

Representation and Self-Representation: Arabs and Muslims in Digital Games

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Abstract

This paper presents the ways in which Muslims and Arabs are represented in mainstream European and American digital games. It analyzes how games — particularly of the action genre — construct the Arab or Muslim ‘Other.’ Within these games, one finds the diverse ethnic and religious identities of the Islamic world reconstructed into a series of flat social typologies, often presented within the framework of hostility and terrorism. The second part of the paper deals with selected digital games created in the Middle East, whose authors are knowingly working with the topic of self-representation. Recent digital games originating in the Middle East can be perceived as examples of an ongoing digital emancipation taking place through the distribution of media images and their corresponding meanings. A key part of this ongoing digital emancipation involves the construction of Arab and Islamic heroes, a process accomplished by exploiting distinctive narrative structures and references to Islamic cultural heritage.

Keywords

videogames, Islamic videogames, Arabs, Muslims, racial stereotypes

1. Introduction

The first visual signifier of Arabs and Muslims that I had ever seen in a videogame was a rectangular cursor symbolizing an Arab unit in *Southern Command* (SSI, 1981), a

strategy game simulating the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The human player controls the Israeli forces whereas the computer controls the Arab ones. Although the limited level of technological development deprives the game of most features that a current generation digital game would typically possess, it prominently features a clearly defined ‘enemy’ and a simplistically bifurcated world of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ – both of which are familiar to current games.

The word ‘representation’ refers to the construction of meaning about the world through symbols and images. In the digital age, videogames have established themselves as a form of mainstream media that shapes our comprehension and understanding of the world by constructing, conveying and iterating various representations. In the last few years a critical approach towards games has emerged, largely referred to as Game Studies, which places digital games in their broader social context (Frasca 2004; Galloway 2005; Juul 2005; Raessens, Goldstein 2005; Bogost 2006).

Alexander Galloway has extended the traditional debates concerning representation into the realm of digital games, considering “whether images (or language) are a faithful, mimetic mirror of reality thereby offering some unmediated truth about the world, or conversely whether images are a separate, constructed medium thereby standing apart from the world in a separate semantic zone.”¹

¹ Galloway 2005.

According to Galloway, the discursive of visual or textual representation of meaning is no longer sufficient in game studies. Instead the actions and the gameworld in which they transpire must be analyzed. He suggests calling this a problematic of ‘correspondences’ rather than just ‘representation’ (Galloway 2005).

It is precisely the structure of gameplay in which the various iconographical and narrative representations related to racial issues should be examined. Research analyzing ethnic and racial issues from different perspectives in gameplay is to date relatively sparse (e.g. Marashi 2001; Everret 2005; Chan 2005; Leonard 2006). Anna Everret has analyzed the ways digital games reinforce, reject, or alter iconographical representations – a theme we are familiar with from other media texts. She presents the games’ ability to replicate attitudes about racial difference or subvert and refuse racist stereotypes in character designs (Everret 2005). Similarly, Dean Chan has suggested that we develop a critical attentiveness to the constituencies of racialized difference and the ways in which these differences are structured and represented in game-world contexts (Chan 2005). Ibrahim Marashi has introduced the stereotypical modes of representation of Arabs in selected combat videogames (Marashi 2001).

In-game representations of Arabs and Muslims do not circulate in a ‘ludological vacuum’² and have to be contextualized in a broader narrative structure that covers Islam in news and popular media in Europe (Said 1995, 1997; Poole 2006). Videogames originating in the United States have to be similarly contextualized within broader media constructions of the Middle East and its distinctive characteristics (Mayer 1998; Wingfield, Karaman 2001; Pintak 2006; Karim 2006). The dominant mode of representation of Arabs and Muslims in European and American media generally exploit stereotypical generalizations and clichés. As Bushra Karaman has noted, “the Arab world – twenty

two countries, the locus of several world religions, a multitude of ethnic and linguistic groups, and hundreds of years of history – is reduced to a few simplistic images.”³

In the post 9/11 climate the rhetoric constructing a bi-polarized world has intensified, in both ‘Western’ and Middle Eastern media. The dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’ helps to reinforce simplistic ideas of a collective Self and its hostile Other. Recent surveys and academic research projects have revealed some disturbing findings about how the Muslims are being ‘othered’ in Western media.⁴

1. The dominant discourses overwhelmingly present most followers of Islam as a threat (Hafez 2000; Karim 2003, Poole 2002, Richardson 2004).
2. Islam is most likely linked with terrorism (Karim 2006; Miller 2006; Manning 2006).
3. The representation of ‘ordinary Muslims’ is marginalized (Richardson 2006).
4. A conflictual framework dominates (Karim 2006; Manning 2006).

