Heritage Destruction and Videogames: A Perverse Relation

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the history of the National and University Library in Sarajevo, and particularly the destruction of the site and how it has been represented with different meanings across various media. The second part of the paper will analyse the representation of the library (post-reconstruction) in the videogame *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*'s Act 2 (called 'Ghost of Sarajevo'), in order to raise issues about the ethical representation of a heritage site that has not only been destroyed and reconstructed, but that it is part of a national heritage.

Keywords
Heritage, history, epistemology, cultural value, iconoclasm

INTRODUCTION
This paper will explore the representation of culturally significant sites in videogames – in particular, those that have been destroyed in the real but find virtual representation in games. Where videogame models are highly destructible, capable of being respawned and destroyed in multiple different ways, historically and culturally significant heritage sites are unique and their destruction leaves an ethical wound on historical consciousness.

As Scott Anderson of *The New York Times* writes, "the fabric of civilization" is "terribly delicate". The "slow and painstaking work of mending once it has been torn… is a lesson we were supposed to have learned after Nazi Germany, after Bosnia and Rwanda. Perhaps it is a lesson we need to constantly learn." This paper will record the history of the National and University Library of Sarajevo, with a particular focus on the destruction of the site and how it has been represented across different media with different meanings. The second part of the paper will analyse the representation of the library (post-reconstruction) in Act 2 – 'Ghost of Sarajevo' in the videogame *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*, in order to raise issues about the ethical representation of heritage sites that have not only been destroyed and reconstructed, but are part of a national heritage. Players entering the representation of the National and University Library of Sarajevo do

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so in a playable flashback that is recalled by the player character, U.S. Marine Captain Cole Anderson. The library is presented in ruins and with all the books burned, but very little context is given as to the events that led up to its destruction: instead, the focus is on Anderson's military exploits and on the way that the flashback informs his contemporary ethos and way of making war.

Scholars have raised questions concerning the representation of real sites in videogames, suggesting that the representation does not correspond to the real sites. Likewise, the representation of heritage sites is problematic because certain types of these sites – sacred sites or monuments – are chosen by the community or the State to symbolize the history of their civilization. Heritage sites are thus the focus of complex debates and contestations as to their meaning and use (Smith 2006). If heritage sites are problematic in the society where they are built, the representation of a heritage site which has been targeted and destroyed is even more problematic.

CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF SARAJEVO

The definition of cultural heritage has seen a shift in the last decades from traditional definitions of heritage that located it in monumental buildings and collections stored in museums and libraries (what are considered the tangible aspects of cultural heritage) to also include the intangible aspects of heritage – oral histories, traditions, and songs. This has been described as a cultural process rather than a product (Viejo-Rose and Sorensen 2015, 282), where figures of authority and expertise outlined the conditions by which some objects and traditions acquire the status of heritage and cultural significance (Smith 2006). Thus, heritage preservation and heritage destruction are the two sides of the same coin. On one hand, excluding some objects or sites as part of a national heritage canon can lead to neglect and disrepair; on the other hand, selecting a site or an object to be part of the collective imagined communities (Anderson 1991), and thus elevating it to the status of national heritage, might contribute to its destruction when conflict arises due to its symbolic value. For this reason, scholars of heritage have argued that cultural heritage exists through a dualism: it is a resource of the past that it is commodified in the present, for contemporary consumption and the benefit of future generations, thus advancing economic development and tourism (Graham et al. 2000, 22; Stone 2016, 40). Needless to say, seeing cultural heritage as a cultural process, rather than a static object, filters our understanding of cultural heritage during times of conflict, as the meanings ascribed to a particular cultural heritage can quickly change before, during and after the conflict, during post-recovery and reconstruction (Viejo-Rose and Sorensen, 2015). How we manage heritage has been a constant debate for the last two centuries, with theories about the proper management of heritage resulting in a conflict of interests between communities, stakeholders and heritage practitioners (González Zarandona 2015). As a result, "tension and conflict are thus inherent qualities of heritage, whatever its form" (Graham et al. 2000: 22). This includes how we use or abuse heritage for didactic or economic purposes either on the ground or on a digital platform such as in a videogame.

