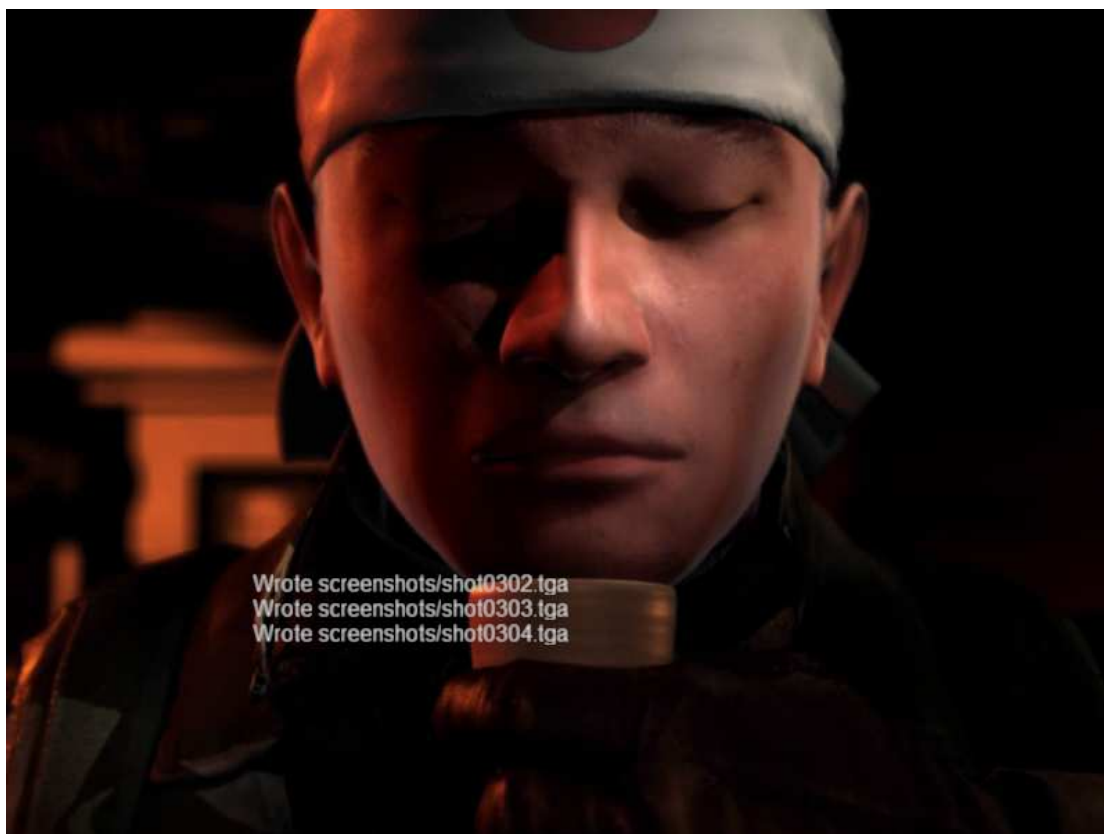
A close range Banzai attack in progress

Figure 4.25



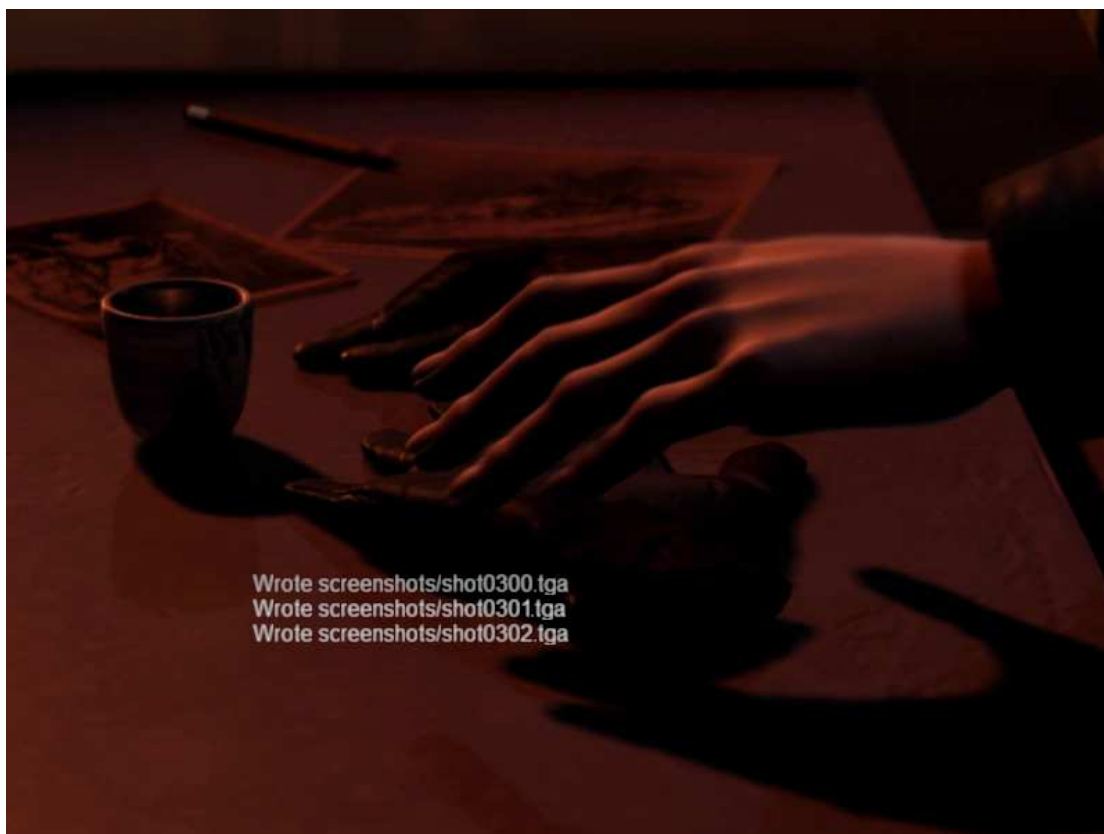
This screen capture indicates the end of the attack repulsed by player action

Figure 4.26



Screen capture showing the preparation of a Japanese pilot for combat

