Engines of Agency and Affect

A Model for Interactive Histories

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts
in
History, with Collaborative Specialization in Digital Humanities

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Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

This thesis presents a framework for interactive histories that presents an argument for using interactive media (principally, games) as a form of historical writing. It argues that when historical knowledge is embedded within an interactive structure, it is as a historical problem space consisting of game and narrative mechanics. It provides a library of historical and digital humanities methodologies that allows a historian to derive historical aesthetics and agencies from their historical research, then adapt their knowledge as game and narrative mechanics. In doing so, the historian also adopts the practices of a game designer; they become a “developer-historian”. When players engage their agency with game and narrative mechanics, they encounter the designer’s historical-rhetorical claims about the nature of historical reality. By interrogating these claims, they are brought “within the circle” of historical and ethnographic practice and expand their historical imagination and understanding.
Acknowledgments

There are many thanks to be issued, as many people have provided their knowledge, support, input, and patience to this thesis. Most of all I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Shawn Graham, who has supported this endeavour from day one. Shawn given me a remarkable amount of insight and guidance, but also the freedom and trust to steer my own course. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my defence examiners, Dr. Jeremiah McCall & Dr. Marc Saurette, and the Chair of Defence Dr. Andrew Johnston. The value of their suggestions, ideas, and expertise cannot be understated.

Much gratitude also goes to the supervisors and group members of Dr. Shawn Graham’s X-Lab and Dr. Jennifer Evan’s Populist Publics research teams; to my research colleagues and cohorts, thank you for your support and interest in my ideas. I also owe a great deal to those who read and made editing suggestions on earlier iterations of this project. Thank you to Gregory Youmans, Terry Chapman, Katherine Davidson, and Dr. Marc Saurette for your generous donations of time and input.

My friends and family have borne the brunt of my (slightly unhinged) ramblings about narratives, games, and ancient Rome with remarkable patience. This thesis would not be possible without them. To my parents, Wendy & Terry Chapman, my younger sister Kyla, and my aunts, uncles, and grandpas- thank you for your love and support. To my regular gaming group (the Lads), the gift of play and camaraderie is often undervalued, and I thank you for it. Finally, I would like to remember my great uncle, Larry Ringer: a master wargamer, computer wizard, and classicist. He is much missed.
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Introduction

In her powerful essay *Venus in Two Acts*, Saidiya Hartman considers the figure of “Venus”, an emblematic representation of Black female experiences of the Atlantic slave trade. Hartman wrestles with the historical “afterlife” of slavery, considering how to reconstruct and present a narrative of Venus’ experiences that does not replicate the violence contained within the archive of her life. In doing so, Hartman pushes the boundaries of historical storytelling, writing at the limits of the unspeakable and unknown in an attempt to redress the violence done to historical agents. In doing so, she presents the following questions:

“How can narrative embody life in words and at the same time respect what we cannot know? How does one listen for the groans and cries, the undecipherable songs, the crackle of fire in the cane fields, the laments for the dead, and the shouts of victory, and then assign words to all of it? Is it possible to construct a story from “the locus of impossible speech” or resurrect lives from the ruins? Can beauty provide an antidote to dishonour, and love a way to “exhume buried cries” and reanimate the dead?

Or is narration its own gift and its own end, that is, all that is realisable when overcoming the past and redeeming the dead are not? And what do stories afford anyway? A way of living in the world in the aftermath of catastrophe and devastation? A home in the world for the mutilated and violated self? For whom—for us or for them?”

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This thesis, *Engines of Agency and Affect* explores these questions by considering historical storytelling and representation within a new medium: **Interactive Histories**, digital representations of the past that use interactivity as their mode of historical knowledge dissemination. I argue that when a historian adopts the practices of a game designer, they can embed their historical research and arguments into the game world. In adopting these practices, they become what Adam Chapman (no relation) terms a “developer-historian”, a game designer with the academic sensibilities of a professional historian.\(^2\) I argue that historical-interactive media provides an expanded library of tools for representing historically overlooked people and events; to tell microhistorical narratives about those not well-represented by the archive; to allow the player to expand their historical imagination and perspectives on the human social experience.

Why should historians strive to become game designers? Here is the value proposition: the process of embedding historical knowledge into interactive media\(^3\) enables us to write certain histories that cannot be adequately represented by conventional historical practice; such as marginalised historical groups that are either undocumented, documented through a colonial lens, or use modes of cultural expression not easily adaptable into conventional historical writing. I argue that a historically powerful use of the framework is to allow historians to express their knowledge in new ways, embracing the value of smallness and intimate storytelling to better express the experiences of historical agents; giving voice to a broader (and deserving) subset of

\(^2\) Chapman 2016, “Introduction” *Digital Games as History*, 16.
\(^3\) While I will largely discuss interactive digital media (video games), this thesis also has potential application for other interactive mediums, such as tabletop role-playing games.
historical peoples, and in doing so expand the historical imagination and awareness of their players.

To achieve a workable framework for the creation of such historical projects, this thesis introduces techniques and ideas from a broad selection of the humanities. The goal is to provide a methodological basis for researching and designing interactive historical narratives. To inform its concept of agency, the *Agential Engines* framework incorporates and expands upon the ideas on historical narrative writing introduced by Saidiya Hartman and incorporates concepts from games philosophers like C. Thi Nguyen and Ian Bogost. To assist in the creation of affective historical narratives and digital imaginary spaces, it draws from narrative, performance, spatial, and sensory theories, as well as theories of historical emotions to drive the player’s engagement with the emotional landscapes of historical peoples. To operationalise its theory of agency and affect, the framework uses Jeremiah McCall’s *Historical Problem Space Framework* as a baseline of analysing and creating game mechanics. Within a historical problem space, historical research and game design concepts work together to present the developer-historians’ research and arguments on the nature of historical realities.

The first chapter, *Here be Dragons* considers an interdisciplinary set of theories, divided into the concepts of Agency (Section 1.1 - Embodied Agency) and Affect (Section 1.2, subdivided into 1.2.1 - Imagination, and 1.2.2 - Emotion). These concepts of historical agency, imagination, and emotion form the core theoretical pillars of the framework, drawing in methodological concepts from several humanities’ disciplines, including sociology (agency & affective theory), anthropology, spatial & sensory archaeology, ludology, narrativity, performance theory, and emotion’s history. These
concepts are collected into a coherent set of diagrams for each broad theoretical concept. Additionally, key concepts will be highlighted in bold, and can be referenced in the glossary of terms.

Section 1.1 considers the sociological concept of agency as a key component of interactive media. It suggests that a developer-historian can embody their player within the agency of a historical actor. When a player adopts a historical agency, they engage with history as a process; they interrogate the rules and claims of historical cultural values. These processes incorporate real historical systems of help and hindrance, and the player must engage their agency in “striving play”, to overcome the game and narrative mechanics. The chapter provides a number of safeguards against the creation of historically biased narratives, focusing specifically on the issues of teleological thinking and source bias; it centres the idea of constructing historically sound agential narratives by using the concepts of counter-archival reading and reconstructing marginalised histories. Overall, the section argues that when the player engages their agency within an interactive agential narrative, they are presented with the historian’s rhetorical claims about the nature of historical events and peoples. This stands to expand the user’s historical imagination and “library of agencies”, allowing them to make historical claims about the nature of historical events and societies.

Section 1.2 argues that for an interactive history to be affective, historical knowledge should be embedded within the fundamental gameplay and narrative structures to create an “imaginary space”- creating an imaginary construct shared between the historian, the player, and the historical society presented within the space. It reconstructs, to the best of the historians’ ability, historical experiences of space and
senses. At the core of the concept of imaginary space are the concepts of narrative, performance, space, and senses. These inform the player’s ability to simulate a historical agent and enhance their belief in the “presence” of history. Interactive histories “perform” history through their game and narrative elements, with the player engaging with a simulation of historical life. They create an imaginary geography and mental map of the space presented to them, which I suggest should be recreated with a mind towards archaeological and archival evidence. It suggests that interactive histories are a hybrid of historical social and cultural ideas intermixed with modern historical writing and narrative techniques.

Section 1.3 introduces the concept of emotional histories, suggesting that historical emotional regimes and communities can be introduced as game and narrative elements, providing additional systems of help and hindrance. On one side are William M. Reddy’s emotional regimes, historical systems that dictated how members of a society were to regulate and express their emotions. I suggest that the agential restrictions imposed by emotional regimes form an excellent procedural mechanic for regulating the player’s emotions and encourage the simulation of historical emotions. On the other side are Barbara Rosenwein’s emotional communities, historical groups who shared a set of emotional values. Should a player be agentally embedded into a simulated emotional community, this forms a system of positive emotive expression that they can emulate and incorporate into their historical understanding.

The final section of Chapter 1 (1.3-”Microhistorians”) suggests that when a player is encouraged to develop their historical imagination and library of agencies, they gain the ability to reflect on their experiences as a form of autoethnography. By doing so, the
player comes to more deeply understand the historical content presented to them, making value claims about the nature of historical reality. Section 1.3 suggests that interactive histories draw much of their value from their nature as microhistories, being able to represent smaller-scale and subaltern historical events more effectively. Finally, it provides the recommendation that aspiring developer-historians embrace the microhistorical value of interactive histories, suggesting that even technically-inexperienced historians can use the framework to make “vignette” games—small, mechanics-driven experiences that reflect personal and affective narratives.

Chapter 2: Paths of Logic is primarily concerned with demonstrating the various components of the framework in action. Using Jeremiah McCall’s Historical Problem Space Framework (HPS) as an analytical tool, it deconstructs three pieces of media that I believe reflect many of the core components and ideas of Agential Engines. This is to demonstrate the utility of many of the frameworks and theories introduced in Chapter 1. It considers three pieces of media: Ice-Pick Lodge’s philosophical game Pathologic 2, Modern Storyteller’s interactive mystery The Forgotten City, and Saidiya Hartman’s book Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments. On the face of it, these three works depict very different historical eras, settings, and genres, but I show below they are united in their goal of telling an agency-centred narrative that presents arguments about the nature of historical societies and experiences.

Through procedural, theatrical, and narrative rhetoric, Pathologic 2 reflects on the social and cultural impacts of Russian and Soviet colonialism, the tension between tradition and modernity, and the confrontation of cultural, spiritual, and social death. In my analysis of Pathologic 2 (section 2.1), I observe that it is an excellent demonstration
of how historical truths can be depicted within a fictional setting; while the game is not set within a historical “reality”, it is an example of a game with a sense for the weight of historical “presence”. Mental mapping and pathfinding of the gameworld is a core gameplay mechanic, embedding the player’s agency within a specific place and community. It also centres the historical experiences of indigenous peoples through featuring spiritual practices and social ideas as game and narrative mechanics, placing the player as a witness to the impacts of colonial practices on culture. *Pathologic 2*’s game world and presented imaginary space provides numerous examples of almost all key concepts introduced in Chapter 1, forming a deeply affective philosophical narrative that draws from the genre conventions of (Russian) history, theatre, and literature.

*The Forgotten City* (section 2.2) is a game that takes a different approach to historical storytelling. Using the genre trappings of a mystery-adventure game, *The Forgotten City* acts as a Socratic dialogue between the player and developer, with game and narrative mechanics representing a powerful procedural rhetoric. Set in a representation of a (fictional) ancient Roman city, the game tasks the player with solving the mystery of “The Golden Rule”, an absolute moral system that collectively punishes the entire city for individual crimes. *The Forgotten City* uses its historical setting to juxtapose ancient and modern moral, religious, and legal systems and uses an extremely literal application of an “emotional regime” to demonstrate the dangers of absolute morality. *The Forgotten City* it provides an excellent example of using historical texture to drive a philosophical and rhetorical narrative.

Chapter 2 concludes with an analysis of Saidiya Hartman’s *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* which of course is not a game. While literary theories have been
used by scholars to analyse games, it is uncommon to use interactivity theory to analyse a work of literature. However, Hartman’s book represents a genre of writing that I believe could adapt well to interactive historical storytelling. *Wayward Lives* considers the lives and experiences of a number of young Black women living in New York City and Philadelphia at the turn of the 20th century. It centres their experiences as radicals and modernists, and the hidden impact of the “ghetto girl” on later American culture. It is an example of Hartman’s practice of “critical fabulation” and “close narration”, a genre of historical writing that creatively (re)interprets archival material in a way that centres the agency and experiences of subaltern historical actors. Hartman’s work reflects a method of writing about historical agencies, imaginations, and imaginations that is exceptionally useful for the creation of procedural-agential narratives. I argue that Hartman’s method and genre has great theoretical utility for the developer-historian striving to create intimate microhistorical narratives that pull in all other aspects of the framework.

The final Chapter, *October 79: Twelve Days in Pompeii* proposes an interactive microhistory of the last days of ancient Roman Pompeii- “October 79”. It details a game that would operationalise the ideas introduced in Chapters 1 & 2, providing a simulation of Roman culture and daily life in Pompeii. Such a game, if built, would provide a procedural and narrative rhetoric about the social structures of Pompeii, demonstrating how interactive histories can be used to simulate a historical social encounter space. The first section (Section 3.1- recreating the Romans) reincorporates the three core theoretical pillars of Agency, Emotion, and Affect, considering how these elements interact with scholarship on Roman society and culture. It considers both current Roman scholarship and the conventions of Roman cultural material to inform an imaginative reconstruction
of Pompeii during its final days, demonstrating how the *Agential Engines* methodology can be used by a developer-historian.

Section 3.1.1 - Life on the *Limens*, emphasises the social agencies of one of ancient Rome’s most liminal and overlooked social classes: the Freedman, former slaves manumitted by their masters. Freedmen occupied an unusual role within Roman society; they were typically well-educated and competent individuals, trusted by their former masters and patrons, and epigraphic inscriptions show that Pompeian freedmen gained success in their business and social standing. However, at the same time Roman literary evidence shows that the Freedmen were viewed negatively by the Roman political elite, seen as a vulgar *nouveau riche*, decadent and intractable. As individuals that did not truly fit within any social class, freedmen seem to have interacted with Romans at all levels of society and found novel ways of raising their social standing. The section reconsiders the social linkages of the freedman, the evidence of their lifestyles, and the implications of their apparent place in Roman society. It considers how a player may be embodied into the agency of an individual that, in the eyes of the broader society, lacked a social “self,” and the systems of help and hindrance that emerged from that fact.

The next section, (3.1.2 - Emotional Communities and Regimes in Roman Society) considers a selection of the ancient Romans’ emotional and moral practices, and how these practices could be adapted into game and narrative mechanics following the *Agential Engines* methodology. The section considers several Roman emotional practices, including the traditional *mos maiorum* - the “ancestral customs” of the Romans. These customs and their cultural enforcement formed a “soft emotional regime” for all Romans, and I suggest that they are a good baseline for creating an emotional mechanic
for the player to adopt. This elucidated by the emotional states detailed by several other scholars of Roman emotions, which are incorporated into the simulation of Roman emotional customs and expectations. Additionally, the section considers the emotional communities that emerge from Roman cult and trade practices, considering how communities of practice and fellow-feeling emerged from communal groups with shared emotional values. These communities are of importance to recreating a Roman social experience, as they form the main point of emotional contact for the player.

