

Toward a Virtual Reenactment of History: Video Games and the Recreation of the Past

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Several modern video games claim a high degree of historical authenticity, and indeed the experience of modern gaming is often described as being more ‘realistic’ than ever before. This article explores the relationship between history and video games by discussing Brothers in Arms (2005) as a form of reenactment. What emerges from the game is a complex negotiation of two goals that often appear to be contradictory—fidelity to the conventions of gaming and attention to historical detail. By deferring to historical authenticity, the game attempts to build historical knowledge through sympathetic identification, which is precisely what the game fails to induce through its own narrative and characters. After treating Brothers in Arms, I conclude with a discussion of a very different game (Façade, 2005) as a way of speculating on future possibilities regarding the intersections of history and gaming.

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A recent advertisement (2006) for the History Channel’s new documentary series *Dogfights* announces that the program allows viewers to ‘experience history in a new way’. As images of fighter planes engaging in combat flash across the screen, it becomes clear that the ‘new way’ refers to computer graphics. The advertisement consists only of computer-generated images, and one might easily mistake it for an advertisement for a video game. Seemingly aware of this correspondence, the advertisement concludes with an ominous summation of the show’s appeal—‘like a video game, but deadlier’. In an inversion of the trope often used by video game advertisements, which tend to emphasize the games’ claims to realism,¹

the History Channel advertisement attempts to heighten its historical credibility by deferring to the experience offered by gaming. The *Dogfights* (2006) website proudly asserts that the show 'recreates famous battles using state-of-the-art computer graphics' and adds that 'viewers will feel like they're in the battle, facing the enemy'. Briefly moving away from the emphasis on the show's simulated images, the website summary states that 'first-hand accounts will drive the story' but then concludes by returning to its original focus: 'Rare archival footage and original shooting supplement the remarkable computer graphics.' The traditional elements of documentary history (interviews and original and archival footage) have now been relegated to the position of 'supplement'. The producers' efforts to recreate history through computer graphics suggests that visually representing an event (even a virtual representation) offers some kind of 'reality effect'.² But while the technology used in video games can be employed to legitimize an already established form of historical exploration (the television documentary), one wonders to what extent gaming can use the tools of historiography to legitimize itself.

In order to conceptualize the kind of experience video games offer as a way to enter into history, we must first understand the relationship between reenactment and history. Scholars have only recently begun to explore the historiographic potential of reenactment, largely in reaction to our cultural moment's preoccupation with various forms of reenactment. Vanessa Agnew (2004) argues that reenactment potentially offers a kind of historical knowledge distinct from the knowledge gained through traditional historical research. The primary difference between reenactment and reading says Steven Ambrose (1994), historian of World War II, is that the former offers a bodily experience from which one may gain historical insight, whereas history writing offers an intellectual engagement not rooted in the body. Agnew (2004, p. 330) writes that 'reenactment... emerges as a body-based discourse in which the past is reanimated through physical and psychological experience'. At least, reenactment suggests this possibility. As Agnew points out, reenactment is not without its limitations: 'Reenactment's central epistemological claim that experience furthers historical understanding is clearly problematic: body-based testimony tells us more about the present self than the collective past' (Agnew 2004, p. 335). This caveat aside, Agnew still posits reenactment's potential for historical insight. And even if reenactment tells us more about the present than about the past, it hinges on the issue of how we understand the past in the present: 'Reenactment's emancipatory gesture is to allow participants to select their own past in reaction to a conflicted present' (Agnew 2004, p. 328). And finally what emerges from the experience of reenactment 'is

mastery: skills are acquired and manual tasks accomplished, fears and aversions overcome, and the body and mind brought into a state of regulation' (Agnew 2004, p. 330).

With the continuing development of gaming technology, the experience of playing a video game has become increasingly similar to reenactment. A game like *Call of Duty 3* (2006), for example, puts the player in the midst of the Normandy breakout, the series of battles in the summer of 1944 on the way to liberate Paris. The battle scenes are baroque in their detail, from flying bits of concrete as bullets slam into nearby buildings, to the seemingly endless supply of soldiers that constantly fill the screen. This summary of the game's opening battle (from a Gamespot.com review) illustrates the kind of excitement the game is meant to convey:

Everywhere you look, there's carnage. Bullets and grenades whiz through the air while bombs explode all around, leaving soldiers to scramble for whatever cover they can find—be it a bombed-out mausoleum or a grave stone. The bodies of your fallen comrades are strewn about the battlefield—a stark reminder that unless you want to join them, you need to keep moving.