Figure 4.27



A mix of ritual elements and modern combat, in this case the reconnaissance photographs in the top of the screen capture

Figure 4.28



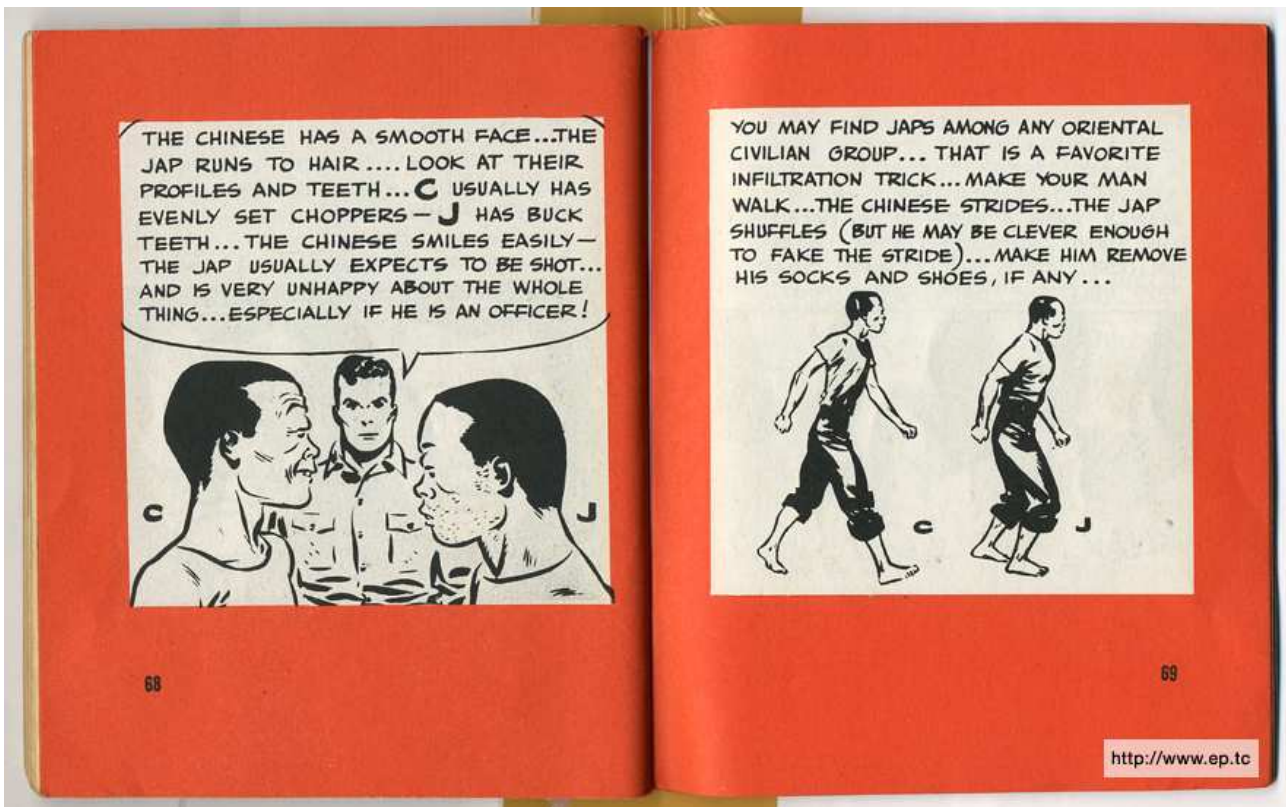
A solitary flag presented during a cut-scene at the conclusion of the game