The last section (3.1.3- “Imagined Pompeii”) considers the physical and imagined experiences of Roman spaces. It suggests that an explorable, reconstructed urban environment provides the player with a social encounter space centred on experience of the Pompeian Street. It centres October 79 as a social simulation, using the player’s “freedman” agency as a focal point for encountering Roman culture. It suggests that a recreation of the imaginary space of a Roman freedman takes place mainly outside, especially within the street or public spaces like the theatre or forum. As an agent of one of Pompeii’s political elites, the player can be incentivised to experience a broad selection of Pompeii’s environments and communities. The section considers the physical layout of Pompeii and how the player could be guided along the build environment, and by doing so emphasising the sensory and spatial experience(s) of living in a 1st century Roman city. This reconstruction is informed by Roman cultural materials and writings, drawing from the descriptions of life on the street from Roman plays and satires. The reconstruction is envisioned as a space of social experimentation, with the player encountering and interrogating Roman social norms and expectations while managing
their in-game reputation. These processes form a rhetoric about the nature of Roman social life and the place of the freedmen and other lower classes.

Chapter 3 concludes with a Footnoted Game Design Document (GDD) for October 79. It details the proposed core gameplay mechanics, narrative goals, and environmental design of the game. Incorporating theoretical ideas from Chapter 1, and game and narrative mechanics analysed in Chapter 2, it provides a vision of one of the potential applications of the *agential Engines* framework. Cumulatively, the three chapters of the thesis detail a vision for a flexible methodological framework for the creation of Interactive Histories. Using a combination of game design, humanities, and historical practices, *Engines of Agency and Affect* suggests that historical ideas and research can be used as game and narrative mechanics for the purposes of affecting the historical imaginations and agencies of their players.
Chapter 1: Here be Dragons - Embodied Agencies, Imagined Spaces, Embedded Emotions

1.1- Embodied Agencies

As a sociological concept, agency is often defined as “an individual’s ability to take independent action and decisions, with the intent to affect an outcome”.4 This conceptualization of human agency expressed and restricted within a structure resonates with theories of games and play. In particular, the concept of the “magic circle”, introduced by social historian Johann Huizinga (1938). The magic circle suggests that games introduce temporary, playful boundaries that restrict a player’s actions to agreed-upon rules, forming a structure that contains a virtual world.5 The concept of games as social structures has carried through to the modern field of games studies.6 Games scholars7 have identified agency as a key component driving user interactions with interactive media. While each of these scholars consider agency from different angles, I have derived a composite definition of agency for the framework that I label as “embodied agency” (see Figure 1).

Agency becomes “embodied” when the user adopts a pattern of behaviour and decision-making that is different from their normal mode of agency for the purposes of functioning within an alternate structure. Within this framework of interactive histories,

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5 Huizinga (1938), Homo ludens, 10.

6 An intersectional field of the humanities based in games. At the broadest scope, games theorists consider games, how humans interact with games, the impact of games on human activities, and how games represent human activities. Historians have broadly focused on game’s representational qualities, considering how games, their narratives, and their mechanics represent past events and societies, which often resembles conventional critiques of how media represents history

7 such as James Paul Gee, C. Thi Nguyen, Ian Bogost, Shawn Graham, Kevin Kee, Andrew B.R. Elliott, and Matthew W. Kapell
ideas surrounding agency fall into two broad categories: the aesthetics of agency, and procedural rhetoric. When a player embodies a historical agency, they can be guided through an interactive rhetoric; historical arguments embedded within game and narrative mechanics. By interacting with game and narrative systems, the user emerges with a new “library” of agencies. This expanded historical view empowers the user to interrogate the systems presented by the game. In doing so, the user engages with an ethnographic and historical process- they are brought “within the circle” of historical research and are able to make historical claims using their new agential library.
To create an Embodied Agency, the Designer-Historian fills the Game world with:

**AGENTIAL AESTHETICS**
which are created when the player engages in

**PROCEDURAL LITERACY**
the ability to read and write processes, to engage procedural representation and rhetoric, to understand the interplay between historically-embodied practice of human meaning-making and technologically-mediated processes

**STRIVING PLAY**
The striving player treats an alternate agency as all-encompassing for the duration of the experience. The striving player is able to adopt and discard agencies flexibly; when they are fully immersed in an agency, they strive in a well-ordered pursuit of game and narrative goals, but are able to resume their own agency and appreciate the aesthetics of their own agential experiences (Nguyen 2020, 11)

**PROCEDURAL RHETORIC**
a technique for making arguments with computational systems and for unpacking computational arguments others have created. (Regot 2007, 5)

**GAME AND NARRATIVE MECHANICS**
and striving play helps the player develop

**TELEOLOGICAL THINKING**
when history is taught as a linear narrative, it contains a sense of inevitability that can be internalized as a bias—one that suggests that present reality was the only possible outcome of the historical process. They present a simplified view of past societies and human experiences, reducing the influence of agency and causality. (Kapell & Elliott 2013, 7)

**HISTORICAL SIMULATIONS AND PROBLEM SPACES**
Jeremiah McCall's concept of a historical simulation that presents the player with mechanical and narrative challenges derived from historical research, and influenced by genre and narrative conventions.

**AGENTIAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVES**
which are created when the Designer-Historian uses their historical research and knowledge to create

**HISTORICAL PROBLEM SPACES**
Historical Problem Spaces are composed of:

**SOURCE BIAS**
An exclusionary effect takes place when a narrow set of historical evidence, archives, and sources are considered to be “facts.” In the historical and archival record, this source exclusion contains an inherent bias towards those privileged groups who “produce history.” Individual agency, sensory experiences, and traditional knowledge are deprivileged.

**A PLAYER AGENT**
representing some form of historical actor tasked with one or more designer-made goals, ultimately expressed as victory conditions, operating within:

**SIMULATING HISTORICAL CONTINGENCIES**
Interactive histories provide tools for historians and students to create “assemblies” of the past. By engaging with these assemblies, students can interrogate new understandings of historical contingencies and developments in a non-teleological manner

**A VIRTUAL GAMeworld**
as a simulated world that usually refers to specific historical locations and contains the game components, essentially the game system, within an environment and geography that includes:

**NARRATIVES THAT READ “AGAINST THE GRAIN” OF THE ARCHIVE**
Recognizing history as a social process which involves peoples in different contexts and locations; 2) as actors in constant interaction with a context; and 3) as subjects, that is, as voices aware of their vulnerability (Foucault 1995, 23)

**EMULATE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES AND BEHAVIOUR**
When they encounter the embedded historical events and values, players adopt their agency to emulate a historical reaction to a given problem, expressing their agency through historically appropriate dialogue and gameplay choices. This develops their agential “library,” allowing the player to reflect on their experiences and make historical claims.

**ENGAGING IN CRITICAL FABULATION**
When recreating a historical agency, especially one from a marginalized group, a composite figure may need to be recreated from different agential experiences. The building blocks of a critically fabulated narrative are small pieces of a historical agency, uncovered within the archive. (Harman 2008, 11)

**PROCEDURAL RHETORIC**
a technique for making arguments with computational systems and for unpacking computational arguments others have created. (Regot 2007, 5)

**A RECONSTRUCTED HISTORICAL AGENCY**
for the player to embody, with associated agential restrictions

Since Interactive Histories can have a major impact on the Player’s historical imagination, they must be extra careful to avoid:

**HEROIC HISTORY**
 Individual agency, sensory experiences, and traditional knowledge are deprivileged.

**Figure 1:** “Embodied Agency” - Each box describes a different theory and component for (re)constructing a historical agency.
1.1.1- Agency: Aesthetic and Rhetorical Forms

A foundational theory of embodied agency within interactive media is James Paul Gee’s *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning And Literacy* (2003). Gee provides an especially useful summary of the concept of agency:

“(Video Games) situate meaning in a multimodal space through embodied experiences to solve problems and reflect on the intricacies of the design of imagined worlds and the design of both real and imagined social relationships and identities in the modern world”\(^8\).

Gee suggests that embodied experiences can be used as a tool for interrogating social interactions and structures. For Gee, interactive media allows a temporary “pausing” of one’s identity and agency. Building on this concept is a recent treatment of agential immersion is C. Thi Nguyen’s *Games: Agency as Art* (2020). Nguyen suggests that:

“(Games are) a unique social technology. They are a method for inscribing forms of agency into artefactual vessels: for recording them, preserving them, and passing them around. And we possess a special ability: we can be fluid with our agency; we can submerge ourselves in alternate agencies designed by another. In other words, we can use games to communicate forms of agency”.\(^9\)

Nguyen argues that early theories of games presented games as simple constructions of rules, constraints, and obstacles,\(^10\) which fails to capture the full richness of game design. To rectify this, he suggests that interactive media is a form of art that incorporates agency as a core of its aesthetic.\(^11\) This concept of playful aesthetics forms a core component of Nguyen’s theory of “Striving Play”, which is informed in part by Bernard Suit’s definition of play as “the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles”. For so-called “Suitsian Games”, goals are achieved by playing within certain designed

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\(^8\) Gee 2004, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*, 48.


\(^10\) Nguyen 2020, 72. In particular, ardent Ludologists such as Jesper Juul, who somewhat deflate the value of agency within games. They frame mechanical success within a game with overriding importance.

\(^11\) Nguyen 2020, 15.
inefficiencies (game mechanics and restraints).\textsuperscript{12} Nguyen builds upon Suit’s concepts by making additional distinctions between the goals of a game and the player’s purpose for playing it. Nguyen suggests that a player’s purpose for playing a game can change depending on whether they are engaging in achievement play or striving play. Nguyen states that within achievement play, the player’s goals and motivations align. Their purpose is to complete game goals for the promise of a reward. High-level sporting and gaming competitions and competitors usually consist of achievement play.\textsuperscript{13}

Nguyen is more interested in the more convoluted concept of striving play. He conceives striving play as a state of play where the player adopts an agency that enables them to overcome the mechanical obstacles of an interactive experience; striving players engage with goals for the purposes of aesthetic engagement and enjoyment—they have motives aside from about succeeding against the game goals. “Striving Play” is treating an alternate agency as all-encompassing for the duration of the experience. The striving player is able to adopt and discard agencies flexibly; when they are fully immersed in an agency, they strive in a wholehearted pursuit of game and narrative goals. After completing the pursuit, they resume their own agency and appreciate the aesthetics of their own agential experiences.\textsuperscript{14} When the player finds themselves improving, they also experience increased aesthetic enjoyment in using their newfound agency to overcome gameplay and narrative challenges. Agential immersions involve a complicated motivational structure, in which a player does not necessarily play to “win”. The player instead takes on an agency as a means to experience the game and narrative design. If the

\textsuperscript{12} Suits 1978, \textit{The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia}, 43.
\textsuperscript{13} Nguyen 2020, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{14} Nguyen 2020, 11.
striving player cares about “winning”, it is because the success within the gameplay is aesthetically satisfying.\textsuperscript{15}

Nguyen notes that there are those who would argue that “striving play” does not exist; these others suggest a simpler motivational structure based on mechanical success and “winning” or “beating” the game.\textsuperscript{16} Other scholars like Michel Sicard prefer to frame games through the lens of play being inherently anarchic, suggesting that overly structured games do not capture the anti-structuralist spirit of play.\textsuperscript{17} These are classical “ludological” positions, interested in play as an instrument of human expression. The \textit{Agential Engines} framework is most interested in the broader concept of “interaction”, of play is a component. Within the framework, game and narrative mechanics drive interaction and encounter within a historical problem space (see Figure 1). Interaction provides a stage for play, but also for developing agential narratives. This approach strays closer to the “narrativity” approach to game criticism, but the framework views game and narrative mechanics as intractable and interchangeable with each other.\textsuperscript{18}

While Nguyen does not discuss historical games, his concepts of the aesthetics of agency and striving play still provide a useful foundational concept for \textit{Agential Engines}.

Striving play is useful because it inverts the usual justification of the player’s actions:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Nguyen 2020, 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Ludologists such as Jesper Juul place heavy emphasis on the fundamental value of play and mechanical experience over, and that ALL players contain winning as a primary motivation. See: Juul 2013, \textit{The Art of Failure}, 13-21.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Nguyen 2020, 74.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} The Ludology vs Narratology debate emerged between two broad schools of games scholars in the late 20th and early 21st century. The debate has largely been exhausted. Many scholars now seethe difference between game and narrative mechanics as a false dichotomy. Ludologists argued that play was the spiritual core of games, focused heavily on the expressive power of mechanical structures, and argued that games required an academic separation to properly study. Narratologists suggested that games could function as an expressive narrative medium similar to traditional aesthetic-narrative work, but also had unique expressive properties unique to interactive media. For an overview of both sides of this “debate”, see the requisite sections in Wolf & Perron 2023, \textit{The Routledge companion to video game studies}.
\end{itemize}
“In most of life, we justify our goals in terms of their intrinsic value or in terms of the valuable things that will follow from them. In games, we justify our goals by showing what kind of activity they will inspire. The justification of game goals has a backward looking, rather than forward-looking, direction. And those backward-looking explanations can point us to valuable aesthetic qualities.”

This concept of agential inversion presents some interesting options for the developer-historian— the ability to “play” with the past. As Hartley’s saying goes, “the past is a foreign country”. Simulations of historical agencies and spaces will feel alien to most players: an agential “uncanny valley”. For example: when player is embodied into the agency of a member of a historic community, the game design can confront them with social expectations and barriers that cannot be overcome; historical prejudices, laws, morals, or social expectations. Within the game these historical systems are operationalised as systems of help and hindrance and are adapted as game mechanics. The player must then strive against this obstacle, interrogating the simulated historical space and its restrictions on agency. By doing so, the player encounters the embedded historical emotions and values, and so adapts their agency to emulate a historical reaction to a given problem. To succeed, they must express their agency through historically appropriate dialogue and gameplay choices; they gain familiarity with the simulated historical society while overcoming the historical concepts-cum-mechanics.

To summarise, agential engagements through striving play form a foundational concept for the framework; agential engagement allows for the creation and internalisation of new identity narratives through creative, playful, and agential interactions with digital space. An affective narrative can deeply shape an individual’s

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19 Nguyen 2020, 27.
thoughts, worldview, and behaviours. Nguyen suggests that games at their core constitute a “library of agencies” - a set of mechanics that inform player actions, and the embodiment of agency within a game allows the player to develop their own “library”\(^{21}\); immersing one’s agency with interactive structures provides an opportunity to encounter the rhetoric of a developer-historian.\(^{22}\)

The idea of players engaging with historical knowledge through their agential experiences overlaps with the concept of procedural literacy. Michael Mateas defines the concept:

> “By procedural literacy I mean the ability to read and write processes, to engage procedural representation and aesthetics, to understand the interplay between the culturally-embedded practice of human meaning-making and technically-mediated processes”\(^{23}\)

Ian Bogost uses this definition in his book *Persuasive Games: The expressive power of video games* (2007). Bogost suggests that when interactive media is designed with an academic motive, mechanical interactions can expand the player’s knowledge of processes; he considers how students come to interrogate processes as a series of rules and claims, becoming procedurally literate through engaging with game and narrative mechanics. A procedurally literate player is able to use their agency to probe both the technical and cultural mechanics, using their understanding to “interrogate, critique, and use specific representations of specific real or imagined processes”.\(^{24}\) In Chapter 8 of *Persuasive Games*, Bogost investigates how history is expressed within games. He notes that interactive media is unique in its ability to simulate the material and spatial processes

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\(^{21}\) Nguyen 2020, 76.
\(^{22}\) Nguyen 2020, 78.
that influenced historical developments. Games (particularly strategy games) allow the player to “play against the grain”, engaging with history as a process.\textsuperscript{25} Such simulations allow players to interrogate the alternate systemic factors that may have resulted in different historic outcomes. He suggests one of the primary academic values of interactive media is its ability to provide tools for players to “read” and criticised the rhetoric that is embedded within the design of all interactive media.\textsuperscript{26}

Within the \textit{Agential Engines framework}, interactive histories provide a rhetorical stage for a historian to make arguments about the nature of history. Like any narrative medium, interactive media uses rhetoric to make arguments about the nature of the world, simulated or otherwise. However, interactive media has a unique rhetorical form. As a procedurally-driven medium, interactive media can incorporate rhetorical positions into the game and narrative mechanics themselves. Ian Bogost calls this procedural rhetoric, and defines it as such:

“Procedural rhetoric is the practice of persuading through processes in general and computational processes in particular. Just as verbal rhetoric is useful for both the orator and the audience, and just as written rhetoric is useful for both the writer and the reader, so procedural rhetoric is useful for both the programmer and the user, the game designer and the player. Procedural rhetoric is a technique for making arguments with computational systems and for unpacking computational arguments others have created.”\textsuperscript{27}

Bogost frames procedural rhetoric as a type of procedural literacy. Before a person can make an argument about a topic, they must gain a reasonable understanding of the core ideas; a developer-historian must first become procedurally literate before they can construct rhetorical arguments about a process through their game design. Bogost frames

\textsuperscript{25} Bogost 2007, 125.
\textsuperscript{26} Bogost 2007, 252-253.
\textsuperscript{27} Bogost 2007, 3.
the creation of procedural rhetoric as a form of “reading” and “writing” that asks four key questions:

1) What are the rules of the system? 2) What is the significance of these rules (over other rules)? 3) What claims about the world do these rules make? 4) How do I respond to those claims?”