(Thomas 2006)

This kind of language mimics that of a battle memoir, although it also points to the combination of detachment and engagement that reenactment usually entails. At one moment the 'soldiers' are nondescript, and in the next 'they' turns to 'you', the switch to second person inaugurating an identification with the formerly unsympathetic mass. But while historically based video games may easily be considered a subset of reenactment, there are also important differences between gaming and dressing in period costume and physically going to the place. For one, gaming of this kind tends to be solitary (although online multiplayer components are now included in most games), whereas reenactment is always a complex collective experience. Furthermore, bodily engagement, which lends reenactment its form of experiential epistemology, is absent from gaming. Clicks of a mouse or movements of a joystick do not provide a pathway to historical identification through the body in the way that running across the battlefield might. While there are drawbacks to gaming as a model of historical engagement, the most obvious benefit that games do offer—and that to which the *Dogfights* advertisement refers—is the visual representation of past events and places.

With these differences in mind, I will explore the ways in which the ever more realistic graphics of modern video games contribute to an experience akin to that of reenactment. To do so, I will focus mainly on *Brothers in*

Arms: Road to Hill 30 (2005), a game that attempts to recreate the battlefields as they were in Normandy during the summer of 1944. This particular game allows the player to imagine himself in that moment of history and to take part in it through a virtual medium. Through this imaginative process, a kind of sympathetic identification with the past begins to emerge.³ However, the realism ends in this game—and in most other games of its kind—when it comes to human interaction. Whereas historical reenactment on the battlefield involves many other people, the virtual characters in *Brothers in Arms* fall short of being ‘true to life’, as the game’s developers claim them to be. The game includes several moments that should induce pathos simply because of the player’s identification with the characters. But because this kind of emotional engagement falls short, the developers turn to history and its potential for creating sympathetic identification. I will then conclude by discussing a recent game called *Façade* (2005), which seeks to bring a different kind of realism to gaming than graphic realism. Although *Façade*’s graphics look basic, the game attempts to create a realistic simulation of human interaction, in which the player can speak to and get responses from computer-controlled characters.⁴ While games currently need to use history to generate sympathy for virtual characters, with the promise of the technology displayed in *Façade*, one can imagine a future in which virtual characters help to produce historical knowledge.⁵

In the past five years, several World War II-based first-person shooters⁶ have been produced (the *Call of Duty* series alone accounting for half a dozen titles). So when *Brothers in Arms* was launched in March 2005, it seemed like just the latest contribution to a long line of games set during World War II. Several game features, however, distinguished *Brothers in Arms* from other similar titles. For one, the game allows players to command squads of three artificial-intelligence (AI), computer-controlled characters, sometimes two squads simultaneously, and sometimes tanks. The player can send the squad to a particular location, command them to put suppressing fire on an enemy, or charge and take out the enemy. These abilities must be perfected throughout the game, since it would be impossible to complete the campaign without the help of one’s squad. In fact, the difficulty of the game also distinguishes it from other shooters of a similar ilk. Rather than blazing through enemy lines as though invincible (which is an option in the more ‘run-and-gun’ style of *Call of Duty*), the player must draw on the basic tactics of ‘fire-and-maneuver’ combat. The game’s brief tutorial teaches the tactics as the ‘four Fs’ or ‘find, fix, flank, and finish’. The combination of tactical elements and intense battle scenes is one reason why the game has proved to be so popular.