Figure 4.29



Screen capture of the player character after completing the final Banzai set-piece

Figure 4.30



A page from the 1942 'Pocket Guide to China' with a section on 'How to Spot a Jap'

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflective Statement and Future Avenues

Within the history of electronic games it seems that one theme has been a constant fixture, conflict features heavily. Power (2007) contends that there is a trend emerging where conflict will endear a sense amongst players that war is simply a contest of wills, that the external dialogue of all of those involved will cease and our focus will rest solely on martial force required to win. *Pacific Assault* feels like a perfect example of that. As an entertainment product the mandate for this expected from the consuming public is low, but a sense of realism is not. Realism as a marketing term increasingly does not relate to the inclusion of the external aspects of conflict but rather a greater sense of freedom in play within all aspects of consumption from design so for example consulting with experts, distribution where content is updated regularly or presentation where the options for interaction increase over time. Within the console based market tactile play reminiscent of the arcade game of yesteryear has been a resurgent development force. Interestingly the *Medal of Honor* series has yet to include a title that fully incorporates or exploits these features.

5.1 *Approach to Study and Outcomes*

Medal of Honor as a series may take some of its inspirations from film, but that does not mean to play a *Medal of Honor* game is to partake in a war narrative in the same way as a film. When examining research within war games, the film analogy was used time and time again. Historic films simplify and create new readings for the sake of the medium, games do just that, but often these abstractions are part of adapting a theme to a set of rules, like stretching latex skin over a mannequin. Sometimes this process of abstraction does have an overt sense of revisionism, but especially in the case of highly technical war games and simulation games it is merely part and parcel of game development. Critique of the manner abstraction and its development produced the strongest work which from which to draw on, when the focus of study was the war game or war themed game, this was done mostly in a journalistic fashion such as the work of Deck (2004) and Cowlshaw (2005).

Pacific Assault is a linear game that follows nearly every convention that most players would associate with the first person shooter genre. In that respect it is quite unremarkable. However its setting is unique, there are not many games of this type where the antagonists are Asian. To understand exactly how they are represented is difficult, the best way to describe them is to imagine

them as mere agents of game play, with their iconography being that of a Japanese soldier in WW2. They occupy a three dimensional space within the game, but in terms of representation they are as flat as a sprite. This conclusion is probably most in line with what the developers have intended, their assumptions for what the player expects from the experience is what has been delivered. The Allies are shown in a little more depth but only just a little more. They are clearly based on a preferred reading of the time period, there are no slackers, objectors or time wasters in the squad. The squad play mechanics are a little weak mainly because there is no consequence of not working as a team. *Pacific Assault*. As a subject it was useful, but it is just one title amongst many, what would make a truly interesting analysis would be to examine every game in detail across the franchise.