The building that currently houses the National and University Library in Sarajevo (known as *Vijećnica* (city hall) in Serbo-Croatian) was built between 1881 and 1896 when Bosnia-Herzegovina was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It did not become the National Library until 1945, and four years later with the opening of the university, the collection of the University of Sarajevo was transferred to the pseudo-Moorish style building (Zeco 1996). By the mid-1950s the library was a full-running research library providing a gamut of cataloging and administrative services to scholars,

students and the population in general (Zeco 1996, 295). As with other similar buildings that bear the title of "National", the *Vijećnica* contained, amongst other valuable assets, the country's national archives and the collection of the University of Sarajevo (Riedlmayer 1995, 7), reflecting the particular multicultural character of the country on the type of assets and archives that the library, until 1992, collected and preserved: works from the Muslim, Croatian and Serbian groups (Frieze 201, 58). Thus, it was considered "the most important depository of the national and cultural history of the country (Zeco 1996, 294).

In August 1992, extreme nationalist Serbs deliberately attacked the library and it was almost completely destroyed. Over 1,200,000 volumes and 600,000 serials were lost to the flames (Bakaršić 1994). The motivation to destroy the site falls under the category that Stone (2016) deems specific targeting, and Brosche et al (2017, 249) consider conflict goals motivations, that is, *Vijećnica* was targeted because the cultural identity it reflected at the time of the conflict was a contested issue. This is also reflected in the fact that on the night of 25th August, when Serbians forces started to shell the building, they also shelled the surrounding streets so the firefighters could not reach the building and stop the flames from consuming the books and the building itself (Zeco 1996, 297). This destruction is one of the many examples that history has witnessed across centuries and seen libraries around the world being targeted due to their symbolic value. Famous examples include the destruction of the Alexandria library in 640 BCE or the destruction of the Louvain University library by German forces in 1914 (Tollebeek and van Assche 2014). During the Siege of Sarajevo, this was not the exception.

National libraries, and to that matter national museums, are an example of what heritage scholars (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) consider a 'contested site'. Contested sites are those which possess a high symbolic value due to the meanings they confer through the content they held, or because the community has acknowledged the site as important and as a repository of historical elements, that together, make up the social fabric of this community, thus reinforcing discourses of identity and belonging. As Graham et al. claim (2000, 24): it is the condition of "discordance or lack of agreement and consistency as to the meaning of heritage" that makes its dissonance or contestation inherent and implicit in our discussions on heritage. The national character of buildings such as the National and University Library in ex-Yugoslavia transcended ethnic divisions amongst different communities "to highlight shared cultures and common histories, crossing over the boundaries of ethnoreligious ties and speaking to more universal Yugoslav identities" (Hartmann 2016, 313).

For this reason, groups that might feel that the building or the content that the building withheld does not properly represent their identity or sense of belonging, heavily contest charged sites such as *Vijećnica* in Sarajevo. Representing the nation through objects, collections and heritage has always been a difficult task which combines the interests of state power with the need for significant intellectual and material resourcing (Boswell and Evans 1999). It is no coincidence then that, according to Graham et al. (2000, 11), the consideration of the word "heritage" to designate the past as a resource for the present surfaced at the same time "as the codification of nationalism into the nation-state".

The destruction of libraries is also a very symbolic act because it seeks to erase the past (Riedlmayer 1995), in order to re-write the past and shape the future. It is what Robert Bevan calls the 'destruction of memory'. The attack on the library "was directed at collective memory, shared history and attachment to place and the built environment. It

was designed to eradicate the historical presence as well as the contemporary lives of the target community" (2006, 60). This destruction was directed towards the erasure of the records, histories, stories and individual heritage that attested to the multicultural aspect of Yugoslavian society; its cultural identity. But the library was not only a place where cultural identity was forged through association with the building and the objects it once housed (Chapman 1994, 120); it was constantly re-created as the library was the place where people regularly met and undertook intellectual discussions (Frieze 2011, 59), its destruction also symbolizes the destruction where critical thinking was sustained. Moreover, Frieze (2011, 66-67) also considers that the destruction symbolizes an act of self-destruction since it was a Bosnian Serb scholar, an expert on Shakespeare, and Serb Democratic Party Vice President, Nikola Koljevic, who ordered the destruction of the library. In this sense, the destruction of the library is read by Frieze (2011, 68) as "a sign of an intention to destroy a particular group, physically, biologically, and/or psychologically; and that cultural destruction is in some instances not equivalent to genocide, but is inherent within genocide."

