VIDEOGAMES AND POSTCOLONIALISM

Empire Plays Back

Souvik Mukherjee

Videogames and Postcolonialism

Souvik Mukherjee

Videogames and Postcolonialism

Empire Plays Back

palgrave
macmillan

Souvik Mukherjee
Presidency University
Kolkata, India

Image credit: Pattern adapted from an Indian cotton print produced in the 19th century

Printed on acid-free paper

Acknowledgments

Bjarke Lieborussen, Paul Martin, Hanli Geyser, Marcus Carter, Satyajit Chakraborty and others with whom I was able to discuss my work at DiGRA and other conferences.

I would also like to thank Felicity Plester, Martina O'Sullivan, Heloise Harding and all the others at Palgrave Macmillan and Springer International who helped me through every step of this process, ever so patiently. Presidency University, Kolkata very kindly granted me research leave for writing the book. I am very grateful for the opportunity. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Philip Leonard, whose versatile example as a scholar of both post colonialism and digital media is one that I have tried to emulate, albeit much less successfully.

This book would never have happened, however, without one person's overarching influence. Dr. Amrita Sen, my partner in life and academic work, was my one major influence in thinking about postcolonial theory in relation to videogames as well as my Digital Humanities projects on colonial India. Her work on early modern post colonialism has always fascinated me and her expertise and skill as a reader have been invaluable to me for the many rewritings that these chapters saw.

Finally, I guess I should thank the hapless peasants in *Age of Empires* or the colonized populace in *Empire: Total War*. The thought that they represent a grim reality that could be my lot made me see the need for a book such as this.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Videogames and Postcolonialism: An Introduction

Abstract Videogames have been analyzed from many perspectives in Humanities thinking and in recent years, a closer engagement with issues relating to gender, race, and diversity is in evidence. Despite early depictions of colonization in videogames, such as Sid Meier's *Colonization* or Microsoft's *Age of Empires*, there has been very little scholarship on postcolonial perspectives on gaming in almost two decades of game studies research. Despite this seeming absence, videogames in non-Western geographies have often critiqued colonialism and more recently, even mainstream titles such as *Assassin's Creed: Freedom Cry* and *Far Cry 2* have also addressed themes associated with post colonialism. This introductory chapter creates the context for exploring issues of space, time and identity as described in the postcolonial theoretical positions of leading postcolonial thinkers vis-à-vis their application in computer games.

Keywords Postcolonial · Videogame · Absence · Introduction · Empire

The Postcolonial in Videogames

The map of the world is a mostly continuous blotch of red on the screen of *Empire: Total* War and the player's objective is clear: conquer the world and keep the peoples of all the conquered nations under control. A very different scene, this time from *Assassin's Creed: Freedom Cry* (Ubisoft 2013), sees the player sneak into the slave colony of

Saint-Domingue to free fellow slaves and join the cause of the rebelling Maroon army. The operative notion in both of these examples is that of empire and resistance. From *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977) to the recent BBC TV serial *Indian Summers* (Lloyd-Hughes 2015), themes of colonialism and readings *beyond* colonialism, especially those that incorporate diverse perspectives of race, gender, class, and creed, remain current and prominent in narrative media through the ages. In the above examples and many more, the comparatively recent medium of digital games also seems to be following suit. While questions of colonialism often get intertwined with game mechanics, there is, however, comparatively little discussion of such themes within the otherwise busy critical community that has emerged around videogames and their analysis.

Videogames have been analyzed from many perspectives in Humanities thinking and in recent years, a closer engagement with issues relating to gender, race, and diversity is in evidence. Despite early depictions of colonization in videogames, such as Sid Meier's *Colonization* (Meier 1994) or Microsoft's *Age of Empires* (Ensemble Studios 1997), there has been very little scholarship if any at all on postcolonial perspectives on gaming in the now almost two decades of game studies research. This seeming absence notwithstanding, videogames in non-Western geographies, albeit few in number, have critiqued colonialism in various ways. More recently, mainstream titles such as *Assassin's Creed: Freedom Cry* and *Far Cry 2* (Ubisoft 2008) have also attempted to address themes associated with post colonialism. Where *Freedom Cry* is set in slave-trading Haiti just prior to the rebellion of the Maroons and the overthrow of slavery, *Far Cry 2* is set in a postcolonial fictitious African nation where faction wars, Western arms dealers, extreme poverty, and blood diamonds are the way of life. Besides these games that directly address the postcolonial situation, there are many others, where the game mechanics provide the possibility of exploring alternative histories to that of the narrative of colonialism. Finally, how these games are played by global and particularly, non-Western, audiences also needs to be studied. It is the aim of this book to carry forward whatever existing conversations there are and to introduce postcolonial thought among the newer perspectives in Games Studies research.

This chapter introduces the research issues outlined above and creates the context for exploring space, time, and identity as described in the theoretical positions of leading thinkers of post colonialism vis-à-vis their application in computer games. Each of these themes is addressed

in a separate chapter and the book concludes with the argument that videogames, as arguably the newest media to comment on these themes, enrich the understanding of post colonialism as in the current twenty-first century contexts, and it also calls for a wider awareness of related issues in both the development and the analysis of videogames, globally.

The Postcolonial and the Ludic: History and Non-Digital Games

The definition of postcoloniality is "resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates [and] it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact" (Ashcroft et al. 2006, 2). The term itself does not simply mean "*after* colonialism," the end of colonialism, or even solely address the scenarios in the formerly colonized countries *after* their independence. The development of new elites within neocolonial institutions in post-independence societies has perpetuated similar complaints of unequal treatments and exploitation. Postcolonial theory, in general, comprises a wide range of issues connected to the exploitative master discourses of imperial Europe and the responses to them by the peoples of the Americas, Asia, Africa, Australasia, and some regions of Europe itself. Speaking of the process of colonialism itself, Ania Loomba states how European colonialism from the early modern period was a different phenomenon from earlier imperial expansion:

> Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonised and colonial countries. This flow worked in both directions—slaves and indentured labour as well as raw materials were transported to manufacture goods in the metropolis, or in other locations for metropolitan consumption, but the colonies also provided captive markets for European goods. (Loomba 2005, 21)

Extending Loomba's description of the multi-directional complexity of the colonial enterprise to the present-day scenario, Simon Gikandi views the postcolonial situation as a paradox. For Gikandi, this is not a win for either the colonial notions of culture and the superiority of the West,

or for those who claim that colonialism has been transcended. With Gikandi one may argue that "'post-coloniality' is a term for a state that does not exist, that postcolonial theory is one way of recognising how decolonized situations are marked by the trace of the imperial pasts they try to disavow" (Gikandi 1996, 15). His argument is illustrated with a ludic example: the quintessentially colonial game of cricket.

While imperialism has long been associated with ludic metaphors such as the Great Game (to be discussed in a later chapter) made famous in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (Kipling 1901), Cricket is, arguably, the most symbolic of the imperial project and as the English parson James Pycroft claims, "a standing panegyric on the English character" (Pycroft 1962, 62). The Calcutta Cricket Club, founded in 1792, was exclusive in its membership and even as late as 1964, in a Britisher's reminiscence about his cricketing experience, the only Indians on the field are the servants and gardeners. As Ramchandra Guha writes, "for this member the Ballygunje Cricket Club was a corner of a foreign field that would be forever England" (Guha 2003, 10). Guha goes on to say, however, that "[the Indian] might even watch cricket and (at a price) retrieve the ball or throw it for the sahibs to bat back. He was not expected to play the game. But he would." (ibid. 11). What was literally the corner of the foreign field that would be forever England has changed much in recent years.

Gikandi takes up the point that cricket is more important in the politics and culture of the West Indies and India than it is in England itself. For him, it is symbolic of postcoloniality in that it allows the formerly colonized people "new spaces of identity and self-expression" (Gikandi 1996, 13) while also reinvigorating the cultural traditions of the erstwhile colonizers. Instead of the British colonial mastery of cricket or even the symbolic beating of the former English masters by the West Indians and the expression of the latter's ambivalence to Englishness, Gikandi sees a radical reinvention of the terms of play. To Pycroft's nineteenth-century quip that "of no single club have we ever heard [that] dieted either with frogs, sour-kraut or macaroni," Guha's present-day rejoinder is equally picturesque: "numerous clubs have since dieted on curry and rice" (Guha 1996, xii).

What Gikandi identifies, perhaps a tad too positively, is a range of issues that go beyond the binaries of the continuation of colonial practices and the overthrow of colonialism: there are vexed questions about the hybrid results of the exchange between the (former) colonizer

and the colonized as well as what is often not seen on the surface. Again, cricket becomes the site for further such discussion in the 2001 Bollywood blockbuster *Lagaan* (Gowarikar 2002), which made a global impact when it received an Academy Awards nomination. The story is of the beginnings of Indian cricket in a drought-affected village where the British have clamped an unfair land tax (*lagaan*). The villagers are given a cruel choice by the sadistic cantonment commander Captain Russell: either beat the British at cricket (which the villagers are unfamiliar with) or pay the already-unaffordable tax in triplicate. The film is about how the protagonist, Bhuvan, manages to train the village team and literally, beat the British at their own game, while getting over the caste prejudices in his community to build a pan-Indian team. A commentator points out "how the film attempts to project the protagonist Bhuvan as an inter-communal unifier in the manner both of assassinated Indian Congress leader Mahatma Gandhi and the former Indian cricket captain Sachin Tendulkar [and] how the film's treatment of non-Hindu minorities problematizes this worthy intention" (Cross 2009, 498). When the crippled dalit figure in the film contributes to the Indian team's victory with his devastating off-spin bowling, there is a similarity to the early success of a now-forgotten dalit spin-bowler, Palwankar Baloo. Guha points out how Baloo and his three brothers were continually sidelined in the formative years of Indian cricket; as for the dalit, Kachra, in the movie, he is never even asked if he wants to play the game of the upper-caste villagers and the British. The film also provides a faux-mythical origin for the game in the colony, by tying it to a narrative of a victory against colonial exploitation. Cricket as a ludic symbol of the "playing back" exists as a hybrid postcolonial complexity wherein, the game is not just about winning against the colonizers and the victory itself is constituted of and fraught with these problems and issues (as Gikandi states) that persist even after independence.

Another ludic symbol of the complexity of empire playing back is the popular toy now displayed in the Victoria & Albert Museum and commonly known as Tipu's Tiger. The toy is that of a tiger rampant on the prone figure of a British soldier. Tipu Sultan, the formidable enemy of the East India Company who was threatening to ally with Napoleon, is said to have commissioned this toy. Tipu's toy tiger, described as "man-tyger-organ" by the poet John Keats who portrayed it as the plaything of an Eastern despot, was one of the first objects exported from India to England for public display. Keats, ironically, was probably

using this image of despotism to criticize his own government. This ludic trophy of the empire was one that nevertheless was an object of much fear:

> In 1814 a young woman from the provinces visited London. She went to the museum at East India House, one of the capital's attractions. There she shuddered to hear a dreadful moan, as of a man dying. She came face to face with a painted wooden tiger in the act of devouring its white-faced, red-coated victim. As the curator worked it, she had to be escorted from the museum "pale and trembling." (Jones 2003)

The tiger toy had a clockwork mechanism and an organ that emitted the sound of a dying man (or something that might approximate to it). The machinery and the organ were of French construction—another strange hybrid when we view the toy from a postcolonial lens. The organ, obviously, can be used to play other tunes and a recent Youtube video (Victoria and Albert Museum 2009) released by the V & A shows the conservators playing "Rule Britannia" on the organ—one wonders if they are reacting to the trenchant resistance to imperialism that the toy-tiger constantly embodies. If it can evoke such a reaction today, imagine the effect on contemporary viewers. The theory that Tipu's Tiger was the depiction of the death of Sir Hector Munro's son who was mauled by a tiger in Saugor Island in Bengal inspired glazed pottery based on the tiger-toy, which now was thought to embody Tipu's personal vendetta against Munro. Susan Stronge, however, rightly challenges such a notion: "whether or not news would have reached Mysore of such a common occurrence taking place over a 1000 miles away, it cannot have been the inspiration for the wooden tiger mauling a European" (Stronge 2009, 86) because the motif was already in use elsewhere in Tipu's possessions. Other reactions to the toy, were actually also ludic: "board and dice games based on the patriotic pursuit and capture of 'Tippoo's Tiger' before it ate any more Englishmen, were sold as souvenirs of the Battle of Seringapatnam" (de Almeida and Gilpin 2006, 38). It is indeed remarkable that the tiger-toy is symbolic of such complex reactions and counter-reactions of the empire and the colony.

A final ludic metaphor for the complexity of the postcolonial "playing back" is the game of *fanorona* in Madagascar. Here, instead of the active playing back, the predicament of the colonisers lies in playing a different game altogether. Damian Walker writes

The French invaded in 1895, in the reign of queen Ranavalona III. During the course of the century, the Madagascan army had been trained and equipped by the British, so in theory they had a modern army with tactical abilities to stand up to the French colonial power. But unfortunately superstition was more important than tactics, and the attention of the queen was on a ritual game of fanorona which was supposed to predict the outcome of the ongoing battle. With the Madagascan tacticians absorbed in their game, the French succeeded in conquering the island. (Walker 2014, 82)

One could argue, here, that the ludic here forms part of a different culture—one where the results of the game, *pace* theorists of the magic circle,[1] were directly connected to the immediate lives of the people. As such, the Madagascan people being colonized because of their government's belief in reaching an outcome through fanorona, is part of this "othered" thinking that Western discourses of rationality cannot understand. In playing fanorona to find out about their country's future while battle is raging around them, the Madagascan people are refusing to play the game of the colonizers. If the empire plays back, then in this case it does so with its own rules of play.

The Postcolonial and the Ludic: A Summary of Videogames Research

In the three examples above, the ludic serves as a metaphor for the "playing back" on multiple levels. In one, the game is made hybrid, the other is a toy that is directly playing against empire and in the third, there is a refusal to play by the rules of empire. Incidentally, the videogame, *Assassin's Creed III* (Ubisoft Montreal 2012), features fanorona as a mini-game that players get to play in various locations within the game. The colonial connections are, however, left unstated.

Assassin's Creed III is about critiquing empire so some reference to the colonial aspect of fanorona might have been expected. When one considers Adrienne Shaw's astute observation on the game, however, this omission is not surprising:

Even as the game carefully offers one of the only, and best developed, Native heroes in a video game, so much else of how history is constructed in the game demonstrates that the ultimate audience for the game is imagined as white, male, and Western. (Shaw 2015, 15)

Shaw compares the precluding of any alteration of this perspective with *Civilization 4: Colonization* (Fireaxis Games 2005) in the way it privileges the colonial logic. As Rebecca Mir and Trevor Owens state, "In *Colonization*, Native peoples are simply a resource to be managed in the spreadsheet of cultural domination. At the level of code they are the 'Other,' limited in actions and cultural traits that specifically benefit their colonizers" (Mir and Owens 2013, 108).

Comparatively early on in studies of digital media, Lisa Nakamura's 1995 article (Nakamura 1995) on identity tourism and race in MUDs set the discussions going. In Game Studies, Sybille Lammes' 2003 paper addresses how in *Civilization 3* the "exploration of the world goes hand in hand with the expansion of your own realm [and how] this fits seamlessly into a European colonial attitude towards homeland and colonies" (Lammes 2003, 126). Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter's *Games of Empire* argues that videogames are "an exemplary media of Empire" (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009, xxix) using Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's concept of Empire, which "characterizes the contemporary world order as a decentralized system of global economic, political, and economic power that transcends national boundaries" (Ferrari and Bogost 2013). Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter's book eschews any direct link with historical imperialism; they also state that their concerns are not with the empire-building videogames per se. A more direct approach to the postcolonial in videogames is made by Hanli Geyser and Pippa Tshabalala (2011) in their article on the representations of Africa in *Resident Evil 5*.[2] Around the same time, Claudia Breger (2008) pursues the orientalist tropes in the *Tomb Raider* games and Jessica Langer (2011) addresses postcolonial problems in *World of Warcraft*. My own work (Mukherjee 2015b) on cartography and empire builds on the work of Lammes and of Shoshana Magnet's 2006 essay (Magnet 2006) on *Tropico*. In a later article, Siddhartha Chakraborti (2015) reemphasizes the cyber-orientalism in videogames while highlighting the problems of neocolonialism and neo-imperialism in videogame narratives. In the same year, Sabine Harrer and Martin Pichlmair (2015) have written on analyzing *RE5* via a framework borrowed from postcolonial theorist and pscyhoanalyst Franz Fanon. Paul Martin (2016) also analyses *RE5* but in terms of Japanese colonialism (Capcom, the developer of the *RE* games, is based in Japan). Subsequently, in a different article (Mukherjee 2016), I connect postcolonial readings of videogames with subaltern studies, so popular in

mainstream postcolonial thinking but hitherto not introduced into game studies discourses.

This summary of the field is extremely necessary. It reveals a serious paucity of research in the area; despite early attempts, it is only in the past 2 years that there has been a rise in game studies publications that begin to explore the postcolonial. The articles listed above provide analyses from disparate perspectives, but not a coherent analysis of postcolonial theory as it may apply to videogames research. Although many of the themes of post colonialism, such as orientalism, empire, cartography, hybridity, and identity have been addressed separately, the links with earlier (non-digital) games have not been investigated. No prior book-length study has been conducted in the area and with the increasing importance of issues related to diversity in videogames (Shaw's *Gaming at the Edge*, published in 2015, makes for an important and timely field intervention), it is high time that the concerns of the millions of gamers in the so-named postcolonial geographies are represented. With the growing attention to issues of diversity in videogames, currently involving questions of gender, race, and religion, the intrinsically connected questions of the representations of empire and the post-colony need a separate and yet related consideration.

The Postcolonial and the Ludic: Case-Studies from Digital Games

In contrast to the limited critical material out there, there is a substantial number of videogame titles that have a postcolonial dimension, whether consciously or otherwise. From the early DOS-based *Oregon Trail* (MECC 1990) and Sid Meier's *Colonization* (Fireaxis Games 1994) to more recent triple-A titles such as *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* (Ubisoft Quebec 2016), there has been a steady popularity for videogames that address colonization in various different ways. More often than not, the games echo the rhetoric of imperialism. For example, the reworked version of the 1985 game *Colonial Conquest* (Strategic Simulations 1985) released in July 2016, "retains its dedication to simulating aggressive expansion and achieving global dominance by any means necessary" (Luster 2015). On the other hand, *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate's* downloadable content, *The Last Maharajah*, directly addresses the question of colonialism by featuring the exiled Sikh ruler Duleep Singh in a role where from his exile in London, he asserts his

birthright and enlists the player's help to take on the 'British Indies Company' (a fictional counterpart of the East India Company). The examples of games that address issues of empire and colonization as well as the aftermath of colonization are too many to list. Three examples will serve as a brief introduction to the various aspects of the postcolonial in videogames.

Settler-Colonialism and Manifest Destiny in Videogame Empires

One of the earliest educational games, *Oregon Trail* was widely popular when it was released. Produced by the Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium, the game has been described as follows:

> As a covered wagon party of pioneers, you head out west from Independence, Missouri to the Willamette River and valley in Oregon. You first must stock up on provisions, and then, while traveling, make decisions such as when to rest, how much food to eat, etc. The Oregon Trail incorporates simulation elements and planning ahead, along with discovery and adventure, as well as mini-game-like activities (hunting and floating down the Dalles River). (MECC 1990)

A free-to-play version is now available on the Internet Archive. Loosely inspired by Francis Parkman's novel, the game's 'pedagogy' portrays an adventure involving a two-thousand mile journey with many risks and a decision-tree that is meant to teach players about survival and the history of the emigrants who made the journey. The screen "You have died of dysentery" has become so iconic that it now appears on t-shirts and coffee mugs. The story that Parkman tells is that of survival and of himself as the historian-hero (Jacobs: n.p.). The game also seemingly encourages such a self-recognition in the player. An overlooked perspective of the *Oregon Trail* story as it is told in both the novel and the game is that of colonialism. Nineteenth-century American ideals of progress were expressed in assertions such as Representative Strother's comment that "the progress of mankind is asserted and you condemn one of the most beautiful and fertile tracts of the earth to perpetual sterility as the hunting ground of savages" (Rosen 2015, 148). Parkman himself says that Native Americans were "destined to melt and vanish before the advancing waves of Anglo-American power" (Parkman: x–xi). The videogame also tends to assume a similar logic—that which is

infamously termed "manifest destiny." The term was apparently first used in connection with the occupation of Oregon (which was also claimed by Britain at the time), when another United States lawmaker asserted the "*right of our manifest destiny to spread over this whole continent*" (Pratt: 795, original italics).

It can be argued that the videogame tacitly assumes the problematic manifest destiny claims over a century after they were made. Native Americans are looked on with mixed feelings in *The Oregon Trail* game: there is a sense of fear that parties of "Indians" might attack but mostly the interactions are peaceful. For example, one of the characters in the game says, "Many Indians came to our wagon with fish in exchange for clothing. We bought a number. They understand 'swap' and 'no swap.' Seem most anxious to get shirts and socks" (MECC 1990). The portrayal here is patronizing and the Native American depicted at best as a "noble savage" totally accepting the Eurocentric narrative of progress as they are most "anxious to get shirts and socks". Another early game, *Custer's Revenge* (Mystique 1982) views any resistance to the notion of manifest destiny and progress with a brutal solution: the game simulates the rape of a Native American woman who is tied to a stake and the player (playing as General George Armstrong Custer who suffered a crushing defeat at the battle of Little Big Horn) is supposed to avoid a hail of arrows to reach her.[3] Joel Miller, the creator of the game, notoriously claimed that the game "was all a bit of fun, saying 'he's seducing her, but she's a willing participant'" (Plunkett 2010). Both the notions of manifest destiny and whether those that resist it are to "melt and vanish" are problems replicated in what is perhaps the newest narrative entertainment medium from the very beginnings of videogame history. Recent game development has also seen a counter-narrative to this being posited with games such as *Invaders* (LaPensée 2015), which is a space-invaders clone but with the player as a Native American shooting arrows at descending rows of aliens who come in droves and keeping firing at the player. The game certainly spurs a rethink of who the invaders and the aliens are. Le Pensee has also designed a t-shirt in response to the famous *Oregon Trail* merchandise saying "You have died of dysentery" and her design shows the same broken wagon with the legend "You have died of colonialism" instead.

The narrative of settler colonialism is one that retains currency, as Lorenzo Verancini argues. Taking the example of "Settlers of Catan," which was reviewed in the *Washington Post* as the "board game of our

time," Verancini concludes that "as settler colonial phenomena are primarily about the reproduction of one social body in place of another, it is not surprising that settler colonialism should be especially suitable for games that manage to capture and represent the proliferation of particular sociopolitical entities through time" (Verancini 2015, 75). In fact, two decades after *Oregon Trail*, in the much-hyped recently released videogame, *No Man's Sky* (Hello Games 2016), Bart Simon sees similar assumptions at work:

> Those traces of alien others who are maybe us, are enough to generate a nature/culture divide because players come to rely on these pockets of civilization to direct navigation, establish game goals, or seek refuge (civilization is a need not a desire yo!). The alien bases are mostly safe zones while the planet around is presumed to be hostile (its *Heart of Darkness* stuff). (Simon 2016)

No Man's Sky is described as "a game about exploration and survival in an infinite procedurally generated galaxy" (Hello Games 2016). Simon correctly identifies the basic colonial assumptions of the game. It even allows players to name planets, locations and even flora and fauna in what seems like a colonial explorer's dream. For Simon, however, the player is probably a tourist complicit in the colonizing process or perhaps "becoming-colonizer" in the sense of currying favor and learning the language of an already present master race. It is possible to learn some of the words of the languages of the planets that the player visits. The word Simon learns is "interloper"; intriguingly, the word I was taught is "give". Although, one can doubtless learn many words of a different nature, these two words kind of sum up two different play-experiences, speaking of my own play-experience alongside Simon's. Instead of the rather innocuous-sounding exploration, as the player finds himself or herself on a desolate planet with a broken spaceship, the game prompts the player to start mining for resources. No need to ask permission, the mining laser tool is activated and the resources gathered from a planet that does not have intelligent life forms on it. The player, however, is constantly surveilled by robotic cameras that some form of civilization has placed in the planet. If they are remnants of another colonizing system, it is possible to smash them and take on the mantle of colonizer oneself. The message is loud and clear: the resources are there for the taking.

From Settlement into the Heart of Darkness

Different from the perpetuating and often seemingly unwitting narrative of settler colonialism is the direct and self-aware engagement with colonialism and the postcolonial in some recent videogames. An obvious example is *Far Cry 2* (Ubisoft 2008). If *No Man's Sky* is "*Heart of Darkness* stuff," then *Far Cry 2* is even closer to Joseph Conrad's novel and its adaptations. Set in Africa like Conrad's novel, the game plunges the player in the midst of a civil war in a nameless African nation that, it seems, might have had some kind of colonial history. Jorge Albor writes of the game:

> The sun rises over Saharan grass lands, draping shadows across a mercenary lying on the ground. By flames or gunfire, his enemies will give their blood back to Africa, one more murder within a maelstrom of violence. This is a modern day reimagining of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, "this is Far Cry 2." (Albor 2010)

Albor is correct about the game's perpetuation of the "common tendency to view Africa as a singular continent plagued with crisis" and his statement that the designers depict "a political reality that is potentially applicable to any war zone" (Albor 2010) needs further attention. Like Conrad's narrator Marlow setting out in search of Kurz in his Inner Station, the protagonist in *Far Cry 2* sets out in pursuit of an elusive and mad gunrunner, the Jackal, who is to be found in the deep interior of the country and maybe, as he insinuates—the protagonist's mind. As in Marlow's journey into Congo, the player of *Far Cry 2* also has to face numerous ordeals, malaria, and countless waves of enemies until the Jackal can be found. L.B. Jeffries identifies the Jackal's similarities to Kurz in *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad 1899):

> The Jackal is also a Kurtz figure, which he comments on when he exclaims in one encounter, "Kill me? I used to be you!" When we first meet The Jackal he quotes Nietzsche, "A living being seeks above all else to discharge its strength. Life itself is will to power. Nothing else matters." This is the act that the players themselves are exercising in the hostile landscape, to exert their presence and survive, that they also share with The Jackal. (Jeffries 2009)

There is one element that neither Albor nor Jeffries stress on as much when they refer to the similarities between Conrad's novel and *Far Cry 2.*

The setting of *Heart of Darkness* is the Belgian Congo and it is addressing the deepest convictions of imperialism or colonialism as a civilizing and ameliorating force. Albor does refer to Chinua Achebe's critique of the novel where Achebe claims that in the novel, "Africa as a setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor and [it views] Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril" (Achebe 1977). Albor goes on to respond that "to be fair" some of the mercenaries in the game are non-Europeans. The point Achebe is making, however, is not about Europeans specifically—it is about *any* colonizing power. Likewise, the game's setting cannot be a stereotype for the political situation of *any war zone*: to say so is to ignore the colonial history of African nations, the exploitation and racial segregation practiced as imperialist policy. Achebe is making the same criticism against Conrad when he points out the how the colonial mindset can so easily reduce the peoples of the African nations ("the human factor") to an abstract and metaphysical scene of struggle for the imperialist powers. Whether Albor also makes a similar criticism is unclear, but Ubisoft's designers clearly fall for the same imperialist reading of Africa as Conrad has been criticized of doing over a 100 years ago.