Videogames, as ‘cultural artifacts,’⁵ presumably don’t stand outside of these broader tendencies. At the same time the medium possesses certain specific, distinguishing features. Gonzalo Frasca suggested that game simulations fundamentally possess the potential for developing a tolerant attitude: “Unlike narrative, simulations are a kaleidoscopic form of representation that can provide us with multiple and alternative points of view. By accepting this paradigm, players can realize that there are many possible ways to deal with their personal and social reality. Hopefully, this might lead to the development of a tolerant attitude that accepts multiplicity as the rule and not the exception.”⁶

This paper critically examines the iconographical representation of Muslims and

² Chan 2005, p. 29. The term ludology (from ludus, the Latin word for ‘game’) was proposed by G. Frasca to refer to the yet non-existent “discipline that studies game and play activities” (Frasca 1999).

³ Karaman 2001, p. 132.

⁴ Richardson, Poole 2006, p. 5.

⁵ Bogost 2006, p. xiii.

⁶ Frasca 2004.

Arabs in European and American mainstream digital games in all the above mentioned contexts. It pays special attention to gameplay to emphasize the subtle ways in which Arabs and Muslims may be perceived within different gameworld settings. It explores racially typecast characters and stereotypical narratives as well as attempts to transcend the simplifying patterns of representation. In this respect the potentialities of simulation, as proposed by Frasca, are investigated. The second part of the paper deals with selected digital games created in the Middle East whose authors are self-consciously engaging in the project of re-fashioning their digital representation.

2. Representation

2.1 Orientalism in the Digital Age

*Oh, I come from a land
From a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam,
Where they cut off your ear
If they don't like your face.
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.*⁷

Videogames inherently provide a schematized image of the world. Game characters, apart from the heroes who possess background and personality, are often being depicted by several distinctive symbols only. The in-game surroundings and setting are similarly frequently rendered by iteration of limited number of textures and schemes. This also applies to the considerable amount of games which adopt Middle Eastern settings in quasi-historical or fantasy manner, e.g. *Iznogoud* (Infogrames, 1987); *Prince of Persia* (Broderbund, 1989); *The Magic of Scheherazade* (Cultural Brain, 1989); *Arabian Nights* (Krisalis, 1993); *Disney's Aladdin* (Sega, 1993); *Al-Qadim: The Genie's Curse* (SSI, 1994); *Beyond Oasis* (Sega, 1995); *Saban's Iznogoud* (Microids, 1997); *Arabian Nights* (DreamCatcher, Wanadoo 2000); *Persian Wars* (Cryo, 2001); *Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones* (Ubisoft, 2005) etc. Although some of these games stand out due to their graphics or plot and are considered

⁷ Opening song to the Walt Disney's movie *Aladdin*. The text was changed after protests by Arab Americans (Karaman 2001, p. 133).

milestones within their genre, such as *Prince of Persia* or *Al-Qadim*, they more or less share the visual and narrative features of 'orientalist' imagery.



Figure 1. The Magic of Scheherazade (Cultural Brain, 1989)

Edward Said, in his classic work, has analyzed the 'orientalist' discourse of 19th and early 20th century which re-creates Islamic society as a timeless and exotic entity. Fine arts and photography which presented 'Middle East' in a naive and historicizing way, as a realm of desert, camels, Bedouins and caliphs, have served to exclude it from 'modernity' and thus, according to Said, have endorsed the patronizing and colonial approach of real politics (Said 1978). When examining the visual signifiers used by the above mentioned games to create the 'Middle Eastern' impression, we find very much the same patterns.

A question thus has to be raised why this charming and romantic representation matters. Roland Barthes gives a diagnosis of how imitative arts "comprise two messages: a denoted message, which is the analogon itself, and a connoted message, which is the matter in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it."⁸ Unlike the fine arts videogames contain in most cases also a narrative. And although this narrative often serves only as an introduction to the quest, it shapes the connoted message together with the images. In the vast majority (seven out of ten precisely) of the above listed games, the plot begins with the kidnapping of a woman

⁸ Barthes 1982, p. 195.