The library reopened in 2014, shortly after the building featured as a ruin in the video game, *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* (City Interactive 2013). Currently, the building does not operate as a library anymore, but it is where the administrative offices of the city hall were relocated, thus "the reconstructed building reflects and perpetuates the growing fragmentation of identity" in Bosnia Herzegovina, shifting its function from "a storehouse for collective memories and identity formation, promoting shared culture and plurality" to a building that "serves the purposes of the city administration (…) and symbolically excludes Serbs with the plaque [acknowledging "Serbian criminals" as the culprits of the destruction of the building] at its entrance" (Hartmann 2016, 321). Similar to the *Vijećnica*, an action that also generated fragmentation and division amongst the local population was the relabeling of the National Museum in Sarajevo as a space for contemporary art, rather than a place "which had the potential to be used to recover a sense of the shared history of the region" (Viejo-Rose and Stig Sorensen 2015, 288). In both cases, recovery does not mean that previous unresolved conflicts still linger and cannot be easily forgotten, as the building possess a high symbolic value that cannot be dislodged with violence.

If heritage sites are difficult to assess in the society where they are built because of their contentious nature, the videogame representation of a heritage site which has been targeted and destroyed is even more problematic. Iteration of its destruction in the videogame might not provide an actual representation of its library, but also, it might be difficult to situate it in a broader cultural framework.

A recent theory of iconoclasm (Clay 2012) establishes that iconoclasm – typically seen as the destruction of religious images – is a transformation of signs, making iconoclasm a continuous phenomenon, always evolving in different directions. For example, the destruction of a religious statue is achieved by destroying the face of the body but then this statue would be read as a completely different sign. In the case of *Vijećnica* in Sarajevo, the signs of its destruction have been transferred to *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* with eloquence and realistic endeavor, in particular in Mission number 6.

THE LIMITS OF REPRESENTATION/APPROPRIATION

Certainly, there are limits of representation in many areas of visual culture. The topic of taboo comes up to mind when we review the reasons why some images, and ideas, cannot be represented for the benefit of some group, or due to cover issues that may affect the

controlling group. When this is the case, then we find ourselves in a situation of iconoclasm, where images are destroyed, covered, defaced and removed so they do not affect or disrupt the current status of a certain group in the society.

However, the representation of destroyed objects or sites reminds us about the past, history and particularly, the violence that was part of that history and past. We show these images to younger generations in the hope that they will learn a lesson – not to do it again. This has been one of the most celebrated functions of heritage in our contemporary society.

In our visual culture, video games provide an opportunity to further educate younger generations in reading images. However, what limits should we criticize or enforced when it comes to the representation of destroyed heritage in a new environment, but one that does reinforce the violence that occurred at the site? It was Stuart Hall who argued (1997, 61) that by producing and exchanging meanings, these constantly change and "will always change, from one culture or period to another." How we represent and transmit these meanings in cultural heritage has been a constant debate in the last few years, since as described above, cultural heritage "fulfils several inherently opposing uses and carries conflicting meanings simultaneously" (Graham et al 2000, 3). This extends to the representation or visualization of heritage as a commodity for consumption as it is the case of the *Vijećnica* in Sarajevo in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*.