The developers, however, are not unaware of the postcolonial perspective. Five of the possible protagonists (the player can choose any one of the multiple characters while the rest appear in the game as NPCs or non-player characters) in *Far Cry 2* are from formerly colonized nations—Haiti, Brazil, Northern Ireland, Algeria, and Mauritius. The inclusion of a Mauritian of Indian origin is intriguing because Indians were originally shipped to Mauritius as indentured labour under British Colonialism.[4] Having a character with such an ethnic background as the protagonist of a narrative that has been viewed as a *Heart of Darkness* adaptation is an interesting touch, especially when looking at the complexity and ambiguity in understanding the postcolonial, as indicated in an earlier section. It will be necessary to analyse *Far Cry 2*'s engagement with colonialism at length, in a later chapter.

To return to the comparison with *Heart of Darkness*, however, it is necessary to consider Edward Said's analysis of the novel. Said observes that despite Conrad's limitations, his criticism of imperialism is severe. He praises the novel saying that it is ahead of its time in pointing to the reality of imperialism:

> Kurtz and Marlow acknowledge the darkness, the former as he is dying, the latter as he reflects retrospectively on the meaning of Kurtz's final words. They (and of course Conrad) are ahead of their time in understanding that what they call "the darkness" has an autonomy of its own, and can reinvade and reclaim what imperialism had taken for its own. (Said 1979)

For Said, the novel in pointing to the "darkness" of imperialism against the current official accounts is also highlighting the instability of notions of truth itself. Whether *Far Cry 2* does raise similar questions relating to the discourse of colonialism in videogames and other recent narrative media is for the players to decide.

Somewhere in the Voice of the Other: Orientalism, Hybridity, and the "Subaltern"

While games such as *Far Cry 2* begin to articulate the problems of imperialism and its postcolonial aftermath, other games have started addressing the postcolonial perspective more directly. Studio Oleomingus, which describes itself as a two-person independent game studio, has come up with its professedly postcolonial game, *Somewhere* (Studio Oleomingus 2014). Much praised in *Rock, Paper, Shotgun* (O'Connor 2014) and *Kill Screen* (Joho 2014), the game is still in development. Dhruv Jani, the developer, conceptualizes the narrative from his own experience of postcolonial India:

> Set in an alternate reality post-colonial India, the story follows a search for the mythical city of Kayamgadh. According to the game's lore: "People of Kayamgadh do not speak. They are afraid that their words might penetrate the layers under which their bodies are hidden. […] As a comment on post-colonial nationalism, *Rituals* reveals that fictions construct the reality around us, while its mechanics show that other people's fictions can infect one's own sense of self. (Joho 2014)

Jani focuses on the fragmentedness of the postcolonial narratives. As the stories and histories of the colonized "other" are deemed invalid by the colonial historians and storytellers, there can only be fragmented identities and silences in the narratives. This is why none of the characters have a fixed sense of selfhood and the protagonist can sneak up on characters and "become" them. This is also why the people

of Kayamgadh do not speak. *Somewhere* is set in a mythical city and the "main areas in the demo repeat in a winding loop, with branching doors and corridors creating paradoxes as convoluted as the conflicted narrative" (Joho 2014). As the review on *Kill Screen* goes on to say, the language of the game speaks "readily to the occupation of identities, and fragmentation of narrative" (Joho 2014). *Somewhere* also addresses the notion of the "subaltern" as the following section will reveal.

The videogames discussed above show quite different facets of post colonialism. In some, the colonial subjects are "othered" or presumed absent; in others, we get to look from the subjects' fragmented and fraught perspectives. The following sections will explore synergies between videogames and these key notions that underline postcolonial thought, despite its inherent ambiguities and complexities.

As observed in the way in which *Heart of Darkness* and *Far Cry 2* construct an image of Africa for the readers and players, Said sees this as the "the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny and so on" (Said 1979, 1–2). Said famously calls this "Orientalism." Orientalism is the artificial cultural construction of so-called "Eastern culture" by the Eurocentric world. Said is clear about the mechanisms of control that Orientalism involves:

> [b]y making statements about it [the 'Orient'], authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it, Orientalism [becomes] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient […] In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. (ibid.)

Before Said redefined it, "Orientalism" was understood as the processes of appropriation and presentation of Eastern culture by self-professed eighteenth-century orientalists such as William Jones, whose translations of Indian literature made their way back to England and mainland Europe. Jones and his orientalist colleagues in the Asiatic Society in Calcutta were instrumental in creating the idea of an "Indian" literature that they exported to Europe. Aamir Mufti observes that it "is in the new Orientalist Studies […] that the subcontinent is first conceived in the modern era as a single cultural entity" (Mufti 2010). He also points out how Goethe, drawing his knowledge of Sanskrit literature

from Jones's translations, declares his love Kalidas's drama *Sakuntala*. These readings were, however, European (re)constructions of the Orient. As Said commented, "Calcutta provided, London distributed and Paris filtered and generalized" (Said 1983, 250). Perhaps the most pronounced orientalism can be observed in Flaubert's characters for whom "what they realize they want comes easily to their daydreams packed inside Oriental clichés: harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boys, sherbets, ointments, and so on" (Said 1979, 190). A similar parallel of constructing identities and of ignoring cultural contexts can be found in Parkman's description of Native Americans, as indicated in the previous section in relation to the *Oregon Trail* game.

When it comes to questions of identity, however, there is a further level of ambivalence in the colonial subject. On the one hand, colonial "stereotypes translate the unfamiliar into coherent terms by seeming to account for the strangeness of other peoples: the Irish are inevitably stupid, the Chinese are always inscrutable; the Arabs are essentially violent" (McLeod 2010, 53). This stereotyping, while it aims to "fix" the colonized "Other" within the purview of Western knowledge also means that such a goal is always deferred. There is the obverse situation where the colonial power needs to create a native underclass for administering the colonial system. For example, education in colonial India was shaped by Lord Macaulay's Minute of 1835 that determined that "the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects" (Macaulay 1835). Franz Fanon, another key figure in postcolonial theory, describes the French-educated colonials in his suggestively titled book *Black Skins, White Masks* (Fanon 1967) as "mimic men." Fanon sees mimicry "as a condition of the colonized's subservience and crisis" (McLeod 2010, 55). For him, "black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (Fanon 1967, 3). For Homi Bhabha, mimicry creates an ambivalent position that challenges the comfortable ways in which colonialism tries to fix identity. The colonial subject and colonizer both relate to each other as mix—a hybrid. Beyond the literal fears of miscegenation, whereby sexual relations between the British colonizers and their subjects were discouraged especially from the nineteenth century onwards and the Eurasian community also was discriminated against, hybridity also occupies a more abstract sociocultural domain. Think, for example, of the experience of Kurz in *Heart of Darkness* and maybe even of the player-protagonists in *Far Cry 2* as they become implicated, as they can

hardly help recognizing, in the destiny of the nameless African state. Bhabha sees the hybrid exchange as happening in a fluid space, which he calls *third space* and of which, a detailed discussion will follow in the connection to the discussion on cartography and spatiality in the next chapter. In thinking of the hybrid, another useful concept is that of the "contact zone" introduced by Mary Louise Pratt. Pratt's 'contact zones' are, similarly, "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (Pratt 2007, 7). Postcoloniality, thus, works both ways between the colonizer and colonized, not just materially as the earlier comment from Loomba indicated, but also in less tangible ways.

When crying out for decolonization in the early years of post colonialism, the Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiongo (wa Thiongo 1986), therefore calls for a "decolonization of the mind." What happens, then, to the colonized subject? Just as in Jani's game *Somewhere*, the subject does not have a fixed locale and has to keep taking on other identities—mimicry, as it were. This fragmentedness is also the cause of the silences of the people of Kayamgadh in the game. Kayamgadh serves as a metaphor for the colonized states. To proceeding with this line of thinking, another word needs to be introduced into the discussion: "subaltern."

The subaltern is a concept that has been borrowed from Antonio Gramsci by a group of historians and theorists, led by Ranajit Guha, concerned with writing "history from below" and with being "part of a self-conscious effort to correct social history's traditional bias for the perspective of the elite classes" (Chaturvedi 2012, ix). Complicating Guha's initial definition, Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" points out the risks of construing the subaltern as yet another voice of protest as an "essence" or an ontologically well-defined entity. Instead, Spivak sees the subaltern as a voice from below that can never articulate itself. Commentators on Spivak state that "there is no subaltern subject that can know and speak itself" (Grossberg et al. 1992, 27). The term has also been applied in cyberculture research by Radhika Gajjala who asks "when is the subaltern brought online and for what purpose?" (Gajjala 2012, 29) and then goes on to locate the subaltern subject position in terms of capital and in online microfinance. For her, the subaltern is also an "individual who does not have the tools or the

agency to actively and freely participate in a social order" (Gajjala 2012, 161). In an earlier article (Mukherjee 2016), I have observed a similar situation in the "goldfarming" practices for games such as *World of Warcraft*. Speaking more generally about videogames, however, I state:

> The player, whether from the erstwhile colonized countries or elsewhere, nevertheless, both writes and writes back in games that engage with the questions relating to colonialism whether he or she chooses to or not. The video game medium offers the simultaneous possibilities of subalternity, protest, elitism, and hegemony; it is the actualization by the player that results in a deeper understanding and experience of the postcolonial. (Mukherjee 2016)

Whether the concept of subalternity is applicable to videogames (especially, ones like *Somewhere*) and what the medium offers in the way of a deeper understanding of the postcolonial is an issue that will be revisited in connections to the discussion of identity in Chap. 3. This brief introduction to some of the fundamental concepts of post colonialism will be useful as a point of departure into its critiques and the thinking through of its relevance to videogame research.

The Deferred Beginning of the Postcolonial Discussion in Game Studies: "Does the Empire Play Back?"

To start again with the critics: when the question is asked as to why post colonialism is such a comparatively late entrant to game studies which is now nearing two decades, there is often the rejoinder, "Is it still relevant?". Indeed, even postcolonial critics have often asked worrying questions about whether we are in a post-postcolonial time and the ambivalence about the "post" in postcolonial, mentioned earlier, is one of the crucial issues for this questioning for theorists such as Kwame Appiah and Stuart Hall. Appiah is scathing when he calls postcolonial thinkers a "comprador intelligentsia" (Appiah 1992, 348). Mostly housed in Western institutions, for him, they imagine an Africa that they then offer to the West. Appiah sees the very discussion of postcoloniality being situated in what is for him an ironical Western paradigm where he refuses to remain an "otherness machine." He states that "the contemporary cultural production of many African societies, and the many traditions whose evidences so vigorously remain, is an antidote to the dark

vision of the postcolonial novelist" (Appiah 1992, 356). Appiah, it might be said, is against a certain way of understanding post colonialism but he does not deny the condition of postcoloniality per se. To fully deny the "othering" that occurred during colonial and, arguably, persists in neo-colonial systems is also to be disingenuous.

Other criticisms, coming from a very different quarter, have been articulated by Stuart Hall. In an interview, Hall states that he uses the term "as if it is under erasure" (Hall 1999). In the title of his essay "When was the 'Post-colonial'? Think at the Limit" (Hall 1996), Hall seems to almost accept that post colonialism is over. He, however, points to two critiques and their respective problems. The first one is that post colonialism does not engage with globalization and the second, articulated by Robert Young in his *Colonial Desire* (1995) that "post-colonial critics are 'complicit' with Victorian racial theory *because both sets of writers deploy the same term—hybridity—in their discourse*" (Hall 1996, 259). The latter charge is dismissed as "inexplicably simplistic" by Hall and the former, too, has been challenged at many levels. Questioning the relevance of post colonialism in the globalized world, Hardt and Negri have posited a concept of Empire that is "a diffuse network of power operating beyond the borders of the nation state" (Hiddleston 2014, 185) and their formulation of a globalized "smooth" Empire seems to render earlier discourses on imperialism irrelevant in current discussions. The global all-compassing Empire, however, has proved a premature concept, especially given the significant role of the United States in the control of capital (Balakrishnan 2000) and the fact that the recent "rhetoric" of security also strengthens the power of the nation-state. Further, as nobel-laureate economist, Amartya Sen, points out, there are differential impacts of globalization and one cannot rebut the charge that the global system is unfair. Sen states that although to see globalization as Western imperialism is incorrect, "there are issues related to globalization that do connect with imperialism and a postcolonial understanding of the world has its merits" (Sen 2002).

Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge (2005) retain the use of "postcolonial" as an adjective but for them its noun form, "post-colonialism," has become too rigid a term for what it set out to achieve. In the wake of such a number of controversies and disagreements regarding the continued relevance of the notion, the fairest judgment is delivered by Hall himself when he says, "I need to question it, to turn it around, to acknowledge where its weaknesses are, its gaps and aporias; and

nevertheless I want to keep occupying it because it seems to me to say something absolutely important, and I know of no other way of saying it" (Hall 1999).

The relevance of the "postcolonial" is still clearly undeniable. Nevertheless, other powerful critiques remain and one of these is that "dominant definitions of the postcolonial, such as *The Empire Writes Back's* own defense of the hyphen in the term 'postcolonial,' imply that hybridizing, 'impurifying' effects are produced throughout the imperial process more or less smoothly and evenly" (Boehmer 2013, 311). Elleke Boehmer points out that the landmark book by Ashcroft et al. (2002) falls into the problem of "collapsing this difference into an overarching Difference that subsumes them all" (Boehmer, 309). Here, she also reiterates Appiah's critique of the Western bias postcolonial critics and how a "one-size-fits-all" perspective is homogenizing and universalizing as well as ignoring the specific cultural, political, and historical contexts.

Boehmer points out that *Empire Writes Back* "had relatively modest ambitions [and] it set out to be little more than a descriptive introduction to a field" (Boehmer, 308) at the outset when the field itself was nascent. The present volume is also part of a similar scenario. *Empire Plays Back: Videogames and Postcolonialism* consciously acknowledges that it has to engage in what is, surprisingly, still a new discussion in videogames studies and although it aims to be more than a "descriptive introduction," it is introducing a new topic in the field. It also has the advantage of hindsight: it is aware of the criticisms that the field has faced and is particularly conscious of the problems of collapsing differences.

This is also because of the element of "play" that this book is concerned with. Here, "writing" is also "play"—play, in the post-structuralist sense of Jacques Derrida (whose work influences many postcolonial theorists such Bhabha and Spivak). Elsewhere, arguing against the watertight homogeneity of videogames, I have written "such a conception of the 'pure' has been contested in the playful (non) philosophy of Derrida where the categories themselves are seen 'in play' and the process of play subverts rigid categorisations and displaces centrality" (Mukherjee 2015a, 11). Derrida describes writing as "that dangerous supplement" (Derrida, 1976, p. 281), where when one wishes to move from the supplement to the source, one needs to recognize that there is a supplement in the source itself. This recognition, however, is not the same in every case. Play, therefore, also is a way of constantly

subverting the "centres" that colonialism tries to construct. Whether it is literally in the game of Cricket as described by Gikandi and Guha, or in the game of fanorona that Queen Ranavalona chooses to play in the face of advancing colonial armies or in the silent and identity-shifting figures of *Somewhere*, there is a continual playing back against the centres of empire. As mentioned earlier, imperialism itself also describes its own systems in terms of games so the ludic metaphor applies on both sides. The postcolonial "play" seen here is, arguably, more subversive and it is this playing with play that this book wishes to represent.

The earlier paragraphs pointed, rather quietly, to the "surprising" late entry of post colonialism to videogames research. From the earlier sections on how play continually challenges colonial systems of thinking, it is clear that the lateness is not due to the lack of relevance. Emily Apter incisively asks: "Does postcolonial cultural production sit in a preterit time zone, worlds apart from this techie futurism? Or is it in fact well equipped to theorize the new forms of colonialism that cyber has helped spawn—multinational power brokering, world debt finance, transnational speculation, and so on?" (Apter 1999: 214–215). She answers her own question pointing at how cyberculture addresses problems that already concern post colonialism. She points out how cyberpunk as a genre is from the outset concerned with intergalactic colonialism and how Mars is a "comprador haven, much like the British and French colonies in Africa" in Philip K. Dick's trend-setting novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Dick 1968). She also sees similarities in the cyborg personalities in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (Gibson 1983) where "barman and his clients have transnational bodies […] a body so fragmented that its morphology is a diaspora" (Apter, 217). Apter, however, sounds the warning that although constantly invalidating identity, cyberculture also tends to move toward fantasies of racelessness. Nevertheless, she "predict[s] that postcolonial theory and aesthetic practice will 'cyberize' themselves quite soon (if they haven't already done so) […] as they place the diaspora on-line" (Apter, 223).

Speaking of the hypertextual, Jaishree Odin states that "The hyper-textual and the postcolonial are […] part of the changing topology that maps the constantly shifting, interpenetrating and folding relations that bodies and texts experience in information culture" (Odin 1997). Philip Leonard views this as "the articulation of postcolonial experiences: challenging notions of unity and linearity that have been central to a Eurocentric cultural imaginary" (Leonard 2013, 12). Pramod Nayar

states that for him the main concern is "postcolonial studies' emphasis on race and Eurocentrism enables cyberculture studies to address the racialised nature of the age of information, of the unequal (racialised, gendered) social life of information and its technologies where Euro-American 'sites' control the lives, labours, and identities of non-white races across the world and where 'cybertypes' abound in virtual worlds" (Nayar 2010, 162). In the new field of Digital Humanities, Roopika Risam and Adeline Koh "position postcolonial digital humanities as an emergent field of study invested in decolonizing the digital, foregrounding anti-colonial thought, and disrupting salutatory narratives of globalization and technological progress'" (Risam and Koh 2016). Gajjala's work on the subaltern in cyberculture has already been mentioned as has been that of Nakamura's pioneering study of race and identity tourism in MUDs as well as the more recent postcolonial criticism relating to videogames.

This overview of connections supports Apter's point that these connections between cyberculture and post colonialism were already-extant connections that had not been expressed hitherto: a "future anterior," in Derridean terms, where the issues of cyberculture are always-already to be found in the postcolonial. This is an argument that this book wishes to extend to videogames research, viewing it within the broader remit of cyberculture, especially in terms of the multiplicity of narratives and identities that videogames explore. While at the same time setting out the basic parameters for initiating and carrying forth discussions in the field, the following chapters will look at the variety of postcolonial discourses relating to videogames.

Keeping in mind the criticism directed at post colonialism, the discussions here will fall back on the multiplicity of the videogame as a medium to include a variety of voices—from various parts of the globe, geographically and culturally. Chapter 2 will address postcolonial concepts of space and cartography, particularly in relation to empire-building strategy videogames although other game genres will also feature importantly. In Chap. 3, questions of postcolonial identity, already introduced here, will be debated at length and Chap. 4 will address how temporality works in postcolonial discussions of videogames, especially keeping in mind the historical contexts of what the games represent and also, the games themselves. The concluding chapter will attempt to bring together the various positions and encourage the opening up of the field to further discussion. Some of the key concepts and critiques outlined here will

inform the debates in all of the chapters where it will be necessary to return to concepts such as orientalism, hybridity, the subaltern among others. The aim here has been to start a discussion in earnest about a topic that has received little attention so far. It has also been to lay out the scenario as far as both videogames and postcolonialism are concerned so that comparisons and connections can be initiated. It is now time to go deeper into how videogames relate to colonialism and how empire 'plays back.'

NOTES

1. The Magic Circle is a concept in Game Studies that claims that the space of play is separate from everyday problems. The concept is loosely drawn from the historian Johan Huizinga's book *Homo Ludens*.
2. *RE5* here onwards.
3. The game sold over eighty thousand copies despite the criticism it attracted.
4. It must be noted, though, that most of the Indians who went to Mauritius as indentured labour were *not* from the Sikh community. In fact the Sikh community is Mauritius is comparatively tiny.

REFERENCES

Achebe, Chinua. 1977. An image of Africa. *The Massachusetts Review* 18 (4): 782–794. Print.

Albor, Jorge. 2010. Lions & jackals: The politics of far cry 2. *Well played 2.0: Videogames, value and meaning*, ed. Drew Davidson. Halifax: ETC Press. Print.

Almeida, Hermione de, and George H. Gilpin. 2006. *Indian renaissance: British romantic art and the prospect of India*. Aldershot: Routledge. Print.

Appiah, Anthony. 1992. *In my father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture*. New York: Oxford University Press. Print.

Apter, Emily. 1999. *Continental drift—From national characters to virtual subjects*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Print.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. 2002. *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. Print.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (eds.). 2006. *The post-colonial studies reader*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge. Print.

Balakrishnan Gopal. Hardt and Negri's Empire. 2000. New Left Review 5, September–October 2000. n.p. Web. 23 Nov. 2016.

Boehmer, Elleke. 2013. Revisiting resistance: Postcolonial practice and the antecedents of theory. *The Oxford handbook of postcolonial studies*, ed. Graham Huggan. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Print.

Breger, Claudia. 2008. Digital digs, or Lara Croft replaying Indiana Jones: Archaeological tropes and 'colonial loops' in new media narrative. *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography* 11: 41–60. Print.

Chakraborti, Siddhartha. 2015. From destination to nation and back: The hyper-real journey of incredible India. *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 7 (2): 183–202. *IngentaConnect*. Web.

Chaturvedi, Vinayak (ed.). 2012. *Mapping subaltern studies and the postcolonial.* New edition. London: Verso. Print.

Dick, Philip K. 1968. *Do androids dream of electric sheep?* 1st ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Print.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Greig de Peuter. 2009. *Games of empire: Global capitalism and video games.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black skin, white masks.* London: Pluto Press. Print.

Ferrari, Simon, and Ian Bogost. 2013. Reviewing games of empire: Global capitalism and video games. *Continent* 3 (1): 50–52. Web.

Fireaxis Games. 1994. *Colonization.* (Maryland: Fireaxis Games). PC

Gajjala, Radhika (ed.). 2012. *Cyberculture and the subaltern: Weavings of the virtual and real.* 1st ed. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Print.

Geyser, Hanli, and Pippa Tshabalala. 2011. Return to Darkness: Representations of Africa in *Resident Evil 5.* DiGRA Conference. Web.

Gikandi, Simon. 1996. *Maps of englishness: Writing identity in the culture of colonialism.* 1st ed. New York: Columbia University Press. Print.

Gowariker, Ashutosh. 2002. *Lagaan: Once upon a time in India.* Film.

Grossberg, Lawrence, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (eds.). 1992. *Cultural studies.* New York: Routledge. Print.

Guha, Ramachandra. 2003. *A corner of a foreign field: The Indian history of a British sport.* ILL ed. London: Pan Macmillan. Print.

Guha, Ranajit ed. 1996. *Subaltern studies: Volume I.* Reprint ed. Delhi: Oxford Paperbacks. Print.

Hall, Stuart. 1999. A conversation with Stuart hall. *Journal of the International Institute* 7 (1): n.p. Web.

Hall, Stuart. 1996. When was the 'post-colonial'? Think at the limit. *The postcolonial question: Common skies, divided horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti. UK: Routledge. 242–260. Print.

Harrer, Sabine, and Martin Pichlmair. 2015. Black skins, white guns: Becoming colonizer in resident evil 5. Philosophy of computer games conference. Web.

Hiddleston, Jane. 2014. Understanding Postcolonialism. Abingdon: Routledge. Print.

Jeffries, L.B. 2009. Far Cry 2: The heart of darkness game. *PopMatters*. n.p. Web. 22 Nov. 2016.

Joho, Jess. 2014. Rituals presents the surreal fragmentation of narrative in a postcolonial India. *Kill Screen*, 11 September 2014. Web. 23 Nov. 2016.

Jones, Jonathan. 2003. Fugitive pieces. *The Guardian* 25 September 2003. *The Guardian*. Web. 19 Nov. 2016.

Kipling, Rudyard. 2006[1901]. *Kim*. ed. Edward W Said and Verónica Canales. Barcelona: Grupo Editorial Random House Mondadori. Print.

Lammes, Sybille. 2003. On the border: Pleasure of exploration and colonial mastery in Civilization III play the world. *Digital Games Research Conference 2003*. Print.

Langer, Jessica. 2011. The familiar and the foreign: Playing postcolonialism in world of Warcraft. *Digital culture, play, and identity: A world of Warcraft® reader*, ed. Hilde G. Corneliussen and Jill Walker Rettberg. Cambridge: The MIT Press. Print.

Leonard, Philip. 2013. *Literature after globalization: Textuality, technology and the nation-state*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Print.

Lloyd-Hughes, Henry. 2015. *Indian Summers*. Film.

Liboriussen, Bjarke, and Paul Martin. 2016. Regional game studies. *Game Studies* 16 (1): n.p. Web. 26 Nov. 2016.

Loomba, Ania. 2005. *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. Print.

Lucas, George. 1977. *Star wars: Episode IV—A new hope*. Film.

Luster, Joseph. 2015. Game reviews: Colonial conquest. *Warfare History Network*. n.p. Web. 22 Nov. 2016.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. 1835. *Minute on education*. http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html. Accessed 22 Nov 2016.

Magnet, Shoshana. 2006. Playing at colonization interpreting imaginary landscapes in the video game Tropico. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 30 (2): 142–162. *jci.sagepub.com*. Web.

McLeod, John. 2010. *Beginning postcolonialism*. 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan. Print. Beginnings.

MECC. 1990. *Oregon Trail, The*. Internet Archive. Web. 22 Nov. 2016.

Meier, S. 1994. *Colonization* (Maryland: MicroProse). PC

Mir, Rebecca, and Trevor Owens. 2013. Modelling indigenous peoples: Unpacking ideology in Sid Meier's colonization. *Playing with the past: Digital games and the simulation of history*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and B.R. Andrew Elliott. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA. Print.

Mishra, Vijay, and Bob Hodge. 2005. What was postcolonialism? *New Literary History* 36 (3): 375–402. *Project MUSE*. Web.

Mufti, Aamir R. 2010. Orientalism and the language of Hindustan. *Critical Quarterly* 52 (3): 63–68. *Wiley Online Library*. Web.

Mukherjee, Souvik. 2015a. *Video games and storytelling: Reading games and playing books*, 1st ed. 2015 ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Print.

Mukherjee, Souvik. 2015b. The playing fields of empire: Empire and spatiality in video games. *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 7 (3): 299–315. Web.

Mukherjee, Souvik. 2016. Playing subaltern video games and postcolonialism. *Games and Culture*. Web.

Nakamura, Lisa. 1995. Race In/for cyberspace: Identity tourism and racial passing on the internet. *Works and Days* 13: 181–193. Print.

Nayar, Pramod K. 2010. *An introduction to new media and cybercultures.* Chichester: Wiley. Print.

O'Connor, Alice. Rituals. *Rock, Paper, Shotgun*. n.p., 9 September 2014. Web. 23 Nov. 2016.

Plunkett, Luke. 2010. Rape, racism & repetition: This Is probably the worst game ever made. *Kotaku*, July 10. Web.

Pratt, Mary Louise. 2007. *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation.* 2nd edn. London: Routledge. Print.

Pycroft, James. 2016. *The cricket-field*. By J. Pycroft. Longman, 1862. Internet Archive. Web. 19 Nov. 2016.

Risam, Roopika, and Adeline Koh. 2016. Postcolonial digital humanities. *Postcolonial Digital Humanities*. n.p., n.d. Web. 23 Nov. 2016.

Rosen, Deborah A. 2015. *Border Law*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press. Print.

Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books. Print.

Said, Edward W. 1983. *The world, the text, and the critic*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press. Print.