(princess, sister, daughter) by an evil character (vizier, caliph, demon) and the hero's in-game *raison d'être* is to save her and gain revenge. (On the contrary in *Al-Qadim* the caliph's beautiful daughter Kara is a final reward for the young hero.) In *Iznogoud* the task is to depose the caliph by regicide; in *Prince of Persia*, *Arabian Nights* and *The Magic of Scheherazade* the hero is unjustly imprisoned in caliph's dungeon and/or his quest is to save himself from beheading.



Figure 2. Prince of Persia: Harem Adventure (Gameloft S.A., 2003)

Although these narratives are typical for common medieval/ fantasy settings, such imagery when dominant in the frame of reference to the 'Middle East' reinforces the stereotypical notions of arbitrary cruelty and barbarism. Although these games do not depict contemporary Muslim society, this perception inevitably extends forward to the present, strengthening the commonly presumed features of an alien and exotic Muslim 'other'. As Karaman has noted, ethnic stereotypes are especially harmful in the absence of positive ethnic images (Karaman 2001). The prevalent 'orientalist' mode of representation can also be perceived as an exclusion from modern constructive discursive, overshadowing the represented contribution to contemporary reality.

2.2 Representation of Enemy: Targets in War Games

"The desert is the country of the treacherous soldier Nomad. He is unreliable as the sand, as cold as the nights and as dangerous as the deadly scorpions that live there. His family is a gang of assassins and wandering thieves. They are men without honor, who use their

*knowledge of the desert to attack innocent villages."*⁹

When speaking of the 'other', we may refer to somebody like ourselves, whom we identify as 'one of us', a stranger ('one of them') or even the unknowable other (what Lévinas calls *autrui*). In the majority of action games (esp. FPS) the point of the game is to kill 'others', who typically belong to the category 'one of them' (Dahlberg 2005). The key question, then, is how the 'others' are constructed by the game in terms of graphics, narrative and gameplay. Since the times of the rectangular cursor featured in *Southern Command*, the sphere of digital entertainment has made considerable progress, though some features still remain the same.

The Middle East is a favorite virtual battleground. Action-genre games like *War in the Gulf* (Empire 1993); *Delta Force* (NovaLogic, 1998); *Delta Force: Land Warrior* (Novalogic, 2000); *Conflict: Desert Storm* (SCi Games, 2002); *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell* (Ubi Soft, 2002); *America's Army* (U.S. Army, 2002); *Conflict: Desert Storm II: Back to Baghdad* (SCi games, 2003); *Command & Conquer: Generals* (Electronic Arts, 2003); *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* (NovaLogic, 2003); *Full Spectrum Warrior* (THQ, 2004); *Kuma/War* (Kuma Reality Games, 2004) and *Conflict: Global Terror* (SCi Games, 2005) take place in the Middle East or in ostensibly anonymous yet overtly Middle Eastern settings.

Generally speaking, the player controls American or coalition forces against terrorists, while insurgents or enemy regime's units are controlled by the computer. The enemy is depicted by a set of schematized attributes which often refer to Arabs or Muslims - head cover, loose clothes, dark skin color. In many cases the in-game narrative thereafter links these signifiers to international terrorism and/or Islamist extremism. *Delta Force: Land Warrior* presents a scenario in which Arabs from several countries have banded together

⁹ Description on the packaging of 'Nomad' figure, a plastic toy and enemy of 'Rambo' figure. After protests by Arab Americans, the producer Caleco Industries, Inc. withdrew TV ads and ceased toy's production (Karim 2006).

into a terrorist organization bent on undermining the activities of the United States. *Full Spectrum Warrior* is set to a fictional but overtly Muslim country of Tazikhstan, “a haven for terrorists and extremists.”¹⁰ The strategic game *Command & Conquer: Generals* allows the player to choose from three sides of fictional conflict: the United States, China, and Arab ‘Global Liberation Army’. The description of these struggling factions is significant. “The United States has powerful and expensive units, including well-armed infantry and vehicles that can heal themselves. Their superior intelligence capabilities and flexible air force allow them to strike quickly anywhere on the map.”¹¹ The Arab Global Liberation Army, on the other hand, is distinguished by “terrorists with car bombs and truck bombs, suicide bombers with explosives strapped to their bodies, anthrax and biotoxin delivery systems and angry mobs of Arabs wielding AK-47s.”¹² In such cases, as Gerard Greenfield has noted, “the choosing to be ‘enemy’ adds no objectivity, it just makes it harder to win – the enemy is still depicted in racist terms.”¹³

