

Stefano Caselli

Digital 'memory-play-spaces'.

Memory-making through Fire Emblem: Three Houses.

In dealing with digital games that engage with the past, one inevitably steps into the academic field of historical game studies (Chapman 2016a). Nonetheless, of course, 'history' is not the only proper theoretical perspective to look at the past. Using the fantasy game *Fire Emblem: Three Houses* (Intelligent System & Koei Tecmo 2019) as a case study, I will suggest looking at digital games from the perspective of memory studies, understanding them as 'memory-play-spaces' in which players continuously engage with memory-making.

[My presentation will begin with / My research entails] a theoretical inquiry on the very concept of history drawing on recent historiography. From the late 70s, history has been interpreted as a dynamic process of selection and assembly: expressing both subjectivities and socio-cultural schemata, and superimposing the present onto the past rather than merely bringing the past into the present (White 1973, 1980, 1984, 1990; Kramer 1989; Munslow 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2013; Droysen 1967; Gilderhus 2003; Rosenstone 2006). The same process is brought to the foreground by memory studies, which is, however, disinterested in verifying singular truths about history and aims precisely at enquiring modes of remembering that occur in socio-cultural contexts (Erl 2008a, 2008b, 2011; Erl & Rigney 2009; Hammar 2019b). To define a 'memory perspective' from which to observe (digital) games that engage with the past, I shall first briefly deal with what distinguishes the approaches of history and memory studies. I shall then provide an overview of digital games conceived as 'memory-play-spaces', i.e., sites of memory performances (Lagerkvist 2013).

The memory perspective may prove helpful in enriching our dealing with the relationship between games and cultural remembrance. Differently from what concerns historical digital games, every digital game, despite its genre or setting, can be interpreted as a 'memory-play-space'. We can conceive digital games as an *ars memoriae* (Lachman 1997), or 'memory-making media' (Hammar 2019b), always re-enacting or 're-evoking' something we experienced before. The case of FE: TH will be useful as it constitutes a clear example of how an unhistorical fantasy game can nonetheless clearly deal with the past, as well as with our reimagining of it, even without engaging with historical settings. The presentation will provide an analysis of FE:TH through the lens of the memory perspective, dealing with (collective) memory-making potentials (Hammar 2019b) within the game. Throughout the present analysis, I will retain player agency and memory performances within the game space at the center. I will also point out the intertwining of historical game studies and memory studies concepts by speaking of: selective authenticity (Salvati & Bullinger 2013), fetishization of the past (Kingsepp 2007), counterfactual historying (Chapman 2016a), mnemonic iconization (Erl 2011), pre- and remediation (Bolter & Grusin 1999), memory brands (Bullinger & Salvati 2011), media memory (Neiger et al. 2011), and timelessness (Lagerkvist 2013).

By focusing on memory-making, [my presentation / my research] aims at enriching historical game studies with an enlargement of our understanding of how digital games engage with the past, or 'play' with it (Uricchio 2005). As I may conclude, in fact, the concept of 'memory-play-space' favours a thorough looking at the ideological, socio-cultural situatedness of our remembering through digital games, as both individuals and groups.

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