Sen, Amartya. How to Judge Globalism. *The American Prospect* 4 January 2002. Web. 23 Nov. 2016.

Shaw, Adrienne. 2015. *Gaming at the edge: Sexuality and gender at the margins of gamer culture.* Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press. Print.

Simon, Bart. In Space, No One Can… *Technoculture, Art and Games*. n.p., 20 August 2016. Web.

Stronge, Susan. 2009. *Tipu's tigers*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum. Print.

Ubisoft Quebec. 2016. *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* (Quebec: Ubisoft). PC.

Veracini, L. 2015. *The Settler Colonial Present*. Springer. Print.

Victoria and Albert Museum. 2009. *V&A conservation in action—Playing Tippoo's tiger—YouTube*. n.p. Film.

wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. 1986. *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. London: Heinemann Educational. Print.

Walker, Damian Gareth. 2014. *A book of historic board games*. lulu.com. Print.

LUDOGRAPHY

Ensemble Studios. 1997. *Age of Empires,* Redmond: Microsoft Games. PC.

Fireaxis Games. 2005. *Civilization IV,* Maryland: Fireaxis Games. PC.

Hello Games. 2016. *No Man's Sky,* Guildford, UK: Hello Games. PC.

Mystique. 1982. *Custer's Revenge,* (n.p.: Mystique). Atari 2600.

Strategic Simulations. 1985. *Colonial Conquest,* Carentoir, France: Ubisoft. PC.

Studio Oleomingus. 2014. *Somewhere,* Dadar, India: Studio Oleomingus.PC.

Ubisoft Montreal. 2008. *Far Cry 2,* Montreal: Ubisoft. PC.

Ubisoft Montreal. 2012. *Assassin's Creed III,* Montreal: Ubisoft. PC.

Ubisoft Montreal. 2013. *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag - Freedom Cry,* Montreal: Ubisoft. PC.

The Playing Fields of Empire: Empire and Spatiality in Videogames

Abstract As in historical accounts, empire in videogames, too, is concerned with the acquisition of geographical space. Videogame empires work on the necessary logic of spatial expansion connected with which is the necessity to remove the "fog" which prevents the player's 'line of sight' from accessing information about surrounding areas. Although much scholarship exists around the representations of the spatiality of Empire in more traditional media, there is little that addresses the videogame representations of Empire. Following on from the general position on the need to examine notions of postcolonial spatiality in videogames, this chapter specifically addresses the representation and experience of space in conceptions of Empire vis-à-vis in empire-building videogames, as understood in terms of both cartography and the lived experience of space.

Keywords Maps · Line of sight · Empire-building games · Surveying Spatiality · Cartography

EMPIRE, SPACE, VIDEOGAMES: A REVIEW

Cecil Rhodes, the British businessman-imperialist extraordinaire who funded the Rhodes scholarships, is said to have wept inconsolably because Britain could not colonize outer space. The victory conditions of the Grand Campaign of Britain in *Empire: Total War* (Creative Assembly

2009; *ETW* here onwards) asking the player to "capture and hold 23 regions […] including Hindustan, Florida, Gibraltar, Iceland, New France, Leeward Islands" (Creative Assembly 2009) may seem tame in comparison. In both cases, however, the very logic of Empire is tied up with how it reconceives spatiality. From the "Great Game" played for the possession of Central Asia to the expansionist logic of *No Man's Sky*, the mechanism of empire is based on a geopolitics through which it lays claim to a consolidated space and on further expansion. The most popular genre in videogames to include this as a game mechanic is the RTS (real-time strategy) genre in videogames, which almost always concerns itself with empire-building, whether it is the early *Age of Empire* (Ensemble Studios 1999) games or the more recent *Rise of Nations* (Big Huge Games 2003) and *Rome: Total War 2* (Creative Assembly 2013). In the present scenario, when there is hardly any place for Rhodes and such overt apologists for Empire, the clear popularity of empire-building games is one that deserves critical attention (Fig. 2.1).

The continued relevance of Empire even today in one of the newest media of culture and storytelling is one that is both worrying as well as, arguably, symptomatic of the ambiguity with which contemporary (particularly Western) society views the imperialist system. Through a

Fig. 2.1 Planting flags to conquer—Screenshot from *Empire: Total War* (Creative Assembly 2009)

study of RTS games, such as mainly *ETW*, this chapter explores deeper questions of empire and its relation to space. It points out how the spatial construction of empire in these videogames follows older Western imperialist models; it also shows how the very nature of gameplay itself constantly undercuts and makes the player problematize such notions of spatiality.

Imperial Spaces in Games Studies Research

Game Studies scholarship related to empire and videogame spaces has so far mainly concerned itself with geopolitics in general (Guenzel 2007; Nohr 2010) or gone on to "locate virtual games within a larger analysis of, and controversy about actual global Empire" (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009, xix). SybilleLammes's brief article "Postcolonial Playgrounds: Games as Postcolonial Cultures" (2010) attempts a more direct engagement as does my own earlier essay (2014) on the topic. In the present chapter, a more direct approach to empire is taken by relating questions of imperialist spatiality to videogame space.

Lammes, of course, identifies the hybrid nature of postcolonial spatiality within the maps in the empire-building games. She sees them as both the maps of the colonial cartographer marking out new territory and also as spaces where players can start "translating world histories into personal stories [and thereby] create their own postcolonial stories" (Lammes). While this can be true, the question arises as to who the player is and whose maps are being represented. It is eminently possible to play on the maps that *perpetuate* the logic of colonialism instead of challenging it—in such cases, the personal histories are intertwined with and constructed out of a colonialist logic. The inherent assumptions of the game's design affordances are also influential. Moreover, this is not true only of videogames.

For example, Karen French and William Stanley describe a board-game based on the colonial expansion in Africa as its basic premise:

> The purpose of the game is to *dramatize* the benefits and liabilities of colonial occupation which accrued to Western European governments and their African subjects. Ideally, it should be played by no more than five students. […] Players each represent a European colonial power (England, France, Belgium, Germany and Portugal) with one of the players serving as an international banker. (French and Stanley 1974, 44).

The game is structured like Monopoly (which itself is about capitalist expansion and industrialization) and the player trades in colonies such as the Slave Coast and Gold Coast based on his or her dice throws and the drawing of the Fate and Fortune cards. The colonialist narrative is thus portrayed as a benign game that can be won by mastering fortune—the underlying connotations of slavery and cupidity notwithstanding. Such a colonial framing of the ludic goes back a long way. For example, *Bowles's Geographical Game of the World*(Bowles and Carver 1796) is an eighteenth century game that almost aims to be a guide to amateur colonizers. For the Cape of Good Hope, the game mentions that it has been taken from the Dutch in 1796 and the player is to "stay three turns to survey the settlements, extending 300 miles up the country of the Hottentots" (Bowles and Carver 1796). Bowles's game typically combines history with colonial cartography. Compare the experience, over three centuries later, of a player of *Empire: Total War* who describes his gaming experience, playing as the Kingdom of Netherlands:

> The Dutch Navy was one of the strongest in the world, but it was overstretched. Since trade was the primary source of income for the United Provinces, it was decided to reinforce the Navy as well. The Indian Squadron was directed to head to East Africa in order to shore up the trade routes, while new ships were going to be built in order to replace them. The European fleet remained near the Netherlands, in case England or the French decided to invade. The Caribbean Squadron was also strengthened, building up in order to face the pirate threat. (NCR 2014)

Not much, indeed, has changed. Daniel Dooghan commenting on *Minecraft* notes a similar trait: "Minecraft's mechanics not only encourage this kind of expansionist thinking but go further by representing the physical and cultural violence of territorial expansion as a pleasurable challenge" (Dooghan 2016, 5).

Indeed, the association of games with the military and empire has a long history. German *Kriegsspiel*, used for military training is a direct example. The clearest association of imperialist expansion and games is to be found in the Great Game or the geopolitical struggle between Russia and the British Empire for the possession of Central Asia. In Kipling's novel *Kim* (1901), the eponymous protagonist is a child who joins the Great Game of secretly surveying beyond the northern borders of British India. Kim's game, still played among the Scouts and Guides, is

about remembering key locations on a mental map—in the novel, this innocuous game becomes the prelude for the Great Game of colonial expansion. Not surprisingly, key political figures of British India such as the Viceroy Lord Curzon portray imperialist expansionist plans as part of a game:

> Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcaspia, Persia— […] To me, I confess, they are the pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for the dominion of the world. (Walberg 2011, 13)

Serious expansionist geopolitics is represented as being playful, even fun. Although not quite a surveyor and adventurer like Kim, Curzon is well known for another aspect of geopolitics: deciding the fate of the Indian province of Bengal by drawing a dividing line on a map.[1]

To start with, one needs to unpack the significance of the two terms, empire and geopolitics. According to Jan Neederven Pieterse, "an imperial state is one that determines the foreign and domestic policies of another political entity, […] a second broad-brush definition is a state that practices expansionist geopolitics [and] a third loose meaning of empire, pertains to ideology" (Pieterse 2009: 18). All of these descriptions are connected and as is evident from a basic definition of geopolitics: "the term geopolitics refers to the use of politics in controlling territories, where certain geographical positions are more strategic than others, for resources, historical and socio-political reasons" (Walberg 2011, 19).

The imperialist machinery of expansionist geopolitics functions through cartography and surveying. Sir George Everest, as the surveyor general of India and the head of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of 1931, was instrumental in computing the height of Mount Everest to which he lent his name. Not surprisingly, the name of the Indian mathematician, Radhanath Sikdar, who, as part of the survey made the actual calculation, is virtually unknown to the world. Cartography itself was not only about map-making as it would have been in the pre-Empire days:

> The cartographic partition of Africa inextricably linked mapmaking and empire building. Yet the act of drawing lines on maps is only one example of how cartography furthered imperialism. Maps were used in various ways to extend European hegemony over foreign and often unknown territory. (Bassett 1994, 316–335)

Like the naming of Mount Everest, the act of naming is significant for the expansionist agenda of Empire. Colonial expansion also meant changes to the geography that went beyond lines on maps and names. In *Flora's Empire* (2011), Eugenia Herbert describes how the British colonialists in India strove to change the landscape with their gardens and often imported foliage. There were also playing fields created out of scrubland to facilitate games of golf and cricket. With cartography and naming, there was the imperial flag to mark out territory. As the British stand-up comedian, Eddie Izzard, brilliantly laughs at Empire in his piece "Do You Have a Flag?":

> We stole countries with the cunning use of flags! Yeah, just sail around the world and stick a flag in. - I claim India for Britain!
>
> They go, You can't claim us, we live here! 500 million of us!
>
> - Do you have a flag?
>
> - We don't need a bloody flag! It's our country, you bastards!
>
> - No flag, no country, you can't have one! That's the rules that I've just made up, and I'm backing it up with this gun that was lent from the National Rifle Association. (Jordan 1999)

The following sections will demonstrate how Izzard's playful yet poignant critique of empire raises issues related to cartography and power compares usefully to the portrayal of empire-spaces in videogames.

Most gamers will be familiar with the concepts of "line of sight" and the "fog of war" in RTS games. The basic aim of the game is to see what is hidden in the dark areas. Send a spy or a diplomat (or a priest, as the case may be) into uncharted territory or even better, send ships and armies to take possession, often after giving battle. Once a region is occupied, the map is redrawn and carries your nation's color. For example, see the map of British India from a gameplay instance of *ETW*. Compare this to the actual maps of the East India Company from the time and a similar logic of expansion is reflected in the cartography. Diplomacy, which includes trade agreements, alliances, joining wars, exchanging technologies and money, is another key factor in defining the changing geographies. The imperialist power also soon replaces the older buildings with its own. For example, a church school or an ashram might becomes a classical university—in real life, a walk around downtown Calcutta reflects this well as one gets a quick

lesson in British architecture, thousands of miles away from the United Kingdom. Surveying, so famously adventurous in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), is an analogue of the RTS game's line of sight. Kim, playing the Great Game of spying, is much like the agent that one sends into unknown or hostile territory in *ETW*. Once surveyed, occupied, and mapped (not always in that order), the game requires the player to have a significant military presence if one is to prevent rebellions from breaking out. That, of course, is the subject of a later discussion in this chapter.

Speaking of geopolitical discourses in RTS games, Rolf Nohr identifies clear links between these games and classical geopolitics from the 1920s to the 1960s. He states that "expansion as acts, however, does not only aim at space as the moment of politics, but can also be financed by or out of space" (Nohr 2010). Nohr points out the Clausewitzian interpretation of politics in these empire-building games that depicts war as a form of politics or a struggle for the resources on the space of the campaign map. For him, this is in keeping with the conception of space as *lebensraum* (German: living space), a concept formulated by German geographer, Friedrich Ratzel, in his 1901 essay. According to Woodruff Smith, "Ratzel defined Lebensraum as the geographical surface area required to support a living species at its current population size and mode of existence. […] Lebensraum seemed to place Darwinian natural selection in a spatial and environmental dimension" (Smith 1991, 51–68). Lebensraum is also associated with the expansionist policies of the National Socialist regime in Germany from the 1920s to 1945. The struggle for Lebensraum then becomes equated with the struggle for resources. Resource gathering is an important aspect of RTS games: to have a production-based capitalist economy (summed up earlier as "trade and taxes") is to win the game. Such a resource-hungry geopolitics also creates the binarism of centre and its peripheries. For Walberg, such a binarism aims "to expropriate the wealth—surplus—of weaker countries—the periphery, their incorporation into the economy of the empire—the center—in a subordinate and profitable way, and to ensure that other competing imperial powers are kept at a disadvantage" (Walberg 2011, 24). Nohr sees a parallel in games such as *Civilisation V* (2010) where a hierarchy of capitals and colonies is constructed and soon one sees the sprouting of peripheral structures such as ports, storage, and supply posts and settlements as the game forces the player to create such hierarchical and concentric arrangements of the capital and the colonies. Naturally, the peripheral spaces exist to supply the center.

Nohr relates RTS games to Samuel Huntington's (1996) argument that human beings pursue policies that bring about conflict within spatiality. Writing about this aspect of geopolitics, Guenzel mentions how the map precedes the territory in real-life geopolitics as well as in games. The historical example he provides is that of the infamous line drawn across the map of Poland by Ribbentrop and Molotov: the consequences are only too well-known.[2] The videogame example that he provides is from *Ghost Recon* where the player can switch to map-mode from the FPS mode and where "the map thus precedes the territory: strategic planning is done in the realm of the map and instantly has an effect on the virtual space of experience" (Guenzel 2007: 446). He also examines the geopolitical scenario of the game as the space for alternative history. Set in the (then) near future, where Eastern Europe is on the brink of war in 2008, *Ghost Recon* makes a geopolitical statement about a possible world.

As Guenzel points out, the deterministic geopolitical schema of Ratzel's was challenged by cultural geographers who "used the category of frame of space to rethink culture from a non-deterministic point of view" (Guenzel 2012: 9) rather than see it as a struggle for existence, expansion, and resources. At this point, it will be useful to introduce the "spatial turn" in theory initiated by Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre (1991) is of key interest here and he views space as perceived space (*percu*), conceived space (*concu*), and lived space (*vecu*). The first type is the material space as physically negotiated through movement, the second type is the mediated space of maps, and the third or "lived" space is the experienced and imagined space that operates as a simultaneous trialectic (in the sense that it is spatially copresent rather than following on as a temporal sequence) to the other two types. In terms of videogames, such a conception of spatiality works out as follows:

> Videogame spaces today are mostly a presentation of perceptual space in the way Lefebvre addresses the individual experience of space or what he also calls 'spatial practice'. In contrast, representations of space differ from this phenomenal experience of space as they are in real-life contexts, videogame maps are essential for orientation, especially in games played from the first-person perspective, for in those games, one needs not only see what one is aiming at, but also where one is located within the entire setting of the game. For this reason, maps in videogames are either fully displayed and function as representations of the whole 'playground' […] or they are reduced to a visual element within the display. (Guenzel 2007: 444)

The third or the "lived" space is imagined by the player in the zone of becoming and identity formation, where the first and second spaces overlap with each other in various degrees. Arguably, this compares well with RTS games such as *ETW* where the perceived space is itself perceived on the "playground" of the conceived space or the map, especially when one considers the movement of units across the world map; it is possible to go into a deeper level of perceived space in the real-time battle scenarios where the player as the god-like commander of massed military units inhabits all of these units as and when required by giving orders to move and attack and then depending on the AI to carry out the actions. The battle scenarios themselves are perceived spaces that are enacted over the conceived space of the battlefield map (most clearly perceivable when the player gets the opportunity to deploy the army within a limited section of the battlefield although the camera is allowed to pan and zoom across the entire battlefield). Given the very obvious overlap of the perceived and conceived spaces here, one needs to think through the implications of the Lefebvrian spatial turn in empire-based games carefully. What happens also to the lived space? Is the notion applicable at all in these games?

Perceived, Conceived, and Lived Space in Empire: Total War

ETW has the advantage of combining the turn-based element of RTS games with real-time battles using massed armies. It also (rather boldly) addresses Empire directly in its title and content. The analysis of the game will be twofold. It will involve a discussion of the way in which the developer, Creative Assembly, addresses the notion of empire and portrays the history of nations. Secondly, it will address the ways in which players (re)write this history and many alternative histories. In Creative Assembly's construction of colonial India in *ETW,* the English are expected to be entrants in the game of building the Indian empire as part of the British campaign: the victory conditions for Britain require the player to "capture and hold 23 regions by the end of the year 1750 *including Hindustan*, Florida, Gibraltar, Iceland, New France, Leeward Islands" (Creative Assembly 2009, italics mine). The mapping of the British Empire involves some set-piece and even "orientalist" conventions as seen in the description of the only playable Indian faction, the Marathas:

> Unlike the foreign (in origin) Mughals the Maratha rulers are Indian
> princes and kings. They know the value of the Indian way of doing things,
> of the age-old strength of their lands. Their armies may look old fashioned
> possibly quaint to foreign eyes, but that makes them no less effective. The
> empire exists solely because it has the military strength to withstand the
> Mughal threat. (Creative Assembly 2009)

This mapping out of colonial history is somewhat simplistic as it was
the Mughals who had been the military masters of India for almost
two centuries when the game begins. Phrases such as the "Indian way
of doing things" ignore the diversity of cultures in India and have an
orientalist ring to them. Moreover, despite the seeming accuracy of the
cartographical presentation of early—eighteenth century India, there
are many discrepancies. Tea plantations are shown a century ahead
of the British discovery of tea in Assam in 1824. Indigo plantations,
later the reason for popular outcry, are nowhere to be seen. Despite
the initial expanse of the Mughals, there are no Islamic religious
centers on the map. Benaras, the holy city of the Hindus, is one
of the "great ashrams"—nothing like this existed and ashrams are
historically very different institutions. The army types are based on
sweeping generalizations that often conflate characteristics of people
of very disparate regions and assume that they are present all over the
subcontinent. Questions of religion and caste, which were paramount
in Indian polity and in how spatial boundaries were conceived, are
mostly ignored. A very complex geopolitical situation is thus rendered
comfortably simple to portray an entire set of places, resources, and
societies through an imperialist (and to use Edward Said's concept,
"orientalist") lens. The procedural rhetoric (Bogost 2007) employed
here is to construct the argument for empire through the structured
code and gameplay of these games.

As Lammes has already suggested, the ludic medium allows a level
of playfulness with the colonial geopolitics. The same notion of play
endorsed by imperialists such as Curzon and Rhodes to explore the
possibilities of empire also reflects its opposite situation where the game
of empire is played *against* them. In response to Creative Assembly's
initial set playing field of empire, there have been player reactions aplenty
to upset any status quo notion of empire. What the map of India finally
looks like is, effectively, the outcome of player action. In effect, it is
the procedural system of the game that allows for contrary positions to

emerge. The "Total War Forum," full of after-action reports on gameplay instances in *ETW,* is a fitting example. After-action reports (or AARs as they are called) are retrospective analyses of goal-oriented actions; these originated in military culture (Julius Caesar's commentaries on the Gallic wars are sometimes described as an after-action report) and recently, they have become popular in videogame culture, especially among strategy game players. Often, these AARs describe events that go counter to historical accounts and create their own alternative histories. Alternative History has long been a popular literary genre and *ETW* players add to the genre in their own distinct way. For example, playing as the Maratha empire, it is possible to undermine the historical success of the mighty British Empire and thereby, the entire geopolitics of India. The following AAR taken from "The After Action Reporter" shows counter-history at its extreme:

> Empire: Total War is fun, but playing as England, Prussia, France or Spain is a bit easy really. So many provinces, so many troops to build, so much money! So instead of going easy, and to provide an interesting AAR, I unlocked the minor nations and decided to play the Barbary States. Why this rag-tag bunch of North African pirates? For two reasons:
>
> 1. I want to play as pirates! Duh!
>
> 2. I want to convert Europe to Islam!
>
> …And I also thought it would be quite funny if I could pull it off. Sure enough, it has been amusing, but also really hard. (Tyson 2009)

Extreme as the intentions of the writer may be, this counter-narrative works on multiple levels. First, it poses a reverse-colonization alternative to the conquest of Africa and Asia by the European powers. Secondly, it subverts the intentions and the affordances of the "official" version of the game by unlocking an unplayable faction and devising its own campaign victory conditions. The player's own experience and intentions thus play an important role in fashioning the empire-spaces in *ETW* and much of the interaction between the perceived space of the player and the conceived space of the map is fashioned imaginatively as the AARs with their detailed narratives reconstructing the action illustrate. One of the correspondents on the Total War forum answers the question "How to win in India?" with Izzard's sketch cited above and then goes on to

say: "Tried it in game. Was going to work great until I realized Indians [sic] actually do have a flag. Bastards" (Kaamos 2009). The empire-space of the RTS game spills out way beyond the games affordances and the game's map. It is this personal experience of mapping that Lammes sees the postcolonial reaction being situated in.

"Transforming the Terrain": Thirdspace in *Empire: Total War*

So far this chapter has argued that the Lefebvrian "lived space" in the empire-building games is to be found in the player discourses of the AAR and other records of the player's experience with the game. Following Guenzel's astute analysis of the shift from perceived to conceived spaces in *Ghost Recon* and the comparison with *ETW*, one can describe the imagined spaces of empire as encountered by players in the way in which they negotiate the spatiality and the geopolitics intended by the developers (as argued here, Creative Assembly, despite giving players much leeway, still provides its own distinct perspective on the history of empire). These imagined spaces are the lived spaces, where the populations in the game's cities live, trade, carry on their diplomatic negotiations and wars. The player is always also part of these lived spaces as the AARs tell us. In *ETW*, this third space is also intriguing because it is here that often the player faces protest. The developers have coded in a crucial element in the experience of empire: protest. Unhappy populations will riot, send letters of demands and finally, rebel. The population of the cities in *ETW* will also defend their cities as the relative weak and ill-trained armed citizenry. Thus these lived spaces of empire, operating beyond traditional spatial conceptions, are also supplementary in Jacques Derrida's sense of the word. In the Derridean sense, the supplement "leaves its trace without ever itself being either present or absent and thereby […] transform[s] the terrain" (Royle 2003: 50).

It is this "transforming of the terrain" that needs to be considered for a fuller understanding of imperialist space in *ETW* and arguably, in the general discourse of empire itself. Poststructuralist geographer Edward Soja revises the notion of spatiality by building on Lefebvre's notion of the lived space to propose what he calls "thirdspace." Soja describes thirdspace as "real and imagined spaces." As Soja further explains:

[T]hirdspace […] is rooted in just such a recombinatorial and radically open perspective. In what I will call a critical strategy of othering. I try to open up our spatial imaginaries to ways of thinking and acting politically that responds to all binarisms, to any attempt to confine political thought and action to only two alternatives by interjecting an-Other set of choices. In this critical thirding, the original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives. (Soja 1996, 5)

In opening up the spatial imaginaries, he also brings to the forefront more marginal spaces and challenges the center–periphery binarisms of the earlier conceptions of empire-space. He then addresses issues of spatiality from Feminist theorists such as bell hooks, Trinh la Minh, and Donna Haraway and postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. Bhabha is particularly important as "third space" is a term originally introduced by him to postcolonial studies. For him, Third Space "is a challenge to the limits of the self in the act of reaching out to what is liminal in the historic experience, and in the cultural representation of other peoples, times, languages, texts" (Bhabha 2011, 10). It is a space of negotiation and not one of resolution. Felipe Hernandez links Bhabha's notion of third space to Soja's with an important observation: "although Soja has a clear affinity with Bhabha in this respect, […] he seems only able to do so via the work of artists and other critics who, as such, are already somewhat detached from the ethnic and cultural minorities" (Hernandez 2010, 95). For Hernandez, to understand the effects and issues related to the "thirding" or the "an-Othered" spaces as described by Soja (and implied in Bhabha's original conception) "consideration should be given to the products of lay people who live, physically and metaphorically, on the periphery or invisibly in the nooks and crannies of contemporary cultures and cities" (Hernandez 2010, 95).

As mentioned in Chap. 1, Said describes the journey that the protagonist of Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* makes to reach what he calls the "heart of Africa" in terms of the European's gaining imperial mastery of the space:

Yet underlying Marlow's inconclusiveness, his arabesque meditations on his feelings and ideas, is unrelenting course of the journey itself […]

> Conrad wants us to, see how Kurtz's great looting adventure, Marlow's journey up the river, and the narrative itself all share a common theme: Europeans performing acts of imperial mastery and will in (or about) Africa. (Said 1994, 19)

Here, the straightforward mapping of territory into imperial possession is beginning to be problematized already in Conrad's ambivalent late-nineteenth century account of the imperial attitude and the "redemptive force, as well as the waste and horror, of Europe's mission in the dark world" (ibid.). Going beyond Conrad's postcolonial doubts about the legitimacy of imperialist notions of spatiality, one further struggles with the post-empire experience of thirdspace in the marginalized narratives of working class Indian women in Spivak's essay on Mahasweta Devi's short story 'Douloti the Bountiful':

> In this story, Devi offers a harrowing portrayal of a subaltern woman's exploitation in bonded labour and prostitution during the period of colonialism and subsequent national independence in India. In the final scene of this story, Douloti's 'tormented corpse' is depicted as being sprawled across a map of India, drawn by a schoolmaster in a rural village in India, just after independence from the British Empire. Despite the emancipatory promise of national independence, Devi emphasizes how older forms of gender and class-based exploitation – such as bonded labour and prostitution – continue to be practised in postcolonial India. (Morton 2003, 98)

Spivak points out the problems even after the end of the British Empire in India and how decolonization itself becomes a misleading and problematic word when the spaces of the subaltern are considered. She calls it "the space of the displacement of the colonization-decolonization reversal [and…] the space that can become […] a representation of decolonization as such" (Spivak 2009, 54).

The dead woman sprawled on the map of India is an extremely disturbing image, but it brings to mind other parallels from fiction and popular culture. The one example used in lectures on post colonialism the world over is that of the map of the fictitious Kukuanaland in H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1886). The intrepid British adventurers enter a land where the map resembles a woman's body (indeed, the place names such as Sheba's Breasts establish this further). So the possession of land by the colonial powers is indirectly

likened to the possession of a woman's body. However, the image of a woman's body, this time a goddess's, is likewise used in the portrayal of independent India as "Bharat Mata" (or Mother India) where the Indian map is covered by the goddess's body. Devi's story where the unfortunate woman falls dead on the Indian map is perhaps a scathing inversion of this image of the independent nation.