When a developer-historian designs an interaction between player agency and procedural rhetoric, they create what Jeremiah McCall terms a “historical problem space”. A historical problem space is a historical simulation that presents the player with mechanical and narrative challenges that are derived from historical research and influenced by genre and narrative conventions. The careful selection of rules and obstacles, especially when incorporating historical research and arguments, can influence the experience’s claim about the nature of historical reality. Through engaging with a simulation of historical processes and structures, the user’s agency becomes deeply intertwined with a game designer’s rhetorical positions. Therefore, when constructing a procedural rhetoric and historical problem space, a developer-historian must carefully consider how the mechanics of game designs stand to impact the player’s historical imagination.

Games designed with a historical problem space in mind provide an engaging way to encounter history: they provide the player with an opportunity to adopt a new agency, overcoming historical problems through emulating historical solutions. By “reading” interactive histories, the player also becomes more procedurally literate, and Bogost’s

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28 Bogost 2007, 258.
questions regarding rules and claims can also form a way for the player to reflect on their experiences. When playing games designed as entertainment, this reflection is often unstructured.\textsuperscript{31} Should such interactive histories be integrated into a historian’s teaching and scholarship, they can ask their players to reflect on their agential experiences through writing, talking with peers, or using guided reflective activities. Additionally, this mode of historical knowledge dissemination can have an impact on the developer-historians themselves. Through reflecting and developing on their historical research through the lens of game mechanics, new properties of the historical topic can be revealed. Should an interactive history and associated written materials be published in an academic context\textsuperscript{32}, the reach of the interactive histories’ reflective properties is greatly extended.

The \textit{Agential Engines framework} is an alternative form of reading and writing history, and applies a slight modification to Bogost’s schema:

1) What were the values of the historical society?
2) What was the significance of these values (over other values)?
3) What claims about the world did these values make?
4) What claims about their values did the historical society make?
5) How can the player adapt their agency to respond to those claims?

So far, I have suggested historical knowledge and research can be embedded within games as both procedural and literary rhetoric. As with conventional historical writing, interactive histories must consider what representational duty is owed to the values of past societies. Social values exert a huge amount of influence on the agency of their members; understanding how historical peoples imagined and created narratives around their values is key to constructing agential-historical narratives.

\textsuperscript{31} Despite this, philosophical and “serious” games like Disco Elysium, Papers Please, and Pathologic have all made an impact on gaming culture in the past few years, with players affected by their ideas and turning to forums and social media to express their ideas regarding these games.

\textsuperscript{32} For example, in a journal like Carleton’s \textit{Epoiesen}: https://epoiesen.carleton.ca.
1.1.2- Constructing Agential Narratives

In their book *Playing with the Past*, Andrew B.R. Elliott and Matthew W. Kapell state that all historical writings are an assemblage of historical facts. The historian selects facts and evidence to form a rhetorical narrative. The narrative attempts to paint a historically plausible representation of a historical reality. Like all constructed narratives, historical narratives are subject to the biases and agendas of their creators. How “historical facts” are assembled into historical rhetoric can vary widely depending on the agenda of the writer; historians create “synthetic worlds” derived from their intellectual journeys into the past. Most historians understand that it is impossible to fully understand the past; they seek to create the most accurate explanations of past events through careful selection of historical values, narrative and rhetoric, backing these constructions with evidence derived from good research practices. However, the concept of “good historical research and teaching practices” presents some distinct issues for the developer-historian, these being **teleological thinking** and **source bias**.

Kapell and Elliott suggest that one of the important aspects of interactive simulation is providing the player the ability to interrogate historical contingencies and counterfactuals:

“...the element of gameplay often comes to the rescue, in which the ludic capacity of historical video games allows for an in-depth understanding not just of facts, dates, people, or events, but also of the complex discourse of contingency, conditions, and circumstances, which underpins a genuine understanding of history...If digital games allow players to interact with a past that, if not wholly accurate, is at least authentic, and if this enables the player to actually enjoy the process and find the events of the past to be fascinating, we must ask a simple question that far too few history teachers ever ask: what is wrong with helping people enjoy history?”

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35 Kapell & Elliott 2013, 13-14.
Kapell and Elliott suggest that one of the greatest capacities of interactive historical narratives is their capacity to demonstrate history as a social process. Rather than as a series of teleological advancements, history is instead presented as a network of contingency and agency. This presents new opportunities for historical thinking and engagement beyond the conventional teaching of history. In particular, by simulating agency and contingency, interactive histories provide tools for historians and students to create “assemblies” of the past. By engaging with these assemblies, students can interrogate historical knowledge in a non-teleological manner.\(^\text{36}\)

Kevin Kee and Shawn Graham address a similar concept in “Teaching History in an Age of Pervasive Computing”\(^\text{37}\), where they consider how to overcome the “genre confusion” of historical games. For example, while a game like *Call of Duty* may be set in a historical setting, the genre of “shooting action game” obscures any historical lesson that may be derived. They also note that while the *Civilisation* series has been studied by many historians and games scholars, a deep playing of the game teaches little about history beyond the simulation of historical contingencies and the teleological social and technological advancement of history.\(^\text{38}\) As a strategy game that uses counterfactuals as a mechanic, it erases its own historical content and context.\(^\text{39}\) Kee and Graham consider steps that can be taken to “coherently address history” within video games. They suggest

\(^{36}\) Kapell & Elliott 2013, 15.
\(^{37}\) Kee & Graham 2014, 271.
\(^{38}\) The win conditions of the typical *Civilization* game are “Scientific”, “Culture”, “Domination”, “Religion”, and “Diplomacy”- With the exception of “Religion” and mid-game “Domination” victories they all address “modern” social and scientific advantages that are built along the teleological tree of advancements. In order: modern science, modern practices (tourism), modern military tactics, modern (democratic) diplomacy.
\(^{39}\) Kee & Graham 2014, 274.
that a historian select games with clear epistemological goals and understand the representative power that different games bring to the table.\textsuperscript{40} Using these understandings, Kee and Graham suggest that classroom games can be created “\textit{ex novo}”. In this case, both educators and their students can learn to take ideas introduced in the classroom and turn them into game and narrative mechanics- students create their own “synthetic worlds” (analogous to Elliott and Kapell’s “historical assemblies”).\textsuperscript{41} Kee and Graham recount games created in their own classrooms, remarking on how the games, while simple, empowered students to explore counterfactuals and reconstruct the lives and concerns of “ordinary citizens”\textsuperscript{42}. While Kee and Graham do not explicitly consider how their students could explore historical narratives through games, their concepts of using games in the classroom form a baseline for thinking about teaching and encouraging students to engage with and create agential narratives.

When history is taught as a linear narrative it generates a sense of narrative inevitability that can be internalised as a bias- one that suggests that present reality was the only possible outcome of the historical process.\textsuperscript{43} Teleological thinking can cause many issues within the audience’s historical imaginations: teleological narratives often further the view of social triumphalism and present a simplified view of past societies and human experiences, reducing the influence of agency and causality.\textsuperscript{44} To demonstrate how teleological thinking can affect interactive histories, we can consider the impact of such thought on another historical practice: the archive. Archival studies, as an older and

\textsuperscript{40}Kee & Graham 2014, 275
\textsuperscript{41} Kee & Graham 2014, 281-82
\textsuperscript{42} For example, a Tavern Keeper in 1812’s Niagara region (Kee & Graham 2014, 283-84)
\textsuperscript{43} Kapell & Elliott 2013, 7
\textsuperscript{44} Kapell & Elliott 2013, 8
more developed historical subfield has had more time to deal with the issues of teleology and source bias. Postcolonial archivists have recognised that when histories privilege certain groups and experiences, an exclusionary effect takes place within the archive; a narrow set of historical evidence, archives, and sources are considered to be “fact”. In the historical and archival record, this source exclusion contains an inherent bias towards those privileged groups who “produced history”; the historical societies that were the “teleological ancestors” of modern “western” society.

While I am not a postcolonial scholar, I believe that the *Agential Engines* framework contains a great deal of utility for the reconstruction and narrativizing of marginalised historical agencies. To aid in this, we can look at how different scholars create anti-teleological historical assemblies. This characterisation of historical narrative by Michel-Rolph Trouillot should ring familiar to the concepts discussed so far:

> “a theory of the historical narrative must acknowledge both the distinction and the overlap between process and narrative …. it fully embraces the ambiguity inherent in the two sides of historicity. History, as a social process, involves peoples in three distinct capacities: 1) as agents, or occupants of structural positions; 2) as actors in constant interface with a context; and 3) as subjects, that is, as voices aware of their vocality.”

The question arises as to how to overcome the historical biases of teleological thinking and archival selection when writing agential narratives. Historians have increasingly “read against the grain” of the archive, searching for “human agency in small gestures of refusal and silence”. The “unthinkable histories” of the subaltern and dispossessed have been increasingly considered within humanities disciplines. A core suggestion of the

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*Agential Engines* framework follows this concept of “reading against the grain” (see Figure 1). The framework views the creation of an agential narrative as a reconstructive process. Interactive histories use the social processes of historical groups as foundational game and narrative mechanics. When historical social processes are operationalised in this way, they form a procedural, structural, and narrative rhetoric that centralises the role of historical agents within the reconstructed historical structure/problem space. It considers marginalised aspects of history as a core aspect to telling non-teleological narratives, centring the historical process as driven by agents acting within their cultural context.

To assist in this process, we can turn back to one of the leading voices championing this genre of historical writing: Saidiya Hartman, a professor at Columbia University who specialises in African-American literature and history. Hartman’s article, *Venus in Two Acts*, uses the composite figure of “Venus” to describe a shared set of circumstances familiar to the Black female experience of the Atlantic slave trade. She admits that it is impossible to reconstruct any individual narrative from the material that remains in the archive; with the material largely reflecting violence, excess, and a system designed to turn people into commodities. Hartman seeks to do more- to assemble a narrative that “listens to the unsaid, translates misconstrued words, and refashions disfigured lives”, while also avoiding replicating the language of violence and subjugation contained within the archive. Hartman’s method of historical assembly is to create narratives based upon a critical reading of the archive; to trace the real lines and

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49 Hartman 2008, 3.
experiences of individuals and create an “impossible narrative” that amplifies its own impossibility; to paint as full a picture of a historical life as possible, using as many historical facts as is feasible.⁵⁰

Hartman calls this practice “critical fabulation”, using the definition of a “fabula” defined by Mieke Bal, which is:

“a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused and experienced by actors. An event is a transition from one state to another. Actors are agents that perform actions. (They are not necessarily human.) To act is to cause or experience an event.”⁵¹

The building blocks of a critically fabulated narrative are small pieces of historical agency, uncovered within the archive. These experiences can be assembled into a composite figure that reflects the agential truths of several individuals, or a patchwork narrative of a single individual. In either case, Hartman respects the “limits of writing history” by respecting the economy and limitations of historical material.⁵² ⁵³ This theory of agential assembly is particularly useful for interactive histories, as it allows for the effective creation of what Jeremiah McCall calls “historical” and “archetypical” player agencies.⁵⁴ Using critical fabulation, the developer-historian can either (re)create an agency that reflects a real person (“historical agency”), or assemble a composite agency that reflects the historical experiences of several individuals (“archetypal agency”).

To summarise: when constructing an agential narrative that centres the agency and actions of historical actors and social groups, the developer-historian should be

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⁵⁰ Hartman 2008, 11.
⁵³ Hartman’s is a complex theory and method. To better demonstrate her concepts, section 2.3 includes an extended analysis of her book Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments, which should serve to clarify the utility of “critical fabulation” to this framework.
⁵⁴ McCall 2020.
careful to avoid the dual issues of teleological thinking and source bias. With the right design elements, historical games can provide excellent simulations of historical agency, cause, and effect. The main concern therefore lies in assembling narratives that represent a non-teleological view of history. Looking to archival and post-colonial studies, the concepts of “reading against the grain”, “unthinkable histories”, and “critical fabulation” all provide a library of concepts for constructing fabulated narratives that respect the limits of writing history while centring the agency of a broader selection of historical actors and social groups. This also serves as a method for reducing the scope of interactive histories to a more “microhistorical” level, moving away from grand narratives of civilization-level conflicts and adventures. By embracing anti-teleological narratives, interactive histories become an ideal platform for more intimate, vignetted, and character-driven experiences that can express the designer’s procedural rhetoric regarding smaller-scale historical issues.

1.1.3- Gamification and Value capture

There is an important distinction to make about the nature of interactive histories: When I write about the turning of historical research into procedural rhetoric, game, and narrative mechanics, I am not suggesting a developer-historian should “gamify” their research. My vision for interactive histories presents historical research & rhetoric with the goal of affecting the end user’s “library” of agencies and their historical knowledge & imagination. This is a distinctly different goal from “gamification”, the process of applying game design concepts and mechanics to real-life structures. Gamification is

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55 See: Strategy Games like *Civilization, Total War, Imperator.*
56 See: Historical action-adventure games like *Assassin’s Creed, Red Dead, Call of Duty, Battlefield.*
intended to apply an additional layer of reward and incentive onto otherwise mundane systems; adding leaderboards and score trackers to work and educational situations, or simple games created for the purposes of education and training. C. Thi Nguyen and Ian Bogost have both expressed their reservations about Gamification. Embodied agency and procedural rhetoric are powerful theoretical tools, and there are a number of ways they can be misused. It is worth considering their points about Gamification, and how simplistic game and narrative mechanics stand to affect the player.

Nguyen expresses concern about agential simplification—gamified structures encouraging a simplification of values and “the spread of the unthinking pursuit of simplified and quantified goals”. With this factor in mind, Nguyen also addresses the power of simplified narratives. He suggests that narrative carry emotional force, and that games carry agential force—both can affect the audience’s worldviews in varying ways. Here is an important consideration for interactive histories: video games are a hybrid ontology between fiction and reality. They can present claims about the nature of reality that can affect a player’s real-life agency in both positive and negative ways. Games are partly “real”, but they do not contain the same inherent value structure as “reality”. Games and playful structures have the effect of value clarity—games have clear and defined rules. Rules and outcomes are consumable and can be measured and ranked on a common scale.