Previous research has indicated that games are often perceived to be an unsuitable form for dealing with sensitive or controversial historical content (Chapman and Linderoth 2015; Chapman 2016). In this research it was found that controversies generated by games of this type seem to revolve around two particular issues or problems. Firstly, that placing serious thematic elements into a ludic system runs the risk of them becoming trivialized (because the player may attend only to their gameplay, rather than representational function). And secondly, there was a fear of particular playable positions, i.e. instances when a game casts' at least some of the players in the role of the generally perceived historical antagonist and thus allows the players to re-enact historical episodes of exploitation, cruelty and abuse through their in-game actions' (Chapman and Linderoth 2015, 140). These issues seem to have an effect on the kind of history that is generally included in games. For example, although World War II is a very common theme within videogames, the Holocaust is almost never mentioned and even elements associated with the Holocaust (e.g. Nazi ideology, units, organisations, symbols and leaders) are frequently excluded (Chapman and Linderoth 2015). Similarly, the relative lack of engagement with aspects and imagery of World War I history common elsewhere in popular memory may also be partly explained by these tensions between form (or perceptions thereof) and sensitive content (Chapman 2016).

Given the sensitive nature of events involving extreme nationalism, ethnic prejudice and genocide, these tensions perhaps also explain why the Bosnian War is a history that is rarely included in videogames. This is despite the fact that many other European conflicts of recent years are frequently included in games and this conflict would similarly seem to have the material elements of modern warfare that suit contemporary First Person Shooter (FPS) gameplay. *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* obviously stands outside this trend by including the National and University Library, a monument very much associated with this conflict. And yet we also see a similar pattern of exclusion here: whilst the building is included, its relation to national identity and its significance within the conflict (the most contentious aspects of its history) are, as aforementioned, not included in the game.

Thus, the manner in which the site is represented in the game may not only be due to the particular pressures of the game's simulation style but also due to the larger cultural perceptions of the appropriateness of playing with particular content.

The library is also an interesting example of contested or sensitive historical content in games for another reason. When games do include content that is potentially sensitive, this tends to be done couching this content in frame cues that seek to deflect criticism. These frame cues attempt to add another by layer of meaning to the representation by 'upkeying' (Goffman 1974) away from the primary framework of meaning. In games, this is often done by attempting to frame the game's inclusion of the sensitive content as having documentary, memorial, educational or artistic value (Chapman and Linderoth 2015). However, it would appear to be possible to also deflect criticism by introducing an additional fictional layer (and concurrent frame). Situating real and potentially controversial content in a larger fictional diegesis creates an upkeying that offers an alibi through ambiguity. That is to say that in any moment of gameplay with/within the library it becomes unclear if what is being commented on by the game is the real conflict (arguably the primary framework) or the added fictional one that the game introduces in its narrative and which sustains and motivates the Anderson's involvement.

A similar pattern of representational strategies can be seen in *This War of Mine*, a game in which the player controls a group of civilians trying to survive a war that surrounds them. This game, though widely believed to be based on the Siege of Sarajevo, is similarly framed as being set in a fictional and non-specific besieged city. In both this case and in the case of *Sniper Ghost Warrior 2* this has a utility. The game makers can be lauded for their inclusion of often overlooked and difficult historical content, yet any perception that the meanings attached to this content by the game are in some way inappropriate to the perceived source can be deflected by leveraging the distancing effect of the fictional framing of this content and the simultaneous ambiguity of commentary that this creates. *Sniper Ghost Warrior 2* is therefore an interesting example to point to the tensions between the form of games and difficult or contentious heritage. Furthermore, this example also points to the complexity of discursive potentiality and possible strategies of negotiation that can be imbued within or surround even relatively simplistic uses of heritage in games.

GAMES AND/AS HISTORY

We will now more robustly theorise the appearance of the National and University Library in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* through the context of scholarship on games and history. It is now fairly well accepted that videogames can function as, or in relation to, history (see for example, Chapman 2016; Kempshall 2015; Uricchio 2005). However, the existing discourses and new problems/possibilities that this new form of engagement might entail are only beginning to be explored. Some of these are of particular relevance to the case study discussed within this paper. For example, it has been suggested that games have a particular capacity to offer 'historying', i.e. to offer engagements not only with representations of the past but also historical practices associated with engaging this past (Chapman 2016). Specifically, the historical game form's potential to offer heritage experiences (Chapman 2016; Champion 2015) is of particular relevance to the representation of the National and University Library of Sarajevo in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*. In the game the player has the opportunity to explore this representation of the monument in a way similar to visiting a heritage site.