Such maps bring the discussion of spatiality from the second space of cartography simultaneously to the thirdspace of Otherness as described by Soja. The connection between the map and the lived body, subaltern or otherwise, is a deep-rooted one. To examine this issue in terms of the videogame space in *ETW*, it will be useful to return to the question asked earlier about lived space in such empire-building games. When the player constructs a map of her own empire in *ETW*, there is much of the player's imagined spaces in the map and much that reflect issues (such as worker's riots, diplomatic offers, or buildings built) that are not obvious on the cartographic second space. Conceived space itself cannot be understood except in terms of lived space.

However, with the expansionist logic of imperialist space in *ETW* and other RTS games described earlier, the simultaneous space of protest also, arguably, affects the gameplay. Existing on the level of lived space, this is the thirdspace that Soja identifies. As in the writings of Said and Spivak, this thirdspace of protest is a problem in the videogame empires as it is in their real-life counterparts. Again, the concern of a player helpfully illustrates the problem (the description almost reads like an AAR):

> So I've taken most of Europe as Sweden and but I keep having money issues from exempting tax from lots of conquered cities and eventually its [sic] still not enough to fund my huge army and stop rebellions. […] It's just impossible to please the lower class people. How do I stop this from happening? My friend said I should change to a republic or constitutional monarchy but I doubt it will work. (Captainsnake 2009)

The player here is almost giving up on empire and expansion, so great is the problem caused by the protest space on his imperial map. One of the "helpful" responses on the forum, by a respondent called Crinalex, is equally intriguing if one is to consider this as the rationale for empire:

> I, also playing as Sweden had the exact problem around the same time. You're getting more and more schools, correct? You're building improved mining facilities and clothes and iron factories. The people who live in the

countries aren't used to such awesome machinery as the one that your country probably is using, and it's costing them their jobs. At the same time, the progress in your schools and the philosophical knowledge is making them angry. Best thing is probably not to upgrade anything that brings down the happiness in the lower classes in awhile [sic], and perhaps let them destroy some of the factories, if they want to. (Crinalex 2009)

This logic runs counter to the redemptive claims that apologists of empire tend to make and it involves not taking technology and education to the colonies. Incidentally, the railway and the telegraph were held as partly responsible for creating the distrust that led to the Indian revolt of 1857 against the East India Company rule and it was the Western-educated elite who started the Indian National Congress. There is no way of knowing whether Crinalex's recommendation worked as the foolproof solution for the Swedish empire in *ETW*; however, it is clear that protest (as the players' conversation above shows) and armed resistance (as encountered by the player who had recommended the Eddie Izzard tactic for conquering India) work greatly toward any comprehension of spatiality in empire-building games.

As stated earlier, alternative history-making also contributes to the challenge to empire. Almost as a postcolonial response, it is possible for players from erstwhile colonized countries to defeat their historical colonizers in *ETW* and thereby challenge imperialist historiography with the alternative discourses from the RTS games. However, in doing so, they also adopt the same expansionist logic of empire that was posited by the real-life colonial powers. It cannot be denied, however, that within every such effort at expansion, whether real-life or in-game, there is an ineluctable element of the "Other" space as Soja and others point out.

As Spivak observes in her postcolonial critique, decolonizing is a problematic concept in the sense that the displacement of the colonizing powers from the colonized space still involves a logic that is similar to that used by empire. Further, the "othered" space of protest always exists simultaneously as a "thirding" to the spatiality of expansion as understood by empire. In the videogame, too, the ejection of the colonizing faction from one's territory involves the same military process and this might be augmented with further expansion on the now-independent nation, which in turn starts reconfiguring space according to its territorial demands. Lived space is always part of this schema; in the case of a "thirding," the marginal space emerges as a protest space and

often, one sees in *ETW* that rebels have taken over a city—i.e., declared it independent. Mostly, the now independent city either forms a new faction or gets assimilated into some other larger state with imperialist ambitions of its own. Further, as Spivak argues, the space of the subaltern Other can also exist as one that is voiceless and in strategy games, the conquered populations that are killed off, enslaved, or converted (in *Age of Empires* the priest/mage performs the conversion).

"No End to Empire?": Other Videogames Genres and the Spaces of Empire

Following the game's logic, there is no end to empire and its extent; yet, the spatial expansion is always accompanied by the thirdspace of protest. The empire-building strategy games serve as a case study for how spatial themes connected to empire and post colonialism are represented in videogames. Some of these themes can also be observed in other genres of videogames as has been indicated earlier. Consider, for example as disparate a game as *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*. In the game, the protagonist Agent 47 must infiltrate the Golden Temple in Amritsar (the holiest shrine of the Sikh religion) in order to eliminate the leader of a religious cult. Chakraborti observes:

> The Golden Temple becomes the exotic location where the future of the Indian nation is to be determined through western intervention. India, far from being a sovereign nation, becomes a destination to which the [W]estern agent must travel in order to ensure the destiny of the Indian nation. (Chakraborti 2015, 195)

In a similarly intriguing example, the Western dominance over colonial videogame spaces is best seen in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* (Infinity Ward 2011) where a level is set in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. Very strangely, as the Americans and the Russians battle it out in the middle of an Indian city, the entire Indian army seems to be absent! Such an erasure when defining colonial spaces may be surprising but it is also symptomatic.

There are further examples of straightforward orientalism. Vit Sisler argues that the videogames such as the *Prince of Persia* series construct "the Middle East as a place without history" (Sisler 2011), a realm of the *Thousand and One Nights* with "caliphs, Bedouins, djinns, belly

dancers and Oriental *topoi* such as deserts, minarets, bazaars and harems"
(ibid.). Chakraborti also points out the historical inaccuracy of the locale
of *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*: "The architectural setting of the
siege of the Indian city shows Islamic influences, including minarets and
rounded cupolas, but the storyline nonetheless asserts a Hindu kingdom"
(Chakraborti 2015, 189). Sisler observes the stark shift from such fan-
tasy orientalism to a faux-real setting in videogames that depict modern-
day Middle-Eastern countries and points to how the region is "a favourite
battle-ground" in videogames; for example, *Full Spectrum Warrior* is set
in the fictional but overtly Muslim country of "Tazikhstan, a haven for
terrorists and extremists" (Leonard and King 2009).

The perceived and conceived spaces in these cases are seemingly meant
to follow a Western mapping but it is in the "thirding" that conflicts
keep emerging. For example, the ambiguity of *Heart of Darkness* has
been reflected in *Far Cry 2* and *Spec Ops: The Line* (Yager Development
2012)—both of these games that remediate Marlow's journey in Conrad's
novel into the space that is shown as linear and increasingly darker. The
darkness is not merely physical. The search for the antagonist takes place
in psychological space as well as physical space and just as Marlow and
Captain Willard from the film *Apocalypse Now*, the player in these games
while moving in the space of colonization (whether it be Africa in *Far Cry
2* or post-apocalyptic Dubai in *Spec Ops*), moves toward madness. The
ambiguity of the colonial spaces lies in the consciousness of exploitation
versus the belief that the colonial intervention is amelioratory in nature.
Although neither of the games are set in an overtly colonial setting, the
context clearly assumes the former interference by a foreign nation. In *Far
Cry 2*, this has resulted in civil war and the trade in weapons and blood
diamonds; in *Spec Ops: The Line*, it is US intervention in the Middle-East.
The latter's title also indicates the crossing of a threshold space. The "line"
crossed may be that between sanity and insanity as the protagonist quests
to rescue his Kurtz-like mentor (ironically named Konrad in the game),
but the "line" is also that between exploitation and enlightenment—just as
Said describes in his assessment of *Heart of Darkness*.

If the gameplay experience of these two games aim to incorporate the
same ambiguity that Conrad sees in Marlow, what about those players
who occupy these spaces as the colonized or the formerly colonized? What
about the an-Othered space that Soja addresses? Lammes's description of
the personal experience of space is also important here. Rhonda Roumani
articulates the concern of Middle-Eastern game developers:

> 'Most video games on the market are anti-Arab and anti-Islam,' says Radwan Kasmiya, executive manager of the Syrian company Afkar Media. 'Arab gamers are playing games that attack their culture, their beliefs, and their way of life. The youth who are playing the foreign games are feeling guilt.' (Roumani 2006)

Players from erstwhile colonies may have similar reactions to playing out the imperial vision of a Curzon, Rhodes, or American imperialism on the maps of their countries. In the case of Afkar Media, of course, the reaction is to reverse the agents and re-conceptualize the space of conflict:

> A different approach to the topic of self-representation can be found in the Syrian game *Tahta al-Ramad* or *Under Ash* (Afkar Media 2002) which deals with the First Intifada. The game is unusually emotional in the way that it presents players with a story starting with the Palestinians' conflict with Israeli soldiers at the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The first mission introduces the main hero, Ahmad, in a demonstration. The Palestinians throw stones at the Israeli soldiers who answer with rifle shots, and the scene is full of shouting, shooting and moaning of the wounded. The player's task is to get out of the demonstration alive; then the story goes on into the classic scheme of action games with the hero joining the Palestinian resistance. (Šisler 2008)

Other kinds of reactions are the conception of space as absurd in the voiceless understanding of the city of Kayamgadh finding which is the objective of the player of *Somewhere*, described in Chap. 1. In *Somewhere* the alternative to challenging the colonial and orientalist construction of space is voicelessness and silence. Where, in the *Call of Duty* example or similar ones, the Indians are absent from their own space, in *Somewhere*, the absence is of the space itself.

Whether there is a direct engagement with imperialism as in either *Under Ash* or *Somewhere*, the problem nevertheless comes to the forefront. In describing the spaces of empire, videogames have defined them within a homogenous code—the affordances of the machine code reflect globally dominant cultural codes. As Alexander Galloway comments about *Civilization*: "'History' in *Civilization* is precisely the opposite of history, not because the game fetishizes the imperial perspective, but because the diachronic details of lived life are replaced by the synchronic homogeneity of code pure and simple" (Galloway 2006, 102). The lived space of the peripheral and the invisible is easily ignored in the global all-pervading narratives of empire.

Conclusion: Empire Deterritorialized
and Reterritorialized

In the context of global notions of empire, it is tempting to bring in Hardt and Negri's much-debated concept of Empire, already mentioned in Chap. 1. For them, Empire presents the paradigmatic form of "biopower," a concept borrowed from Michel Foucault, which "refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself" (Hardt and Negri 2001, 24). Within such a theoretical framework, "Empire does not have any boundaries and it operates on registers of social order; it not only regulates human interactions but also seeks to rule over human nature" (ibid.). Thus in their attempt to represent the age of empire and the corresponding conception of spatiality, one can argue that games like *ETW* end up doing much more and tend to resemble such a uniform notion of global Empire. As has been pointed out already, however, Hardt and Negri's concept has been criticized for the "smoothness" in its thinking of global empire. Here, although the appeal of their concept of empire continuing into the present and pervading global discourses is recognized, the differences in the experience of empire in different regions and communities is to be kept in mind. As a challenge to Empire, Hardt and Negri also posit a universal concept of "the multitude" that will resist and reorganize the processes of empire to create a counter-empire, or an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges that will "deterritorialize" empire on its very own imperial terrain. Moving away from Hardt and Negri's universality of Empire, their identification of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization as key processes in understanding empire is, nevertheless, of major importance.

To simplify a many-faceted and rather complex concept, deterritorialization is "a capacity to take any actual thing and translate it into a movement of flow […] but deterritorialization, which relies on an initial territorialization, is also accompanied by reterritorialization […which] arrests its tendency to produce and open flows by quantifying all exchange" (Colebrook 2001, 65). Sara Upstone, writing about the representation of colonial space in postcolonial writing, states that the postcolonial writer "does not accept absolute space as a reality: rather, he or she reveals the sense of an overwritten chaos" and this is a "three-fold process, colonial space is acknowledged, rejected, and then re-made."

To explain this, Upstone invokes "Deleuze and Guattari's argument for the power of this multiplicitous, fluid, and moving space which strikes at the core of the structure of the state and, more importantly, is explicitly anti-colonial—a 'nomadism' that is 'deterritorialized par excellence' and subversive as 'it is the vital concern of every State not only to vanquish nomadism but to control migrations'" (Upstone 2009, 146–147). In the videogame, too, a similar threefold spatiality can be seen. For the real and the imagined spaces posited in the game, there is also the lived space of experience that is conveyed through records of gameplay experiences such as AARs and Let's Plays. To the hegemonic understanding of homogenously coded spaces, there are alternatives constructed by subverting that code via mods or spin-offs (the *ETW* mod and *Under Ash* serve as examples) and there is the subsequent re-coding and reimagining of the space. Even as the hints of protest located in the unplayable interstices of the games, such as the rebellions and workers' strikes in *ETW,* or even the metaphorical spaces of periphery such as the guilt of the players engaging with the imperial construction of space, the "thirding" occurs as a negotiation where colonial spatiality is challenged. This deterritorialization is the process whereby the fixities and the homogeneities of colonialism are replaced by a flow of the experiences of the Other. In terms of understanding how spatiality is perceived, conceived, and lived within the framework of empire, it is imperative to take into account the spaces of protest which, as the an-Other space that Soja describes, deterritorialize imperialist space by highlighting problems within the construction of such a space; however, this is always accompanied by a reterritorialization that closes off the flows of the marginal protest space and fixes an order of spatiality that is akin to the previous logic of imperialist space.

Games with their huge possibility-spaces allow for many different ways in which one can (re)play the logic of empire. Together with the logic of imperialist expansion as designed by the developers through their victory conditions and other elements of gameplay, there is always the reconfiguring of space as embodied by the possibilities of alternative history, in-game opposition from the AI or other players and also the element of protest from within the lived thirdspace in the game. In the replaying of the game, however, this reconfigured space itself becomes the norm, the process continues and it might be argued that the replaying of *Empire: Total War* illustrates the replaying of empire itself.

Notes

1. In 1905, Lord Curzon, the viceroy of India, passed the resolution to partition the Province of Bengal into two parts, East Bengal and West Bengal. This was ostensibly done for administrative reasons but it is well-known that the East had a Muslim majority whereas the Western part had more Hindus.
2. According to Guenzel, Poland was divided into two between the German and Russian governments in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between the Nazi government and Stalin.

References

Bassett, Thomas J. 1994. Cartography and Empire Building in Nineteenth-Century West Africa. *Geographical Review* 84 (3): n.p. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. 2011. *Our Neighbours, Ourselves: Contemporary Reflections on Survival*. Boston: Walter de Gruyter. Print.

Bogost, Ian. 2007. *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Print.

Captain snake. 2009. Strikes, Riots and Rebellions: How Do I Stop Them?. *GameFaqs.com*. Web.

Colebrook, Claire. 2001. *Gilles Deleuze*, 1st ed. London: Routledge. Print.

Chakraborti, Siddhartha. 2015. From Destination to Nation and Back: The Hyperreal Journey of Incredible India. *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 7(2): 183–202. IngentaConnect. Web.

Crinalex. 2009. Strikes, Riots and Rebellions: How Do I Stop Them? *GameFaqs.com*. Web.

Dooghan, Daniel. 2016. Digital Conquerors Minecraft and the Apologetics of Neoliberalism. *Games and Culture*: 1555412016655678. gac.sagepub.com. Web.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Greig de Peuter. 2009. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Print.

French, Karen E., and William R. Stanley. 1974. A Game of European Colonization in Africa. *Journal of Geography* 73 (7): 44–48. Web.

Galloway, Alexander R. 2006. *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Print.

Guenzel, Stefan. 2007. 'Eastern Europe, 2008'—Maps and Geopolitics in Video Games. In *Space Time Play. Games, Architecture and Urbanism: The Next Level*, ed. F. von Borries, M. Böttger, and S.P. Walz, 444–449. Basel: Birkhäuser. Print.

Guenzel, Stefan. 2012. Space and Cultural Geography. In *Travelling Concepts for the Study of Culture*, ed. Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning. Boston: Walter de Gruyter. Print.

Haggard, H. Rider. 1886. *King Solomon's Mines*. New York: Cassell & Company. Print. Cassell's Rainbow Series of Original Novels.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2001. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Print.

Herbert, Eugenia W. 2011. *Flora's Empire: British Gardens in India*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Print.

Hernandez, Felipe. 2010. *Bhabha for Architects*. Routledge. Print.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon &Schuster. Print.

Jordan, L. 1999. *Eddie Izzard: Dress to Kill*. Comedy.

Kaamos. 2009. How to Win in India. *Total War Centre*, March 5, 2009. http://www.twcenter.net/forums/showthread.php?232289-How-to-win-in-India-(Spoilers). Accessed 25 June 2015.

Kipling, Rudyard. 2006 [1901]. In *Kim* ed. Edward W. Said and Verónica Canales. Barcelona: Grupo Editorial Random House Mondadori. Print.

Lammes, Sybille. 2010. Postcolonial Playgrounds: Games as Postcolonial Cultures. *Eludamos. Journal for Computer Game Culture* 4 (1): 1–6. Print.

Leonard, David J., and C. Richard King. 2009. Replaying Empire: Racialized Violence, Insecure Frontiers, and Displaced Terror in Contemporary Video Games. *Ethnicity and Race in a Changing World* 1 (2): 2–14. ercw.openlibrary.manchester.ac.uk. Web.

Morton, Stephen. 2003. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. London: Routledge. Print. Routledge Critical Thinkers.

NCR. 2016. A Dutch Resurgence: An Empire Total War AAR. *Total War Centre* November 2014. Web. 14 Nov.

Nohr, Rolf F. 2010. Strategy Computer Games and Discourses of Geopolitical Order. *Eludamos Journal for Computer Game Culture* 4 (2): 181–195. Print.

Pieterse, Jan Niedervan. 2009. Does Empire Matter? In *Recent Themes in World History and the History of the West: Historians in Conversation*, ed. Donald A. Yerxa. University of South Carolina Press. Print.

Roumani, Rhonda. 2006. Muslims Craft Their Own Video Games. *The Christian Science Monitor*. n.p., 6 May. Print.

Royle, Nicholas. 2003. *Jacques Derrida*. London: Routledge. Print. Routledge Critical Thinkers.

Said, Edward W. 1994. *Culture and Imperialism*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books. Print.

Šisler, Vít. 2008. Digital Arabs Representation in Video Games. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11 (2): 203–220. Print.

Šisler, Vit. 2011. Postmodern Imperialism: Geopolitics and the Great Games. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11 (2): n.p. Print.

Smith, Woodruff D. 1991. *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840–1920*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2009. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge. Print.

Soja, Edward W. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. Print.

Tyson, P. 2009. Dar al-Islam: A Barbary States Empire Total War AAR – Part 1. *AfterAction Reporter*. March 22, 2009. Web.

Upstone, Sara. 2009. Writing the Post-Colonial Space: Ben Okri's Magical City and the Subversion of Imperialism. *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 2 (2): 139–159. *Project MUSE*. Web.

Walberg, Eric. 2011. Postmodern Imperialism: Geopolitics and the Great Games. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press. Print.

LUDOGRAPHY

Afkar Media. 2002. *Under Ash* (n.p.: Dar Al Fikr). PC.

Big Huge Games. 2003. *Rise of Nations*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios. PC.

Bowle's and Carver. 1796. *Bowles's Geographical Game*. Boardgame.

Creative Assembly. 2009. *Empire: Total War*. Tokyo: Sega. PC.

Creative Assembly. 2013. Rome: Total War 2 (Tokyo: Sega). PC.

Ensemble Studios. 1999. *Age of Empires 2*. Redmond: Microsoft Game Studios. PC.

Fireaxis Games. 2010. *Civilization V*. Maryland: Fireaxis Games. PC.

Infinity Ward. 2011. *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*. Los Angeles: Activision. PC.

Yager Development. 2012. *Spec Ops: The Line*. Novato, CA: 2K Games. PC.

Playing the Hybrid Subject: The Slave and the Subaltern in Videogames

Abstract Drawing on the work of Lisa Nakamura on race in videogames, and the previous chapter's discussion on colonial cartography in videogames, this chapter will engage with current postcolonial theory such as that framed by commentators on how postcolonial identity is perceived. Complicating Ranajit Guha's initial definition of subalternity, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak sees the subaltern as a voice from below that can never articulate itself. In a similar vein, one needs to consider the issues of identity and the denial of selfhood in slavery. This chapter examines what it may be like to identify with the postcolonial subject in the videogame, especially when the avatar is an ex-slave like Adewale the protagonist of *Freedom Cry* and what this identification or lack thereof means in terms of how identity is constructed in videogames.

Introduction: "Monstrous" Identity in Videogames and Post colonialism

In the videogame *Assassin's Creed: Freedom Cry* (*Freedom Cry* here onwards), the player finds himself or herself in the shoes of Adewale, former slave and now a pirate captain. *Freedom Cry*, an add-on to the piracy-adventures of *Assassin's Creed: Black Flag*, is probably one of the

few games where the player takes on such an avatar. The setting is also unique: the game takes place in the eighteenth-century slave plantations of Saint-Domingue, at a high point of colonialism and shortly before the historical liberation of Haiti by Toussaint l'Overture. Adewale's space in the game is again, a space of protest and of negotiation, a "thirding" of sorts. Like the mute denizens of Kayamgadh in *Somewhere*, or Douloti in Mahasweta Devi's short story, the characters in Saint-Domingue cannot normally speak for themselves. Adewale himself (and the player-as-Adewale) has more agency in the game; his actions, however, are a result of a constant interaction with the colonizers and the rebels. The player-protagonist, in the role of a former slave who is a one-man army freeing slaves and uprooting colonial plantations, is also a complex mix of identities. Starting with the scenario in *Freedom Cry*, this chapter will address how videogames address subaltern and hybrid identities in connection with post colonialism.

As introduced in Chap. 1, identity is a vexed question for the postcolonial subject. Whether it is for the mixed-racial communities such as the Creole and the Anglo-Indian (formerly called Eurasian) populations, or those who have been displaced far from their original homelands, such as the Native American tribes in the USA or the people of Indian-origin in the Antilles, colonialism has been a major factor in the shaping and modifying of identities. Beyond even such physical dislocations and intermingling, is the hybridity that Bhabha observes in the social and cultural spheres across the formerly colonized communities. Ironically, however, the colonial apparatus, although responsible for such dramatic shifts in identities, is uneasy with such departures from the watertight categories and divisions that it attempts to construct in its colonies. A classic example of such a literal enforcement of compartmentalization was Gandhi's expulsion from a first-class railway carriage in South Africa, when as a barrister fresh from England, he had neglected to observe the colour-bar then prevalent in the country. Another major fear of the colonists was one that remained largely unarticulated: miscegenation or the mixing of races. Perhaps, the scariest arch-villain of nineteenth-century fiction, Count Dracula, is the ultimate embodiment of this fear when he literally sucks blood from Mina Harker and effects what might be considered today as a blood-tranfusion. Stephen Arata (1990) discusses at length how the Count was the result of fears of reverse colonialism. To a colonial regime that reinforced its rights over the colonized

populations through a set of stereotypes, the hybrid and any departure from the norm would seem dangerous.

The colonized subject is an object of distancing and difference; he or she is also to be constructed as an "It" or an "Other." In many cases, ranging from Count Dracula to numerous hybrid creatures in fantasy, science fiction, and videogames, the Other is a monster. Derrida articulates the condition of monstrosity extremely clearly:

> A monster is not just that, it is not just this himerical figure in some way that grafts one animal onto another, one living being onto another. A monster is always alive, let us not forget. Monsters are living beings. The monster is also that which appears for the first time and, consequently, is not yet recognized. A monster is a species for which we do not yet have a name, which does not mean that the species is abnormal, namely, the composition or hybridisation of already known species. Simply, it shows itself [elle se montre]—that is what the word monster means—it shows itself in something that is not yet shown and that therefore looks like a hallucination, it strikes the eye, it frightens precisely because no anticipation had prepared one to identify this figure. (Derrida and Kearney 1986, 123)

Derrida goes back to the etymology of the word (*monstrare* in Latin means "to show" and is, incidentally, shared with words such as "demonstrate") to indicate how it is a certain kind of "showing" that is the problem. The fear of the monster (irrespective of whether it causes harm) is due to the unpreparedness to face it or recognize it.

From the lone space-marine on the colonized moons of Mars in *Doom* (id Software 1993) to the Witcher (CD Projekt 2015) in the fictional lands of Velen and Novigrad, videogame players have taken on the avatars of monster-hunters. These monsters are often hybrids—an unexpected mix of creatures—and Geralt, the Witcher, even has a special oil to apply to his sword so that he can kill them easily. These stories seem to replay the narratives of empire from time immemorial. The unknown, usually hailing from the East but not necessarily so, are always othered and considered different while their traits are seen as distinctly less evolved in comparison to the colonial power. Videogames such as *Freedom Cry*, however, present a problem. The antagonists are not monsters as per the "normal" use of the term (although, anybody who does not support slavery might call its perpetrators "monstrous"). Indeed, Adewale, as the battle-scarred former pirate and ex-slave,

is certainly an "Other" and might be cast as a monster in the eyes of colonialism. For example, a British sergeant articulates his feelings against the Indian soldiers who fought the British in 1857: "The men are mad, and oh, how they go about swearing and vowing to avenge this atrocity. They are wrought up to the highest pitches of madness, and are burning to go at these *murdering monsters*" (Peers 2006, 69: my italics).[1] Whether Adewale is a "hero" in the same league as Geralt the Witcher or the nameless space marine of *Doom* or whether he is a "murdering monster" is a moot question. In the context of rethinking identity in a postcolonial setting both playing either role is equally problematic.

RACE, IDENTITY AND STEREOTYPES IN VIDEOGAMES: EXTENDING THE DEBATES

The problematic representation of Native Americans, Middle-Eastern peoples, and other formerly colonized nations in videogames has already been highlighted. There are many games, however, where the representation of racial inequity is carried out more subtly. Jessica Langer observes the following about the races in *World of Warcraft* (referred to as *WoW*, here onwards):

> I argue first that the Alliance and the Horde are divided along racial lines not into good and evil but into familiar and other or foreign, and that this division has consequences not only within the game but in the real world as well. To this end, it is helpful to use aspects of postcolonial theory to conceptualize these divisions. (Langer 2011, 88)

Langer reiterates Nakamura's contention that racial inequity and oppression is not absent from cyberspace but that it occurs differently. Nakamura, invoking postcolonial critiques in her "cybertypes" theory, warns against seeing cyberspace through a "utopian vision of […] a promoter of a radically democratic form of discourse" (Nakamura 1995).

Maria Fernandez points out how there was a tendency to believe that "in discussions of electronic media 'twenty years of post-colonial theory simply disappear'" (Fernandez 1999, 59). In Chap. 1, some of the reasons for the long absence of a postcolonial critique of cyberculture have been stated already; Fernandez adds to that the charge of "utopian universalism" that worked as a replacement of the civilizing mission of the earlier colonial enterprises. She presents the problem in starkly disturbing terms:

[I]n most of the world, connecting requires money, utility infrastructure, literacy, and competency in English. Like the rhetoric of the civilizing mission in previous colonialisms, utopian rhetorics of electronic media occlude the practical project of creating new markets and work forces for capitalist enterprises. In electronic media this applies to all levels of production, from writing code to the assembly line.[…] In Said's opinion, these technologies are crucial for the construction of identity in formerly colonized regions, since colonized peoples learn about themselves through these forms of knowledge. (ibid.)