Nina Huntemann stated that “9/11 is so culturally significant that the games take on a new meaning.”¹⁴ Apart from a dramatic increase in games whose objective is fighting terrorism and combat games set in the Middle East, the militarization of the public sphere is a trend that has modified digital entertainment as a whole. Recent studies examine increasing collaborations between the games industry and the military in the United States (Zhan Li 2004; Leonard 2004; Barron, Huntemann 2004). Video games are being used as a public relations tool for promoting the U.S. Army and recruitment (*America’s Army*) or as a means of explaining and vindicating the ‘War against Terror’ (*Kuma/War*).

Possible racial schematizations in *America’s Army* have been thoroughly examined, given its status as an official U.S. Army communication tool. “A key directive for the game design was that players should

not be able to play in such a way that they are rewarded for the killing of virtual American soldiers. Accordingly, each player sees members of his own team as American (with an ethnically mixed team of avatars), and the opposing human team members as enemies (the OPFOR or opposing force). OPFOR teams are portrayed as coming from one of a variety of broad ethnic backgrounds (Latin American, Arab, European) depending on the (anonymous) geography of the mission scenario.”¹⁵ Despite the game’s self-proclaimed correctness, the concern has been raised that the Arab or Afghani enemies are predominant and the American soldiers are only of Caucasian or Afro-American origin (Woodside 2003).

When a game is set in a particular Middle Eastern country and based on real conflict, the re-telling of the narrative inevitably reshapes its comprehension and evaluation, schematizing complex political relations into a bi-polar frame. *Kuma/War* is a FPS action game based on real campaigns of the U.S. Army, mainly from the War in Iraq. New downloadable missions are available every month covering recent operations, with Arab or Afghani terrorists or insurgents as enemies. Missions like *Spring Break Fallujah* (2004) and *Battle in Sadr City* (2005) allow the player to engage in “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” *Assault on Iran* (2005) even anticipated America’s potential further engagement by carefully changing the depiction of enemies to Iranians.



Figure 3. *Kuma/War*, Battle in Sadr City (Kuma Reality Games, 2005)

¹⁰ Leonard 2004.

¹¹ Chick 2003, p. 1.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Greenfield 2004, p. 2.

¹⁴ Barron 2004.

¹⁵ Zhan Li 2004, p. 6.

In both games the moral mission of the U.S. Army is emphasized: “As long as there are forces which threaten the promise of freedom... America's Army stands ready... and in the vanguard you will find... Special Forces [...] help liberate the oppressed... become one of the Army's Green Berets... and subdue the enemies of freedom.”¹⁶ Huntemann compares similar games with the *Why We Fight* war films made by Hollywood directors in the 1940s but comments that the interactive character of the video games medium makes the game's message more like “How We Fight.”¹⁷ She noted that both games are provided with an overwhelming load of technical information about weaponry and technology of war but fail in providing background for the deeper understanding of the conflict and its outcome. Similar opinion has been expressed by Zhan Li in his analysis of *America's Army* (Zhan Li 2004). “The ergodic virtual representation of war in video games engages the public in a participative mimesis within the confines of instrumental media system, so thereby detaching it from actual communicative reasoning.”¹⁸ The militarization of digital game trope, having reinforced the bi-polar frame of the good Self and the evil Other, obviates any further explanation of the reasons for the conflict.

2.3 Introducing the Other: Breaking the Old Patterns

If there is one game that stands as an exception to this broader pattern – matching in particular Frasca's claims concerning simulation – it is surely Sid Meier's *Civilization III* (Infogrames, 2001). This famous strategy game allows players to act on the part of various civilizations and engage in building cities, establishing trade routes and interacting with others on a diplomatic or military basis through thousands of years of virtual history. Each civilization has its own unique traits and all are presented in a very culturally-sensitive way. The balanced gameplay, which allows the player to choose any side and generally rewards cooperation, counters the bi-polar notions of Self and Other.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 118.