Along with the innovative gameplay strategies, *Brothers in Arms* also features a compelling narrative based on the events of the war, which draws on numerous historical facts and documents. The player assumes the role of Sergeant Matt Baker, a fictional member of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. The story begins during the early hours of D-Day, when Baker and his squad drop into enemy territory in Normandy. The game spans D-Day and the following seven days, as the 502nd moves toward Carentan and finally defends the German counter-attack on Hill 30. Each successive chapter begins with the name of the mission and the date projected onto a dark screen, over which Baker's voice narrates. Through this device we learn bits and pieces of Baker's past, including his childhood friendship with another soldier, named George Risner (whom Baker encounters during the course of the game), and the advice that Baker's father (a veteran of World War I) gave him before departing for France. After Baker's narration, each chapter begins with a brief scene in which the members of the squad discuss what has been happening, their lives at home, their feelings about Germans, and so on. All of these elements contribute to the game's narrative and increase the potential for the player to engage with the history being explored.

While the narrative is well constructed, at least as far as video game narratives go, the more striking quality of *Brothers in Arms*'s story is how it claims fidelity to the history of D-Day and the days following it.⁷ The game's website boasts that it features 'Unprecedented Authenticity' with 'Historically accurate and detailed battlegrounds, events and equipment recreated from Army Signal Corps photos, Aerial Reconnaissance Imagery and eyewitness accounts' (*Brothers in Arms* key features' 2005). The members of Gearbox Software who made the game (notably Gearbox's president, Randy Pitchford, and its historical adviser, Colonel John F. Antal) also traveled to Normandy to walk and study the terrain. As a promotional tool, but also as a way to legitimize the game's claims for historical authenticity, Pitchford and Antal teamed up with the History Channel and produced a television documentary telling the story of the 502nd PIR. Similar to the *Dogfights* series, this documentary uses game footage as a way of reinforcing the more conventional means of storytelling in documentary television, namely interviews, archival footage and dramatic reconstructions.

While *Brothers in Arms* makes significant efforts toward verisimilitude, when the game is actually being played, it is entirely possible (and indeed likely) that most gamers have little or no knowledge of the battles and scenes being recreated. Moreover, there is no way of ascertaining how carefully game developers have designed the game world to represent the

real one. The digital recreation of the church in Carentan, for example, might be highly accurate or entirely fabricated. The only sources of such information lie outside of the game, whether on the back of the box in which the game comes, in television commercials, or on the game's website. The exception to this case is extras, which occupy a space that is both inside and outside the game.⁸ Just as DVDs tend to include deleted scenes, production stills, and the like, so too do many video games. The key difference between DVD extras and video game extras, however, is that, in order to access the latter, it is necessary to play the game. Only after completing every chapter at every level of difficulty is one able to view all the extras for *Brothers in Arms*. Although it is possible to have no contextual historical knowledge of the game while playing it, the player's success is rewarded with the means for acquiring such knowledge. The structure of this movement (playing in ignorance and being rewarded with knowledge) mirrors the narrative structure of the quest, or that of reenactment.⁹

One particular moment early in the game stands out in relation to this negotiation between historical detail and the player's ignorance. Just seven chapters into the game and one day after D-Day (D + 1), Baker links up with an armored division in the small town of Vierville. The man driving the M5A1 Stuart tank happens to be George Risner, Baker's childhood friend about whom he has spoken in his previous voiceover narrations. Baker and his squad, along with Risner and his tank, make their way southwest away from Vierville, clearing the area of Germans. Eventually they make their way north to St. Come-du-Mont in order to secure the road south into Carentan. At the end of this particular chapter, Risner's tank reaches an intersection at which there is a German panzergrenadier unit. They fire a rocket at the tank and destroy it. In order to finish the level, the player (as Baker) must eliminate the remaining German units. The next chapter begins as usual with Baker's narration, although this particular one is darker and more emotionally charged than many others, since he has just witnessed the death of his longtime friend. After the voiceover narration, the chapter begins with Baker standing in front of the destroyed Stuart tank, with Risner's body still slumped over atop the turret. The members of Baker's squad offer their condolences, and then Baker moves on to the next mission.