5.2 *Aims and Objectives in Retrospect*

The greatest points of difference between the aims and objective and the outcome was related to the level of detail that the game was scrutinized under. This is not to say that an attempt was not made to really come to grips with the topic but on the whole there were a number of aspects that, if this undertaking was conducted again they would be handled in a different fashion. These mainly relate to the analysis and the way the content was interpreted.

The initial goal was to gain a clear understanding of the cultural representation within the game as part of the larger gaming environment and to see how the game is used to explore these themes. This would have involved examining not just the game, but the community and the focus would have been on the political ramifications of the game. These two themes are often explored when examining games that are set within conflict and there are number of examples of this explored in chapter two. While doing this is valuable in terms contribution the field, the method that this is usually conducted was not always to the researcher's satisfaction and this is not to say that these methods were wrong but just difficult to then apply. Understanding the power implications of a game were critical to exploring this topic but knowing how to conduct this was quite difficult. The desired objectives of these informative studies were all quite varied as well, and this led to further confusion about which path to take.

While there are a number of different approaches to games studies, gaining audience involvement is essential to understand how a game is perceived and used, so without that aspect trying to conduct an analysis and then apply that to the 'real world' would have been fruitless. Again finding a

methodology to conduct this type of research was difficult, would the game analysis be conducted first and then a set of questions be developed from that analysis? Would the various respondents be then asked those questions? And if that approach was taken how would ethical concerns be absolved, also what would this type of research achieve? These were some of the questions which lead to a focus on the game itself and its placement within the game environment rather than the game community. In a similar vein was an initial research plan to examine the game and compare these observations to fan created content for the game (an example of some of the fan created content can be found here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pzbjbtn31M>). This probably would have made for an interesting study but again this lead to the many potential questions on method and the analysis of the fan material, initial considerations were to incorporate these aspects into the literature review.

The problem with examining this fan content was that it would require the analysis of the game and the content to have a sense of synergy, that the methods would complement each other and work towards the same research goals. This process of rationalizing and reducing down the study at times felt like cutting away at the roots of the project rather than a pruning of the tree so to speak. The change of context did however help move the research process along significantly and there was definitely an abundance of material, although not all of it was particularly easy to write about. Without a doubt the most difficult section to write was chapter four in particular the aspects of cultural representation without relying on work that felt like a methodological mismatch primarily material from sources that relied heavily on semiotic analysis, border-line Freudian type psycho-analysis and other philosophical directions that were interesting but difficult to justify in the context of the thesis. As for the outcome, yes it has been met, the outcomes match the task set outline in chapter one but as to how much it has met this outcome is hard to judge. Certainly a lot was learnt about game analysis and if required to do another analysis then the researcher is better equipped to handle that. On a personal note, the main motivation for doing this thesis was to learn more about games, research skills and critical thinking. That was most definitely achieved as an outcome.

5.3 Further Research

Obviously an avenue for more research would to examine the rest of the games in the franchise in more detail and make some comparisons to other similar franchises. It would be interesting to see how the development process is different for the other titles in the series. It would also be interesting to see how the association with the Medal of Honor Society is forged. It was curious to

see in the back of the manual the endorsement of the society but there is scant information about how this arrangement came about and what it exactly means. If this could be ascertained then it would probably be easier to argue that the reading of history in the *Medal of Honor* series is in a sense an active sense of revisionism, this researcher suspects that this relationship is not that deep however. By looking at the series as a whole, it would be an interesting prospect, one could make more general statements about the evolution of the series and examining trends would be much easier. Although a few of the titles were played in this series there are definitely some gaps in the researchers knowledge of the series.

In terms of personal research interest, examining history in games would definitely be a further avenue for research. Mainstream games would not be the focus of this research instead the focus would be on the more esoteric war games that are published by the minor and independent game companies. Of particular interest are conflict simulations of hypothetical conflict such as a war between NATO and the Soviet Union in the mid to late 20th century, conflict between China and Taiwan and games set within developing nations. Particularly games set within the proxy wars fought in the 20th century, the Arab-Israeli Wars, Vietnam, Korea, Latin America and Southern Africa. There are so many types of games with these settings that it would be a fertile and rich ground to explore.

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