In the words of McKenzie “Sid Meier turns history and anthropology books into strategy game.”¹⁹ The game is equipped with an in-game encyclopedia containing a substantial amount of historical, ethnographical and cultural information. The in-game description of many features of Islamic civilization is unique for its correctness and sensitivity, e.g.: “Jihad is the only type of war legitimized by Islam, yet the word itself is still misunderstood by Westerners. ‘Holy War’ is the often-used misleading translation of Jihad, which in fact is meant to consist of an individual's or a communal ‘struggle’ against evil, within one's self, and in order to protect Islam, but never as a tool for conversion.”²⁰ The same sensitivity applies to the selection of the representative figure for game diplomacy: the first caliph Abu Bakr and not the prophet Muhammad, whose depiction in a computer game would be a considerably delicate subject.

3. Self-representation ²¹

3.1 Resistance and Martyrdom: Construction of Heroes

The production of digital games in the Middle East is subtle in its early development. Nevertheless, there is a strong notion that Arabs and Muslims are being misrepresented and that their image is being distorted by ‘Western’ videogames (Marashi 2001; Sisler 2005). Few attempts have been made to overcome this misrepresentation, but the ones that have been produced vary considerably in their means and philosophical approach.

A direct answer to games like *Delta Force* or *America's Army* came from the Central Internet Bureau of Lebanese Hezbollah movement in 2003. The action game *Al-Quwwa al-Khasa (Special Force, Solution, 2003)*, a promotional tool for the movement, deals with the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon and glorifies the role of Hezbollah in the retreat of the Israeli Army.²² The game

¹⁹ McKenzie 2004, p. 69.

²⁰ http://www.civ3.com/ptw_prof_arab.cfm (5th June 2006).

²¹ Some fragments of this chapter previously appeared in Sisler 2005; Sisler 2006.

²² <http://specialforce.net> (5th June 2006).

constructs two basic types of Arab and Muslim heroes. The first is a figure controlled by the player, a fearless warrior winning, despite being outnumbered by Zionist forces; the second type comprises his fallen comrades, the real fighters of Hezbollah. Throughout the game they are consistently referred to as martyrs (*ash-shuhada*'), and the player finds their photographs in the virtual battlefield, allegedly in the same places where they really died. The game is just like common action games built on a concept of the lone invincible fighter and is full of the atmosphere of sacrifice and victory, simply reversing the narrative and iconographical stereotypes mentioned above. It strongly emphasizes the Muslim identity of the main hero – missions usually begin in a shelter equipped with the Quran, a praying mat and posters of the Dome of the Rock or Al-Aqsa Mosque.

A different approach to the topic of self-representation can be found in the Syrian game *Tahta al-Ramad (Under Ash)*, Dar al-Fikr, 2002) which deals with the First Intifada. The game is unusually emotional in the way 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 task of the player 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. Combat is central to the narrative but killing of civilians is prohibited. According to the authors, *Tahta al-Ramad* is a "call for justice and realization of the truth, the prevention against the wrong and aggression."²³

Dr. Fadel Abu Hien, a psychology professor at Gaza City's Al Aqsa University, although referring to 'real' games, made an observation concerning the re-playing of skirmishes by Palestinian children. "It's a way to have some feeling of power in a real-life situation where they are powerless. If a boy can 'fire' the same weapon as the occupier, if

he can imitate the sound of a mortar or rocket which he sees as the Israeli source of power, then he 'owns' that power too and feels more in control."²⁴

Special Force and *Under Ash* can be considered as the first attempts to participate in computer games' construction of Arab and Muslim self-representation. Although the first is blatantly ideological and propagandistic, whereas the latter pales in technological comparison with similar U.S. and European games, for the first time the Middle Eastern gamer is offered congruence between his political reality and its in-game *mimesis*. As Galloway put it, "If one is to take the definition of realism a documentary-like attention to the everyday struggles of the downtrodden, leading to a direct criticism of current social policy then *Special Force* and *Under Ash* are among the first truly realist games in existence."²⁵

3.2 Digital Dignity: Distinctive Narrative and Islamic Heritage



Figure 4. *Tahta al-Hisar (Under Siege)*, Afkar Media, 2005)

The direct sequel to *Under Ash* is *Tahta al-Hisar (Under Siege)*, Afkar Media, 2005). Unlike its predecessor the game introduces real events to the virtual world. It begins with a killing in the Mosque of Abraham in Hebron, where in 1994 a radical Jewish fundamentalist, Baruch Goldstein, shot 29 Muslims during the Friday prayer. The player controls Ahmad,

²³ <http://www.underash.net/emessage.htm> (5th June 2006).