The question of identity is intertwined with digital technologies and as Fernandez claims, access becomes a major issue. Max Padilla comments, in his essay "A Gay Chicano Lost in Cyberspace" written in 1995, "Despite the hype about the Internet, a lot of my friends aren't tripping over themselves to log on. We're not technophobes, mind you; just people of colour who can't afford the merchandise" (Holeton 1997, 121). Although the parameters of the problem have changed, the nature of it has not—especially when one views it in the global perspective where there are many locations like the thousands of villages in the Indian subcontinent which are only now beginning to get Internet access over two decades later. The claim to utopian universalism in cyberspace worryingly also helps cloak the deep-seated inequities of identity and the way in which it is recognized in cybercultures—videogames are only one case in point.

Exposing the similar trend of identity-politics in videogames, Langer astutely points out the deeply drawn racial outlines in *WoW*:

[R]ace in World of Warcraft functions thus: trolls correspond directly with black Caribbean folk, particularly but not exclusively Jamaican; tauren represent native North American people (specifically Native American and Canadian First Nations tribes); humans correspond with white British and white American people; and dwarves correlate to the Scottish. The other races, both Alliance and Horde, do not correspond so directly to real-world peoples, but they still represent the general familiarity or foreignness of their factions. (Langer 2011, 89)

Nakamura points out how MOOs and early videogames portray oriental racial stereotypes—the example of Dhalsim in *Streetfighter 2* is a case in point. Dhalsim is an Indian yogic fighter who sports a necklace of skulls and his name is derived from two Hindi words, *dal,* the Indian dish of

lentils, and *Seem,* which means "sesame" (*Streetfighter Wiki*, n.d.). His wife, incidentally, is called Sari, after the Indian garment! As Langer's comment reveals, not much seems to have changed in later games and besides *WoW*, popular games such as *Skyrim* (Bethesda Softworks 2011) carry similar implications (the Redguards, who have African features are described as fierce and proud warriors who nevertheless cannot serve as a disciplined group).[2] Nakamura notes that "cybertypes are the images of race that arise when fears, anxieties and desires of privileged Western users are scripted into a textual/graphical medium that is still in constant flux and revision"—for her, these "images of raced Others become necessary symptoms of the postcolonial condition" (Nakamura 2002, 18). Similarly, Rebecca Mir and Trevor Owens point out how in Sid Meier's *Colonization* (2008) "native peoples are defined by the game's procedural rhetoric, *at the functional level of the code,* to be the 'Other'" (Mir and Owens 2013, 96). Langer notes how in the stereotypes in *WoW*, there are "echoes of Homi Bhabha's assertion that stereotyping is a method of making otherness 'safe' and comfortable for the colonizer" (Langer 2011, 91). While the whole purpose of stereotypes is to "fix" identities so that they are rendered safe and predictable, Bhabha's full analysis is missed in Langer's comment. Bhabha sees in the stereotype an ambivalence that works together with and against the fixity that the colonial system wishes to use it for:

> [T]he stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated […] if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved. (Bhabha 1983)

The ambivalence is at the very core of the process of "fixation" itself: even in the act of stereotyping, there is a tension that the stereotype is not final. Nakamura also outlines a similar problem as she goes back to the digital roots of the notion of stereotype. She identifies her usage of the term "cybertypes" as what she calls a "kludge or hack" that "acknowledges that identity on-line is still typed, still mired in oppressive roles even if the body has been left behind or bracketed" (Nakamura). The ambivalence of the stereotype disturbs the colonial notions of identity; it will be argued that a similar situation is to be perceived in videogames also.

Mimicry, Hybridity and Identity-Tourism

Speaking of the "Other," Bhabha sees it as the object both of desire and derision. There is a wish to become the Other while at the same time there is one to spurn it. In this doubling, the stereotype "is the scene of a similar fantasy and defence-the desire for an originality which is again threatened by the differences of race, colour and culture" (Bhabha 1983, 27). Not all postcolonial theorists agree with the ambivalence that Bhabha posits; Fanon, for example, also speaks of mimicry but for him it is less of an ambivalent process. Before returning to the complexities of Bhabha's argument, it is necessary to approach the question through Fanon's complaint.

For Fanon, it is a fact that white men consider themselves superior to black men and that black men wish to prove at all costs the equal value of their intellect. Fanon, of course, also notes the difference among black people themselves and points out that proximity to European culture is seen as the basis of such difference: the man from Antilles "is more 'civilized' than the African, that is, he is closer to the white man; and this difference prevails not only in back streets and on boulevards but also in public service and the army. […] On one side he has the Europeans, whether born in his own country or in France, and on the other he has the Senegalese" (Fanon 1967, 15). What is aspired to is, therefore, whiteness and he thereby brings up the question of mimicry. Fanon is scathingly critical of mimicry: he sees it as the loss of an autonomous cultural identity and he wants "writers to escape mimicry" (Hawley 2001, 297).

In recent videogame criticism, Harrer and Pichlmair (2015) have chosen Fanon as the sole voice of post colonialism in their critique of Capcom's controversial game *Resident Evil 5* (Capcom 2009), which quite notoriously has the player killing hordes of zombified Africans. They identify the trope of white supremacy in the game by comparing it with the German *Herrensafari* (big-game hunting, which they translate as "gentlemen-safari" but which could also be translated as "master-safari") in 1950s Namibia, a leisure activity that they see as the domination and taming of the Other. They also bring up Fanon's concerns with how the colonized is forced to understand his or her identity from the point-of-view of the colonizers:

> The black woman has only one way open to her and one preoccupation - to whiten the race. The mulatto[sic!] woman wants not only to become

white but also to avoid slipping back. What in act is more illogical than a mulatto woman marrying a black man? For you have to understand once and for all that it's a question of saving the race. (Fanon, quoted in Harrer and Pichlmair 2015, 8)

In the game, Harrer and Pichlmair comment that the protagonist's side-kick is a local black woman Sheva who "desperately wishes […] to frame herself as a 'partner'" (ibid.) although the only effect it has is to "trigger Chris' flashback of Jill—the white woman that [sic] ought to be on his side" (ibid.). They conclude their assessment of Sheva in what they see as a Fanonian problem: "Whiteness at any cost is exactly what Sheva gets in RE5. Upon Chris' command, she is willing to eradicate all things black from her home continent, until white blonde Jill is resurrected towards the end of the game and Sheva is history" (ibid.). The Fanonian position helps to delineate some of the key problems of post colonialism in clear-cut terms; in itself, however, such a position leaves much ignored.

As Bhabha has argued, developing Fanon's position, mimicry is not a one-way process and it goes hand in hand with hybridity. In the colonial system, the identity of the white colonial masters is altered, despite and because of the stereotypes they enforce. Consider, for example, the stereotype of white superiority in the context of nineteenth-century attitudes to Ireland. Charles Kingsley's infamous comment comes to mind: "I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw [in Ireland] … I don't believe they are our fault. … But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much" (Curtis 1968, 84). On the one hand, here is a stereotype of white superiority that has been challenged for Kingsley and on the other, although he tries to distance himself from the colonized Irish in his comment, "I don't believe they are our fault" (which incidentally, sounds ominously like the more common "white-man's burden) and by bestializing the Other, it only reinforces his uneasiness at the proximity he perceives. The relation to the other is one that necessitates the recognition of the hybrid and fluid self; despite the stereotypes, the fear of a Count Dracula or other "monsters" cannot be expunged. The distance between the self and the monstrous Other is not too great, after all.

In yet another article on *RE5*, Geyser and Tshabalala take a more nuanced approach where they focus on the "liminal nature of the zombie also assists in the eliciting of an abject response from the player: a horror which repulses and attracts simultaneously, and keeps the player

engrossed" (Geyser and Tshabalala 2011). They also identify distinct stereotypes that the game employs. The protagonist is of course the model American hero and Sheva fits the Hollywood model of the light-skinned black heroine and "talks more like Lara Croft than her thickly-accented foes" (Dan Whitehead, quoted in Geyser and Tshabalala). Africa is seen as homogenized and post-independence African countries are seemingly incapable of looking after themselves without Western participation (compare Chakraborti's argument, cited in Chap. 2). The zombies are called "Majini", meaning "evil spirit" in Swahili. The very need to construct these stereotypes reveals much that contradicts them.

"Evil spirit" is a simplistic description of the nature of zombies. The word "zombie" itself is a hybrid, having originated in Haitian Creole and the West African words *zunbi* (meaning "fetish") and *nzambi* (meaning "god"). Just as Bhabha describes the ambiguity of the colonial stereotype where the Other is both desired and derided, Geyser and Tshabalala also see a similar dual experience with the zombies in *RE5*. The zombie is both dead and alive, both human and not-human. Geyser and Tshabalala aptly identify that its "hybrid disjuncture, the inability to situate as either subject or object, is what gives the zombie its grotesque power" (ibid.). This "grotesque power" is also one that allows the zombies to infect, or reduce their difference with "normal" human beings. The colonial norm is again under threat in games such as *RE5* and although the victory condition is the removal of the threat, the very playing of the game brings back the engagement with the Other. The superiority of the colonizer is in question.

The attraction toward the Other and the desire to take on its identity is not confined to the colonized alone. The reaching out to the colonized or the taking up of the colonized identity is a common occurrence in colonial narratives. As mentioned in Chap. 1 already, the identity of Kurz in *Heart of Darkness* is a case in point. A very popular real-life instance of "going native" is that of Colonel T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia. Rudyard Kipling's Kim (an Irish boy who grows up among Indians and can pass for an Indian although he is a *sahib*) and Mowgli (a human boy who grows up among animals) also show the colonial fascination with the hybrid. Only, in this case, it is the colonizer trying to "become" the Other instead of the reverse, as seen in Fanon's Antilleans. Nakamura sees the same scenario transposed to cyberspace and terms it "identity-tourism":

> The choice to enact oneself as a samurai warrior in LambdaMOO constitutes a form of identity tourism which allows a player to appropriate an Asian racial identity without any of the risks associated with being a racial minority in real life. While this might seem to offer a promising venue for non-Asian characters to see through the eyes of the Other by performing themselves as Asian through on-line textual interaction, the fact that the personae chosen are overwhelmingly Asian stereotypes blocks this possibility by reinforcing these stereotypes. (Nakamura 2002, 40)

She draws on the example of Lawrence of Arabia and Kim as used by Said to explain her position. She claims, like Said, that identity tourism is a risk-free experience because the colonizer has the huge apparatus of empire behind his or her back. In fact, Said asks what he feels is a rhetorical question: "Was there ever a native fooled by the blue or green-eyed Kims and Lawrences who passed among the inferior races as agent adventurers?" (Said in Kipling 2006, 44). The point is not about natives being fooled, though. The stereotypes that are used in such identity tourism are ultimately undermined and the other remains an object to be desired and derided but nevertheless in constant slippage. Therefore, while identity tourism remains a symptom of the colonial unease with the other, it cannot be the solution.

Furthermore, another point needs to be made. In Harrer and Pichlmair's analysis, an "auto-ethnographic" methodology was used, whereby the first author's experience of playing *Resident Evil 5* from a drawing room in Copenhagen provided the experiential data for the analysis. One would also need to think of what the experiential data would be like if someone were to play the game somewhere in Zimbabwe or Zaire.

"Becoming-Adewale": *Freedom Cry's* Take on Colonial Identity

Stereotypes and hybrids, opposed as they are, both illustrate the fissures in the conception of identity within the colonial spaces. For both colonized and colonizer, identity is characterized by fluidity and the slippage of the clear boundaries and selfhoods that both groups try to achieve. Returning to the discussion of *Freedom Cry* and its protagonist Adewale, this section will try to examine how identity in postcolonial readings of videogames is affected by the notions of hybridity, mimicry, stereotypes, and identity-tourism.

Adewale is a liminal figure, moving between death and life—he starts in the game having survived a shipwreck and being left for dead. He is also a former slave and although as the game's protagonist, he enjoys the agency that the player has, his memories of his not having any agency cannot be too distant. Drawing on his fictional biography from the *Assassin's Creed* wikia reveals intriguing details. Adewale is described as having "the brand of a slave, the eloquence of a scholar, the hands of a sailor and an Assassin's hood" (Ubisoft Montreal 2013). He is said to speak English, French, and Spanish and is first the quartermaster of a pirate ship and then a captain in his own right. In the series, he is a member of the Assassin Brotherhood and is pledged to fight against the Templars who have been part of a centuries-old conspiracy of global conquest. In *Freedom Cry*, however, although he originally starts the story on Assassin business, he puts this aside to become a liberator of slaves and an abettor of the Maroons of Haiti. At the same time, despite his achievements in the Assassin order and among the pirates, he recognizes that some of the pirates would not accept him as captain—possibly because of his race, skin colour, and his being a former slave (Fig. 3.1).

As such, he is a hybrid and an Othered personality. To the colonial slaveholders and slave ships, he is, doubtless, a monster. In terms of

Fig. 3.1   Screenshot from *Assassin's Creed—Freedom Cry* (Ubisoft 2013)

agency, too, he is a hybrid: as protagonist of *Freedom Cry* and as an ex-slave, he confronts slaves who have no agency and in this, his own recognition of agency is ironic. In *Assassin's Creed: Rogue* (Ubisoft Sofia 2014), the player, as Shay Cormac, a protagonist of Irish origin, has to kill Adewale. The agency that Adewale has in *Freedom Cry* is to be undercut by the plot of the later games. *Freedom Cry* is not a full release game but rather a DLC (downloaded content) that is not available on dvd in the stores. It is ironic and intriguing that the only game where the ex-slave hero gets agency is one which is an in-between of sorts and which is not available to buy off-the-shelves.

Freedom Cry's colonial setting and the character of its protagonist make it the ideal example for studying how videogames address postcolonial notions of identity and the problems they embody. Stepping into the avatar of Adewale opens up a major possibility space for exploring identity(ies). As Adewale, the player's identity is both hybrid and fluid; the process could be described not as a "being" but rather as a "becoming." Elsewhere (Mukherjee 2015), I find it useful to look at the process of identity formation in videogames as a "becoming" in the sense Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari use the term. A simplified description of the concept might be helpful:

> Processes of becoming are not predicated upon a stable, centralised 'self' who supervises their unfolding. Rather, they rest of a non-unitary, multi-layered, dynamic subject. Becoming woman/animal/insect is an affect that flows; like writing it a composition, or a location that needs to be constructed in the encounter with others. All becomings are minoritarian, that is to say they inevitably and necessarily move into the direction of the 'other' of classical dualism (such as sexualized, racialized and/or naturalized others). Yet becomings do not stop there; they become displaced and are reterritorialized in the process. (Parr 2010, 307)

It is in such a sense that the questions of postcolonial identity can be examined as a "becoming-Adewale." To become Adewale is a process and not one fixed entity; it is to be a hybrid of the agent and the non-agent, the colonized and colonizer, as well as the free and the enslaved. It is this fluid identity that is a challenge to the colonial system as much as Adewale's Assassin skills of killing from the shadows are to his French colonial antagonists in the game. This is also reminiscent of the myths around the Mau Mau leader, Dedan Kimathi, which might have been

equally disturbing for his colonial antagonists: he was supposed to be able to crawl for thirty miles and even more intriguingly, change into a white man.

Slavery and the Subaltern in Videogames

How far it is possible to understand and experience the processes of colonial and postcolonial identity through videogames and the increased space of possibilities and involvement that they offer? "Becoming-Adewale" is a metaphor for engaging with such a question and because of the processual nature of the metaphor itself, it is not a conclusive answer. In the previous section, the fear caused by Adewale among the colonial masters of Saint-Domingue was mentioned: the culmination of this fear lies in Adewale's assassination of the colonial governor De Fayet. In game terms, the assassination is the end of the game and what follows is not action by the player but the end of the story through cutscenes. The ending might be a momentary victory for the freed slaves but De Fayet's last words are very disturbing. He dies, saying with uncomprehending laughter, "Those slaves… but they are not human … without the discipline of their masters they turn to rebellion … as you have" (Ubisoft Montreal 2013). The conclusion is that slaves are not human and that indeed they do not have a self that is worth defending and liberating. Without the Western influence, they can only achieve chaos. Fanon, too, sees the same logic at work in colonialism but in this "zone of nonbeing" he also sees possibility: "At the risk of arousing the resentment of my colored brothers, I will say that *the black is not a man*. There is a *zone of non-being*, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born" (Fanon 1967, 8). Through Adewale's eyes, it will be possible to attempt to recognize this denial of selfhood that is also part of understanding identity from a postcolonial perspective.

Frederick Douglass, American abolitionist and former slave, makes an important observation: a free human being "cannot see things in the same light with the slave, because he does not, and cannot, look from the same point from which the slave does" (Douglass 2006 [1845]). The condition of slavery can only be spoken of or described *from outside*. Similarly, it is only possible to understand Spivak's conception of subalternity not from within the condition but outside. This section will discuss both slavery and subalternity as aspects of understanding

postcolonial identity that are, nevertheless, only approachable at a remove from the actual experience and not from within.

The condition of slavery is poignantly expressed in this scene from the autobiography of another American abolitionist, Norman Barton Wood:

> It was a morning in April, sharp, crisp and clear, and we were rounding a bend in the Ohio River just below Wheeling when I caught sight of a strapping darky, an ax flung over his shoulder, jogging along on the Virginia bank of the river, singing as he went. "De cold, frosty morning make a niggah feel good, Wid de ax on de shoulder he go jogging to de wood." "Halloo, there! Where are you going?" I called to him. "Gwine choppin in de woods!" "Chopping for yourself?" "*Han't got no self.*" "Slave, are you?" "Dat's what I is." (Wood 2012 [1897], Emphasis added)

The words "han't got no self" are a chilling pointer to the denial of agency that slavery involves. To address slavery or to protest against it, one has to move outside the condition. Fanon, however, still considers this "zone of non-being" as also the possibility space for upheaval.

Some recent videogames besides *Freedom Cry* have directly addressed the question of slavery and certain sections of *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Softworks 2008) and *BioShock: Infinite* (Irrational Games 2013) come to mind immediately. In *Fallout 3*, the player has to interact with slavers who play "a fairly large role in Fallout 3 […] several quests feature slavery as either major or minor elements" (*Fallout 3* wiki n.d.). In the quests, the player can choose to aid the escaped slaves or help the slavers capture them. He or she can also choose to own a slave called Clover, who serves as a bodyguard because as the slave-owner disturbingly describes "she's crazy in love with whoever holds the leash" (*Fallout 3* wiki). Clover occasionally speaks some stock dialogues such as "Can I have a better gun?" and she does turn hostile to the player under certain circumstances—however, although she is described as being brainwashed and completely subservient, she is also ironically categorized as "slaver" rather than "slave" by the game. Similarly, the player comes across the leader of the escaped slaves, Hannibal Hamlin (incidentally named after President Lincoln's deputy) who also voices his complaint against the slavers and enlists the player's help against them. Hamlin, like Clover, is different from the slaves themselves—the slaves have no agency whatsoever. Both Clover and Hamlin, in the small way in which they can choose to impact the game, do so *outside* their slave identities. Similarly,

BioShock: Infinite also addresses issues of slavery, its abolition, and the problem of agency. Alejandro Quan-Madrid writes of his experience of winning a raffle in the game:

> It turns out the "prize" is a chance to throw the first pitch at a tied up black woman and white man. They were presumably caught being an intimate couple, and the man pleads for people to spare the woman, claiming responsibility for the ordeal. (Quan-Madrid 2012)

The colonial fears of miscegenation are obvious here as is the fact that the black woman is not given a voice. One of the characters in the game ponders what separates a man from a slave: he announces that a man chooses while a slave obeys. The game recognizes the colonial notion of the slave being less than human and the absence of choice in the condition of the slave.

As games critique racism and slavery, they also open up the question of the denial of agency in more than one way. A seemingly innocent attempt to "put the student in the middle of important and interesting points in history" in the *Playing History 2: The Slave Trade* game (Serious Games Interactive 2013) contained a level that involved the player having to dump slaves with their crumpled bodies into the hold of a ship and to squeeze them into the available space as efficiently as possible—"Tetris fashion." Needless to say, this "Slave Tetris" has been much criticized the world over and its "educational value" being deemed questionable, the level has been removed from the game. Again, this is a game where the slaves have no voice whatsoever—perhaps, more than any other game discussed so far, the slaves are objects, just like *Tetris* blocks. Another game that addresses slavery, albeit in a more sensitive way than the previous example, is *Thralled* (Oliveira 2016 TBA). Still awaiting release, the game tells the story of an escaped slave Isaura who traverses a "nightmarish representation of the New World, reliving a distorted reminiscence of life in captivity and the events that led to the taking away of her baby boy" (*Thralled* website). In the game, whenever Isaura stops to remove an obstacle, she has to put down her baby and whenever she does that, she runs the risk of losing the baby to the shadowy presence of her own remembered past. Although she has broken free of slavery, Isaura does not speak in the game but even more worryingly, she is haunted by her memories of slavery that threaten to take away her future and return her to her past.

Coming back to Adewale, when he frees the numerous slaves in the colony, his thoughts and his memory of being enslaved are unknown to the player. This memory is, however, an intrinsic part of how he conceives his identity and cannot be ignored. The agency he has as the protagonist of the game and as the liberator of slaves, occurs simultaneously with the memories of being unfree. Even as he dies at Adewale's hands, the governor De Fayet still identifies him as not being human. Moreover, the very liberation of the slaves that sets him apart both from the slaves and their captors, becomes a problematic act within the game's mechanics. The game rewards the player (as Adewale) with better weapons depending on the number of slaves who have been freed. Freed slaves become the currency of the game—quite the opposite of the lofty intentions that the game had started out with. Bhabha's comment about the real-life liberator of the slaves of Haiti and Saint-Domingue, Toussaint L'Ouverture, is an important parallel:

> What do we make of the figure of Toussaint […] at the moment when he grasps the tragic lesson that the moral, *modern* disposition of mankind, enshrined in the sign of the Revolution, only fuels the archaic racial factor in the society of slavery? What do we learn from that split consciousness, that "colonial" disjunction of modern times and colonial and slave histories, where the reinvention of the self and the remaking of the social are strictly out of joint? (Bhabha 2004, 236)

Bhabha is attempting to describe the situation of modernity as a postcolonial experience and it will be necessary to return to his conclusions shortly. For now, the "split consciousness" of Toussaint, whereby the reinvention of the self and remaking of the social are out of joint, needs to be assessed. Adewale's role in freeing the slaves of Saint-Domingue is not an end in itself and as pointed out, it ends up having the opposite connotation to what it aimed to be. In the sequel to *Freedom Cry*, his death at the hands of Shay, the son of Irish colonial-emigres, indicates that his actions in *Freedom Cry* have not proved to be a solution against empire. As mentioned earlier, his sense of agency in freeing the slaves works constantly within the consciousness of his former enslavement. Circumscribed by the split-consciousness of slave/not-slave and self/other, Adewale is a hybrid for all these reasons and more. Any conception of his identity is, therefore, unfixed and fluid.

Perhaps a little more needs to be said in connection to the subaltern, here. In Chap. 1, following Spivak, it was stated that the subaltern was

not yet another voice of protest but rather it is a "voice from below" that can never articulate itself. The subaltern also lacks agency to participate in the functioning of society. Although not necessarily bound by chains like the slaves in Saint-Domingue, the subaltern are the creations of race, religion, gender, caste, class, and other divisions. The category is not only the result of colonialism but it existed before and persists after the age of modern imperialism. Existing on a liminal plane, the subaltern is hardly perceptible. Going back to the example of the cricket match in the Bollywood film, *Lagaan*, one cannot help remembering the village untouchable who is included last-minute in the team because of his unbeatable spin bowling. In itself, a Bollywood postcolonial response to the British Raj, the film features the *dalit* or untouchable in a way that raises to the forefront not just colonial problems but those that are deeply rife in modern India. Kachra (the name means "garbage" in Hindi and might not be his real name) does not get to speak much; he follows the lead of Bhuvan, the protagonist and does exactly as he is told. As stated before, subaltern studies started as part of a new historiography that moved away from nationalist histories and saw the subaltern as the "maker of his own destiny" (Chakrabarty 2000). Dipesh Chakrabarty, commenting on Ranajit Guha's (1996) original conception of subalternity underscores the fact that writing the history of the subaltern was a "quest" where Guha's subjects, the peasants, did not write anything directly into the archives and that "Guha makes no claim that the 'insurgent consciousness' he discusses is indeed 'conscious,' that it existed inside the heads of peasants" (Chakrabarty 2000). Guha derives his content by studying the relationships between the subalterns and the elites and between the subalterns themselves. Spivak, in her famous essay mentioned earlier, questions even this notion of the subaltern as the "maker of his own destiny" by pointing out that the subaltern subject itself is fragmented.

It was in the latter context that in Chap. 1, the example of the game *Somewhere* was used. In the game, the characters of the mythical city, Kayamgadh, are voiceless and the protagonist does not have a fixed identity—the gameplay mechanic makes the player sneak up on characters and get their identities instead. As in the earlier discussion of slavery, this is another case where identity is fluid and any distinct sense of identity and its expression is denied. It should be noted here that in this context a very specific usage of the subaltern is being considered—that of those identities that are voiceless and fragmented in their colonial and

postcolonial predicament. The slaves freed by Adewale and the voiceless conquered peasants in *Empire: Total War* all come under this category. Is the subaltern totally bereft of agency? In what compares well with Fanon's comment on the zone of non-being as also being the site of upheaval, from Guha's work onwards, subaltern history has addressed modes of resistance. Uday Chandra sees the possibility of resistance in the subaltern, thus:

> To resist in our narrower but arguably more robust sense of the term is, therefore, to minimally apprehend the conditions of one's subordination, to endure or withstand those conditions in everyday life, and to act with sufficient intention and purpose to negotiate power relations from below in order to rework them in a more favourable or emancipatory direction. (Chandra 2015)

This could be applicable to the silent characters and sneaking identities of *Somewhere* as well as the nameless peasants in *Empire: Total War* who from time to time cause difficulties for the player (as the imperial governor of ruler) by rebellions and strikes. They might not be heroes like Adewale but their resistance is also, arguably, manifested through similarly fragmented identities—albeit perhaps in a different medium and in different degrees. To return to Bhabha's original comments on Toussaint, his idea of modernity is one that is a catachresis:

> The "subalterns and ex-slaves" who now seize the spectacular event of modernity do so in a catachrestic gesture of reinscribing modernity's "caesura" and using it to transform the locus of thought and writing in the postcolonial critique. (Bhabha 2004, 237)

The very notion of modernity is then a re-inscribing, by the Adewales and Toussaints as well as the subalterns and ex-slaves, whereby its very meaning is seen to be continually altered and fragmented.

Conclusion: Fragmented Identities, Modernity and History

Any discussion of identity from a postcolonial perspective is to be one that has no conclusive answers or clear descriptions. Videogames, as part of the newest media to take up the question, bring their own

complicated multiplicity and fluidity of identity formation to postcolonial studies. In Adewale's avatar and in those from the many other games that address colonial history, videogames reflect on the one hand, the fascination for colonial and orientalist stereotypes and one the other, the resistance to such "fixings" and the coming together of multiple hybrid identities. To end at the end of Adewale's mission in *Freedom Cry*, he responds to governor De Fayet's dying words that the slaves aren't human and they resort to murder and destruction without the discipline that slavery has imposed on them with the words, "I only wish that were true" (Ubisoft Montreal 2013). Truth is not something that emerges in the quest for identity in the discourses of postcolonial theory. What does become more obvious is the catachrestic construction of modernity, as Bhabha would have it, as opposed to the comfortable stereotypes of race, class, and agency within which it is often understood. Another result is a rethinking of how the colonial accounts reshape the notion of human history; following the previous chapter's engagement with space, the next chapter will pursue the question of how temporality is conceived within the framework of empire and what the implications are for modernity.