Nguyen notes that while value clarity can be a feature of games, it does not necessarily have to:

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57 Nguyen 2020, 190.
58 Hybrid ontologies will be discussed in section 1.2.1. For now, they can be simply defined as a hybrid between two different representations of reality.
60 Nguyen 2020, 194-95.
“for example, we could play a survival game, in which we are all thrown naked into the woods for a month, where the goal of the game is to emerge having cooked the most delicious gourmet meals, having created the most comfortable and elegant shelter and the most fashionable handmade clothes…the goals are unclear in their application; they are plural and their values aren’t easily commensurable; and successes aren’t easily rankable. Let’s call such games subtle value games”  

To Nguyen, gamification brings the concept of “value capture” into reality. He suggests that gamification imposes artificial clarity onto reality and discourages the use of subtler value systems. While gamification can amplify motivation, it also alters goals to seem clearer than they actually are. This simplification of goals and values erodes the richness and nuance of agential experiences, reducing them to easily measured outcomes in service of a preexisting social structure.

Ian Bogost takes an even dimmer view of Gamification. In his piece Why Gamification is Bullshit (2015), he frames it as a cynical corporate adoption of game design practices. Bogost frames gamification as a phenomenon driven by a class of consultants who attempt to capture “the magic and power of games”, and their ability to grab and maintain player attention. At the same time, the concept of “-ifying” reduces the complexity of game creation to an easy and achievable application of game mechanics and ideas to real-life systems. This forms a powerful rhetorical force that references the power of “games”, and “simplification”. This rhetoric is, to Bogost, bullshit. Bogost does make a distinction between some educational and training games like Vim Adventures as examples of “gamification” that are not truly “gamified”. Such examples also include Bogost’s own studio “Persuasive Games”, which developed Killer Flu and

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61 Nguyen 2020, 197.
62 Nguyen 2020, 199.
various “newsgames”. These limited examples are bespoke and creative games that are designed and developed from scratch and are not Bogost’s target. Bogost directs his argument against the one-size-fits-all “solutions” offered by gamification consultants. Essentially, the practice of stapling leaderboards, badges, and rankings to corporate practices. This may lead to greater engagement, but at the end of the day it is engagement with a cynical corporate system:

“For gamification, games are not a medium capable of producing sophisticated experiences in the service of diverse functions and goals, but merely a convenient rhetorical hook into a state of anxiety in contemporary business.”

To clarify what I view as the difference between a “Gamified History”, and a “Interactive History”: a gamified history is designed to supplement an existing system of value capture (standardised grading and rote learning). This is the grouping into which most “education games” fit. A gamified history takes historical ideas already present within historical teaching and packages them into a simple bundle of game mechanics. It is designed to hold the student’s attention with the aim of improving their information retention. I would suggest that if a “classroom game” largely repurposes information that could be delivered through lecture, that information has been “gamified”. If it has not been integrated into a procedural rhetoric and presents roughly the same core narrative; the rhetoric is the same in either presentation, and the transformative power of the gamic medium has not been leveraged. The issue with this is that these pieces of media retain many of the same narratives and biases contained within conventional historical

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64 See: Bogost 2012, Newsgames.
65 Bogost 2015, 69.
66 Bogost 2015, 76.
67 This also runs counter to what Kee and Graham suggest is the true value of classroom games, the ability of educators and students to transform what they are teaching and being taught through the designing and programming of game mechanics.
narratives. This is done with the hopes that the student will better recall the historical information, which will improve their score within the value capture system of grades and evaluations. Providing a comprehensive breakdown of “education games” and the value of standardised learning is outside the scope of this thesis. However, I assert that “gamified histories” do not provide the nuanced presentation of cultural values that would distinguish a truly “interactive” historical narrative.

Interactive histories exist outside of the gamification schema. I suggest that the experiences that the Agential Engines framework is designed to inspire are subtle value games. They do not contain a “gamified” value structure: for example, in my proposed game detailed in Chapter 3, players cannot score points and measures of success are only telegraphed via diegetic means.68 Instead, these games reconstruct the value structures of the historical societies they seek to represent; historical concepts are embedded as procedural rhetoric, and emphasis is placed on affecting the player’s agency towards emulating social values. Additionally, the Agential Engines framework is not a plug-and-play guide for gamifying historical material. While gamification places emphasis on engagement, due to its simplification of values it cannot truly represent historical space and values through its representation. It is only through agential engagement with a historical problem space that an interactive history can serve as an effective historical medium.

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68 By “diegetic”, I mean that indicators of success are expressed within the game world- it is “real” within the gameworld, not simply expressed through menus and the user interface (non-diegetic elements).
1.2- Affective Interactivity

In order to simulate historical agencies within a historical problem space, accurately reproducing the imaginations and emotions of historical peoples is a core goal. Since emotions and imagination are heavily influenced by social norms and expectations, without the developer-historian’s intervention it can be quite difficult for a general audience to understand the past agencies and motivations of historical actors. When an interactive history presents procedural and narrative rhetoric about the nature of past societies and events, the player’s historical imagination must be prepared to fully absorb, critique, and understand the historical content presented to them. The Agential Engines framework incorporates methods for encouraging the player’s imaginative engagement with the historical space being presented. Through player engagement with narrative and game mechanics, the interactive histories created through the Agential Engines Framework seek to affect the user’s emotions and imagination; the overall goal being to positively affect the user’s historical imagination towards a more well-rounded understanding of historical spaces and societies. Affect theory has increasingly been utilised in historical and archaeological practice to uncover the emotions and imaginations of historical peoples.69 “Affect” generally has two meanings within historical practice.

The first is used as a verb: to produce changes and influence an object’s state. In the case of interactive histories, they seek to affect the user’s historical imagination through engagement with narrative, performance, reconstructed space, and sensory input. This creates what I refer to as an “imagined space”: an imagination of space

69 Affect theory has become increasingly prevalent in the practice of “Sensory Archaeology”. See: Skeates & Day 2020, Routledge Handbook of Sensory Archaeology.
created at the intersection of the developers and player’s historical imaginations. The second meaning of “affect” is as a noun referring to emotional responses. By understanding historical emotional landscapes, an interactive history can aim to generate a specific emotional response from the player. Ideally, the designer-historian will use the historical “scripts” they derive from historical expressions of emotions, seeking to affect the player’s experience of emotions towards emulating historical modes of feeling and expression. Section 1.2.2 considers two historical frameworks of emotion, those of Emotional Regimes, and Emotional Communities.

Both sections approach affecting the player’s agency, imagination, and emotions as a means by which the player comes to emulate the social experience of a historical community. These communities are recreated via a close reading of the cultural archive and archaeological materials to uncover emotional scripts, drawing from the past experiences of historical peoples to draw the player into the historical imaginary space.
The Engines of Agency and Affect Framework: AFFECT

**AFFECT**

“Affect” generally has two meanings within historical practice.

The first is as a verb— to produce changes and influence an object’s state: Interactive histories seek to affect the user’s historical imagination through engagement with narratives, performances, reconstructed spaces, and sensory inputs (Imagined Space).

The second meaning is as a noun referring to emotional responses— an interactive history can aim to affect a specific emotional response from the player using historical “cues” derived from historical expressions of emotions (Embedded Emotions).

**IMAGINARY SPACE**

A social imaginary construct, created at the intersection of multiple imaginations. When interacting with a physical space, people create special imaginations by experiencing the “meaning” of the space as mediated by function, sensibility, and memory.

**NARRATIVITY**

Narratives can serve as mechanical drivers of a game. They can construct the rules, challenges, decision spaces, and practices that create the “magic circle.”

Narratives strive to present as “true” something that is not “real.” They embrace possible narrative contingencies, which may or may not be based on fact. When writing historical narratives, we must remain vigilant against teleological thinking and source bias.

Historical narratives can convey a sense of historical presence to their readers, giving the sense of the reality of historical events.

**PERFORMATIVITY**

Freddie Rokem (2008) suggests that the performance of history is a mending of various performative ontologies.

This creates an ontological hybrid, combined within performances of the historical event involves both those on stage and those in the audience, creating a shared social energy.

When the actor engages with the historical narrative and processes, they witness and convey their historical understandings to the audience through their performance in a similar manner as a historian conveys historical information through text and lecture: they become a “hyper-historian.”

**SPATIAL IMAGINATION**

The idea that people view space as a map of functions and meanings based on their present agential and social projects. Locations adopt different meanings and uses depending on what is “projected” onto them— an individual’s imagination—space is “received” differently depending on experiences, needs, and perceptions.

Special historians are concerned with how space was received, perceived, and projected by past societies.

The game world communicates historical responses, perceptions, and projections of space through its narrative and performance.

**SENSORY EXPERIENCE**

The idea of “sensory archaeology” focuses primarily on the affective powers of physical objects— these include both the properties of smaller portable objects (especially those rendered by human agency to express and affect a sensory response), and the built environment and the multi-sensual experiences it can inspire.

Interactive media, especially those that contain a 3D environment provide the opportunities for sensory engagement with a reconstruction of the past. Sights and sounds can be reconstructed and directly embodied in the game world, or expressed through interactive objects and narrative cues.

**EMBEDDED EMOTIONS**

Historians of emotion hope to develop a deeper understanding of historical behaviours and developments. They often engage with past people and societies on their “own terms.” Within interactive histories, emotions can be embedded as game and narrative mechanics, creating a mechanical challenge wherein the player must alter their agency in order to fit the historical emotions of the past.

Players navigate their experiences of historical emotion through their encounters with

**EMOTIONAL REGIMES**

Which is William M Reddy’s framework for understanding historical societies’ systems of

- **EMOTIONAL CONTROL**
  A society sets a system of rules, symbols, incentives, and punishments that manages a dense network of emotional goals that give coherence to one’s agency. This ties into the idea of striving play since game and narrative mechanics are also regulated by agency and goals. A historical problem space also recreates these rules, creating a procedural structure that emulates historical emotional restrictions and cultures.

Therefore, players are placed within a set of procedural mechanics that represent a

- **HISTORICAL EMOTIONAL CULTURE**
  Which gained sway over members through the cultural encouragement of emotional norms, creating a domain of affect for emotional management, and providing members with prescriptions and strategies for maintaining expected emotional and behavioral states. This creates an

  - **EMOTIONAL REGIME**
    The cultural enforcement of shared social values and expectations within a social-imaginary space. In a Historical Problem Space, emotional regimes will typically be mechanized as a system of agential hindrance

- **CRITICAL FABULATION**
  Which can uncover

  - **EMOTIONAL SEQUENCES**
    Emotional episodes which play a sequence of emotions within the sequence, each subsequent emotion inflects on the previous. It is these sequences of emotions that lend emotional communities character. Emotional communities contain their own memories of emotion, inferring sequences and rhetoric that influence their internal cultures. Connecting to a historical emotional community and landscape allows the player to gain emotional empathy with the past. Within a historical problem space, emotional communities will typically be mechanized as a system of agential hindrance.

Which is Barbara Rosenwein’s framework for understanding how historical groups form communities based around

- **SHARED EMOTIONAL VALUES**
  Which regulate the communities’ “emotions,” a shared library of emotions are embedded into cultural works and may be uncovered by a historian. The internal affective expressions of an emotional community can take on constructions that are singular and internal to the community. Alongside shared emotions, emotional communities may also share cultural, or ideological values. These values leave traces within the broader social-imaginary space and the archive.

Historians can uncover the traces of emotional communities through the process of

- **EMOTIONAL REGIMES**

Figure 2: “Affect: Imagination and Emotion” - The second subsection of the Engines of Agency and Affect Framework combining theories of historical imagined space (blue) and emotions (green).
1.2.1- Imagined Space: Narratives, Theatricality, Space, Senses

Section 1.2.1 is concerned with how to (re)construct historical imaginations of space. I define the concept of imaginary space as “a shared imaginary construct, created at the intersection of multiple imaginations of space”. I derive the term from the concept of “imaginary geography”\(^{70}\), expanding it to a broader application of “space” in order to draw in theoretical principles from narrativity, performance theory, spatial theory, and sensory archaeology. Imaginary space is a critical tool that interactive histories use to affect the player’s imagination. It influences the player’s perception of space, which can be topological, geometric, conceptual, conveyed by narrative, painted in words, represented graphically in 2 or 3 dimensions or even in augmented, virtual, or mixed reality. Through their experience of these spatial ideas, agents create an imaginary space of their own by experiencing the “meaning” of the space as mediated by function, symbology, and memory. This also has a conceptual overlap with the structuralist concept of “habitus”, the idea that cultural concepts, beliefs, and behaviour embed themselves within the shared emotional and imaginative landscapes of a given society.

Habitus was introduced by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who describes the concept as:

> “a set of acquired characteristics which are the product of social conditions and which, for that reason, may be totally or partially common to people who have been the product of similar social condition. There is another difference which follows from the fact that the habitus is not something natural, inborn; being a product of history, that is of social experience and education, it may be changed by history, that is by new experiences, education or training”\(^{71}\)

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\(^{70}\) See: Said, Edward 1978, *Orientalism*. Said originally used the term to critique the patronising historical perceptions of Eastern countries by Western scholars but has been expanded to include broader critiques on how humanities’ scholars present their imaginations of cultural spaces.

Historical societies possessed an imaginary space that contained social conditions, experiences, and educational systems that differ from the contemporary habitus. An important part of historical practice is uncovering the cultural imaginations of a historical society as conveyed by their cultural material. Cultural expressions contain a reflection of the original imaginary space, with values and ideas embedded within aesthetic and cultural expressions. While elements of a historical imaginary space may still exist in the modern conception, it is invariably altered and fragmented by time. Therefore, the role of the developer-historian is to uncover and “resurrect” historical imaginations of space and culture using historical methodologies and practices. When these historical imaginations are operationalised as game and narrative mechanics within a historical problem space, the user’s interactions within the space can affect their imagination towards a view of historical spaces that is more consistent with the historical cultural record.

This ties in with a core recommendation of this framework: that narrative and historical conventions be operationalised as a driver of interaction with the game’s imaginary space. To expand on the concepts introduced in section 1.1.2, the developer-historian resurrects historical imaginary spaces through the process of critical fabulation. Storytelling within interactive histories will necessarily include a degree of historical narrativizing; archival and evidentiary selection is essential to creating a historical imaginary space that resembles a historical reality. For interactive histories, when Developer-historians “resurrect” a historical cultures’ imagination of space, they select game and narrative mechanics to immerse the player within the storytelling of the designer’s historical problem space.

72 Suter & Bauer 2021, 25-26
In his article *Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality,* Hayden White (2005), frames historical fictional writing as the pursuit of capturing what is possible or imaginable within a narrative. Narratives strive to present as “true” something that is not “real”. They embrace possible narrative contingencies, which may or may not be based on fact. In the 19th and 20th centuries, historical methods became framed around capturing a past “reality”. This assembly of reality is based on what the historian can uncover as true events through studying historical sources and the archive; the reality of the past is taken as a given. This is the writing of history framed through the lens of scientific process, and White notes the failures and downsides of such an approach:

“...it is because historical studies have manifestly failed in their efforts to become the kind of ‘science’ they hoped to become in the nineteenth century. Prior to this time, history was cultivated in profitable combination with belles-lettres, epistolography and philosophy, as branches of rhetoric, serving as the foundation of a pedagogy of virtue and as a kind of archive of experience….But the scientization of historical studies was thought to require their severance from any connection between, not only poetic and rhetoric but also between philosophy and imaginative literature…."