While this scene is meant to develop pathos in its own regard (the main character of the story has just witnessed the death of his best friend), it establishes a different relationship to sympathy once we realize that the scene carefully reenacts an actual event. The chapter is called 'Dead Man's Corner', which is the name GIs used to refer to the intersection where a Stuart tank was actually destroyed on D + 1. After completing the game and

unlocking all the extras, there are several different images to be found relating to the historical and the virtual Dead Man's Corner. There is a collection of pictures from the game developers' trip to Normandy in 2003, including one of Pitchford and Antal standing in front of the house at Dead Man's Corner. But perhaps the most striking samples are two composite images comprised of archival photographs and gameplay screenshots. The first features a photograph taken on D + 4 of two soldiers inspecting the hulk of the destroyed Stuart tank (Figure 1). The right side of the image shows the right half of the photograph, while the left half is made up of a screenshot from the game. Inset in the upper-left corner of the image is the entire photograph, so the viewer can compare it with the digital replication of it from the game. After viewing this image, one can replay that particular chapter and essentially reenact the photograph. It is possible to frame the image in such a way that the game screen represents almost exactly the photograph from 1944 (the main difference being the presence of three soldiers in the game, and only two in the photo). The other composite image creates a similar effect (Figure 2). It uses a period picture of the house located at Dead Man's Corner—the right half of the image is taken from the photo, and the left half from a game screenshot (once again with



Figure 1 A Composite Image of a Gameplay Screenshot and Period Photograph which can be Accessed from the Game's Extra Features.



Figure 2 Another Composite Image from the Game's Extra Features. It shows the house at Dead Man's Corner in its photographic and virtual representations.

an inset of the entire photo in the corner). Clearly these photos are meant to legitimize the game's gestures toward historical accuracy. But coming at this particular moment in the game's narrative, one also assumes that the extras should intensify the pathos felt for Baker. The photos do double work: they claim this moment in the game as a historical one, and at the same time appeal to the player's capacity for sympathy. The extras suggest that if one cannot feel for Baker's loss, perhaps the introduction of a historical document will entice an emotional reaction. *Brothers in Arms* attempts to use history as a means for sympathetic identification precisely because gaming struggles to achieve such a goal on its own.

This appeal to history for its powers of sympathy occurs throughout the game's extras, which, after viewing, lead the player to reconsider the game itself. Once again relating to Dead Man's Corner, the game offers an aerial photograph of the area taken just prior to D-Day. The next image shows this photo with a red dotted line showing 'a likely path for Baker's squad moving North towards St. Come'. The world of the game and its plot gets literally mapped onto an image of the terrain in France as it was in 1944. The next image takes this idea further by showing the aerial photo with

'blue and green colored sections' that denote 'set pieces from the game where combat occurs'. After viewing these images, as with the first two, one can replay *Brothers in Arms* with a different conception of the game's virtual space. In fact, this negotiation between extras and the game proper is a question of distance.¹⁰ When viewing the extras, one has a detached sense of their relationship to the game. One cannot, after all, view the extras while playing the game but must instead access them from the game's main menu screen. But when reentering the space of the game, the level of engagement is heightened because of the contextual knowledge gleaned from the extras.

One final example from the game's extras points specifically toward the ways in which the historical detail raises the player's engagement with the story and the action. This particular extra shows the demo given by Pitchford and Antal at the 2004 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), the gaming industry's main trade show. The demo consists of Pitchford and Antal explaining the game and narrating while Pitchford plays a brief section from the game's 'Ripe Pickings' chapter. The scene begins with Baker and his squad awaiting action, and Pitchford says, 'This is Normandy in 1944. This is what it actually looked like.' They continue to explain the game's features, usually alternating between comments about its innovative gameplay system and its historical accuracy. Eventually Pitchford leads Baker and his squad past a crossroads and into a house occupied by German infantrymen. When reaching the top floor of the house, Pitchford goes to a window and looks out on the horizon, noting that 'it looks like Carentan is under naval bombardment'. He asks Antal who is firing on the town and, as if it is happening at that very moment, Antal responds that it is the 'U.S.S. *Texas* firing 16-inch naval shells on the town of Carentan'.¹¹ The repeated insistences of the present tense suggest that Antal and Pitchford wholeheartedly buy into the game as a form of reenactment. Furthermore, this particular extra collapses the difference between inside and outside by showing a sample of the game being played, which is distinct from actually playing the game. The video in fact models how one ought to play the game: with a sense of history being reenacted at the moment of playing.