As Prentice argues (1996, 169), "Museums, like many other heritage attractions, are

essentially experiential products, quite literally constructions to facilitate experience … museums are about facilitating feelings and knowledge based upon personal observation or contact by their visitors". It would seem that heritage re/constructions in videogames, also designed as experiential products, function similarly. Players entering the representation of the National and University Library of Sarajevo are invited to enjoy the virtual space as a resource, challenge, and strategic element of gameplay. However, given the history of the building depicted, the game space also has a possible symbolic and epistemological function. That is to say that, just as in the museum, there is a potentiality for feelings and knowledge to be facilitated through personal observation, contact and of course interaction. This potentiality can be realised by any player with an interest in the heritage context but is particularly relevant for those players for whom the socio-cultural significance of this space relates to their localised understandings and experiences. Additionally, "games also give us an exploratory agency somewhat parallel to the museum experience, and which goes beyond more passive historical media (such as cinema), by allowing us to manipulate the spatial representation and adjust our perspective" (Chapman 2016, 175).

As such, at least from a particular perspective, the very inclusion of the National and University Library can be viewed as a positive pedagogical feature of *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*. The game opens up potential popular engagement with a heritage site and one that relates to a history comparatively rarely dealt with in broader popular culture and particularly within the form of games (perhaps because of the perception of games as intrinsically less suited to the depiction of sensitive historical content – a point discussed below).

Furthermore, it would seem that the game's representation of the National and University Library has at least some basic pedagogical potential. Visual information on the heritage site is presented to players in a manner that echoes the fundaments of heritage experiences and also similarly affords players opportunities to indulge their curiosity about the site through exploration. However, it must be noted that there are also some significant differences in this regard. For instance, experience of heritage in games is often subject to pressures arising from gameplay that is a primary aesthetic goal in commercial videogame production and hence an often-integral part of the actual player experience of such spaces. This would certainly seem to also be the case in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*. Players enter this virtual heritage space as player character Captain Anderson. Their experience is subject to the ludic pressures of potential enemies who, if they are not attended to, run the risk of producing a fail game state and also to the pressures of finding their way through the space and past these enemies in order to progress. They are therefore invited to see lines of attack, potential areas of cover, means to hide and flank the enemy (or in turn be flanked by hidden enemies) and search for paths of progression.

Players are enmeshed in the gameplay affordances of the representation of the library, a potential distraction from attending to the fact that this game space also affords the representation of heritage and therefore an engagement with a raft of potentially important socio-cultural discourses of history and identity. In essence, the game invites the player to enter what Anders Frank, in his study of military training wargames, terms the 'gamer mode', "where players are mainly concerned with winning the wargame, disregarding what the theme is meant to represent" (Frank 2014, abstract). This is hardly only a problem unique to *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* and is certainly a frequent tension between form and content in many games representing the past or related to discourses about it.

It could be argued that players can reduce these ludic pressures (by for example killing enemies) and then spend time exploring the space if they wished. However, given the particular history of the library, this dynamic in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* does perhaps run uncomfortably close to some of the reasons that the building is so contentious a site in the first place. By inviting players to treat the space not as a heritage site but as a space of military utility as seen by an American protagonist, it does seem that the game, however inadvertently, almost invites the player to echo the treatment of the building that resulted in its destruction in the first place. The key difference here is that players are invited to treat the space as a military resource by *ignoring* its symbolic value, whereas it is precisely the cultural symbolic value of the National and University Library that made it a target for destruction in reality – alongside the (at least partly military) utility of such collective psychic violence in conflicts of this type and the resulting "weaponisation" of heritage.

Whether this is actually problematic depends on one's perspective on the licenses and alibis for interaction granted by play (e.g. should players be accountable for actions conducted in playful fictional worlds anyway?). Furthermore, by not highlighting the cultural significance of the space, the game allows for a further distance to be maintained between the actions of the player engaged in gameplay and the militants who destroyed the actual building, as does the game's added narrative framing motivating and justifying the player's particular actions within the space. And yet this also simultaneously ignores an important aspect of the building's history and cultural context, leaving the game open to accusations of only superficially engaging with the National and University Library as a prop (and therefore insensitively) and from a more cynical perspective, actually "whitewashing" its history of potentially uncomfortable content. Furthermore, an analysis of photographs taken inside the library before its destruction, compared to the actual design of the library in the videogame, provide further proof that the designers of the videogame deliberately, perhaps, designed the library without much resemblance to the original, thus contributing to the confusion that the player might experience.