Notes

1. The Revolt of 1857, also called the First War of Indian Independence, was a massive uprising of the Indian soldiers or Sepoys who served the British East India Company against their British masters.
2. I am grateful to Emil Hammar for pointing this out.

References

Arata, Stephen D. 1990. The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization. *Victorian Studies* 33 (4): 621–645. Print.

Bhabha, Homi. 1983. The Other Question … The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse. *Screen* 24 (6): 18–36. n.p. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. 2004. *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge. Print.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography. *Nepantla: Views from South* 1 (1): 9–32. Print.

Chandra, Uday. 2015. Rethinking Subaltern Resistance. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45 (4): 563–573. Web.

Curtis, L. Perry. 1968. *Anglo-Saxons and Celts; A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England,* Bridgeport, CT: Conference on British Studies at the University of Bridgeport (distributed by New York University Press, New York). Print.

Douglass, Frederick. 2006. The Portable Frederick Douglass. Ed. John Stauffer and Henry Louis Gates. London: Penguin Classics. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Pluto Press. Print.

Fernández, María. 1999. Postcolonial Media Theory. *Art Journal* 58 (3): 59–73. *JSTOR.* Web.

Geyser, Hanli, and Pippa Tshabalala. 2011. Return to Darkness: Representations of Africa in Resident Evil 5. DiGRA Conference, Web.

Guha, Ranajit (ed.). 2000. *Subaltern Studies: Volume I.* Reprint edition. Delhi: Oxford Paperbacks. Print.

Harrer, Sabine, and Martin Pichlmair. 2015. Black Skins, White Guns: Becoming Colonizer in Resident Evil 5. Philosophy of Computer Games Conference. Web.

Hawley, John Charles. 2001. *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies:* Westport, CT: Greenwood. Print.

Holeton, Richard. 1997. *Composing Cyberspace: Identity, Community, and Knowledge in the Electronic Age*, 1st ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill. Print.

Kearney, Richard, and Jacques Derrida (eds.). 1986. Deconstruction and the Other. In *Dialogues With Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. Print.

Kipling, Rudyard. 2006 [1901]. *Kim*, ed. Edward W. Said and Verónica Canales. Barcelona: Grupo Editorial Random House Mondadori. Print.

Langer, Jessica. 2011. The Familiar and the Foreign: Playing Post colonialism in World of Warcraft. *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft® Reader*, ed. Hilde G. Corneliussen and Jill Walker Rettberg. Cambridge: The MIT Press. Print.

Mir, Rebecca, and Trevor Owens. 2013. Modelling Indigenous Peoples: Unpacking Ideology in Sid Meier's Colonization. *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Andrew B. R. Elliott. New York: Bloomsbury. Print.

Mukherjee, Souvik. 2015. *Video Games and Storytelling: Reading Games and Playing books*, 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Print.

Nakamura, Lisa. 1995. Race In/for Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet. *Works and Days* 13: 181–193. Print.

Nakamura, Lisa. 2002. *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet.* New York: Routledge. Print.

Parr, Adrian (ed.). 2010. *The Deleuze Dictionary.* 2nd Rev. ed. Edinburgh University Press. Print.

Peers, Douglas. 2006. *India under Colonial Rule: 1700–1885*, 1st ed. Harlow: Longman. Print.

Quan-Madrid, Alejandro. 2012. BioShock Infinite Forces Players to Confront Racism (Hands-on Preview). *VentureBeat*. n.p., 12 July. Web. 23 November 2016.

Wood, Norman Barton. 2012 [1897]. *The White Side of a Black Subject: A Vindication of the Afro-American Race, From the Landing of Slaves at St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, to the Present Time*. n.p: HardPress. Print.

LUDOGRAPHY

Bethesda Softworks. 2008. *Fallout 3*. Rockville, MD: Bethesda. PC.

Bethesda Softworks. 2011. *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. Rockville, MD: Bethesda. PC.

Capcom. 2009. *Resident Evil 5*. Osaka: Capcom. Arcade.

CD Projekt. 2015. *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt*. Lodz: CD Projekt. PC.

id Software. 1993. *Doom*. New York: GT Interactive. PC.

Irrational Games. 2013. *BioShock Infinite*. Novato, CA: 2k Games. PC.

Oliveira, M. TBA 2016. *Thralled*. n.p.: Tiffany Mang. Ouya.

Serious Games Interactive. 2013. *Playing History 2: The Slave Trade*. New York: Serious Games Interactive. PC.

Ubisoft Montreal. 2013. *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag—Freedom Cry*. Montreal: Ubisoft. PC.

Ubisoft Sofia. 2014. *Assassin's Creed: Rogue*. Sofia: Ubisoft. PC.

Playing Alternative Histories:
Post colonialism, History, and Videogames

Abstract Videogames allow players to replay their stories; strategy games based on historical situations, therefore, effectively play out historical events from a counter-factual perspective. In postcolonialist historiography, the past is often viewed as a colonized terrain where indigenous histories have been eradicated and rewritten by colonizing powers. Many videogames attempt to represent history from a critical and "othered" perspective. On the one hand, while videogames claim to provide a critical reading of history they games often end up supporting the dominant narrative and on the other, as games are played out, they continually challenge dominant narratives by changing the conclusions, the events and the validity of monolinear readings. This chapter will address the key problems regarding the postcolonial (re)construction of temporality and history in terms of how videogames provide a hitherto unique perspective on the issue.

Keywords Alternative histories · Reverse colonialism · Plural history Subaltern

"Africa Is Unhistorical": The Denial of History to the Colonial Subject

Adewale's appearance in and departure from Saint-Domingue was a definite influence on the events of the Haitian slave rebellion according to history as it is retold by the *Assassin's Creed* series. For us, it never happened, as there is no record in any archives of the time. One might argue that the relevant records were destroyed and that the events could have been remembered and passed down for generations. Then again, whose memories are to be considered acceptable? Following these questions, this chapter will address two major questions. The first relates to whether the postcolonial subject even has a history and how that history can be represented in videogames. The second is about how the multiple endings of videogames make it possible to play out the events of history differently and whether such cases of history being "reversed" relate to postcolonial notions of history. In the process it will address discourses of nationhood and of reading "against the grain."

The fragmented and hybrid postcolonial subject might struggle on trying to look back at the past: denied selfhood and even the full status of humanity, the "natives" were also *sans* history for the colonial occupiers. G.F.W. Hegel, whose philosophy influenced the historical materialism of the Marxists as well as many later thinkers, had declared that Africa had no history. Compare Karl Marx's equally problematic pronouncement:

> India, then, could not escape the fate of being conquered, and the whole of her past history, if it be anything, is the history of the successive conquests she has undergone. Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society. The question, therefore, is not whether the English had a right to conquer India, but whether we are to prefer India conquered by the Turk, by the Persian, by the Russian, to India conquered by the Briton. (Marx 1853)

Although Marx criticizes colonialism and the East India Company elsewhere, the passage above is almost an apology for colonialism. In his classic *History of India*, James Mill writes that Indian history is "a highly interesting portion of British History" (Mill and Wilson 1848, 2). Marxist historian Edward Thompson, writing in the early twentieth century, said "Indians

are not historians and they rarely show any critical ability" (Gregg 1999, 49). Kwame Appiah notes how even in the 1960s, speaking "*ex* cathedra, from podium of the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford", H.R Trevor-Roper had "declared to an audience on the BBC: 'Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But, at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness…'" (Appiah 1998). Appiah points out that "even Herodotus, the father of Trevor-Roper's *disciplina*, would have challenged these easy certainties" (Appiah 1998). Nevertheless, such stereotypes persist even in popular notions of history. It is intriguing to review how videogames address these issues.

Colonial Stereotypes in Videogame Portrayals of History

In the earlier chapters, some of the representations of modern-day Africa and India were addressed. The depiction of a modern African city in *Resident Evil* as corrupt and chaotic is indicative of such stereotypes in use. An Indian city in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* (Infinity Ward 2011) is shown as emptied of the otherwise teeming local populace while the Russians battle it out on Indian territory with the British and the Americans. Likewise, speaking of how videogames portray Latin American settings, Philip Penix-Tadsen comments on the how *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* uses the Brazilian *favela* and the football field as "a signifier of Brazilian culture" (Penix-Tadsen 2016, 164). There are many games set in Vietnam but rarely do they make any reference to the colonial situation in Vietnam. The French and Japanese occupation are hardly ever mentioned and usually when games do portray historical scenarios, such as *Battlefield Vietnam* (Digital Illusions 2004) does with the maps of the Ho Chi Minh Trail or the Battle of Hue, it is always the Americans in Vietnam who are playable characters. The local populace are NPCs who are depicted as guerillas and terrorists; their grievances against their French colonizers remain unknown.

Videogames that address a broader sweep of colonial history, such as the *Age of Empire* series (particularly *Age of Empires 3*), *Rise of Nations* (Big Huge Games 2003), *Empire: Total War* (Creative Assembly 2009), the *Civilization* series and a slew of other RTS games, often do so with equally problematic stereotypes. Consider, for example, the history of India as told by *Age of Empires 3* (Ensemble Studios 2005). As Brian

Reynolds, head of Big Huge Games, lays out the basic historical context he adds "one other fun detail […] you may be aware that for religious reasons Indians do not consume cows and so forth, and so indeed they do not in the game" (Butts 2007). Now, although Hindus do not eat beef, there are many other religious communities in India that do (the Mughal rulers who were Muslim would be a case in point for the particular historical setting of the game) so there is already a very problematic oversimplification going on here. Further, although the game features the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 in one of its early missions and hints at the discontent against the East India Company, the colonial history of India is presented in a sanitized uniformity that views exploitation of resources in colonial India in the same light as perhaps one would see mining or farming in one's home country. The series has already been criticized by Vit Šisler who compares the depiction of the Middle-East in *Age of Empires 2* (Ensemble Studios 1999) to "orientalist discourses of European novels and nineteenth century paintings" (Šisler 2008).

Critiquing the history constructed by *Civilization: Colonization*, Mir and Owens note how although the game considers socio-cultural exchanges such as trading horses and guns between Native Americans and Europeans (and the implicit way in which they changed their cultures), it nevertheless keeps out issues of hybridity and subscribes to problematic notions of cultural assimilation

> The process of cultural assimilation in the game is deeply resonant with the educational theories of Captain Richard H. Pratt, founder and longtime superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, who often mentioned that Native American education should "Kill the Indian, and save the Man." His attempts to systematically eradicate any traces of native culture, in requiring individuals to stop using their Native American names, forbidding anyone from speaking Native languages, and explicitly forcing individuals to look more like "Whites" by cutting off their long hair, represent a similar model of cultural assimilation via education enacted in Colonization. (Mir and Owens 2013)

Such examples abound in the game and it seems that the Native Americans exist as a means to an end—that of European colonization. Mir and Owens show how the identities of historical Native leaders such as Sitting Bull are constructed to show "traits to help the colonial powers" (ibid.).

Another classic example of misrepresentation is the portrayal of Gandhi in *Civilization V*. As Luke Plunkett writes, "from the very first game in the *Civilization* series through to today, India's supposedly-peaceful leader Gandhi has been famous for one thing: dropping nukes" (Plunkett 2016). Deeply disrespectful as it is to the history of India's non-violent struggle against colonialism, the original game gave Gandhi this trait because of a software glitch: Gandhi was given the lowest "aggression rating" (a score of 1) so that he would rarely declare war on someone; however, if a player chose a democratic government, the aggression score dropped by two and Gandhi went down to minus one. Since the game was unable to parse negative values, it gave Gandhi the next value that it recognized, instead: 255 or highest aggression rating in the game. Plunkett notes, however, that the trait has been purposely retained in the later games:

> In later games this bug was obviously not an issue, but as a tribute/easter egg of sorts, parts of his white-hot rage have been kept around. In Civilization V, for example, while Gandhi's regular diplomatic approach is more peaceful than other leaders, he's also the most likely to go dropping a-bombs when pushed, with a nuke "rating" of 12 putting him well ahead of the competition. (ibid.)

While this might seem to be fun for some people, this treatment of the entire history of India's freedom movement and colonization is a violent erasure and although videogames often move away from the actual history, this seems singularly insensitive to a significant section of the world's population who revere the figure and the ideals of Gandhi. Whether this deliberate reversal of the stereotype of Gandhi as the figure of peace and non-violence is also an expression of the colonial fear of the 'Other' is a moot question but one that has its historical antecedents. Winston Churchill had notoriously found "alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor" (Iggulden 2002). Churchill's alarm seems to have been converted into the entirely non-Gandhian, very different, and yet very current fear of India as a nuclear-capable nation. In *Civilization*'s version of history, not much has changed from the colonial times.

Procedural Rhetoric and Remediation in Historical Videogames

Gandhi in *Civilization*, of course, opens up another very important issue in discussing videogames and their treatment of colonial history. The history of India and indeed, many of the other colonies can be played out differently. In the game, these nations can become colonizers and even rule the world. This is true of most of the empire-building games with the exception of *Colonization* where "players must be a colonial power, must rebel against their motherland, and must fight in a war for independence [against their homeland, while maintaining similar colonial practices against the "natives"]" (Mir and Owens 2013). With the use mods, or programs that modify the original code of the game, however, even this limitation can be reversed, as formerly unplayable factions are made playable. Mir and Owens note that

> *Colonization* interprets the history of the American colonial encounter. While players can and do make their own moral judgments about the game and the history of colonial encounter, the model of the world in the game comes with a "procedural rhetoric," an argument expressed in the computational logic and design that drives the game. (ibid.)

Two terms from videogame studies need to be introduced before proceeding further: Procedural rhetoric and remediation. Procedural rhetoric is described by games scholar, Ian Bogost, as "a type of rhetoric tied to the core affordances of computers: running processes and executing rule-based symbolic manipulation" (Bogost n.d.). How history is to be conceived in these games is also dependent on the procedural rhetoric that the code and algorithms of the game support. Besides supporting the colonial history stereotypes indicated by Mir and Owens, the procedural rhetoric of these videogames could also include the *reversal* of colonial history by giving the player the chance to replay history and to replay it differently. This brings us to the concept of "remediation." Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin describe it as "a process of appropriation and critique by which digital media reshape or 'remediate' one another and their analogue predecessors such as film, television, and photography" (Bolter and Grusin 2000, 314). One wonders how postcolonial and colonial historiography is remediated in videogames and whether the counterfactuality that is possible because of multiplicity

of the games' *telos* is a manifestation of such remediated history. I have, elsewhere (Mukherjee 2015a), addressed the question of the multitelic in videogames by referring to the notion of the virtual as derived from the work of Deleuze (1995) and Manuel DeLanda (2005). Tom Apperley, in his essay on counterfactual history in videogames, also states that "counterfactual history becomes a powerful tool for examining both the past and present" (Apperley 2013, 189) because of its potential to break the hegemony of a single *telos* and to explore multiple temporal and spatial pathways of changes that exist simultaneously. Apperley draws on Barney Warf's essay "The Way it Wasn't: Alternative Histories, Contingent Geographies" (Warf 2005); there is, of course, a larger body of work that incorporates much debate on the subject. First, however, it will be useful to consider how history is presented in non-digital games and literature.

ALTERNATIVE HISTORIES AND THE LUDIC: TWO CASE STUDIES FROM LITERATURE

Munshi Premchand's short-story, "The Chess Players" (Premchand 1928), comes to mind. It is the story of two aristocrats from Lucknow, Mirza and Mir, who are obsessive chess players with no care for anything in the world barring their *bazi* or the chess matches. The backdrop of the story is the takeover of Lucknow and the deposition of its music-loving sybarite ruler, Wajid Ali Shah, by the British East India Company. Under the rule of the governor-general, Lord Dalhousie, the Company has started its policy of annexation and Lucknow is about to become the latest victim. Meanwhile, though, Mirza and Mir go about their game and when they are expelled from their homes by Mirza's angry wife, they set their chessboard in a field on the outskirts of the city, just as the Company's army begins its entry into Lucknow. It is chess-play as usual for the two, except for one significant change: they have just learnt the European style of chess. Replacing the vizier in the Indian style is the all-powerful queen—also reflecting contemporary events and symbolic of the change of the imminent change of power in India from the Mughal rule to that of the British Raj under Queen Victoria. Together with the story of the chess matches, Premchand provides a depth of detail about contemporary life in Lucknow, the politics and the history of the times. Obsessed with chess, just as the nawab is obsessed with luxury, the aristocrats of Lucknow do not resist the annexation, and the excitement

around the event is lost in that around the mock-battles fought on the chessboard as the following dialogue indicates:

Mir: "All right, so they have. I'm putting you in check."
Mirza: "Sir, just wait a bit, please. My heart isn't in it right now. The poor nawab must be weeping tears of blood now."
Mir: "Well, so he should. This luxury will never fall to his lot there! There, check!"
Mirza: "No one's fortune continues the same all his life. What a pitiful situation it is."
Mir: "Yes, of course it is—take that, check again! And this time it's checkmate; you can't escape."
Mirza: "By God, you're really heartless. Even seeing such a major calamity doesn't make you sad. Alas, poor Vajid Ali Shah!"
Mir: "Please save your own king first and mourn for the nawab later. There, check, and there, mate! Come on, concede!" (Premchand, translated in Pritchett 1986)

As Frances W. Pritchett comments, "This seizure of their country and king by the British, an event which ought to have been deeply feared and energetically resisted, remains a kind of non-event, a climax manqué […] and in the wonderfully funny and ironic dialogues between Mir and Mirza as they sit over their perpetual chess game, Premchand shows us how fully they share their city's attitude" (Pritchett 1986). Premchand's story does not change the main events of the tragic takeover of Lucknow and the exile of its Nawab by the British. It explores the history of the time from the gaps in the colonial history and through those voices that do not speak up in the colonial accounts. Satyajit Ray's film adaptation of the story, also called *The Chess Players* [or *Shatranj ki Khiladi*] (Ray 1977), also points to a different historiography from the British historians portrayal of "the symptoms of a civilization in decline […and] national historiography [that] describes the same period in terms of Awadhi servility" (Dube 2005, 63).

Quite a remove from Premchand's short story is the genre of alternative history, which tells stories where historical events have been subverted for a very different course of events than those that took place. A classic example is Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (Dick

1968) where the Axis powers have won World War II and America is divided into three zones, two of which are controlled by the Germans and the Japanese. The story self-reflexively questions any account of history as the mysterious man in the high castle circulates videos of a different reality: ours, where the Axis powers had lost the war. In a similar vein, consider the novel *Aztec Century* (1993) by Christopher Evans. An alternate history fan describes it as one of the best books in the genre and outlines it plot, thus:

> *Aztec Century* is set on an Earth where the Aztecs successfully repelled their Spanish invaders and became a conquering power in their own right. The novel is set towards the end of the 20th century, just after they've taken over England and have world domination well within their sights. All this made semi-plausible by the existence of a South American plant is a natural solar panel, Cortez aligning himself with the Aztecs, Europe being devastated by a plague bought back by the conquistadors, as well as several other serendipitous events. (Kelly 2016)

This kind of reversal of history is also eminently possible in videogames. Commenting on the counterfactuality of the Montezuma campaign in *Age of Empires 2: The Conquerors Expansion*, Joshua Holdenreid acknowledges that

> While this narrative mirrors the history of the conquest for most of the campaign, counterfactual components appear, especially in the later levels, in order to make an Aztec victory against the Spaniards feasible. This is a necessity because the game would be devoid of interest if the player, who always controls the Aztec side, was destined to lose. (Holdenreid and Tepanier 2013, 111)

If the players win the campaign, then the outcome is counterfactual; only by losing, in this case, will the basic historical outcome approximate to "real" history. He also goes on to discuss *Medieval II: Total War*, where the game designers account for the Aztecs' lack of horses and gunpowder as well as their very different battle culture, so as to "highlight the Spanish dominance in an elegant and relatively accurate fashion" (ibid.). In both cases, it is possible to have counterfactual outcomes as well as a plural approach to exploring the historical scenario.

Counterfactual History in Videogames and Its Problems

Plurality, albeit to varying degrees, is a key characteristic of ludic representations of history. Johan Huizinga, Dutch historian and author of the seminal game Studies text *Homo Ludens*, naturally combines his interest in the ludic with his attitude to history. Not surprisingly, for him, history is plural:

> The historian must […] constantly put himself at a point in the past at which the known factors will seem to permit different outcomes. If he speaks of Salamis, then it must be as if the Persians might still win; if he speaks of the coup d'état of Brumaire, then it must remain to be seen if Bonaparte will be ignominiously repulsed. (Huizinga 1973, 292)

Like the plural histories that videogames allow players to construct, Huizinga also advocates a playful notion of what history is. Other historians, such E.H. Carr and E.P. Thompson have, however, been dismissive. Carr has compared counterfactual history to "idle parlour games" and Thompson has called them 'Geschichtswissenschlopff, unhistorical shit' (see Hellekson 2001). Carr might not accept counterfactual history as worthy of consideration but his metaphor certainly recognizes the ludic element. Support for counterfactual history is also considerable. From Huizinga in the early twentieth century to Niall Ferguson more recently, there are many advocates among historians for counterfactual history. For example, Stephen Weber thinks they are important because they "raise tough questions about things we think we know and […] suggest unfamiliar or uncomfortable arguments about things we had best consider" (Hellekson 2001, 16). Ferguson describes two kinds of counterfactual history: "those which are essentially the products of imagination but (generally) lack an empirical basis; and those designed to test hypotheses by (supposedly) empirical means, which eschew imagination in favour of computation" (Ferguson 1999). He also comments directly about videogames saying that the counterfactuality in them (picking out *Civilization* and *Empire Earth* especially) provides only a "crude caricature of the historical process" and that this is because they are profoundly unhistorical and because the cost of miscalculation is low. He does choose to play some videogames and prefers those that "a combination of system dynamics, a technology designed to generate simulated scenarios from real-world data" (Ferguson 2006).

Apperley makes a similar case for preferring *Europa Universalis* (Paradox Development 2001–2013) over *Civilization* and states that

> [The] desire for historical verisimilitude drives a constant evaluation of feasibility and redesign of the variables built into the game […] producing a version of history that is a dialogue between the official history of the game, their own understanding of feasibility and verisimilitude, or their counterfactual imagination, players contribute to an understanding to the past as plural and contingent. In this sense, *Europa Universalis II* encourages players to mod the historian's code by challenging the authority of the hegemonic and linear official history. (Apperley 2013, 195)

Not all gamers are convinced, though, of the need for historical verisimilitude and a comment on the "playthepast" blog post says, "I understand your need of accuracy and compliance with history, you worry much about the influence of theses [sic] historical narratives and the campaign mission ones. […] You must take it for what it is, just a game, despite that you're right with the tokenism, and some labels or names that could have been more accurate" (Pastplayer 2013). Another reader of the same blog, however, importantly adds that "accuracy and compliance aren't really the issue here though: it is the replacement of a plurality of histories (and points of view) with a single narrative, and the items that do not fit with this narrative get scant attention" (Pastplayer 2013). These are tricky issues and both historical verisimilitude and plurality need to be qualified.

The Same Logic as Theirs: Reverse Colonization in Videogames and Its Guiding Logic of Imperialism

While historians such as Robert Cowley caution against scenarios of "Hannibal possessing an H-bomb" (as may actually happen in videogames such as *Empire: Earth* and *Rise of Nations*), it is also important to ask who decides on the extent of the possibility space and what kind of historical verisimilitude the procedural rhetoric of the games may support. Ferguson is dismayed that most current videogame algorithms seem to apply the logic and tactics of the present-day US military to historical events; likewise, going by his book, Ferguson himself would see counterfactual history as a return to empire and imperial arrangements for what he sees as a decent global future for mankind.

In what Pankaj Mishra describes as a "counterfactual manoeuvre" (Mishra 2011), Ferguson states that without the spread of British rule colonized peoples, such as Indians, would not have what are now their most valuable ideas and institutions—parliamentary democracy, individual freedom, and the English language. Linda Colley writes in her review of his book that "while the destruction of native Americans by English colonists' germs and guns in the seventeenth century gets two paragraphs, heroic David Livingstone receives more than a dozen pages" (Colley 2003).

Needless to say, the history played out in the empire-building games might have Ferguson's parameters in their procedural rhetoric but they also allow for the process of reverse-colonialism. In games such as *Empire: Total War*, there is the opportunity of playing as the Marathas, for example (or even, the Pirates if you use mods) and creating alternative history that goes counter to the real historical narrative of Empire: players write about how they destroyed other nations such as Persia or conquered Europe with the hugely powerful Maratha armies. Is this an expression of voices that challenge Empire, then? The question might be raised as to whether this "playing against the grain" cannot be likened to the postcolonial historians "reading colonial and nationalist archives against their grain." Whether playing as the British conquering India or the Marathas conquering Europe, the same logic of colonial rule and empire is in effect. The Aztecs conquering London in the alternative-history fiction are as much part of the imperialist logic as the Spaniards who conquered the Aztecs in reality. Instead of playing against the grain, this is to play straight into the procedural rhetoric of empire and to the main imperialist world-historical agenda that Mill and the historians of the British Raj espoused. This is the logic that validates empire and nationalism but only with the players changed.

Alexander Galloway has noted that "'History' in *Civilization* is precisely the opposite of history, not because the game fetishizes the imperial perspective, but because the diachronic details of lived life are replaced by the synchronic homogeneity of code pure and simple" (2006: 102). The procedural logic that Galloway calls the *opposite of history* has been shown earlier in this chapter as resembling the logic of colonial historiography. So the question needs to be reframed: whose history is being referred to, who is to judge it and how? Historical verisimilitude and plurality notwithstanding, the empire-building RTS games

are finally justifications for the logic of empire. The code pure and simple *is* the fetishization of the imperial perspective.

A Brief Note on Postcolonial Historiography

Postcolonial theorists do not entirely eschew the idea of the nation: Fanon declares "[e]very native who takes up arms is a part of the nation which from henceforward will spring to life" (Cheah 2003, 216). Fanon, however, understands the state as "merely the corporeal incarnation of the national spirit, for the nation-state is only a secondary institutional manifestation or by-product of national consciousness" (Cheah 2003). This is not how the nation-state functions after the end of colonialism, as Said warns:

> Nationality, nationalism. nativism: the progression is, I believe, more and more constraining. In countries like Algeria and Kenya one can watch the heroic resistance of a community partly formed out of colonial degradations, leading to a protracted armed and cultural conflict with the imperial powers, in turn giving way to a one-party state with dictatorial rule. (Said 1994, 303)

In a sense, then, as Partha Chatterjee argues "in the Third World, anticolonial cultural nationalism is the ideological discourse used by a rising but weak indigenous bourgeoisie to co-opt the popular masses into its struggle to wrest hegemony from the colonial regime, even as it keeps the masses out of direct participation in the governance of the postcolonial state" (Chatterjee 1986, 168–169). As Said and Chatterjee point out, such nationalist agenda effectively replicates its roots in imperialist notions of the nation-state. Postcolonial history is not about replicating the imperialist logic of conquest and expansion.