While the game developers envision reenactment fusing seamlessly with gaming, there are several contradictions that arise between the two activities. In fact, the game displays a continual negotiation between a credible kind of reenactment and a pleasing gaming experience. In their introduction to the E3 demo, Pitchford and Antal illustrate this point when Antal explains that his job is to ensure the game's authenticity, while Pitchford makes sure that 'it's fun to play', as if the two goals were at odds. Any time the developers decide to include something that increases the game's verisimilitude, this factor needs to be measured against how it alters

the gameplay. While Antal and Pitchford may think of *Brothers in Arms* as a way to re-create the past, it ultimately needs also to be recreational. As an instance of this negotiation between verisimilitude and fun, take one of the game's innovative features. If you die three times in a row without reaching a checkpoint, a screen appears, reading, 'War isn't fair, but video games should be. Would you like to heal your squad?' Answering in the affirmative allows all the members of the squad to magically reappear in full health. This feature seriously challenges the game's similitude, but it does so in the service of making it more enjoyable as a video game. It can be frustrating to reach a point at which the entire squad is dead, and one's character's health is seriously compromised while being pinned down by two German tanks. By recuperating the squad, one is able to proceed through the narrative again and to continue progressing through subsequent levels of the game. In this way there are limits to how far Pitchford and Antal can use history to enhance their game.

Perhaps the other significant limitation *Brothers in Arms* faces with respect to reenactment is the ability to simulate a collective experience. Pitchford and Antal and the other game developers attached great significance to making 'true-to-life' characters, giving them detailed biographies and distinctive personality traits. However, as is the case with most conventional video games, this aim falls short. The main obstacle is that one's interactions with the computer-controlled characters lack a degree of interactivity that is comparable to that of the battle scenes. Pre-scripted cutscenes and Baker's voiceover narration provide the main avenues for emotional involvement with the characters. The emotional identification with the characters (if there is any) happens—as it does in cinema—by witnessing, not by interacting. The player's sole opportunity for interacting with the other characters occurs during a firefight, something that keeps the emotional register permanently ratcheted to fear. One wonders how this game would look—and how the sense of it as reenactment would change—if there were some way meaningfully to simulate human interaction.

In another gaming realm, two game designers named Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern are attempting to do exactly that, except without the guns and battles. Mateas and Stern have developed a game called *Façade*, which puts the player in a world far removed from the fields of Normandy. Rather than shooting bad guys, the player simply goes to the apartment of his/her¹² friends, Grace and Trip, for a nice dinner together. *Façade* is unlike most modern video games in several ways: the graphics are basic, resembling those of games from a decade or more ago; the space of the game is extremely small (just a one-bedroom apartment with a balcony

overlooking a minimally detailed cityscape), as opposed to the large, immersive world of a game like *Brothers in Arms*; and the player cannot interact much with the environment (it is possible to pick up some items like wineglasses or pictures, but that essentially accounts for all possible interaction). While all of these characteristics make *Façade* seem primitive compared to other modern games, where it excels is with the AI system (simply put, the programming that allows the computer-controlled characters to perform complex actions). By using the keyboard, the player can talk to Grace and Trip, who respond based on the programming language designed by Mateas and Stern.¹³ For example, when the game begins, the player starts just outside the door to Grace and Trip's apartment, from where it is possible to hear them arguing. One knocks on the door, and Trip will answer and say, 'Brian, how good to see you!' or some such response.¹⁴ From there on in, the player simply moves about the apartment and carries on a conversation with Grace and Trip.¹⁵ One can act in whatever manner one chooses, and the characters will react in turn, much like an improvised scene with actors. For example, if the player decides to take Grace's side in a debate about the apartment's décor, Trip will become defensive or perhaps sullen. Acting inappropriately (flirting too openly with Grace, for example) will even result in the player being escorted out of the apartment. Game over. But each play produces a new script depending on how the player decides to act. After playing several times, more gets revealed about Grace and Trip and their troubled marriage. For example, eventually one learns that Grace wanted to be an artist, but Trip convinced her to take a practical job in advertising. Depending on how each play progresses, Grace and Trip are either reconciled at the end of play, decide to separate, or neither.