The approach to history as a fact-finding mission has a distinct issue with source and archive bias; by narrowing what is acceptable as a source, this form of historical practice marginalises liminal cultural groups and ideologies. This historical marginalisation is often due to low rates of documentation and archiving, exacerbated by cultural atrophy and destruction. To address the issues raised by White, the developer-historian can

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73 This resonates with Trouillot’s “Unthinkable Histories”, and Hartman’s “Impossible Narratives” (section 1.1.2 pages 27-30)
75 White 2005, 149
76 Recall the marginalisation of cultural knowledge noted in earlier sections and the issues presented by teleological thinking, the belief that the course of history was natural and deterministic.
leverage the power of games discussed in section 1.1.2- reading against the archive to uncover the agencies and imagination of subaltern historical groups. As an interdisciplinary project, the framework reincorporates the connection between literary writing and the “archive of experience”.

In his essay *Digitalizing Historical Consciousness* (2009), Claudio Fogu notes that narratives presented by digital media have had a displacing and remedial effect on more traditional linear narratives of history. Digital media detaches the notion of history from the reference to the “real” past that it had acquired at the end of the eighteenth century. Fogu emphasises how interactive media stands influence the development of a user’s historical consciousness and imagination. Fogu presents a hypothetical video game: *Holocaust II*, a historical role-playing game wherein the user would take on the roles of disparate historical actors: perpetrator, victim, and researcher. Each section of the game probes the ethical and aesthetic limits of narrative depictions of the Holocaust. Fogu believes that such a historical game has the power to alter the development of cultural collective memories and historical consciousness, focusing on the rhetorical concept of *presence* within narrative, which can be described as a medium’s ability to depict the reality of history to an audience. Fogu notes that the idea of presence was remediated away from historical writing, towards historical cinema, and most recently towards historical gaming. Fogu suggests that as historians severed themselves from such imaginative work, they also surrendered their ability to depict the “presence” of history to

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77 Note: teleological and deterministic.
79 A similar concept is contained within the role-playing game *Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah* (White Wolf, 1997), which has players engage with the fallout of the Holocaust within an afterlife setting.
80 Fogu 2009, 104.
81 “Immersion” is a similar concept within video games.
their readers. This severance has allowed other historical media greater influence and ability to influence historical consciousness. Fogu concludes by suggesting that it is these simulations of the possibilities of the past that will inform historical imaginations going forward. He states that digital history has entered the twenty-first century by simulating and spatializing the possible, with players interacting with the past as a tangible simulation.

Narrative mechanics form a core component of historical simulations, as they can be embedded within a historical problem space as a driver of simulation. In Narrative Mechanics: Strategies and Meanings in Games and Real Life (2021), Beat Suter, René Bauer and Mela Kocher consider the increasing emphasis on affective narrativity within video games. Within games that place emphasis on storytelling, the ability to immerse the player in a narrative is especially important. Narrative mechanics can construct the rules, challenges, decision spaces, and practices that create the “magic circle”. This adaption of the imaginary space allows the player to feel much more “present” within game worlds. Bauer and Suter suggest that narrative mechanics can form a game’s driving motivation, and that narrative fulfilment can provide as strong a player motivation as what they call “traditional game mechanics”. They state that game writing can draw from a similar set of mechanics to more traditional forms of narrative such as novels and theatre. They include familiar mechanics like “three/five-act structures”, “the

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82 Fogu 2009, 111-112.
85 For example, modern story-driven games such as The Last of Us, The Witcher, and titles from publisher Fromsoftware adapt both the narrative and gameplay outcomes to the player’s decisions.
hero’s journey”, and, importantly for the purposes of interactive history, the tropes and storytelling sensibilities of historical cultural material.

To Bauer & Suter, narrative mechanics can become complex repositories of cultural meaning, and by engaging with these meanings within a mechanical structure, players can create their own identity narratives.\(^{86}\) To drive engagement, video game narratives use concepts already embedded into the collective imaginary culture, with the player absorbing these concepts as they strive towards narrative fulfilment.\(^{87}\) For the developer-historian, this resonates with the ideas of stiving play and procedural rhetoric discussed in section 1.1.1. By selecting historical-cultural ideas through the process of critical fabulation, the developer-historian can resurrect historical imaginations of space and embed them as narrative mechanics within their historical problem space. The player then strives for narrative fulfilment, and in doing so encounters historical repositories of meaning, operationalised as a form of procedural rhetoric. As discussed earlier in section 1.1.1, this forms a powerfully affective tool for influencing the player’s historical imagination towards a more historically representative view of the past.

We can expand upon this concept of imaginative immersion by introducing another core aspect of this conceptualization of imaginary space: the concept of performativity. Performativity developed from performance and drama studies, although it has also been used by historians. In his book Performing History, Freddie Rokem provides a useful framework for understanding performativity in his description of theatrical energies. He considers how stage actors transmit moments of historical emotion

\(^{86}\) Suter & Bauer 2021, 21.
\(^{87}\) Suter & Bauer 2021, 24-26.
and experience to their audience. Performance is an act that engages with and transmits theatrical “energy”. Historical understandings can also be transmitted between actor and audience, resurrecting the past within the imaginary space of the stage.\textsuperscript{88} Rokem suggests that the performance of history is a unification of various performative ontologies. It is a medium that unifies aesthetic, social, fictional, and historical energies in order to convey meaning. The \textit{ontological hybridity} contained within performances of the historical event involves both those on stage and those in the audience, creating a shared social energy.

These concepts of the theatrical have a great deal of overlap with what has been already discussed; interactive media also combines aspects of other narrative forms, benefitting from the increased “presence” of the subject material. It is through this ability to depict presence that the audience becomes more involved with the story. Rokem frames the actor’s role as one of a middleman between textual and theatrical energies, with a great deal of input from their director and other members of the cast.\textsuperscript{89} It is in this interpretive role where the concept of the actor as “hyper-historian” emerges: When the actor engages with the historical materials and processes, they witness and convey their historical understandings to the audience through their performance in a similar manner as a historian conveys historical information through text and lecture.\textsuperscript{90}

Rokem references the concept that actors are in a way subsumed by their role, by the “flow” of their performance, which feeds into the audience’s interest in the illusion of

\textsuperscript{88} Rokem 2000, \textit{Performing History}, 188-190.
\textsuperscript{89} Rokem 2000, 195-196.
\textsuperscript{90} Rokem 2000, 202.
reality and the ludic nature of performance.\textsuperscript{91} This creates a state in which the audience is primed to accept what is presented as “true” within the play.\textsuperscript{92} Theatrical presentations of history should not be a foreign concept to historians: most students of history have had a memorable history teacher or professor who was both an affective and effective lecturer. The best educators will often embrace theatrical energies, engaging their students within their rhetorical and narrative presentation of the past. A good historical presenter strives to impart their historical understandings within their lectures. In the case of interactive media, theatrical energies are harnessed through the user’s interaction with the game world. Theatrical interactions are mediated through non-Player characters (NPCs), who fulfil a similar function to the stage actor. NPCs serve as terminals for the delivery of the game’s story while also behaving as members of a simulated social group.\textsuperscript{93} Game narratives are created as a textual document that often closely resembles a play script. Game designers take on an analogous role to a theatre director; they direct the narrative’s characters as extensions of their rhetorical positions.

Non-player characters attempt to embody theatrical energies through their performances and narrative roles, which have become increasingly sophisticated as game design has advanced. Early three-dimensional role-playing games such as \textit{The Elder Scrolls} saw NPCs gain a reputation for cartoonish voice acting and uncanny physical models. The voice acting for earlier interactive media also tended towards the amateur or used a very limited cast of professional actors.\textsuperscript{94} In comparison, modern games often

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{91} Rokem 2000, 196-197.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Literature contains this idea as “suspension of disbelief”.
\item \textsuperscript{93} They may also be used to simulate emotional communities.
\item \textsuperscript{94} \textit{The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion} has gained an especially infamous reputation for this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSQtY131sJQ.
\end{itemize}
have a greater attention to theatrical details, utilising trained theatrical actors. The shift in interest toward narrative-driven games has also granted NPCs a greater deal of theatricality across all genres of games, with developments in 3D software allowing for more lifelike 3D models. This increasing sophistication has allowed designers to depict subtle facial and body movements - a key aspect to communication and performance. These movements may be manually created by an animator, or an actor’s movements may be recorded through motion capture technology. These advances in technology and process have extended the ability of designers to embed theatrical energies within interactive media.

Overall, historical narrativity and theatricality are concerned with the presentation and reception of historical materials. They are concepts that intersect with the concept of pure historical fiction; narratives not rooted in historical fact or academic practice. This is a core tension when discussing historical narrativizing. In particular, Saidya Hartman’s concept of critical fabulation is of immediate relevance, as she stresses the need for fabulated narratives to remain within the bounds of the historical information available. Narrative restraint is prioritised, refusing to fill gaps or provide closure when information is lacking: “a history of an unrecoverable past; it is a narrative of what might have been or could have been; it is a history written with and against the archive”. Two recent methodological “turns” can supplement the creation of historical narratives, these being the “Spatial Turn” and the “Sensory Turn”. These theories introduce an additional layer to the developer-historian’s resurrection of historical spatial imaginations.

95 A good example of a game with powerful theatrical energies is The Witcher 3. You can view a compilation of voice actors and lines here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3OBgmxVirE.
96 Hartman 2008, 12.
The first methodological turn is the “Spatial Turn” of cultural and political history, which Ralph Kingston describes in his article *History and the Spatial Turn*:

“...cultural historians have been less interested in the uses of physical artefacts than they have been in literary description and the expression of architectural ‘dreams’. Their spaces are empty, impermanent, or unmade. They are stages waiting to be filled by ceremonies and rituals, ideas and debate. Investigating the symbolism of space, cultural historians have also drawn heavily on postmodern theories of space and place as repositories of social meaning.”

The spatial turn contains a number of concepts, such as “mental mapping” and “imaginary geography”. These theories suggest that people do not only interact with the physical world. Instead, people view space as a map of functions and meanings based on their present agential goals. Locations adopt different meanings and uses depending on what is “projected” onto them by an individuals’ imagination. Different people may have quite different mental maps depending on their experiences, needs, and perceptions. Spaces also accumulate historical meaning within the wider imagination with the passage of time. Events, people, and changing social needs create a shifting impression of space.

The concept of “imaginary geography” has also been very influential on spatial methodologies. Imaginary geography considers the reception of space that is mediated by the cultural perceptions of the viewer. This reception is influenced by factors beyond physical geography, incorporating cultural ideas and biases.

Spatial historians are concerned with how space was received, perceived, and projected by past societies. Interactive histories have the potential to communicate these receptions, perceptions, and projections of space. Games can contain visual

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97 Kingston 2010, “History and the Spatial Turn” *Cultural and Social History*, 112-114.
representations and reconstructions of historical space. Representation provides the capacity to incorporate an imaginative reconstruction of historical spaces, and to communicate cultural ideas about space through its narrative and game mechanics. The selection of historical spaces and elements for representation can form a key aspect of the developer-historians' rhetorical claims about the socio-historical importance of historical spaces. For example, in Section 3.1.3, within the procedural rhetoric of my proposed reconstruction of ancient Pompeii, I choose to focus on the street as the primary encounter space of the game; much of the important mechanical interaction takes place outside, in the forum or street corner. As the player is not embodying a Roman elite, the domestic “domus” home is not a consideration within the spatial imagination they are embodying. For the typical Pompeiiian, their imagination and use of space is focused on the exterior, and the game reflects this by having very few interior spaces. Such decisions regarding space can reflect the historical realities uncovered via the archive, enforcing the player’s assumed agencies’ uses and imaginations of space and forming a core part of a procedural rhetoric.

Another methodological “turn” emerging within archaeological practice is the “sensory turn”. This practice places and increased focus on investigating the sensory experiences of past societies, uncovered through archaeological evidence and cultural material. Sensory archaeology focuses primarily on the affective powers of physical objects. In their introduction to the concept, Robin Skeates and Jo Day consider the theory of the “sensorial field”, the combined sensory experience of a space and the affect it has on human experience and cognition. Sensory archaeology is primarily concerned

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100 Skeates & Day 2019, Routledge Handbook of Sensory Archaeology, 8.
with “the experiential and sensory properties and impacts of material things on people in the past and present”, and “the aesthetic effect of the physical properties of objects on the senses and the qualitative evaluation of those properties”.\textsuperscript{101} These include both the properties of smaller portable objects (especially those modified by human agency to express and affect a sensory response), and the built environment and the multi-sensorial experiences it can inspire.\textsuperscript{102} The concept of the “sensory turn” within interactive narrative histories provides a grounding in archaeology and the opportunity for environmental storytelling. Interactive media, provides opportunities for sensory engagement with a reconstruction of the past. Sights and sounds can be reconstructed and directly embedded in the game world. While touch cannot be directly implemented, many public interactive histories and exhibits have introduced a more “tactile” experience through interactive 3D models of archaeological artefacts. Finally, the remaining two senses can be narratively reconstructed through the dialogue and theatrical actions of the non-player characters, using historical and archaeological evidence for how past societies considered their sensory experiences.

To bring this all together: imaginary space is a very important concept for creating historical narratives and social histories. Within this framework, interactive media represents an ontological hybrid of social and cultural ideas. The assembly of historical information must be undertaken with care. Just as with any historical writing, with narrative accuracy and evidence-based presentation being of equal importance. One of the key goals of the \textit{Agential Engines} framework is to assemble a historical imaginary

\textsuperscript{101} Skeates & Day 2019, 9.
\textsuperscript{102} Skeates & Day 2019, 9-10.
space using as many cultural and imaginative elements from a historical culture as possible. This is one of the areas where there will be friction between the desire for accurate representation of historical spaces and the requirements of game and narrative mechanics. The player’s agential immersion allows them to interact with a developer historian’s “resurrection” of cultural and physical space, embedded within the broader historical problem space. When a developer-historian embeds historical assemblies with their rhetorical ideals, they must remain mindful of the involvement of their player’s agency and how their rhetoric and historical presentation stands to affect their historical imagination.

1.2.2- Embedded Emotions: Experiencing Emotional Regimes and Communities

While emotions have been touched on as a part of narrativity and narrative mechanics, they also form a distinct affective factor within this framework. The study of historical emotions is a recent trend within historical practice, with most of the foundational work developed in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Many of the theories and methods practised by emotional historians involve a re-evaluation of the archive along with unorthodox examinations of primary sources. For the purposes of interactive histories, historical emotional experiences represent possibilities for agential inversions and development into narrative mechanics. Within my proposed framework of interactive histories, emotions can be embedded as game and narrative mechanics, creating a mechanical challenge wherein the player must alter their agency in order to fit the historical agencies of the past.

103 See: Barclay et. al. 2020, Sources for the History of Emotions for the development of this historical subfield.
Common to all studies of historical emotions is the tendency to place a greater emphasis on cultural materials. In doing so, historians of emotion hope to develop a deeper understanding of historical behaviours and developments. Historians of emotion often engage with past people and societies on their “own terms”. From a theoretical perspective, researching emotions often requires close engagement with primary sources in order to gain a conception of past emotional landscapes. Emotions history is a methodology that recognizes that these landscapes are often quite different from how modern people experience emotions. This section will discuss two works of emotions scholarship that will provide the theoretical groundwork for approaching historical emotions and considers how different concepts of emotion can be incorporated into an interactive history.