Speaking about the postcolonial historians' enterprise, Gyan Prakash states that their historiography involves "focusing on their blind-spots, silences and anxieties, these historians seek to uncover the subaltern's myths, cults, ideologies, and revolts that colonial and nationalist elites sought to appropriate and conventional historiography has laid to waste by their deadly weapon of cause and effect" (Prakash 1992). The concept of the subaltern has already been discussed in detail in Chaps. 1 and 3, where the origin of subaltern studies in postcolonial historiography, particularly the work of South Asian historians such

as Ranajit Guha, has been mentioned. Chakrabarty outlines the main principles of reading and writing history in this way, thus:

> Subaltern historiography necessarily entailed (a) a relative separation of the history of power from any universalist histories of capital, (b) a critique of the nation-form, and (c) an interrogation of the relationship between power and knowledge (hence of the archive itself and of history as a form of knowledge). (Chakrabarty 2000)

Guha alleges that the archive, hitherto held sacrosanct, is constructed by the colonial powers and the local elite—for example the official records of the peasant insurgencies in colonial India were produced by the counter-insurgency measures of the ruling classes, armies, and police. Prakash's stress of focusing on silences, blind spots, and the suppressed voices in the understanding of colonial history speaks well to the concerns of subaltern studies. If one is to compare the two literary examples described earlier, Prakash's description would match more with Premchand's presentation of Lucknow's history than the reverse colonialism of *Aztec Century*.

Nationalist History in Videogames from the Postcolony

The videogames, mainly empire-building RTS games, that I have focused on so far have been developed mainly in Europe and the United States. It will be intriguing to see how the nascent videogame industries of the formerly colonized countries across the world have been portraying their own histories, or if at all. Keeping all of these different schools of historiography in mind, three games from India, Indonesia, and Cameroon will be analyzed as indicative case studies. Incidentally, although little-known even in India, one of the first videogames made in the country had a postcolonial, or rather an anti-colonial theme: coming in the wake of the numerous films based on Bhagat Singh, the Indian revolutionary who attempted to assassinate a British viceroy, *Bhagat Singh* (Mitashi 2002) was a first-person shooter in the style of *Doom* and instead of fighting monsters, the player would be shooting British colonial police officers. The game is "technically wanting in many ways" (Mukherjee 2015a, b, 237) but it remains one of the earliest examples of presenting an anticolonial take on history, albeit perhaps an unwitting one. In any case, though, it still ties into strong nationalist notions of

history-writing toeing the populist political line and following the lead of the Bollywood entertainment industry (which was producing multiple Bhagat Singh themed films at the time).

The next example is *Nusantara Online* (Telegraph Studio 2009) from Indonesia. The game was launched by Indonesia's President Yudhiono and described as the "product of the nation's sons and daughters" (Rakhmani and Darmawa 2015, 257). Nusantara in the Indonesian context means "the other islands," or a pre-nation-state and pre-colonial mythical place where the player gets to interact with the histories of the Majapahit empire and two other kingdoms that flourished in the region in the fourteenth century. Players take part in missions loosely related to the history (and myths) of these kingdoms taking on bandits and demons. In the cutscenes, however, the narrative is different: it is one of the lost glory of Nusantara and it includes foreign invaders such as the Dutch and the Tatars. Iskander Zulkarnain observes,

> Explanation of the narrative discontinuity between Nusantara Online's cutscene and the game itself lies in understanding the cutscene as a unit operation of "playable" nationalism and disregarding its incongruity with the game's narrative progression. The cutscene's narrative of invasions, as a unit operation, metaphorically indicates the colonial domination that threatens the formation of an ideal Nusantara in the game realm. (Zulkarnain 2014)

The absence of the foreign powers from the actual gameplay is described by Zulkarnain as part of the procedural rhetoric of "playable nationalism" envisaged by the game's programmers. The Indonesia they present is one that is an "unadulterated" Nusantara where players get a "pure" experience of nationhood that the contemporary independent Indonesia also seeks. Nevertheless, the traces of colonial domination remain, arguably as uncomfortable voices even in the history of the origins of Indonesia and its golden age.

Africa's first-ever indigenously developed role playing game, *Aurion: Legacy of Kori Odan* (Kiro'o Games 2016), has recently been developed in Cameroon through funding from a Kickstarter campaign. The plot involves an African hero and an African context:

> The hero of the game, Enzo Kori-Odan, is the ruler of Zama - a diverse country free of an imperialist past but now threatened by a coup. The

story centers around Enzo and his wife Erine, and their fight to regain the throne. The hero's power comes from the collective energy of his ancestors, a force known as the Aurion. (Patel 2016)

Interestingly, *Aurion*, like *Nusantara* avoids directly addressing the imperialist past of African nations. Cameroon itself was colonized by the Germans, the British, and the French. Another similarity is that *Aurion*, too, is about harking back to the energy of the ancestors and by implication to a mythical past. Madiba Olivier, the developer, describes the difficulty in creating the game because of the economic challenges and repeated power-cuts—both quite symbolic of postcolonial problems. Intriguingly, despite the game's apparent disconnect with colonial history, Olivier announces that "we have an advantage with our colonial past, in that we can relate to people from different countries" (ibid.).

The distinct move toward presenting a nationalist history runs in common through all the three examples. The counterfactual element and the plurality that the videogame medium provides works differently here than in *Civilization* or *Age of Empires*. In all of these games, the past is presented through different voices than those in the colonial accounts. In the last two games, history is almost fused with the mythology of a once-glorious past. The voices of colonial history need to be countered either by the tales of brave martyrs who died fighting colonial rule, or by avoiding a direct engagement with those times. Like *Somewhere,* which has been discussed at length in Chaps. 1 and 3, it is possible that *Nusantara* and *Aurion* are unable to articulate the colonial experience. Where the available archives (which often serve to sanction historical verisimilitude) are those meticulously maintained in the record-rooms of the colonial governments, the response in these games is therefore, to latch on to the nationalist historiography that emerges as a reaction to the stereotypes of Western superiority and the Hegelian determinism in colonial history. At another level, these games also present alternative and plural ways of looking at the pasts of these nations. The pasts they construct and explore are often not part of standard history texts. In certain respects, the narratives in either *Nusantara* or *Aurion* might even not be considered "history" because they cannot fall back on documented archival material. They represent voices that are outside the colonial archives and important, nevertheless. A comparative study of how these games approach the colonial past of their countries is also intriguing.

Bhagat Singh attempts to document a resistance to colonialism based on events documented in history but from the perspective of the

colonized rather than the archives of the colonizers. It also bases the telling of history in public memory, heroic celebrations of the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh and the Bollywood version of the story. *Nusantara*, *Aurion*, and *Somewhere* all show that they are conscious of the colonial history in varying ways; in all of them, paradoxically, the silences are the ways of speaking about their colonial pasts. In *Nusantara*, this is most obvious because the cut-scenes show the history that the gameplay itself tries to avoid. *Aurion's* developer's comment on their shared colonial history being a means for people across the world to relate to his game is another important example: although clearly *not* based in a country that is colonized, the game still has an implicit awareness of colonialism. Finally, as mentioned before, the characters of *Somewhere*, are voiceless because their predicament of being colonized cannot be articulated. Even as some of these games might choose to respond to colonial history through nationalist discourses, as Prakash says, they end up "focusing on their blind-spots, silences and anxieties" to represent the colonized pasts of the cultures they represent. Further, as discussed in Chap. 3, these representations cannot remain homogenous and as in the case of *Nusantara* it is impossible to ignore the colonial experience. From a postcolonial perspective, the understanding of the past is only possible as a hybrid that cannot always be articulated.

Articulating the Blind Spots, Silences and Anxieties

Such a representation of "subaltern" history is not restricted to these games or even to games from formerly colonized countries. Alongside the popularity of games that perpetuate stereotypes of colonial history, there are a number of major examples that attempt to articulate alternative representations of history and recognize the importance of the silences, blinds-spots and anxieties. Even in an ostensibly imperialist game such as *Empire: Total War*, the strikes, riots, and rebellions form the uncomfortable blind spots in the game. Their presence in the game is a unique feature that is not found in *Civilization* or *Age of Empires*. The procedural rhetoric of the game has included problem-spaces in the pursuit of the imperialist logic. As described in the related discussion of thirdspace in Chap. 2, these are pockets of resistance where the player is temporarily powerless. Within the game, the strikes and rebellions are represented in a pop-up window that is accompanied by chaotic noise in the background. It is these voices that cannot be heard in the archives

of empire and the easiest way to deal with them is to acknowledge them by clicking the "okay" button and moving on to further conquests and imperial administration. The unheard "subaltern" voices are, however, there and the game does well in acknowledging them.

Another example that comes to mind is from a level called "Family Matters" in *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* (Ubisoft Quebec 2016). Ubisoft's interest in colonial history has already been in evidence in the analysis of *Freedom Cry* in the previous chapter. *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* also makes a number of connections with colonial history and even hints that the East India Company is part of a Templar conspiracy. Doubtless, such an alternate history (the game also combines it with Steampunk) will anger many purists; however, "Family Matters" certainly has enough basis in terms of historical events and is an intriguing exploration of possibilities. The story here is that of Duleep Singh, the exiled Maharaja of the Punjab. After the British victory over the Sikh armies, Duleep Singh, the 10-year old king, was deposed and later exiled in England after he had converted to Christianity. The *Assassin's Creed* wikia entry provides a quasi-real history:

> Duleep Singh (1838–1893), also known as Dalip Singh or the Black Prince of Perthshire, was the last Maharaja of the Sikh Empire and the youngest son of Ranjit Singh, ruling from 1843 to 1846. He was also an associate of, and great-uncle to, the Assassin Henry Green. Exiled to Britain when he was fifteen, Duleep befriended Queen Victoria, who would go on to become the godmother to several of his children. After his mother passed away in 1863, he began to lobby for India's independence from the British Empire. (Assassin's Creed Wikia n.d.)

In "Family Matters," Duleep asks one of the protagonists, Evie Frye, to steal the royal carriage so that he can meet three politicians whom he wants to meet but has not been able to gain access to. The royal carriage is to transport them to an important state occasion and the unsuspecting politicians are going to have to spend some time with Duleep during their journey. One of them is the prime minister of England, William Ewart Gladstone. Gladstone does not take kindly to the "abduction" and addresses Duleep as "Mr Singh" instead of the using the customary "Your Highness." He also wastes no time to make it clear that the British takeover of the administration of the Punjab is because the local population is unfit to decide what is good for them. Gladstone does not

give Duleep what he wants and in fact, does not listen to what he has to say. What is important, however, is that the players get to hear him out. The game articulates the resistance and protest that the exiled king makes against the empire. Duleep, of course, is no subaltern when compared to the peasants whose history Guha represents through this term; in the game's scenario, however, despite the player's best efforts and Duleep's clever subterfuge, his is a voice that does not get heard by the British Empire but that the game cleverly makes us aware is there, nevertheless.

It is impossible to miss *80 Days* (Inkle 2014) in this context. The game is a steampunk adaptation of Jules Verne's (1873) novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* and has the player journeying across the world in strange futuristic means of transport, ranging from airships to mechanical elephants. During these travels, the player, as Passepartout, Mr Phileas Fogg's manservant makes the acquaintance of people from different countries. Many of them are from sections of society that do not get represented adequately. Meg Jayanth, the writer of *80 Days* expresses herself quite clearly:

> But there are also times we use fantasy to enable us to tell the kind of story we wanted to be able to tell, to redress some of the colonialism, sexism and racism of the period. If you're inventing a world, why not make it more progressive? Why not have women invent half the technologies, and pilot half the airships? Why not shift the balance of power so that Haiti rather than barely postbellum United States is ascendant in the region? Why not have a strong automaton-using Zulu Federation avert the Scramble for Africa? Why not have characters who play with gender and sexuality without fear of reprisal? History is full of women, and people of colour, and queer people, and minorities. That part isn't fantasy—the fantastical bit in our game is that they're (often but not always) allowed to have their own stories without being silenced and attacked. That their stories are not told as if they're exceptional. (Jayanth 2014)

In the game, she has clearly constructed counterfactual history in ways that might displease those seeking historical verisimilitude; unlike the empire-building games, her formulations for the nations have already been constructed and the "strong automaton-using Zulu Federation" does not seem to engage in reverse colonization. What is most important in her story is that it attempts to allow the subaltern voices to be heard. Not everyone's story in the game is important for the way the player experiences it, but these stories are told nevertheless.

Depending on how the procedural rhetoric of the game is designed, even non-digital games can be powerful ways to convey historical perspectives even of those who have been otherwise silenced in official records. An extremely poignant example, designed by eminent game designer Brenda Romero, comes to mind. The game is called *Síochán Leat* aka "The Irish Game." Romero describes it as "my family's history beginning with the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland" (Romero 2009). The game, now in the Strong Museum of Play in Rochester, is a unique installation of its kind; Romero has sewn in personal family heirlooms into the board and the green yarn that she has used to knit the grass sections of the board represents each county of Ireland. Shannon Symonds describes her experience of the game:

> She informed us that the game does not produce traditional winners. "You're playing the Irish," she said. "You've already lost." A successful game meant that we lost the fewest amount of game pieces possible— each piece represented thousands of Irish people. The game began with each square of the board holding two game pieces, one green figure and one white figure. During each turn, we placed an orange cube that represented Cromwell's army into one of the spaces, thus displacing the Irish people (game pieces) onto other squares. Each square could hold up to four figures, which demonstrated the tale of the Irish losing their land and huddling together in increasingly crowded areas. If no free spaces remained, we placed the Irish figures off to one side of the board. These figures, Brenda explained, would be shipped to Barbados to serve as slaves. By the end of the game, Cromwell's orange cubes marked more than three-quarters of the board, and both J.P. and I possessed a sizable contingent of figures bound for Barbados. Only a small amount of land remained for the Irish figures, which crowded so tightly against one another that it became difficult to tell where one square ended and another began. I wondered about how many families split up, how many lost parents or children to slavery, and whether the English officers felt any remorse for their actions. (Symonds 2016)

Symonds description is that of orange cubes replacing other pieces on the board and of how the procedural rhetoric of the game has transformed this simple game mechanic into retelling of a lesser-known episode of Irish history. As she wonders about the families that were split up by the colonizing forces and also those that were shipped off to slavery in Barbados, the game tells us a great deal through its silences.

The official colonial history quite shockingly describes it as a salutary event for the Irish. As Prendergast outlines this,

> It was a measure beneficial they said to Ireland which was thus relieved of a population that might trouble the Planters it was a benefit to the people removed who might thus be made English and Christians and a great benefit to the West India sugar planters who desired the men and boys for their bondmen and the women and Irish girls in a country where they had only Maroon women and Negresses [sic] to solace them. (Prendergast 1868)

This very glib justification for enslaving and shipping of thousands into slavery and displacing them from their land and property is countered by the simple procedural rhetoric of the game where the white and orange pieces tell a story of displacement and exploitation that goes largely unheard in the archives. Romero's presentation of colonial history moves the player into a position of direct complicity and involvement. It provides the sense of multiplicity in the agency it provides toward changing the ending; nevertheless, in the game "you have already lost" although even the inevitable keeps one thinking "I felt guilty when I looked at the large groups destined for slavery and I wondered if I could have made any better moves to protect them" (Symonds 2016). Romero's game is yet another model that games addressing history from a postcolonial perspective might consider. The issue in question is to change the dominant procedural rhetoric that videogames in general have often promoted in the presentation of history. In recent years, however, there has been a shift toward a more plural, diverse, and representative game development. Many of the games described in this chapter and earlier, such as *80 Days, Thralled* and *Somewhere* among others have made vast leaps in this direction and like *Síochán Leat*, engaged with the past through voices that were silenced in other accounts of history by making it possible to explore them through the plurality and agency that they were denied before.

Conclusion: Toward a Plurality of Histories

Looking at history through postcolonial lenses reveals many stereotypes that need to be questioned; it also shows that there is much that is unsaid in colonial historiography and much that cannot be articulated.

Videogames, and indeed games in general, are a plural medium and the key thing about them is that they allow players to replay situations in different ways. Their plurality encompasses different opportunities, skills, and playing styles. Players also learn from experience. In terms of postcolonial history, much of it involves resuscitating narratives from the margins of normative historical discourse. It involves the what-if scenarios of counterfactual history and also the creation of scenarios where characters who never find a voice in the history books are given a chance to speak. There are multiple levels in exploring the past as postcolonial historians and they involve a writing back or a playing back in diverse ways. This is also true of videogames as a medium of writing/playing postcolonial history.

It is possible to replay history in ways where the colonies become the colonizers—such a reversal of roles, however, still subscribes to the logic of imperialism. Instead of postcolonial, this would be another form of the neocolonial. Nationalist constructions of history where the colonized is given agency or where the colonizer is purposely written out of history would be another possibility. Finally, by playing out the narratives that were otherwise hidden in the blind spots or even silences in the "normal" historical accounts, it is possible to explore the plurality of pasts that postcolonial, and specifically subaltern, historiography concerns itself with. If videogames can at all represent history from a postcolonial perspective, then what they write/play back to the discourses of empire, is a response that is not a single method or perspective but one that is described best through the plurality of play.

References

Apperley, Thomas. 2013. Modding the Historian's Code: Historical Verisimilitude and CounterFactual History. In *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Andrew B. R. Elliott. New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation. Print.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1998. Africa: The Hidden History. *The New York Review of Books* 17 December. Web.

Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. 2000. *Remediation—Understanding New Media*, Reprint edition. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Print.

Butts, Steve. 2007. Age of Empires III: The Asian Dynasties. *IGN*. n.p., 25 June 2007. Web. 23 October 2016.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography. *Nepantla: Views from South* 1(1): 9–32. Print.

Chatterjee, Partha. 1986. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. London: Zed Books. Print.

Cheah, Pheng. 2003. *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*. New York: Columbia University Press. Print.

Colley, Linda. 2003. Into the Belly of the Beast. *The Guardian*, 18 January 2003. Web. 25 September 2016.

DeLanda, Manuel. 2005. *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, New edition. London: Continuum International. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1995. *Difference and Repetition*, trans. and ed. Paul Patton, revised edition. New York: Columbia University Press. Print.

Dick, Philip K. 1968. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* 1st ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Print.

Dube, Reena. 2005. *Satyajit Ray's The Chess Players and Postcolonial Film Theory: Postcolonialism and Film Theory*, 1st ed. 2005 edition. Houndmills, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Print.

Evans, Christopher. 1993. *Aztec Century*. London: Victor Gollancz. Print.

Ferguson, Niall. 2006. How to Win a War. *New York Magazine*. Web. 25 November 2016.

Ferguson, Niall. 1999. *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, Basic Books edition. New York: Basic Books. Print.

Galloway, Alexander R. 2006. *Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press. Print.

Gregg, R. 1999. *Inside Out, Inside In: Essays in Comparative History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Print.

Hellekson, Karen. 2001. *The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press. Print.

Holdenried, Joshue D., and Nicholar Trepanier. 2013. Dominance and the Aztec Empire: Representations in Age of Empires II and Medieval II: Total War. In *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Andrew B. R. Elliott. New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation. Print.

Huizinga, Johan. 1973. The Idea of History. In *The Varieties of History*, ed. Fritz Stern, trans. and ed. Rosalie Colie. New York: Vintage. Print.

Iggulden, Amy. 2002. The Churchill You Didn't Know. *The Guardian*, 28 November. Web. 25 November 2016.

Jayanth, Meg. 2014. Fantasy, History and Respect. *You Can Panic Now*, 18 October. Web. 25 November 2016.

Kelly, Peter. 2016. Aztec Century—Christopher Evans. *Super Novel*, 27 March. Web. 25 November 2016.

Marx, Karl. 1853. The Future Results of British Rule in India by Karl Marx. *New-York Daily TribuneI*, 22 July 1853. Web. 24 November 2016.

Mill, James, and Horace Hayman Wilson. 1848. *The History of British India*. London, J. Madden. *Internet Archive*. Web. 24 November 2016.

Mir, Rebecca, and Trevor Owens. 2013. Modelling Indigenous Peoples: Unpacking Ideology in Sid Meier's Colonization. In *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Andrew B. R. Elliott. New York: Bloomsbury. Print.

Mishra, Pankaj. 2011. Watch This Man. *London Review of Books*, 33 (21):10–12. Print.

Mukherjee, Souvik. 2015a. *Video Games and Storytelling: Reading Games and Playing Books*, 1st ed. 2015a edition. Houndmills, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Print.

Mukherjee, Souvik. 2015b. India. In *Video Games Around the World*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and ToruIwatani, 1st ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Print.

Pastplayer. 2013. The Othering of Time in Age of Empires II | Play The Past. *Past Player*, Janaury 8. Web. 25 November 2016.

Patel, Heenali. 2016. Finally, a Video Game Hero for Africa. *CNN*, 20 Janaury. Web. 25 November 2016.

Penix-Tadsen, Phillip. 2016. *Cultural Code: Video Games and Latin America*, 1st ed. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Print.

Plunkett, Luke. 2016. Why Gandhi is Such an Asshole in Civilization. *Kotaku*, 2 March. Web.

Prakash, Gyan. 1992. Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography. *Social Text* 31/32: 8–19. *JSTOR*. Web.

Premchand, Munshi. 1928. Shatranj Ki Khiladi [The Chess Players]. *Madhuri*. n.p. Print.

Prendergast, John Patrick. 1868.*The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*. P.M. Haverty. Internet Archive. Web. 25 November 2016.

Pritchett, Frances W. 1986. 'The Chess Players': From Premchand to Satyajit Ray. *Journal of South Asian Literature* 22 (2): 65–78. Print.

Rakhmani, Inaya, and Hikmat Darmawan. 2015. Indonesia. In *Video Games Around the World*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Toru Iwatani, 1st ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Print.

Ray, Satyajit. 1977. *The Chess Players*. Film.

Romero, Brenda. 2009. Sîochân Leat, 'The Irish Game.' *Brenda Romero*, n.p. Web. 25 November 2016.

Said, Edward W. 1994. *Culture and Imperialism*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage. Print.

Šisler, Vít. 2008. Digital Arabs Representation in Video Games. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11 (2): 203–220. Print.

Symonds, Shannon. 2016. Brenda Romero: 'The Mechanic is the Message.' *CHEGheads Blog*, n.p., n.d. Web. 25 November 2016.

Zulkarnain, Iskandar. 2014. 'Playable' Nationalism: Nusantara Online and the 'Gamic' Reconstructions of National History. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 29 (1): 31–62. Print.

Ludography

Big Huge Games. 2003. *Rise of Nations*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios. PC.

Creative Assembly. 2009. *Empire: Total War*. Tokyo: Sega. PC.

Digital Illusions. 2004. *Battlefield Vietnam*. California, EA Games. PC.

Ensemble Studios. 1997. *Age of Empires*. Redmond: Microsoft Games. PC.

Ensemble Studios. 1999. *Age of Empires 2*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios. PC.

Ensemble Studios. 2005. *Age of Empires 3*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios. PC.

Infinity Ward. 2011. *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*. Los Angeles: Activision. PC.

Inkle. 2014. *80 Days*. Cambridge: Inkle. PC.

Kiro'o Games. 2016. *Aurion: Legacy of Kori Odan* (n.p.: Plug In Digital). PC.

Mitashi. 2002. *Bhagat Singh* (n.p.: Mitashi). PC.

Paradox Development Studios. 2001–2013. *Europa Universalis*. Montreal: Strategy First.

Telegraph Studio. 2009. *Nusantara Online* (n.p.: Telegraph Studio). PC.

Ubisoft Quebec. 2016. *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* (Quebec: Ubisoft). PC.

Warf, Barney. 2005. "The Way It Wasn't: Alternative Histories, Contingent Geographies." *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction. Ed. Rob Kitchin and James Kneale*. Edinburgh: A&C Black, 2005. Print.

Rethinking (Post) Colonialism in Videogames: Toward a Conclusion

Abstract The ludic has always been linked with colonial and postcolonial discourses across the world. This concluding chapter addresses the question of how even videogames that are ostensibly critical of colonialism nevertheless end up perpetuating its key assumptions. It also looks at the nascent discipline of Game Studies to encourage a deeper engagement with diversity within the field at large. As, arguably, the newest media to comment on and critique empire and colonialism, videogames provide yet another perspective for rethinking—and replaying—the key issues involved, here. The discussion book is intended not as a to open up the already growing Game Studies research on diversity and the margins to include the larger debates on empire and post colonialism.

Keywords Post colonialism · Play · Diversity · Conclusion

"Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra": On Communicating the Postcolonial Other

One of the most popular episodes of the TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Kolbe 1991) featured an alien (a fictional species called Tamarian) spaceship captain who forces Captain Picard of the starship *Enterprise* to join him on a desolate planet and tries to communicate with him using the peculiar sentences, "Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra" and "Temba, his arms wide" ("Tamaria" n.d.). The computers of the

Enterprise are unable to guess the meaning of these sentences although they can parse the individual words. The crew of the *Enterprise*, unable to understand the goings-on, open fire on the alien ship but without any effect. Later, it is understood that the alien culture of the Tamarians "spoke entirely by allegory, referencing mythological and historical people and events from their [own] culture" making all the initial attempts to understand them, futile. "Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra" simply means co-operation between individuals—the meaning is derived from the Tamarian historical/mythological characters who cooperated in defeating a mutual adversary. The "Darmok" episode highlights the differences in culture and communication as well as the different ways in which history is perceived and used (in this case as a part of language itself). In this discussion of post colonialism and videogames, a similar argument is posited. The presentation of history as a mono-narrative is problematized by the multiple endings of videogames and the alternative histories they present. Instead of a Eurocentric narrative of progress, other possible ways of looking at history become evident.

The West Indian author, Derek Walcott, notes in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech:

> Deprived of their original language, the captured and indentured tribes create their own, accreting and secreting fragments of an old, an epic vocabulary, from Asia and from Africa, but to an ancestral, an ecstatic rhythm in the blood that cannot be subdued by slavery or indenture, while nouns are renamed. (Walcott 1992)

Walcott observes that although European writers such as Graham Greene and Claude Levi-Strauss mourn the "unfinishedness" of Caribbean culture, to the Caribbean itself, such a culture and history is one that is complete. The sense of completeness does not have to conform to the Western notions of historical progress. Walcott's poetic evocation of this different but complete sense of culture and history is to be found in his description of the Hindu festival of *Ramleela*, originally from India, being performed in the Caribbean villages: "one of the greatest epics of the world was seasonally performed, not with that desperate resignation of preserving a culture, but with an openness of belief that was as steady as the wind bending the cane lances of the Caroni plain" (Walcott 1992). Dipesh Chakrabarty points out that Western historiography in general assumes an "underlying structural unity (if not an expressive

totality) to historical process and time that makes it possible to identify certain elements in the present as anachronistic" (Chakrabarti 2007, 12). Intriguingly, he notes that gods and superstitions have not died anywhere and that is why he has no objections in taking "gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human" in his representation of history. As Chakrabarty clearly puts it, the norms laid down by Western historiography tend to privilege specific notions of temporality and progress and are not universally applicable. Indeed postcolonial history has different tales to tell and other ways of telling.

Empire Playing Back: Post colonialism, Videogames, and Play

So far this book has argued, with numerous illustrations, that the culture of the ex-colonies has been portrayed in videogames through lenses that privilege Eurocentric accounts of history and progress. Some exceptions to this norm emerge in the modded versions of the empire-building games; in the stories of Adewale and Duleep Singh in the *Assassin's Creed* games; in the presentation of Indonesian history in *Nusantara Online* and in the subaltern voiceless interaction of *Somewhere*. In their respective ways, described earlier, just as postcolonial historiography and narratives foster "reading against the grain" of imperial chronicles, these videogames can be said to be "playing against the grain." Like the non-digital ludic examples of cricket in the Bollywood movie *Lagaan* and the game of fanorona described in Chap. 1, reactions to colonialism can be that of a "playing back." In the case of the fanorona game that Queen Ranavalona kept playing in the face of the advancing French troops, it could be interpreted as a playing back that refuses to engage with the colonial system of progress and instead, meets the imperialist Western military strategy with its counterpart in the game of fanorona. The other playing back is, of course, that which has empire as its subject—the games that implicitly are based on the logic of imperialism are the prime examples.