Mateas and Stern developed *Façade* largely in reaction against the action-based games that dominate the gaming market. But their more ambitious goal is to create a game in which human interaction can be effectively simulated. In Jonathan Rauch's (2006) article about Mateas and Stern and their project, Stern notes that they wanted to '[make] players feel a true connection to characters on the screen [so that] you'd feel like you're immersed in an actual relationship with these characters' (Rauch 2006, p. 86). This kind of emotional identification is precisely what is absent in a game like *Brothers in Arms*, even though it attempts to make up for this lack by offering historical context as another way to create sympathy. However, *Brothers in Arms* presents a view of history as a straightforward sequence of events, with no sense of competing interpretations or multiple viewpoints. Each time one plays the game, events unfold the same way. *Façade*, on the other hand, allows players continually to renew the scene being enacted. If

the technology created by Mateas and Stern continues to develop and improve, the possibilities offered by that technology combined with a game like *Brothers in Arms* would be limitless.¹⁶ Such a combination would allow one to visit and revisit Dead Man's Corner and glean a new insight each time by interacting with the virtual characters. One could explore the 'inside of the event' and its 'processes of thought' (Collingwood 1946, p. 215). With developers like Mateas and Stern working toward a new kind of interactive experience, it is easy to imagine that in the near future we will see games unite the attention to environments and action with equal focus on dramatic and emotional detail. At that point gaming may provide a complex reenactment of history that allows for emotional engagement and the potential for revision and reflection.

Notes

- [1] Throughout the article I use the term 'realism' or 'realistic' to describe modern video games. Generally this term refers to recent trends in gaming graphics, which include, for example, increased detail in facial features, highly textured environments, and lighting and shading effects, all of which tend to be described (by developers and reviewers alike) as features that contribute to a game's graphic, mimetic realism. One might also understand these attributes as factors that help to produce a game's 'reality effect', to use the term in Roland Barthes's sense. For Barthes (1984), the ostensibly inconsequential details of realist narrative (he uses examples from Flaubert and Michelet) become 'the very signifier of realism', which is, of course, still verisimilitude, still 'effect'. Just as the presence of a barometer in a description of a room by Flaubert and the detail of a 'little door' in Michelet's *Histoire de France* 'finally say nothing but this: *we are the real*' (p. 148), so says the appearance of grass bending with the wind, for example, in a video game.
- [2] The reality effect, for Black (2002), has been produced by film culture, which asserts that visual documentation is tantamount to reality. In these terms, the legitimacy offered by CGI technology arises out of the ability of recorded media to produce a reality effect—if we see it, it must be real. Of course, Black's larger argument is that, by claiming 'reality' from virtual images, film culture is leading to a point at which the two categories become indistinguishable. Video games capitalize on this collapse of differences.
- [3] Throughout my discussion of history and the role that sympathy plays in relation to history, I am drawing on Mark Salber Phillips' (2000, 2003) work on eighteenth-century historiography. He points out that 'eighteenth-century sentimentalism played an enormously important role in encouraging the idea that we go to history in order to experience a sense of the evocative presence of other places and other times' (Phillips 2000, p. 28). And it is the trope of distance that determines how a certain writer will establish sentimental identification with the past. In order accurately to conceptualize distance, one must move beyond an understanding of it as merely 'objectivity', and instead consider 'all points along a gradient of distance, including immediacy as well as detachment' (Phillips 2003,