William M. Reddy’s *The Navigation of Feeling: A framework for the History of Emotions* provides a theory for placing emotions into a navigable framework. Reddy, whose original work focuses on the French Revolution, delves into various scientific and anthropological definitions and theories of emotions. He first considers the psychologist’s conception of emotions as “overlearned cognitive habits”: behaviours learned to provide mental short-cuts to help mediate social interactions. He contrasts this with the anthropological view: that emotions are constructed by culture and vary from society to society.104 Reddy notes that both theories create conceptual obstacles to political and cultural critique. He suggests that a synthesis of these ideas is most useful for historians. With this in mind, Reddy frames emotions as cognitive content influenced by social interactions. He concludes emotions are influenced by culture, with the strongest

emotional influences stemming from life within cultural communities. Emotions are also malleable through the influence of symbols and ideologies.

Furthering this, Reddy suggests that most historical societies expected individuals to strive for control over emotions. Control of emotions is “closely associated with the dense network of goals that give coherence to the self (and aid in) managing the conflicting tugs and contradictions that the pursuit of multiple goals gives rise to”. Reddy describes a schema of motivation and striving that is similar to the earlier discussion on agency. Management of a dense network of goals is a core part of striving play as envisioned by C. Thi Nguyen. Game and narrative mechanics are regulated by symbolic and narrative meanings, as well as the embedded procedural rhetoric of the game designer. Procedural mechanics create a system of punishments, incentives, and rewards for following game rules, just as social groups do for emotional expressions and control.

Reddy goes on to discuss how “emotional cultures” gain sway over their members through the cultural encouragement of emotional norms, creating a domain of effort for emotional management, and providing members with prescriptions and strategies for maintaining expected emotional and behavioural states. It is this framework that Reddy deems an “emotional regime”, the cultural enforcement of shared social values and expectations within a socio-imaginary space. Uncovering historical emotional regimes can display a great deal about social values and how individuals within a society were “expected” to feel. Reddy's definition of emotions and emotional regimes are of a

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particular use to a developer-historian: emotional regimes are an excellent source of adversarial mechanics. By studying historical emotional regimes, the designer is presented opportunities to embed the emotional rules and restrictions enforced by emotional regimes into their game design as mechanical and narrative obstacles.

Reddy suggests that certain aspects of the human emotional experience can be considered universal. Much of the cultural differences we observe in anthropological study can be pinpointed by looking at the specific emotional prescriptions and expectations placed by the local “emotional regime”. Reddy considers his framework at two extremes. The first is a regime in the true sense: one where emotions are strictly regulated, with only a small number of emotives allowed. Socially-acceptable emotives are modelled through ceremony, tradition, and permitted art forms. In short, a restricted emotional regime is a cornerstone of most high control groups. Members are expected to perform expected emotives at expected times, with severe penalties threatened for noncompliance with the normative emotions.\(^{107}\) On the reverse of this are emotional regimes with looser emotional expectations. Such societies only place tight emotional controls within institutions. In these societies, certain emotional scripts may be taught with the intent for preparing the learner for operating in society, but that these systems do not create intense emotional regulations. Between these two extremes is a broad spectrum of different emotional regimens. Existing below the emotional regime are smaller groups that seek to supplant or alter the emotional regime (countercultures, marginalised groups, political extremists).\(^{108}\)

\(^{107}\) Reddy 2001, 125.

\(^{108}\) These outlying emotional systems are not discussed detail by Reddy, but are best characterised as emotional communities using Barbara Rosenwein’s framework.
Reddy states that most historical societies' strict emotional regimes displayed a tendency to inflict emotional suffering on their subjects to achieve stability. They often worked against the agential goals of the majority to achieve ideological and emotional consistency. Reddy notes that such regimes become particularly salient “in situations of conquest, colonisation, or expansion, when the normative management strategy must be imposed on new populations”. Additionally, he states that all emotional regimes are often willing to impose some degree of emotional suffering. This imposition is due to the fact that a regime must restrict agency through laws, social expectations, and institutional instruction. For the purposes of interactive histories, strict emotional regimes provide interesting possibilities of adversarial game design. Since strict regimes work against individual agential goals, they provide opportunities for turning emotional expectations into genuine gameplay or narrative challenges to the player. In games that feature marginalised communities, genuine historical adversity from past emotional regimes can be used to engage the player’s agency; players can be made to experience a simulation of historical emotional hardship. Reddy concludes that the historical trend has demonstrated that the most successful emotional regimes attempt to reduce the friction between culture, ideology, and emotion. His conception of emotions and of emotional regimes are linked to his political analyses of history, particularly notions of liberty and individualism. While the concept of emotional regimes is quite useful as a starting framework, there has been some pushback from scholars interested in less political methodologies.

When studying histories and periods where the theories of modernity and postmodernity are inapplicable, a different approach is warranted. Scholars have shown a distinct interest in the communities that emerge in distinction to the core emotional regime of a given historical period. When studying smaller and subaltern emotional cultures, Barbara Rosenwein’s concept of “emotional communities” is of particular use. Rosenwein, a medievalist, takes a broader view of emotions beyond the politicised concept of “regimes”. She instead uses the concept of emotional communities, defining them as a distinct group of individuals who share a group of emotional values. Alongside shared emotions, emotional communities may also share cultural, or ideological values. Such groups may be closely related to another community, or quite distinct as an outlier within a culture.\textsuperscript{111} While deviating from William Reddy’s framework of Regimes, Rosenwein does use his concept of “emotives”.\textsuperscript{112} Emotives theory states that spoken or written emotional expressions are “drafts” of an attempt to express feelings. Emotives are embedded into cultural works and may be uncovered by a historian.\textsuperscript{113} Additionally, as emotives are embedded into cultural material, they are also diffused into social imaginary space, as described in the earlier section. Such emotives may be familiar to a broader culture, but manifest in altered ways within an emotional community. The internal emotive expressions of an emotional community can take on constructions that are singular and internal to the community\textsuperscript{114}. Rosenwein cites the Roman system of emotive gestures that were almost systematically codified as shorthand for emotion; certain

\textsuperscript{111} Rosenwein 2015, Generations of Feeling, 29.
\textsuperscript{112} Also called emotional “scripts” and “sequences”.
\textsuperscript{113} Reddy 2001, 32.
\textsuperscript{114} Rosenwein 2015, 30.
gestures and phases can be so deeply embedded within imaginary space that they can express a great deal of emotional meaning through simple emotive forms.

A core concern of Rosenwein’s work is how communities use emotional sequences as an affective tool. She presents the idea that emotional episodes are played out with a sequence of emotions. Within the sequence, each subsequent emotion inflects on the previous. It is these sequences of emotions that lend emotional communities their character. Emotional communities contain their own rhetoric of emotion; they inherit sequences and emotives that influence their internal cultures.\textsuperscript{115} These collective \textbf{emotional landscapes} are mediated by communal culture and ideas. Fundamental differences in landscapes separate emotional communities from emotional regimes. Rosenwein notes that historian’s theories of modernity and progress often deliberately frame earlier periods (in particular the mediaeval period) as landscapes of unorganised emotions. It is only the “civilising process” of modernity that restarts the human process. Within theories of modernity, the transition between the Early Modern period brought with it a more regimented sense of emotions, brought about by development in religious and political influence and thought.\textsuperscript{116} To a modernity-oriented historian, this could be seen as the emergence of emotional regimes, set to regulate the emotional chaos of earlier eras.

To push over the strawman I have just set up, I argue that all historical periods contain a rich diversity of both emotional regimes and communities. It is possible to reconstruct the emotional qualities of a wide variety of historical cultures through

\textsuperscript{115} Rosenwein 2015, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{116} Rosenwein 2015, 463-464.
historical research and narratives. Through the process of cultural habitus, tradition, and documentation, the emotives of both emotional regimes and emotional communities have been calcified into historical writings and the archive. While their emotional expectations and prescriptions may no longer influence modern agencies, interactive histories can “resurrect” historical imaginations through their narratives; re-embedding emotions into a recreated imaginary space by taking cues from the historical archive of experience. Game and narrative mechanics can be utilised as procedural rhetoric to immerse the player into an emotional community. By emotionally engaging with the historical problem space, players can come to gain a greater appreciation of the emotional landscapes of past societies.

1.3- Microhistorians

The technical skills required to create interactive media have not been addressed. The framework has been envisioned to have a low technical barrier to entry; it is focused on the assembly of historical research and game design into a frame that can be deployed in a wide variety of interactive media. With the right combination of historical research and mechanical immersion, a small, narrative-focused game can have as much historical value as a game with a larger scope and complexity. The framework places importance on an experience's ability to: A) embody the player within the agency of a historical actor, and B) to affect the player’s historical imagination by immersing them within reconstructed historical spaces and emotional landscapes.

The process of the user creating historical understanding through agential immersion and performative energy resembles the practice of autoethnography. Autoethnography is an anthropological method that creates ethnographic narratives through reflections of the writer’s
own lived experiences. In their introduction to the theory, Tony Adams, Stacy Jones, and Carolyn Ellis explain that autoethnography is the combination of ethnographic practices with an autobiographical consideration of one’s personal experiences. Autoethnographic writing locates the self within a narrative incorporating space, emotion, and memory. Autoethnographers also integrate considerations of agency and affect into their narratives:

“Access and availability can happen through the use of engaging writing, as well as an autoethnographer’s ability to bridge the academic and the affective by addressing the heart (emotions, the sensory and physical aspects of experience, intuition, and values) and the head (the intellect, knowledge, the analytical)”

By centring agency within an affective narrative, autoethnographic writing is particularly useful at depicting cultural and emotional narratives. These narratives exist outside of the typical scientific view of ethnographic study. Autoethnographic writing strives to show how effects of culture and human experience shape broader narratives. By reflecting on their personal and communal knowledge, autoethnographic writing reflects the agencies that shape human development and culture. As the interactive histories I propose are deeply rooted in history as a social process, they overlap with other anthropological processes such as Clifford Geertz’s “Thick Description”, the idea that human agencies are a series of social cues that can be “read” and interpreted through a series of shared social cues rooted in the cultural imagination.

The personal and introspective autoethnographic narratives also resemble a concept that may be more familiar to historians: the microhistory, a historical work that features smaller-scale historical events, along with considering smaller and often

118 Adams et. al. 2015, 42.
marginalised social units. Historical studies on emotional communities are often considered as microhistorical, as are precise reconstructions of extremely specific historical spaces and events. The Agential Engines framework encourages historians, designers, and audiences to consider the past through an autoethnographic and microhistorical mode; immersion within an interactive frame allows for the construction of personal identity narratives and ethnographic references. For the audience, such historical thinking is an excellent method for combating presentism and teleological thinking in historical analysis. Simulations of historical agency allow users to practise autoethnographic reflections with an expanded historical imagination. These reflections lead to an expanded understanding of past societies, emotional groups, and spaces. A historical problem space incorporating these concepts allows the player to assume the role of a social actor, with ludic success measured by ability to witness, absorb, and emulate the agential, imaginative, and emotional expectations of a historical society.

Success within the “magic circle” of a historical problem space is measured by the successful observation of how the engine of agency and affect operates. If a user chooses to engage with the system in good faith, they embody the emotions and behaviour that are reflected in the performance of other agents and in the environment(s). It is in this way that a user transforms into an agent within the world. Unlike the audience of a stage play, the user mantles theatrical historical energies for themselves. Users take a role in and interact with the cast as a historical agent. If the cast is composed of non-player characters, they then enter into dialogue with the imagination and knowledge of the developer-historian. If the cast consists of other users, they can mediate their role-playing by integrating their performative energies and historical knowledge. In gaining
understanding of the past agencies, emotions, and imaginations, the user(s) of an interactive history perform a similar interpretive role to Rokem’s “hyper-historian”. They subsume their roles in order to externalise their knowledge of acting as a historical agent.

To ensure that the players and creators of interactive experiences become effective “microhistorians”, users of this framework should take into consideration the interactive form, the reach and power of such an experience, and the technical skills required to create one. The creation of video games requires complex technical knowledge, and even with limited mechanical interaction they can be a difficult project to undertake. However, there has been a recent trend within independent (“indie”) game design involving the creation of vignette games - small game projects that distil personal experiences into interactive experiences using simple game creation techniques and tools. On a more complex level, this framework is also useful for the creation of Role-playing games (RPGs). The historical RPG is also an under-investigated genre within interactive histories. Many of the academic work on games I have discussed in this chapter have only looked at historical strategy games such as Civilization, Total War, and Europa Universalis, or first-person action games such as Call of Duty or Medal of Honor. However, I argue that the historical RPG provides many opportunities to embody the user into a broader variety of historical spaces and is also effective at representing historical social encounter spaces, emotional regimes, and emotional communities. To defend this assertion regarding the affective power of the historical RPG, I will analyse two historical role-playing games in Chapter 2: Paths of Logic and propose a role-playing game set in Roman Pompeii in Chapter 3: Twelve Days in Pompeii.
For the aspiring developer-historian seeking an inroad into game creation, I recommend they consider the concept of vignette games: a “genre” of games that contain short narratives with limited mechanical interactions. Vignette games are designed as aesthetic experiences, reflecting very personal experiences of their respective designers. I wish to highlight this concept in particular because of the low technical bar to entry of such projects. I suggest that historians wishing to use this framework should consider a vignette game as an enticing mode of expression. In a study involving creators of vignette games, researchers Thryn Henderson and Ionna Iacovides provide an overview of the vignette games community in their paper *Sincerity, Support & Self Expression in Vignette Games*. They frame vignette games and those who make them as outsiders to mainstream game production:

“Personal vignettes are encapsulated game works with minimal interactions, focused on aspects of lived experiences. Often created by under-represented games creators, they draw on techniques of poetry, art and theatre to tell diverse and complex stories in small spaces….facilitation, experimentation, disruption and expression are cornerstones of the vignette game ethos; a form of game creation under the creator's own terms, which utilises design through positive restriction, as a playful creativity and for self-expression.”

Vignette games as a genre in general do not follow commercial game design practices. They often push against conventional ideas of game design. These scrappier, more personal games resonate well with the concepts of microhistory and autoethnography. Like autoethnographic writing, they embed personal experiences and histories into their rhetoric. The genre of vignette games is also broad, ranging from autobiographical documents to highly abstracted representations of personal experiences. Vignette games

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120 A genre in the loosest sense of the term, as vignette games contain little in the way of unifying aesthetics, mechanics, or subject matter, rather being bound together by communal practices and a DIY attitude to interactive creation.

use techniques and aesthetic concepts that are also recommended by *Agential Engines*, such as drawing from theatre and the benefits of positive agential restriction. Vignette games represent a positive inroad to those who wish to create games using this framework and are examples of games with a low technical entry point.