This suggests that the library is merely a prop within the videogame, and that the design minimizes its potential for cultural and historical meaning: in-game, the characters merely refer to it as 'that library'. *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* is limited in terms of authentic engagement with history by its affordance-based ludic structure: where the building was historically used for meetings and discussion, in the game it is primarily a navigational aid ("There's the library. But I'll get smoked out in the open. Gotta go around") or as source of cover and pacing for encounters with enemy combatants ("Anderson find a good position to return fire, or get the hell out of that library, pronto!").

In part these exclusions can also be attributed to the inherent pressures of the game's chosen style of representation. Just as in the construction of any other heritage experience, with games we must not only attend to the information that is presented but the means by which this presentation occurs and the tensions between form, mode and content this implies. For instance, *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2* utilizes a "realist simulation style" (Chapman 2016, 59-89). Such simulations are characterized by the claim and attempt to show the past as it appeared to historical agents and typically feature rich visual representations. Generally this entails creating environments with good spatio-temporal coherency and context. This has advantages, adding a layer of information by situating objects and architecture in their relative historical environmental context, giving clues as to their relative historical relations and providing a full environmental gestalt.

However, there are also downsides to this realist spatiotemporal rendering of environments and objects, insofar as it "involves the loss of some of the rhetorical freedom that museum exhibits have in creating meaning about the past through thematic sequencing and/or anatopism and anachronism … [where] items from wholly different times or places can be placed together in order to draw comparisons or show change over time" (Chapman 2016, 176). Specifically in relation to *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*, this means that the game only offers a "snapshot" of the history of the National and University Library of Sarajevo. The building's *change over time* (which is arguably the central concern of history and certainly central to this particular history), the events leading to its construction, destruction and eventual reconstruction, are not easily explored through this particular simulation style. To do so means either to dedicate a significant portion of the game to repeated visits to the library at different points (running the risk of breaking the game's diegetic continuity and consistency) or to add a layer of supporting information through other modes (most commonly in the form of text, video or audio explanations) that could also only deal with the history up to the point in time at which the player enters the library (i.e. excluding "future" developments) or similarly risk breaking the game's diegetic coherency. However in a design common to FPS games, temporality is mapped onto the realist space: events that represent narrative progression are keyed to the moment when players, as Anderson, reach certain spatial points in the game level.

This is compounded by the fact that games utilising realist simulation styles tend to have a heavy emphasis on and capability for the representation of material culture: such games often have relatively rich visual data loads concerning this material. Like film, which Chatman (1980, 126) here talks of, these simulations are characterized by a "plenitude of visual details, an excessive particularity compared to the verbal version, a plenitude aptly called by certain aestheticians visual 'over-specification' (überstimmtheit)". However, these same simulations have to expend significant effort and resources in order to represent less tangible aspects of culture. This certainly seems to also be the case in *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*, with the game offering a representation of the material aspect of the library itself. However, these same simulations have to expend significant effort and resources in order to represent less tangible aspects of culture. This certainly seems to also be the case in *Sniper Ghost Warrior 2*, with the game offering a representation of the material aspect of the library itself in terms of its distinctive architecture, strewn with shattered bookshelves and the Moorish-style arches in the foyer's library.