- p. 438). My discussion focuses on how gaming negotiates distance precisely in terms of the movement back and forth from engagement to detachment.
- [4] What *Façade* hopes to be is, I imagine, similar to what Joel Black (2002) means by the term 'real virtuality'. Black proposes that the twentieth century as the 'century of film' will end up being 'a brief, transitional stage on the way toward the kind of transpersonal, virtual reality that a fully interactive technology is bound to achieve' (Black 2002, p. 14).
 - [5] This knowledge would most likely be gained through sympathy, but one could also imagine gaming facilitating a sort of virtual 're-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind' (Collingwood 1946, p. 215).
 - [6] First-person shooter is broadly defined as a game in which the on-screen view is from the perspective of the character (as opposed to a third-person perspective, in which the player sees the body of the character from an imagined camera constantly following behind), and the bulk of the action involves shooting.
 - [7] Scholars on video games have continually wrestled with the question of gaming's relationship to narrative. Jesper Juul (2001) for example, in his article for the first issue of *Game Studies*, criticizes the use of narrative theory to study video games. Other scholars like Jan Van Looy (2005) have taken a less extreme position, arguing that 'the inability of narratology to account for the full experience of games does not mean that we should do away with the concept of narrative in ludology altogether'. Mainstream video games, particularly first-person shooters, are notorious for lacking narrative finesse.
 - [8] Brookey and Westerfelhaus (2002, p. 25) argue that the DVD extra 'collapses the functions of secondary texts into the product of the primary text, and gives the signifying force of intertextual relationships an intratextual advantage'. Their analysis focuses on the *Fight Club* DVD and the ways in which the extras discourage reading the film as homoerotic, while the film itself seems to encourage such an interpretation. The extras from *Brothers in Arms* similarly attempt to guide the player's interpretation, but not necessarily into an interpretation that is clearly at odds with how one might read the game without such guidance.
 - [9] Agnew (2004, p. 330) writes that 'Reenactment's central narrative is thus one of conversion from ignorance to knowledge, individualism to sociability, resistance to compliance, and present to past.'
 - [10] For a consideration of historical distance, see Phillips (2003).
 - [11] In the interest of accuracy, it should perhaps be noted that the *Texas* was equipped with 14-inch guns (Ambrose 1994, p. 120).
 - [12] The player can choose to play as a man or a woman, which changes the way in which Grace and Trip interact with their dinner guest.
 - [13] Mateas and Stern developed a programming language called 'A Behavior Language' (ABL) to run Grace's and Trip's actions. ABL has the ability to 'decide how a particular character might, for example, simultaneously mix a drink, walk across the room, and yell at her husband, as a human actor would do'. The game also uses a program called a drama manager, 'which looks at what the player and characters are doing and makes plot and dialogue choices intended to ratchet up and then release dramatic tension' (Rauch 2006, p. 80). And finally there is also a program that processes the dialogue input by the player and creates adequate responses for the characters. For an in-depth discussion of ABL and its application in *Façade*, see Mateas and Stern (2004).

- [14] Upon starting the game, one is asked to select from a list of possible names, which determines how Grace and Trip address the player.
- [15] In my limited playing time I was unable to create a lasting, dramatic moment that worked smoothly, although there were brief moments when it worked perfectly. As an example of a more sustained exchange, take Rauch's (2006) excerpt from a game in which he played as Ed:

TRIP: Okay, you know what, Ed, I need to ask you something.

GRACE: Trip—

ED: What?

TRIP: Grace, let me ask our guest a question. Ed, yes or no—

ED: Let him ask, Grace.

TRIP: Each person in a marriage is supposed to try really hard to be in sync with the other, right?

GRACE: What?

TRIP: I mean, when you're married, to make it good, you need to always be positive, and agreeable, and together, right?

ED: [Hesitates]

TRIP: Yes or no.

ED: No, not always.

GRACE: What?! Oh, all right. Yes. Just admit it. Trip, admit it, we have a shitty marriage! We've never really been happy, from day one! Never, goddammit!

(p. 82)

This is the kind of dramatic moment toward which the game moves from the beginning. And once the game is finished, the player has the option to create a 'script' of that particular play by one click of the mouse. Doing so opens a text document with the entire script of the game just played.

- [16] Playing *Façade* can be frustrating at times, since the technology is still in the experimental stages. Often while playing the characters get confused and respond incorrectly. Rauch (2006) gives an example of one particular mix-up: 'When I played as a woman... and announced that I was pregnant with Trip's child, Grace and Trip thought I was flirting with them' (p. 82). I had one play in which Trip held up a bottle wine and asked, 'So, how about some Bordeaux?' I responded with answers such as 'Sure' and 'Yes, let's have a drink', and even 'Let's all get drunk', but nothing seemed to have any effect. Trip's only response to my comments was, again and again, 'So, how about some Bordeaux?' While the game has problems like this, there are moments when it works smoothly and the potential for such technology is revealed.

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