Another notable aspect is the wide variety of tools used by vignette designers. The community has taken on a do-it-yourself aspect, as vignette game designers use a variety of game engines and micropublishing platforms. These platforms range from the text-based story engine *Twine*[^122], open-source micro game engines like *bitsy*[^123], to more complicated game engines such as *Unity*[^124] or *Unreal*[^125]. Many vignette or micro games are published, often for free, on the games site *Itch.io*[^126]. The interconnectedness and welcoming nature of the community at large is also noted by Thryn and Iacovides, with an emphasis on online forums and “game jams” dedicated to the creation of vignette games. The vignette games community is also noted as containing a diverse group of creators, who draw on their experiences of marginalisation to create aesthetic expressions of personal struggle.^[127]

In the view of many marginalised and aesthetic-focussed creators, “gamers”, developers, and even academic works can act as gatekeepers to game design. These groups serve to enforce restrictive views and definitions of “games” and “play”, resulting

[^127]: Thryn & Iacovides 2020, 3-4.
in a less diverse gaming landscape\textsuperscript{128}. It is for this reason that vignette games creators have often displayed a reticence towards the term “game”. Vignette designers conceive their projects with the alternate labels of “interactives”, “vignettes”, “trashgames”, or “smol games”\textsuperscript{129}. Anna Anthropy and Ian Bogost also introduce similar concepts in their “Videogame ‘Zines”\textsuperscript{130} and “Newsgames”\textsuperscript{131}, respectively. Regardless of their exact label, the practice of creating such projects seeks to push against the common conceptions of games. It embraces the value of smallness and personal experience. This framework has also avoided the term “game” when addressing applicability. I do not believe that the label of “game” or interactive histories as something to be “played” with are always applicable to all projects.

Regardless of their form, my concept of an Agential Engine is a system that develops the critical historical imagination: it allows for an individual to interrogate cultural and historical claims from new angles; to embody historical agencies through a simulation of past emotions and imaginary space. Through their engagement with Interactive Historical material and rhetoric, the player engages with the historical process - they retain their modern perspectives, but are also able to interrogate historical agencies, imagination and emotions, generating experience & evidence-based historical claims. In doing so, they gain an imaginative understanding of what would have allowed someone to claim that: “Here be Dragons”.

\textsuperscript{128} Thryn & Iacovides 2020, 8.  
\textsuperscript{129} Thryn & Iacovides 2020, 9-10.  
\textsuperscript{130} Anthropy 2012, \textit{Videogame Zinesters}.  
\textsuperscript{131} Bogost 2012, \textit{Newsgames: Journalism at Play}.  

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The Engines of Agency and Affect Framework: ENGINES

The framework has been envisioned to have a low technical barrier to entry; it is focused on the assembly of historical research and game design into a frame that can be deployed in a wide variety of interactive media. With the right combination of historical research and mechanical immersion, a small narrative-focused game can have as much historical value as a game with a larger scope and complexity.

The framework places importance on an experience's ability to: A) embody the player within the agency of a historical actor, and B) to affect the player's historical imagination by immersing them within a reconstructed historical space and emotional landscape.

Two useful concepts for this purpose are:

- **Autoethnography**
- **Microhistory**

**Autoethnography**

An anthropological method that creates ethnographic narratives through reflections of the writer's own lived experiences. Autoethnographic writing locates the self within a narrative incorporating time, emotion, and memory. By centering agency within an affective narrative, autoethnographic writing is particularly useful at depicting cultural and emotional narratives. These narratives exist outside of the typical scientific view of ethnographic study. Autoethnographic writing strives to show how effects of culture and human experience shape broader narratives.

**Microhistory**

A historical work that features smaller-scale historical events, along with considering smaller and often marginalised social units. Microhistorical projects focus on activities in which individuals find themselves and the microhistorical most critically formulated narratives are limited in scope and are also microhistorical.

This framework encourages histories, designers, and audiences to consider the past through an autoethnographic and microhistorical mode. This approach provides an interactive frame allowing for the reconstruction of personal identity narratives and ethnographic references. Through the practice of Autoethnography, players are empowered to reflect on how their historical imagination is affected with procedural and historical rhetoric; they learn what the historical mechanics expect of them. If a user chooses to engage with the system in good faith, they embody the emotions and behaviour that are reflected in the performance of the characters and in the environment(s). It is in this way that a user transforms into an agent within Historical Problem Space. They take on a role and interact with the non-player cast as a historical agent, entering into dialogue with the imagination and knowledge of the developer-historian.

They engage theatrical energies in embodying their role, and subsume their experiences into their agential libraries.

This genre, rhetorical, and gameplay form presented most closely resembles the

- **HISTORICAL RPG**
- **“VIGNETTE GAMES”**

**HISTORICAL RPG**

RPGs are the main genre for story-driven games, and increased audience engagement with story-driven series such as The Last of Us, The Witcher, and titles from publisher FromSoftware show that there is a marked interest in the genre. As a genre for the delivery of stories, RPGs have the advantage of stimulating a social encounter space whereby historical communities can be closely represented. This has the advantage of placing the player within a historical agency with a grounded view of historical events. A sense of community is fostered by either placing real people in historical roles, or by turning non-player characters (NPCs) take on these roles. Regardless, all actors involved want some degree of theatrical energy.

**THEATRICAL ENERGY**

Since the shift in interest toward narrative-driven games has also granted NPCs a greater deal of theatricality across all genres of games. Additionally, developments in 3D software have empowered designers to create more life-like 3D models. This increasing sophistication has allowed designers to depict subtle facial and body movements - a key aspect to communication and performance.

**VIGNETTE GAMES**

Which are a “genre” of games that contain short narratives with limited mechanical interactions. Vignette games are designed as aesthetic experiences, reflecting very personal experiences of their respective designers. They have a low technical bar of entry and in general do not follow commercial game design practices. They often push against conventional ideas of game design. Vignette games designers use a variety of game engines and micropublishing platforms. Vignette games also form an ideal platform for autoethnographic and microhistorical storytelling.

Since they embody personal experiences and histories into their game. This ranges from grounded autoethnographic documents to highly abstracted aesthetic representations of personal experiences. Vignette games are also noted as a platform for expressing marginalised experiences with vignette games creators draw on their experiences of marginalisation to create aesthetic experiences of personal struggle and defy the conventional meanings of what a “game” is. This concept lends itself well to creating agential narratives about marginalised histories and using concepts from critical fabulation and expressing emotional systems of help and hindrance.

This is not to suggest that these two mediums are the exclusive form of an engine of Agency and Affect can take. Rather, that historical RPGs and Vignette games are the forms that I am most interested in at the time of writing. This passage serves as an open invitation for experimentation and historical expression via interactive media, the key inspiration behind this Framework.

Figure 3: “The Engine” - The third subsection of the Engines of Agency and Affect Framework describing two potential applications of the Agential Engines framework: Historical RPGs and Vignette Games
Chapter 2: Paths of Logic

This chapter provides examples and analysis of media that are effective displays of the concepts of Embodied Agency, Imaginary Space, and Embedded Emotions. I will use Jeremiah McCall’s *Historical Problem Space Framework (HPS)*\(^{132}\) to do a mechanical and narrative analysis of two video games and one book. These works are: *Pathologic 2* (Ice-Pick Lodge, 2019), *The Forgotten City* (Modern Storyteller, 2021), and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (Saidiya Hartman, 2020). While each work represents quite different historical ideas and genres, they all contain invaluable methodological, design, and narrative concepts. The analysis will consider each work’s effectiveness at representing historical and rhetorical elements and presenting agential and affective narratives. Through this process, game and narrative mechanics that are of use to aspiring developer-historians will displayed. The HPS provides needed utility to my framework, since it does not yet have a mechanic for articulating how agencies, imaginations, and emotions are represented by historical media; or a means of displaying how mechanics and concepts used within a historical game world. The HPS provides a means of analysing and understanding the game and narrative mechanics of interactive media. It breaks historical games into their component parts in order to analyse games as a mode of historical expression.

McCall, drawing from his experiences as a secondary school history teacher, classicist, and game designer, presents the HPS as a theoretical framework that provides an approach to analysing and inspiring historical games. The framework looks at games not only as text, but as interactive objects that address specific historical issues. The

\(^{132}\) McCall 2020, “Historical Problem Space Framework,” *Game Studies.*
HPS’s approach to thinking about games is compatible with the framework laid out in *Here be Dragons*. Both draw on similar literature and concepts of games as potential containers of history. McCall suggests that the historical problem space consists of:

- A primary *player agent* representing some form of historical actor tasked with one or more designer-made *goals*, ultimately expressed as victory conditions, operating within;
- a *virtual gameworld*\(^ {133}\), a simulated world that usually refers to specific historical locations and contains the game components, essentially the game system, within an environment and geography that includes;
- various *gameworld elements: agents, minions, resources, obstacles, and tools*\(^ {134}\), whose function primarily is to enable and/or constrain the player agent in achieving those designed goals;
- and so, the player forms *strategies*, makes *choices*, and adopts *behaviors*\(^ {135}\) to reach those designed goals, optimally by capitalizing on abilities and circumventing, overcoming, or working within the constraints in the game's virtual space;
- this entire gamic problem space is contained within a meta space of genre conventions\(^ {136}\) that often significantly influence designer choices of player agents/ goals/ gameworld/ gameworld elements/choices and strategies.\(^ {137}\)

In short, the *HPS* considers how developer-historians assemble their historical spaces as imaginary spaces, wherein history can be simulated and reconstructed. It breaks down these constructs into their components, searching for historical meaning within systems of help and hindrance. These systems compose the game, narrative, and rhetorical mechanics of a historical game. The HPS also considers how gameplay systems are constructed by developer-historians, revealing the historical arguments and viewpoints of their creators. This is a familiar schema to Chapter 1, as the HPS searches for the historical rhetoric, emotions, and imagination the developer-historian embeds in

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\(^ {133}\) Analogous to Imaginary Space.
\(^ {134}\) Additionally, simulated emotional communities, narrative mechanics.
\(^ {135}\) Agential adaptations and inversions.
\(^ {136}\) See sections on Narrative Mechanics and Narrativity.
\(^ {137}\) McCall 2020.
their game. Additionally, this concept has immediate relevance to my discussions of how game and narrative mechanics use historical facts.

2.1- Pathologic 2 (Ice-Pick Lodge, 2019)

“As a matter of fact, this town is nothing but a machine…produced to challenge the limits of human potential. And our ideas of how people connect to each other…. You’ve found yourself a utopia”- NPC, Pathologic 2: The Marble Nest

Pathologic (2005) is a role-playing game by Russian independent developer Ice-Pick Lodge.138 It is set within “The Town”, which while not a historical location, closely resembles a Siberian frontier town at the turn of the 20th century, before the Russian revolution.139 As an interactive narrative, Pathologic 2 contains a number of examples of concepts introduced in Chapter 1. By analysing these mechanics and narrative concepts, Pathologic serves as an excellent example of how the Agential Engines framework can be applied to gameplay design to affect the player’s historical imagination. The player takes on the roles of three characters: The Bachelor, The Haruspex, and the Changeling. The game is a narrative survival game, with the core gameplay loop tasking the player with surviving a supernatural epidemic. As the plague threatens to wipe out the population, the player is tasked with curing the plague, while also solving the narrative mystery of the plague’s origins. Pathologic 2 (2019) a remake of the original Pathologic. It contains the same characters and core plot, with reworked gameplay and environments.

While not a commercially successful series, Pathologic shows many of the characteristics of a successful interactive history. For example, Pathologic encourages

138 At time of writing, the Ukraine war remains a sensitive issue, and by extension covering Russian cultural materials can also be considered a sensitive topic. You can find Ice-Pick Lodges’ denunciation of Russia’s invasion here: https://twitter.com/IcePickLodge/status/1498269141404463107?s=20.
139 Specifically, central Russia and the Mongolian steppe.
players to perform autoethnographic investigations of the game world, which contains a
deep sense of culture, history, and community. The Non-Player Characters (NPCs)
represent a number of distinct emotional communities; the largest two groups being “the
Townsfolk” and the indigenous “Kin”. The player is expected to come to understand the
cultural experiences of both groups, with their agential success dependent on their
recognition and adoption of the NPC’s “traditional practices” (game mechanics). While it
does not take place within “real history”, the narrative reflects historical experiences
drawn from Russian and Siberian history. From an autoethnographic and historical
perspective, the story of Pathologic is an excellent example of constructing a procedural
rhetoric using historical texture. This is most obvious when viewing Pathologic’s
considerations of cultural destruction, Russian imperialism, and the tension between
tradition and modernity.
Figure 4: Combined framework diagram for Pathologic 2. Ideas surrounding “Agency” are coloured in purple, “Imagination” in blue, “Emotion” in green.
2.1.1- The Player-Agent: “The Haruspex”

“Our life lessons will prove me right. But heed my words: Whenever you want to do something, don’t. You’ll just make it worse. You’ll be the demise of your hometown. You’ll drown it with blood.” - Changeling, Pathologic 2

Pathologic 2 is a complex game containing many nested gameplay systems, narratives, and meta-narratives. Due to project constraints, Pathologic 2 only contains a single gameplay route- that of the Haruspex (Artemy Burakh). However, it presents a more complete narrative and gameplay experience as compared to the original Pathologic. The other two main characters- the Bachelor (Daniil Dankovsky) and the Changeling (Clara)\textsuperscript{140} are present as Non-Player Characters (NPCs). This analysis will focus on the story of the Haruspex as the primary agent. Artemy Burakh represents the narrative conflict between traditional practice and modern progress; he is the son of a local medicine man (“Menkhu” in the Kin’s Buryatian-based language), and a Townsfolk woman. Prior to the events of the game, Burakh was sent away from the Town to study surgery in a major city.\textsuperscript{141} When Burakh returns to his hometown following an urgent letter from his father, he is accused of murdering his father and ostracised from the community. However, as one of the only people with medical training remaining, he is also desperately required by the community following the outbreak of the “sand plague”. Burakh’s character works on several agential levels. Unlike some main characters in role-playing games, he is a distinct character, not a mere vessel for the players’ agency. He

\textsuperscript{140} These abstract titles denote each character’s dramatic and symbolic role:
- Clara is an enigma, a mysterious child who may either (or both) a saint or the direct avatar of the plague.
- Dankovsky is a man of science and progress who is a distinct outsider to the Town. Note that he is a Bachelor of Medicine, using the older definition wherein the “Bachelor” degree was considered sufficient to practise medicine as a full Doctor.
- Burakh is a spiritual guide and medicine man, filling the historical role of a Haruspex.

\textsuperscript{141} Implied to be the county’s capital, analogous to Moscow.
has his own past, relationships, thoughts, and feelings which can be expressed through
dialogue. However, the game remains aware of the player’s agency nested within the
Haruspex’s dramatic role, routinely breaking the fourth wall\textsuperscript{142} to address the player
directly.

As a player-agent, Burakh is what Jerimiah McCall would deem a \textit{historical}
\textit{archetype}- a fictional agent who does not strictly exist within the historical record. The
“archetypical agency” is one of McCall’s three categories of player-agent, the other two
being the “non-historical agent”, which fits no historically documented role, and the
“historical agent”, being a representation of a real historical person. Archetypal
characters fit in the middle- while fictional, they can be placed into historically
documented roles. In section 1.1.2, I considered Saidiya Hartman’s composite figure of
“Venus”, which performed a similar rhetorical function. “Venus” is a representation of a
shared set of historical circumstances. In the case of \textit{Pathologic}’s player-agent, the
Haruspex is a real historical role found in many cultures; Haruspicy is the tradition of
telling the future through the reading of entrails. Burakh fulfills the historical role of the
Haruspex by “reading the entrails” of the plague victims and the town itself.

Mechanically, Burakh’s dual role as surgeon and menkhu allows for the player to combat
the plague by using surgery and traditional medicine. The procedural rhetoric of the
medical mechanics is that Burakh combines tradition and modernity through his medical
practice, requiring both to achieve his goals. His agency draws influences from literature
on isolated small-town doctors\textsuperscript{143} and the traditional medicines of the Mongolian steppe.