This is far more difficult to represent within the pressures of the realist simulation style and its focus on materiality in comparison to the other major simulation style of historical games: the "conceptual simulation style" (Chapman 2016, 59-89). In these latter simulations, characterized by abstraction (simple visual cues supplemented by text, charts, menus and maps) and which function more as a simulation of discourses about the past than a direct representation of it, intangible aspects of history and culture are much more easily represented. The developer can, for example, relatively simply create a rule representing how these intangible cultural discourses, ideas, identities and systems function and the kind of affordances they imply and then establish and contextualise this representational relationship through text or simple visual cues (and all without worrying about impinging on a visually and spatio-temporally coherent diegetic world). The intangible aspects of the library could therefore be included and explored (however reductively) by tying it to gameplay systems that attempt to represent interlinked processes of national identity, ideology and culture, such as those we see in strategy games (which commonly utilise conceptual simulation styles). This is far more difficult

within the game's chosen realist simulation style. As such, it may be that the aspects of the library concentrated on in the game (i.e. the material but not the important cultural/symbolic aspects) are at least partly determined by the pressures of form upon the historical content. These exclusions seems particularly important to the library given both the losses that the destruction entailed and also the site's symbolic role in relation to various national identities.

Furthermore, realist simulation styles are also potentially problematic because in their visual specificity and emphasis on claiming to show the past (or material of that past) as it appeared to historical agents, they also generally function through a reconstructionist epistemological approach (Chapman 2016, 66-69). This is part of Munslow's (2007) tripartite classification of epistemological approaches: reconstructionist (a concern only with facts), constructionist (a concern with facts as selected, arranged and explained according to theory), and deconstructionist (a concern with the way the history itself is written). The reconstructionist perspective is the most naïve epistemology of the three and is conservatively Rankean in its approach to the past. Realist simulations have a tendency towards this kind of epistemological approach because of their concern with visual specificity, diegetic coherency and their subsequent inherent autoptic authority.

This results in games that tend to be univocal and struggle to include the possibility of conflicting accounts or interpretations. Furthermore, also due to these characteristics, such games also tend to hide the role of the historian (in this case the developer) in a similar manner to the way in which the rhetorical techniques of written history, described by Barthes (1987) as the "discourse of history", also often do. This positions the representation as a simple mediation between past and present (rather than a subjective construction) and therefore subsumes the uncertainty, underlying ideologies, subjectivities, pressures and unresolved questions of the process of representation and instead enhances the authority of the text. This would seem to be potentially problematic in the case of monuments such as the National and University Library of Sarajevo. Firstly, in the sense that the representation found in the game appears to deviate significantly from primary sources (such as the aforementioned photographs of the libraries interior) and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because the library is a site not only of literal destruction and reconstruction (introducing questions about its subsequent virtual reconstruction) but also one of contested meanings and identities. Furthermore, even generally speaking, the idea that any one simulation can capture everything of a historical environment that it represents is clearly problematic to wider questions about the nature of historical work, and yet this is the underlying emphasis of the realist-reconstructionist simulation which players are invited to accept.

CONCLUSION: INTERACTING WITH HERITAGE

Three major issues or difficulties with the depiction of historical sites in videogames such as the National and University Library of Sarajevo in *Sniper Ghost Warrior 2* have been identified thus far: the "gamer mode" in which the uses of the building are reduced to the ludic structures common to the shooter genre, the tendency to naïve reconstructivist historical epistemology, and the bracketing out of conflicting meanings and interpretations of the historical site's legacy due to the concentration on a "realist simulationist style".

Overall, the heritage experience structured by *Sniper Ghost Warrior 2* doubtlessly has both an epistemological and affective potentiality as an audience-led historical activity. However, whilst the particular choices in the reconstruction and deployment of the library

within the game allow for these possibilities, they also clearly introduce pressures, exclusions and potentially problematic forms of engagement. These choices also open up to the capacity of games for offering reenactment experiences, something highlighted as a significant aspect of the form (Chapman 2016; Rejack 2007). This raises questions as to exactly what role the player is invited to reenact in their both memorial and military interventions into the ruins of the library. As noted above, it can be argued that there is perhaps an uncomfortable echo of the library's destruction in the way the game asks the player to treat the representation as a military resource. But, in order to identify a fuller range of potential roles made available to players by the game, we must also consider other aspects, such as the narrative framing of the player-character's (and thus player's) activities. In light of this framing, we can ask if the player's role is a metaphorical reenactment of the destructive forces that resulted in the library's destruction in the first place? Or are players invited into a cathartic experience whereby the wrongs associated with the library's destruction are to be somewhat righted by the player's intervention? Or does the player's very presence seek to highlight the status of the library as a symbolic entity in cultural memory? What does this digital form of participation with significant places reveal about communities and their social value?