With the increasing focus on diversity in games, questions of the postcolonial are beginning to come more to the forefront in games studies discussions. The earlier chapters in this book have addressed questions of colonial stereotypes together with constructions of space, identity, and temporalities in videogames that address colonial and

postcolonial themes. Play itself becomes a strategy for both colonial and the anti-colonial discourses. As discussed earlier, Spivak and Bhabha have both invoked deconstruction in their understanding of post colonialism.[1] Deconstruction has, as one of its key concepts, "play": Derrida views the relationship between the center and the margins to be "in play." In the opening chapter, this relationship of play has been described as the "dangerous supplement," which, like writing, threatens to overturn the center. In his foundational essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Derrida discusses play (*jeu*) as follows:

> The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a freeplay based on a fundamental ground, a freeplay which is constituted upon a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of the freeplay. With this certitude anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, of being caught by the game, of being as it were from the very beginning at stake in the game. (Derrida 1978)

In terms of post colonialism, play is a crucial factor in disrupting the centers of the structured colonial notions of progress. Going back to the presentation of subaltern history, it has been pointed out that much of the historical records can be found in performative practices rather than in official archives. Walcott's example of the *Ramleela* in the Caribbean is also one such example.[2] Play, in this context, is the unsettling of the colonial processes and their notions of progress. In terms of the hybrid, the subaltern and the "thirding" of space, notions of identity, history and spatiality are no more settled in the comfortable logic of the superiority and order that the colonial system claims to provide.

The colonizer also plays back. The ludic has been a longstanding metaphor for exploring the possibility-spaces of imperial expansion; videogames are merely the most recent medium where the armchair general (or perhaps, governor-general) can simulate mechanisms of control and expansion. In a sense, of course, such a notion of the ludic is more restrictive. The rules of the game, here, are necessarily to promote colonialism and just as reflected in games such as the *Age of Empires* and the *Civilization* series, success in the game is measured by increasing levels of control. From Kim's game in Kipling's novel to the digital empire-building games, one of the key elements in these games is to control the line-of-sight; the potentialities of space need to be explored and peoples and regions to be conquered and governed.

What about the postcolonial subject playing games that perpetuate colonial stereotypes? In playing with the same strategies as that of empire, the postcolonial subject also plays the role of the colonizer in a game that is, arguably, a process of mimicry. Mimicry is an important game-type in Roger Caillois's (1961) typology of games, so beloved in Game Studies contexts. In postcolonial theory, especially that of Fanon and Bhabha, as described in Chap. 1, it is of course not the straightforward roleplay as described by Caillois. Mimicry, for the postcolonial subject, is a doubling, a fold—the playing out of the colonial logic is simultaneously accompanied by breaking the boundaries that colonizer has with the colonized when the latter "becomes" the former as it were. Playing at colonialism can also turn into the subversion of colonialism.

Empire playing back is a complex phenomenon. The multiple possibility-spaces of play are the site of both the Great Game of empire and its opposite, play as the disruption of the colonial chronicle of progress. Playing back, here, is the playing of the plural; it disrupts linear chronologies and centers of truth; implicitly, it speaks for those voices that cannot be heard in the colonial archives; and it presents scenarios where both colonial stereotypes can be simulated and anticolonial alternative stories can be told. The experience of postcoloniality, in its many facets, can be well appraised through play, which must be understood in its potential for a serious commentary on colonialism and related issues.

DESTROYING DUBAI AND DELETING DANDI: PERSISTENT PROBLEMS IN DIGITAL ATTEMPTS TO ENGAGE WITH THE POSTCOLONIAL

As diversity keeps gaining ground and opposition to it faces widespread academic reaction (as evidenced in the Gamergate controversy), the industry and academia are both becoming increasingly diversity-conscious. The Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) conference in 2015 was themed on the diversity of play and the Game Developer Conference in 2016 featured talks and advocacy sessions on diversity. As part of these efforts, it is only expected that post colonialism will figure more importantly in games research in the days to come. Efforts to convey postcolonial themes through videogames are underway as many of the examples mentioned earlier illustrate; however, such endeavours might also be fraught with problems or representation. For example, *Spec Ops: The Line* conveys a journey similarly to that of Marlow in

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and among the many deep human questions that it addresses, there is the also the notion of the exploratory journey that examines how the colonized Other relates to the colonizer. As an adaptation of Conrad's novel, *Spec Ops* chooses an intriguing modern-day equivalent to early twentieth-century Belgian Congo: it selects as its locale the now-sprawling middle-eastern desert-turned-megalopolis, Dubai. Dubai, which prides itself today on its postcolonial (here the term is used in the sense of "after colonialism") opulence, is reduced to rubble in the game and its symbolic skyscraper, the Burj Khalifa (or its in-game equivalent), is destroyed as it becomes the scene of the final showdown for the protagonist. Soraya Murray points out how the game portrays a "psychological and ethical ruin of a Western soldier-ideal, whose time has passed and whose prescribed role as a protector/gatekeeper against the backdrop of an Arab heart of darkness is defunct" (Murray 2016, 327). Brendan Keogh in his book-length analysis of the game states:

> The West certainly doesn't 'own' Dubai, but Western culture and sensibilities are widespread. It's a Middle Eastern city where Westerners can feel safe, 'at home,' like this is different from the rest of the Arab world. Dubai is a city that we look at and we understand. [...] But in The Line the sands of that very Arabic world that terrifies the West have engulfed and destroyed Dubai, taking an entire battalion of US troops with it. Against the encroachment of the West, the world (at least, the natural world) has fought back. (Keogh 2013)

The use of the "West" and the pronoun "we" in Keogh's comment seems to mark out a West–East binary; Dubai is viewed as a city where the West has made inroads into the Arabic world. Although Keogh speaks of the world fighting back against the encroachment of the West, it is also possible to interpret the scenario of the destruction of Dubai differently. The destroyed city embodies the colonizer's fear of being conquered. Dubai in *Spec Ops* is symptomatic of such fears. As Murray points out, the game acknowledges the end of the former colonizers' role "as a protector/gatekeeper against the backdrop of an Arab heart of darkness"; in the process, however, the player ends up making the journey into the "heart of darkness," as it were. In the game, Dubai has to be destroyed to accommodate the colonizers' fear of the crashing of the boundaries between the West and the East. The game combines the journey into the heart of darkness (or the exploration of the Other) with

the fear of the metropole being destroyed by the colonies. The developers have left very few possibilities of interacting with the local populace in Dubai. They are either victims or barbaric hordes who do not know what is good for them. Their agency is limited, if not non-existent: as the protagonist and his two team-mates battle it out with the 33rd Division of the US Army, which has now gone rogue, the citizens of Dubai are nowhere around or are mute victims. In attempting an adaptation of Conrad's classic novel, the developers of *Spec Ops: The Line* have ended up perpetuating typical concerns and assumptions of colonialism. When the game is analyzed using a postcolonial framework, the line, which is a metaphor for many things in the game, also becomes a symbol of the demarcation between the colonizer and the colonized, the Self and the Other and the colony and the metropole.

There are other examples in digital media where the intended highlighting of the problems of colonialism have similarly resulted in the perpetuation of colonialist norms or a disconnect with the agenda of post colonialism. Again, Gandhi features in yet another such example (of course, the earlier case of Gandhi using nuclear bombs in the *Civilization* series makes no claim to postcolonial consciousness). Although not strictly a game, *Second Life* has often featured in Games Studies discussions, and Joseph DeLappe's *The Salt Satyagraha Online: Gandhi*'s March to Dandi in Second Life is, therefore, being considered as another case in point. DeLappe describes his endeavor, a treadmill simulation of the historical Dandi March as follows:

> Over the course of 26 days, from March 12 - April 6, 2008, using a treadmill customized for cyberspace, I reenacted Mahatma Gandhi's famous 1930 Salt March. The original 240-mile walk was made in protest of the British salt tax; my update of this seminal protest march took place at Eyebeam Art and Technology, NYC and in Second Life, the Internet-based virtual world. For this performance, I walked the entire 240 miles of the original march in real life and online in Second Life. My steps on the treadmill controlled the forward movement of my avatar, MGandhi Chakrabarti, enabling the live and virtual reenactment of the march. (DeLappe 2008)

The historical Dandi March was a signal event of protest against the salt-tax imposed by the British government on colonial India. Gandhi's journey to Dandi inspired many later protest marches and had as

its objective the breaking of a British colonial law that forbade the indigenous manufacture of salt. This was part of Gandhi's unique form of protest: non-cooperation. DeLappe's effort fails to recognize key elements of Gandhi's famous march like its purpose and its context. During his journey, DeLappe meets many *Second Life* avatars who interact variously with his own avatar, MGandhi Chakrabarti, but the original spirit of the Satyagraha (described by Gandhi himself as "the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence") is missing from these instances. None of these key notions that were part of Gandhi's protest emerge in DeLappe's digital "re-enactment" of the Dandi March. As a retelling of history, it misses out the colonial context that is so important in appreciating the significance of the protest. It might be argued, of course, that DeLappe's installation did not wish to focus on the complexity and novelty of Gandhi's protest against colonial economic and administrative policies; if that is so, then this is a missed opportunity for digital media to represent a major intervention in thinking about peace, protest, and colonialism vis-à-vis digital identities.

The Onward Journey of the Postcolonial in Videogames

The difficulties notwithstanding, videogames have shown considerable potential in representing the multiplicity of perspectives and possibilities that postcolonial discourses tease out of the seemingly unchanging fabric of colonialism. The retellings from multiple perspectives that videogames facilitate help in presenting voices and experiences that have not been commonly represented. The identification with the so-called colonial Other as the player's avatar points at problems in thinking through questions of identity and indeed agency from the position of the colonial subject. Finally, the possibility of playing out alternative histories provides opportunities to both critique and perpetuate the logic of empire. Videogames have come a long way from the stereotypical glorification of colonization to attempts to represent the lack of agency of the colonized as in games such as *Somewhere*. Together with the inclusion of postcolonial themes in game development, games research has also started taking cognizance of the key issues related to post colonialism. The overview of current research in the area in Chap. 1 indicates the growing interest. As mentioned above, studies in diversity and inclusiveness are fast gaining ground and the postcolonial, as a connected theme, is at the cusp of cutting-edge research to come in Game Studies.

Just as the Darmok episode in *Star Trek* and Walcott's experience of Ramleela in the Caribbean both point toward the need to view cultures from multiple perspectives that are different to one's own, so too postcolonial critiques in videogames open up the field beyond the North American and European discourses that it largely tends to privilege. The inclusion of a diverse set of views is an advantage for both the industry and academia in terms of a larger global market and also the representation of and research into a wider range of player cultures. This also facilitates a deeper connect with current and older debates in the Humanities that relate to colonialism and the aftermath of empire. In a recent article, Liboriussen and Martin (2016) have commented on the need for a "regional games studies" which they describe as follows:

> [R]egional game studies is not *necessarily* a movement of resistance against some putative globalizing […] game studies. We hope with "regional" to guide attention to power-geometry without specifying a particular model of power relations, for example one in which a hegemonic centre dominates its periphery. A centre-periphery model of power might, however, be wholly appropriate in some cases of regional game studies, as demonstrated by very recent work on ludic representations of India. (Liboriussen and Martin 2016)

Liboriussen and Martin acknowledge the hegemonic center–periphery relationship in the treatment of videogames when one considers research assumptions and priorities in relation to some of the so-called third world countries. They base their conclusions on two postcolonial readings of videogames in India, by Chakraborti and Mukherjee, as two different but linked approaches to the center–periphery model which claim that "games produced in global centres of power and depicting peripheral countries in very casual ways might be experienced [differently] by players from those very countries" or criticize "the crassness of Indian stereotypes in a number of digital games" (ibid.). Liboriussen and Martin, of course, go on to caution against the center–periphery model as a default option and "suggest instead to let thought be guided by the more flexible notion of power-geometry—a geometry that may or may not take the shape of a center–periphery as it comes into focus through analysis" (ibid.) although they agree that the postcolonial intervention is particularly suitable for the examples they have addressed.

Phillip Penix-Tadsen, writing about the presentation of Brazil in videogames, expresses a similar problem to what Liboriussen and Martin call the "centre-periphery model." He compares the treatment of Brazil *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (*CoD* here onwards) to Robert Schwarz's concept of "*brasilidade* ("Brazilian-ness"), in which he argues that Brazil unceasingly affirms and reaffirms European ideas, always improperly" (Penix-Tadsen 2016, 162 original italics). Penix-Tadsen, however, goes on to say that "video game designers are turning the dynamics Schwarz describes on their head, with game developers located in major production centers of North America now attempting to convey brasilidade, each in their own 'improper' ways" (ibid). The single-player mission in the game features the *favela*, a favorite stereotypical location for movies and games based in Brazil and the antagonists are shown running in the rundown tin roofs and flimsy doorways wearing shabby but brightly-colored clothes and bandannas. In the rather rushed mission, the player is hardly likely to ponder deeper about the cultural representations in the game and look beyond the stereotypes. Penix-Tadsen also carefully analyses the multiplayer-version where he discovers culturally uncharacteristic elements strewn across the urban landscape in the game:

> As players pick around the Brazilian stone quarry, they might begin to note that some of the signs posted in corners of buildings are written in Russian as well as Portuguese; in the same quarry, a "Transportadora" sign that made sense on a body shop in the Favela map is cut and pasted onto a manufacturing building; a fish store in the Brazil-based Rundown is called "Don Pescado" in Spanish and filled with fresh fish and Maine lobsters, with newspapers in Chinese on the walls; among the products on the store shelves are bags marked "Basmati Rice," "Beef Jerky," and "Mint Gum." The explanation for these cultural non sequiturs is fundamentally economic in nature: these are properties created for other culturally coded environments, cut and pasted into these Latin American maps, a reflection of the shortcuts to cultural contextualization necessitated by the development calendar of serial games like Call of Duty. (Ibid.)

In this case, of course, the stereotypes for Brazil have been casually replaced by other stereotypical Western elements—this time because of the tight schedules of the game developer that allowed little attention to finer cultural details. It was okay to assume that beef jerky, basmati rice, mint gum, and Maine lobsters are readily available in a Brazilian stone-quarry or favela.

The crucial point that needs to be emphasized is the fragility of colonial and neocolonial centers that apparently lend an air of finality to global representations. Often, the "real" experience through such powerful media such as videogames reflects only very limited perspectives, just as Microsoft's depiction of all of medieval India as not eating beef (despite the difficult-to-miss fact that much of the region was under Muslim rule), or in certain cases, like the example of Brazil in *CoD*, it is based on rushed assumptions that typically North American consumer goods would be found everywhere in Brazil. Such approaches emanate when colonial or neocolonial centers of power are constructed in a process that encourages cultural hegemony. Any center–periphery model, however, needs to be nuanced further. Earlier in the book, Derrida's notion of the supplement has been mentioned multiple times. The supplement always and already influences and displaces its center; this notion is applied by Derrida to writing and has also been used in postcolonial discourses (see Chap. 1) to denote the instability of colonial constructions of "centres." Postcolonial discourses help in seeing how the hegemonic constructions of knowledge in the West (or one could use "first world" or "global north") about the diverse cultures of the world are skewed and instead of being fixed, benefit from a multiplicity of perspectives. Games, whether digital or non-digital, are a powerful medium for conveying this multiplicity. They enable a multiplicity of play strategies, whereby the empire-building games can be modded or played to get other outcomes and the colonial game of cricket be subverted to pose a challenge to the colonizers' normative discourses of superiority. Just as in earlier narrative media such as the novel, postcolonial readings are important for videogames—not least because they challenge the centrality and fixity of readings and offer a multiplicity of perspectives. Meaning, instead of being the preserve of imperial "centres," is *in play*, as it were. Just as in the real world, the virtual spaces of the Capital Wasteland or the vast global map of *Empire: Total War* are also the locus of this diverse play of meaning. The game of empire is, therefore, replayed and reloaded in the postcolonial readings of videogames.

Notes

1. Spivak, of course, has expressed her difference with Derrida's understanding of Marx but that debate is not germane to the purpose, here.
2. Incidentally, *leela* is the Sanskrit word for the divine play of the gods.

REFERENCES

Caillois, Roger. 1961. *Man, Play and Games, trans.* Meyer Barash. Reprint edition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. Print.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2007. *Provincializing Europe—Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Revised edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Print.

DeLappe, Joseph. 2008. MGandhi's March in Second Life. n.p., n.d. Web. 26 Nov.

Derrida, Jacques. 1978. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Reprint edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Print.

Keogh, Brendan. 2013. *Killing Is Harmless: A Critical Reading of Spec Ops: The Line*, 1st ed. Stolen Projects. e-Book.

Kolbe, Winrich. 1991. *Darmok. Star Trek: The New Generation*. Film.

Liboriussen, Bjarke, and Paul Martin. 2016. Regional Game Studies. *Game Studies* 16 (1): n.p. Web. 26 Nov 2016.

Murray, Soraya. 2016. Upending Militarized Masculinity in Spec Ops: The Line. In *Zones of Control—Perspectives on Wargaming*, 1st ed., ed. Pat Harrigan, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, and James F. Dunnigan. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Print.

Penix-Tadsen, Phillip. 2016. *Cultural Code: Video Games and Latin America*, 1st ed. Cambridge: The MIT Press. Print.

Walcott, Derek. 1992. Nobel Lecture: The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory. *Nobelprize.org*. n.p., 12 July 1992. Web. 25 Nov 2016.

References

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1998. Africa: The Hidden History. *The New York Review of Books,* December 17. Web.

Bogost, Ian. 2016. Persuasive Games. n.d. Web. 25 Nov. 2016.

Caillois, Roger. 1961. *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash. Reprint edition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. Print.

Cheah, Pheng. 2003. *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*. New York: Columbia University Press. Print.

Conrad, Joseph. 1989. *Heart of Darkness: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Print.

Cross, Robert. 2009. Brotherly Hands across the Cricket Pitch: Lagaan as Gandhian Post-Colonial 'India.' *Doshisha Studies in Language and Culture* 11 (4): 493–514. Print.

DeLappe, Joseph. 2008. MGandhi's March in Second Life. n.p., n.d. Web. 26 Nov.

Dhalsim. 2016. *Street Fighter Wiki*. Web. 23 Nov.

Dhalsim. 2016. *The Man in the High Castle*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Print.

Douglass, Frederick. 2016. *The Portable Frederick Douglass*, ed. John Stauffer and Henry Louis Gates. London: Penguin Classics. Print.

Duleep Singh. 2016. *Assassin's Creed Wiki*. Web. 23 Nov.

Fallout Wiki—Fallout 3. http://fallout.wikia.com/wiki/Fallout_3. Accessed 24 Nov 2016.

Fallout Wiki—Fallout. 2007. *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox. Revised edition. New York: Perseus Books Group. Print.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2001. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Print.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Print.

Kearney, Richard, and Jacques Derrida (eds.). 1986. Deconstruction and the Other. In *Dialogues With Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Print.

Keogh, Brendan. 2013. *Killing Is Harmless: A Critical Reading of Spec Ops: The Line*, 1st ed. Stolen Projects. e-Book.

Keogh, Brendan. 2011. *Kim*, ed. Paula M. Krebs and Tricia A. Lootens. Boston: Longman. Print. A Longman Cultural Edition.

Kitchin, Rob, James Kneale, and Barney Warf (eds.). 2005. The Way It Wasn't: Alternative Histories, Contingent Geographies. In *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction*. A & C Black. Print.

Martin, Paul. 2016. Race, Colonial History and National Identity Resident Evil 5 as a Japanese Game. *Games and Culture*: 1555412016631648. gac.sagepub.com. Web.

Odin, Jaishree K. 1997. The Edge of Difference: Negotiations Between the Hypertextual and the Postcolonial. *Modern Fiction Studies* 43 (3): 598–630. Print.

Parkman, Francis. 1927. *Works of Francis Parkman*, Centenary Edition. Boston, MA: Little, Brown. Print.

Parkman, Francis. 2016. *Cultural Code: Video Games and Latin America*, 1st ed. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Print.

Pieterse, Jan Niedervan. 2009. Does Empire Matter? In *Recent Themes in World History and the History of the West: Historians in Conversation*, ed. Donald A. Yerxa. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. Print.

Plunkett, Luke. 2010. Rape, Racism & Repetition: This Is Probably the Worst Game Ever Made. *Kotaku*, July 10. Web.

Premchand, Munshi. 1928. Shatranj Ki Khiladi [The Chess Players]. *Madhuri*: n.p. Print.

Pycroft, James. 1862. *The Cricket-Field*. By J. Pycroft. Longman. *Internet Archive*. Web. 19 Nov 2016.

Rakhmani, Inaya, and Hikmat Darmawan. 2015. Indonesia. In *Video Games Around the World*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Toru Iwatani, 1st ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Print.

Roberts, Andrew (ed.). 2010. *What Might Have Been?: Leading Historians on Twelve "What Ifs" of History*. Hachette: Orion Publishing Group. Print.

Smith, Woodruff D. 1991. *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840–1920*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2009. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge. Print.

Symonds, Shannon. 2016. Brenda Romero: 'The Mechanic Is the Message.' *CHEGheads Blog*. n.p., n.d. Web. 25 Nov. 2016.

"Tamaria" *Memory-Alpha Wiki*. Web. 23 Nov. 2016.

"Thralled." *Thralled*. n.p., 2015. Web. 24 Nov. 2016.

Upstone, Sara. 2009. Writing the Post-Colonial Space: Ben Okri's Magical City and the Subversion of Imperialism. *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 2.2: 139–159. *Project MUSE*. Web.

Verne, Jules. 1980. *Around the World in 80 Days*. New York: Viking Press. Print.

Whitehead, Dan. 2009. Resident Evil 5 Hands On. *Eurogamer.net*. n.p., 2009. Web. 23 Nov. 2016.

Wolf, Mark J. P., and Toru Iwatani. 2015. *Video Games Around the World*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.

LUDOGRAPHY

Afkar Media. 2002. *Under Ash* (n.p.: Dar Al Fikr). PC.

Bethesda Softworks. 2008. *Fallout 3*. Rockville, MD: Bethesda. PC.

Bethesda Softworks. 2011. *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Rockville, MD: Bethesda). PC

Big Huge Games. 2003. *Rise of Nations* (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios).PC

Bowles and Carver. 1796. *Bowles's Geographical Game*. Boardgame.

Capcom. 1991. Streetfighter 2 (Osaka: Capcom). Arcade.

Capcom. 2009. Resident Evil 5 (Osaka: Capcom). Arcade.

Captainsnake. 2009. Strikes, Riots and Rebellions: How Do I Stop Them?. *GameFaqs.com*. Web.

CD Projekt. 2015. *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt* (Lodz: CD Projekt). PC

Chakraborti, Siddhartha. 2015. From Destination to Nation and Back: The Hyperreal Journey of Incredible India. *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 7(2): 183–202. IngentaConnect. Web.

Creative Assembly. 2009. *Empire: Total War* (Tokyo: Sega). PC

Creative Assembly. 2013. *Rome: Total War 2* (Tokyo: Sega). PC

Crinalex. 2009. Strikes, Riots and Rebellions: How Do I Stop Them? *GameFaqs.com*. Web.

Douglass, Frederick. 2006. *The Portable Frederick Douglass*. Ed. John Stauffer and Henry Louis Gates. London: Penguin Classics. Print.

Ensemble Studios. 1997. *Age of Empires* (Redmond: Microsoft Games). PC.

Ensemble Studios. 1999. *Age of Empires 2* (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios). PC.

Ensemble Studios. 2005. *Age of Empires 3* (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios). PC.

Fireaxis Games. 1994. *Colonization*. (Maryland: Fireaxis Games). PC.

Fireaxis Games. 2005. *Civilization IV* (Maryland: Fireaxis Games). PC.

Fireaxis Games. 2010. *Civilization V* (Maryland: Fireaxis Games). PC.

Gibson, William. 1986. *Neuromancer*. West Bloomfield, Mich: Phantasia Press. Print.

Hello Games. 2016. *No Man's Sky* (Guildford, U.K: Hello Games). PC.

Hiddleston, Jane. 2014. *Understanding Postcolonialism*. Abingdon: Routledge. Print.

id Software. 1993. *Doom* (New York: GT Interactive). PC.

Illusions, Digital. 2004. *Battlefield Vietnam (California*. EA Games): PC.

Infinity Ward. 2011. *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* (Los Angeles: Activision). PC.

Inkle. 2014. *80 Days* (Cambridge: Inkle). PC.

Irrational Games. 2013. *BioShock Infinite* (Novato, California: 2k Games). PC.

Kiro'o Games. 2016. *Aurion: Legacy of Kori Odan* (n.p.: Plug In Digital). PC.

LaPensée, Elizabeth. 2015. *Invaders* (n.p.: LaPensée). PC.

MECC. 1971. *The Oregon Trail* (Boston: The Learning Company). PC.

Meier, S. 1994. *Colonization* (Maryland: MicroProse). PC.

Mitashi. 2002. *Bhagat Singh* (n.p.: Mitashi), PC.

Mystique. 1982. *Custer's Revenge* (n.p.: Mystique). Atari 2600.

Oliveira, M. TBA 2016. *Thralled* (n.p.: Tiffany Mang). Ouya.

Paradox Development Studios. 2001–13. *Europa Universalis* (Montreal: Strategy First)

Plunkett, Luke. 2016. Why Gandhi is Such an Asshole in Civilization. *Kotaku*. February 2016. Web.

Serious Games Interactive. 2013. *Playing History 2: The Slave Trade* (New York: Serious Games Interactive). PC.

Strategic Simulations. 1985. *Colonial Conquest* (Carentoir, France: Ubisoft). PC.

Studio Oleomingus. 2014. *Somewhere* (Dadar, India: Studio Oleomingus).PC.

Telegraph Studio. 2009. *Nusantara Online* (n.p.: Telegraph Studio). PC.

Tyson, P. 2009. Dar al-Islam: A Barbary States Empire Total War AAR – Part 1. *AfterAction Reporter*. March 22, 2009. Web.

Ubisoft Montreal. 2008. *Far Cry 2* (Montreal: Ubisoft). PC.

Ubisoft Montreal. 2012. *Assassin's Creed III* (Montreal: Ubisoft). PC.

Ubisoft Montreal. 2013. *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag - Freedom Cry* (Montreal: Ubisoft). PC.

Ubisoft Sofia. 2014. *Assassin's Creed: Rogue* (Sofia: Ubisoft). PC.

Ubisoft Quebec. 2016. *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* (Quebec: Ubisoft). PC.

Walberg, Eric. 2011. *Postmodern Imperialism: Geopolitics and the Great Games*. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press. Print.

Warf, Barney. "The Way It Wasn't: Alternative Histories, Contingent Geographies." *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction*. Ed. Rob Kitchin and James Kneale. Edinburgh: A&C Black, 2005. Print.

Yager Development. 2012. *Spec Ops: The Line* (Novato, CA: 2K Games). PC.

INDEX