²⁴ <http://rafahnnotes.blogspot.com/2005/11/playing-game-professionally.html> (5th June 2006).

²⁵ Galloway 2005.

who has to survive the first minutes of Goldstein's shooting hidden between pillars and in the right moment disarm him. In a narrative similar to *Under Ash* he is then engaged in a fight with Israeli police and Army.

The game construes three types of heroes: Ahmad, who, according to the game's manual, is actually a fearful person, who is reconciled to the life of a second-rate citizen and shuns violence, but who in the game is exposed to an attack and thus forced to defend himself, which explains the game's development of further violence and combat gameplay; Ma'an, a small boy who with his friends throws stones at an Israeli tank; after he manages to steal the Israeli flag from it, he is killed; and Maryam, sister of Ahmad, who tries to save her husband from Israeli jail and interrogation.

All these characters have a background story that is presented in a very emotional way, something that is exceptional in the realm of the video game industry. Radwan Kasmiya, manager of Afkar Media, says: "It was our aim to show what happens in Palestine behind politics, to show people stories and problems."²⁶ Like its Western equivalents, the game fails in its schematization of enemies (Israelis), although it does make an attempt to overcome this problem. The game world is inhabited by civilians (Israelis and Palestinians) whose killing is penalized by an automatic 'game over.' This constitutes a substantial difference from the majority of Western war games, where the Middle Eastern cities are depicted as being without inhabitants and the allied war effort is thus shown not to hurt civilians.²⁷

A new real-time strategy game, *Quraish*, will soon be released by Afkar Media.²⁸ It deals with the wars of Bedouin tribes and the spreading of Islam. The gameplay allows the player to control four different nations – Bedouins, Arabs, Persians and Romans. The authors promise that the origin of Islam will be witnessed by a Byzantine officer, a Persian

priest and Bedouin tribe chieftain.²⁹ The game pays attention to the delicate subject of representation of the prophet Muhammad, so his sayings and deeds will be present in the game through memories and dialogues of his companions, in a way somehow similar to the one which the authors of the movie *Ar-Risala* (The Message, 1976) have chosen. This game can be seen as a cultural appropriation of real-time strategy game, but also as a digital translation of the Islamic culture heritage to the next generation. Radwan Kasmiya told me, that his aim is to present to the Arab youth the knowledge about their civilization in a way they understand the best, that means videogames.



Figure 5. *Quraish* (Afkar Media, 2006)

Radwan Kasmiya coins the concept of 'Digital Dignity' when describing their works.³⁰ From the perspective of Arab gamer even a normal fantasy action game like *Qalat al-Nasr* (*Castle of Victory*, Afkar Media, 2003) could have cultural meaning in the sense that the hero who fights evil is Arab and speaks the Arabic language.

4. Conclusion

Today we are in crucial need of critically understanding the symbolic and ideological dimensions of in-game representational politics. Sherry Turkle has noted that only "people who understand the distortions imposed by simulations are in a position to call for new kinds of representation."³¹ Critical awareness however does not imply directive policy to game production. The addition or subtraction approach to game design practice

²⁶ Sisler 2006b, p. 78.

²⁷ Leonard 2004.

²⁸ The paper was submitted in July 2006.

²⁹ www.quraishgame.com (5th June 2006).

³⁰ Sisler 2006b, p. 78.

³¹ Frasca 2004.

does not provide a rounded ethical basis for understanding and confronting in-game misrepresentation (Chan 2005). The problem of stereotyping schematization and ‘othering’ the enemy by far transcends the realm of digital games and the *panacea* could not be found solely within its virtual borders. As Marcel Khleifi stated in his documentary movie *Route 181* (2003): “Only if we know, that hatred is a construction, we can deconstruct it.”

In this respect I am looking forward with expectations to the genre of serious and educational games, especially those dealing with the Middle-Eastern conflicts and their representations, like *Global Conflicts: Palestine* (Serious Games Interactive, release date 2007) and *PeaceMaker* (ImpactGames, release date 2006).

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