In the first half of the twentieth century, photography and film seemed to Walter Benjamin (2003) to be stripping artworks of their "aura": their unique provenance and history gives way to their "technical reproducibility". Once photographed, a great work of art could potentially be experienced anywhere and in dynamic new conformations. The decay of the aura was in part democratizing (as the works could be experienced by a greater audience), but it also created significant problems for historical consciousness by removing the works from their original contexts and traditions. Videogame models and environments are far more reproducible than anything Benjamin could have anticipated, and are thus deeply non-auratic. They are capable of being manipulated, destroyed and respawned within the virtual world at a whim: if you experience a Game Over, simply re-load and try again. The representation of lasting trauma and harm that can characterize historical conflicts can often be sidelined or simplified in videogames.

In addition to the issues of "playing" with the past noted above, then, the appearance of historical sites in games, is also tied up with the complex and often contradictory processes of meaning-making inherent in the videogame medium that takes its place in a society of spectacle and historical crisis (think of contemporary discourses such as "fake news"). The heteronomous flows of sensory experience that computers make possible are very powerful in their capacity for generating media experiences, but as the constant presence of glitches and flaws indicates, can often be unruly and difficult to control. What appear to be faithful recreations of real environments or complex battlefields are actually tricks of perspective in tunnel-like linear maps.

This can be illustrated in the controversy surrounding the inclusion of a virtual model of Manchester Cathedral in Insomniac's *Resistance: Fall of Man* (2006) as a game level. Set in an alien invasion, players of the game fight through the ruined cathedral: this not only brings the "gamer mode" into the space, but also imagines it as a destroyed remnant. Church leaders were highly critical of this move, while then-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, echoed concerns about gun violence, the influence of the game on young people, and the need for game companies to consider wider social responsibilities (Dubey 2008). Sony, for its part, argued that the science-fiction scenario was sufficiently alienating to distinguish its product from an attempt at desecration, but nevertheless issued an apology for any inadvertent offense it may have caused. Scholar Ian Bogost,

however, asserted that the reference to the real cathedral encapsulated in the computer game model oriented players to a structure that "demands respect" and a kind of "reverence" (Bogost 2007).

This gamut of responses shows the cathedral to be the locus of contradictory semiotic processes – the introduction of an auratic and unique appearance into a space which is greatly characterized by reproducibility. The differences between Manchester Cathedral and the National and University Library of Sarajevo also reinforce the need to consider the appearance of historical sites within the wider significative strategies of a given game. For example, the final boss fight in *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty* (Konami 2001) takes place on the rooftop of a ruined Federal Hall National Memorial in a destroyed New York City, but this did not cause a similar reaction to the cathedral's inclusion in *Resistance*. This is in part because, while *Sons of Liberty* was produced with high quality and visually "realist" graphical environments for its time, the game's welter of conspiracy theories, camp performativity and knowing referentiality inflect the appearance of the historical site in a very different way to a game committed to a realist simulation style.

Similarly, although *Sniper Ghost Warrior 2* does run the risk of reducing the National and University Library's significance in various ways, the central story seems to displace issues of historical complexity onto the life history of the player character. The level, called "Ghosts of Sarajevo", is in fact a flashback sequence in which the PC recalls a traumatic event: the betrayal by his "spotter" partner. This disarticulation of the two-man sniper squad, which is trained to combine seeing and doing into a neat continuum, can be read as a critique of the jingoistic militarism so common in games where heroes simply slaughter their way through waves of vaguely sketched enemy combatants in caricatural environments. And indeed the burning books and scattered masonry of the building do give an oblique sense of the conflicting interpretations of its meaning.

Heritage sites present significant problems and opportunities for game design; while game design presents similarly complex issues for historians and scholars who are, at least to a degree, responsible for cultural provenance. This reciprocal exchange shows complex dynamics in which contested meanings, videogame aesthetics, ludic pressure, and cultural norms all are brought to bear. Heritage sites bring the cultural friction of history into the consumerist virtual spaces of videogames, and thus provide a locus on which to reflect on how history appears in our present.

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