\textsuperscript{142} I argue that there is great value in a game’s willingness to break the fourth wall to “show its hand”. This
is especially relevant when telegraphing moments of historical editorialising.
\textsuperscript{143} In particular, \textit{Pathologic} draws from Russian literature on the topic. \textit{A Young Doctor’s Notebook} by
Mikhail Bulgakov in particular reflects the blending of folk practices and modern medicine.
He is simultaneously an archetype of the turn-of-the-century surgeon and traditional medicine man.

Embodying the agency of “The Haruspex” allows for the player to engage with many of the emotional communities present within the game. Through communal engagement, they are provided a close-up view of the historical impacts of colonial practices on indigenous peoples. The game’s problem space asks the player to balance the needs of several different (and often opposed) narrative goals and actors. Individual actors may either help or hinder the player, depending on the connections the player is able to make. This is balanced against several different narrative mysteries that must be solved in order to succeed within the narrative frame. When compared against concepts from my framework, the most historically relevant aspect of the Haruspex’s embodied agency is in the way that players are empowered to engage with the cultures and communities within the game. As a person of mixed race, the Haruspex bridges the gap between the kin and townspeople, having roots in both cultures. The kin and townsfolk represent overlapping and opposed imaginations and claims about the nature of the world. By engaging with the emotional communities and regimes contained within the problem space, the player is also encouraged to develop their imagination of the gameworld- they mentally map the town and imaginary landscapes of the community.

2.1.2- The Gameworld: “The Town”

“The Town is, of course, the game’s real protagonist. Everything is nested: the town is filled with people like the human body is with (plague) bacteria. People move along the streets like the blood cells circulating inside them” - Pathologic 2 Game Design Document

144 Ice-Pick Lodge 2019, The Art of Pathologic 2, 8.
The plot of the game is set within the “Town on the Gorkhon River”. While the gameworld contains many supernatural and spiritual elements, the Town itself is an example of an imaginary space that contains embedded historical and cultural texture. Isolated from the rest of the world, it relies on regular train deliveries for all modern commodities. There are numerous references that some form of war is occurring, with the most likely historical parallel being the First World War or the Russian Civil War. The gameworld is populated by two forms of non-player characters (NPCs). The first type are “the extras”, NPCs that act as extras within the theatrical meta-narrative of the game. These NPCs have generic 3D models arranged into archetypes. They play a key role in the game’s barter and trade system. The second type are referred to as “Bound”: characters that are important to the Haruspex and the narrative. The “Bound” live in each city district, and the plague moves from district to district with each passing day. As the plague moves, new “Bound” may be threatened with infection or death each day.

Figure 5 (left). The “Bound” (not fully pictured). They are arranged in groups relative to their social place in the town.

Figure 6 (right). The map of the town. Infected districts are presented in Red, ravaged districts in Grey. The icons and circles on the map are points of interest and story events.
Pathologic 2 displays a great deal of attention to environmental and atmospheric storytelling in its world design. The game world is divided into four quarters, with each quarter of the town containing several named districts. Navigation is accomplished through use of a map which highlights quest lines and points of interest. The architecture of the town resembles a Russian frontier town at the turn of the century, but the visual storytelling shows how the town has drawn cultural influences from the Kin; this influence is obvious through observation of smaller environmental details. Props, paintings, and furniture show subtle influences from the Kin’s culture. In particular, the Kin’s fascination with bulls is a recurring motif throughout the environmental clutter of the game; many objects are bovine-shaped or contain horn motifs. Additional environmental storytelling can be seen when venturing onto the Kin’s native steppe. In this area, remnants of their religious practices and former villages can be found, the gameworld indicating their loss of cultural meaning and practice.

The tension between the Townsfolk and the Kin forms a core gameworld element. The Kin are closely based on the Buryat peoples, a Mongolian steppe culture that is extant in Russia to this day. They are presented as a nomadic and highly spiritual people, with their own language and cultural practices that inform much of the Haruspex’s story. The metastory of the Kin forms one of the largest and most lasting narrative impacts the player can have on the gameworld. Coming to understand the Kin’s beliefs and practices is a clear example of Autoethnographic practice within a game. For example, to someone that hasn’t played the game, the terms “Herb Bride”, “Shabnak-adyr”, “Bos Turokh”, and

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145 My observations here can be supplemented by Mandalore Games’ excellent review, in particular the visuals and music sections: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7uKUgire7Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7uKUgire7Y). Specific sections: [https://youtu.be/E7uKUgire7Y?t=309](https://youtu.be/E7uKUgire7Y?t=309).
the differences between a “Menkhu” and “Emshen” will mean very little. These terms gain narrative and rhetorical meaning through gameplay.\textsuperscript{146} Through agential engagement, the game seeks to demonstrate the social realities of an indigenous culture on the brink, the slow fading of practice and spiritual meaning. Ice-Pick Lodge describes the Kin in their game documents:

“The Kin is falling apart and decaying. They’re in a similar state to late-19th-century Native Americans: the old chieftains are still alive, but young people have been going to work at White man’s stone quarries, brothels and railroad construction sites for a while now. The rituals and customs have long lost their vividness, their direct links to reality, indeed their meaning.”\textsuperscript{147}

The Kin are a composite of a number of different indigenous groups—while they are heavily based on the historical experiences of the Buryat peoples, they form a narrative archetype that comments on the outcomes of Western Colonialism on Indigenous people at large. They are an example of an “unreal” culture that nevertheless gains historical significance through a procedural presentation of their traditions.

The Kin’s cultural atrophy is shown through rhetorical and visual storytelling. The remnants of a one-thriving culture can be seen throughout the gameworld, suggesting a fading of the Kin’s traditional culture. One location is of particular importance: the abandoned village of Shekhen, referred to as “a place of old”. Shekhen represents the Kin’s past way of life as a semi-nomadic tribal culture. Gardens for cultivating traditional medicines can be found there, enforcing the traditionalism of the Kin’s medicine practice. The site is vested with strong spiritual importance within the game’s narrative, being the

\textsuperscript{146} For a brief primer on the “lore” of the Kin, the Pathologic wiki is a good source: https://pathologic.fandom.com/wiki/The_Kin.
\textsuperscript{147} Ice-Pick Lodge 2019, 78.
source of the “earth’s lifeblood”, an object of worship for the kin. One of the major influences the player can have on the gameworld is the revitalisation of Shekhen as a place of residence for the Kin. Should the player complete “The Kin” metastory and free them from the grip of forced industrialisation, the Kin will return to Shekhen under a new generation of leaders, who will heal their spiritual practices and end the plague (which is as much a spiritual malady as a real disease).

The Townsfolk, on the other hand closely resemble ethnic Russians, who are implied to be settlers of the region. The town’s rapid drive towards modernisation forms an emotional regime. Specifically, it is a regime that enforces a certain worldview onto the townsfolk. This regime imposes the expectation that all residents of the town embrace economic and industrial progress, even if the progress is harmful to their own culture and environment. The Townsfolk have a political structure revolving around three powerful families: the Saburova, who hold executive responsibilities, the Kains, who hold judicial and planning authority, and the Olgimskys, who control the “Bull Enterprise”, the source of capital and trade. The three families represent a fundamental philosophical disagreement: The Saburova believe in law and order, in firm governance inspired by tradition. They resemble Tsarist officials facing the end of their rule, unable to survive the march of “progress” and “revolution”. The Olgimskys are “Russian merchants through and through”, capitalists who believe in the power of industry. The Olgimskys treat the kin as a labour force, people to be used. They represent the townsfolk’s overall view of the Kin. Even the most well-intentioned townsfolk see them as people to be

148 “My path was called “The Restoration of Power.” I wanted to return strength and dignity to our country” - Alexander Saburov, Pathologic 2.
“civilised”.

The Kains are architects and creators, they defy natural law in an attempt to create a utopia. Ironically, it is their building projects that unleash the plague. In their attempt to create a utopia they harm the Earth itself.

As noted, the gameworld of *Pathologic 2*, despite not being set in historical reality, still reflects historical experiences. The townsfolk represent many of the historical issues present at the turn of the 20th century, especially those of cultural and environmental destruction on the Russian frontier. In her book *Empire of Nations*, *Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Francine Hirsch notes how the rapid push towards industrialisation and urbanisation affected the peoples of the USSR. She notes that the “advanced” nationalities (Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, and Moldavians) began to lose their national distinctiveness, and the “former colonial peoples” (of Siberia, the Far East, Central Asia, and the North Caucasus) saw their traditional cultures folded into the Soviet national culture.

The game world specifically reflects the experiences of the regions of Russia that experienced the harshest drive towards cultural and industrial collectivization:

“Collectivization, by changing the economic base and eliminating traditional forms of social organisation, was supposed to accelerate the ethnohistorical development of the population. This had special significance in regions with large clan and tribal populations…. national kolkhozes, clans, tribes, and narodnosti would become bound to particular national territories and languages, engage in collective labour, and develop “Soviet” sensibilities”

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149 In particular, Vlad the Younger (son of Big Vlad) is a reformer, showing respect and interest in the Kin’s traditions while still trying to “civilise” them. He is described as “...similar to those naïve landowners who sought to “enlighten” the peasants, teaching them French and the use of handkerchiefs” (Ice-Pick Lodge 2019, *The Art of Pathologic 2*, 172).
151 Hirsh 2005, 247.
The gameworld of *Pathologic 2*, through its procedural and narrative rhetoric, reflects an embedded historical experience derived from the social histories and realities of the Russian frontier. While including many fantastical and historically archetypal elements, it still reflects real historical problems and experience, which are expressed to the player through the agential experiences of the “Haruspex” and the implied agency of the emotional communities surrounding him.

2.1.3- Gameworld Elements: Operationalising Philosophy and Culture

“Watch the herbs grow. Listen to them sing. You’ll find them by their song, by the sound. Mother Boddho reveals herself to the generous” -Warm One, *Pathologic 2*

*Pathologic 2* contains an elegant balance of game and narrative mechanics.\(^{152}\) It has a well-developed gameplay loop that encourages close interactions with the narrative, with the main goal being the curing of the “Sand Pest” plague. As a medical practitioner, Burakh is expected to combat the plague using all means at his disposal. Time management is a crucial mechanic within the game world. The narrative is constructed around eleven in-game days.\(^{153}\) Each gameplay day is a self-contained gameplay loop that presents a new set of challenges. Time management is an important mechanic as it is never entirely clear which plot points are important or can be left to a later time. To combat the plague, complete narrative goals, and overcome survival mechanics, the world demands the player gain an understanding of the town’s geography. Memorisation of impassable barriers, strange geographies, and key locations for survival supplies can save valuable time. In this way, *Pathologic 2* encourages a mental mapping of its game

\(^{152}\) For a comprehensive breakdown of *Pathologic 2*’s game mechanics, see: https://pathologic.fandom.com/wiki/Game_Mechanics.

\(^{153}\) Each Pathologic day takes two real-life hours.
world. My second playthrough of the game showed an increase in gameplay efficiency and narrative completion because of my established mental map and knowledge of the game world, having uncovered a number of shortcuts and hidden places. When I learned to navigate the town, I gained a sense of presence, feeling a sense of belonging within the game world. Should a similarly constructed game be set in a realistic historical space, this form of game design presents opportunities for the player to better understand how past peoples interacted with historical spaces.

There are two core cultural elements that are operationalised as game mechanics that are key to survival and combating the plague. The first is the town’s trade and barter system, wherein items from the player’s inventory can be traded with the NPCs. Items are primarily acquired through scavenging through trash or looting abandoned houses. As a gameworld element, this mechanic is used to encourage a sense of connection with the Town, the player engages in “traditional practices” within the imaginary space. Additionally, gaining an understanding of the barter system can provide a constant flow of survival resources, far beyond what can be purchased with money. The second operationalised cultural element is the practice of traditional medicine.

154 A mechanic that MandaloreGames refers to as “The Hobo economy”
155 This is not a metaphor. Trading in an NPCs favour will raise the player’s reputation in the district
As a “Menkhu”, Burakh can create a number of healing elixirs using local plants and infected human organs. These elixirs are used to boost immunity against the plague and are the most plentiful and accessible method of fighting the plague. The player’s role as a Menkhu also plays a core role in “The Kin” meta-narrative. By learning how to practise traditional medicine, the player forms an anthropological connection to the Kin. Investigating and deepening this connection gives the player insight into the nature of the plague and how to cure it. This effectively meshes a game and narrative mechanic into a single procedural argument about the cultural meaning of traditions and the environment.

Figure 7. The Haruspex’s laboratory. Note the chart on the wall that tells the player what herbs are used in each tincture.

Figure 8. The menu used to brew elixirs by combining various herbs and grasses found in the game world.

Another core gameworld element is a strong element of theatricality that overlays the game. Theatrical elements abound throughout, and the designers blatantly break the fourth wall to acknowledge the artificiality of their narrative. This can be seen in how both the non-player and player characters are treated as actors with a given role and metaphorical meaning. The vast majority of NPCs serve the role of the Greek chorus, a faceless mass of background extras that provide background details and commentary to the events of the play/game. “The Bound” are given more character and some agency. They are the emotional connective tissue of the narrative, having histories and friendships.
with the Haruspex. Finally, the three main characters are given the most agency and meaning within the game world. Each has their own perspective on medical practice and on the philosophical confrontation of death. As in a stage play, *Pathologic 2* has a strong sense of dramatic lighting and musical score, deploying both to create an oppressive and tense atmosphere. *Pathologic 2* also mechanises its theatrical nature, as at the end of each day the player is given the opportunity to view a play in the theatre. These plays often break the fourth wall and address forthcoming events within the story, as well as providing commentary on the philosophy of the game and narrative designs. Viewing these plays has a mechanical benefit, as they unlock a special shop that sells valuable items. The theatrical presentation is overlaid over much of the game world, and the impact of this element will be discussed more in the “Genre Conventions” sections.

2.1.4- Strategies, Choices, and Behaviours: Knowing the Lines

“Sure, it’s metaphor. But a beautiful, clever metaphor. Think of the world as though it is a living thing. Understand that all things are tied to all other things, just like a body. Respect the line as a creature with its own free will” - Aspity, *Pathologic 2*

*Pathologic 2* is at its core a survival role-playing game. Players must manage several health bars in order to maintain their overall ability to survive. Limited food, drink, and plague-protective items are available, and scavenging, barter, and purchase of survival items is necessary. Roleplaying one’s job as a town doctor also provides an infusion of supplies each day. Sleeping takes up valuable time but is one of the only ways to restore health and exhaustion. On top of the survival mechanics, the gameworld also layers on several other goals. Players are asked to: keep their “Bound” alive; solve the mystery of the plague and Burakh Sr.’s murder; complete their daily work assignments; gather resources for trade and crafting. The gameplay loop of *Pathologic 2* requires a
degree of mastery that is unusual within the genre of role-playing games. As an example: My first playthrough of the game was a frustrating uphill struggle wherein I was constantly low on resources and time. Half of the “Bound” characters died and I did not complete two of the major metastories. During my second playthrough, I had a hard-earned understanding of the gameplay mechanics and survival tolerances. The result was an increased degree of narrative and gameplay success- all the “Bound” survived, and I completed all of the major plotlines and story beats. By playing the game to the fullest extent, I learned that the gameplay loop incentivises efficiency; experienced players of the game will understand the strategies of efficient pathfinding, daily planning, and survival tolerances. *Pathologic* does not contain an explicit tutorial. Players are expected to observe and learn from their surroundings, role-play their assigned character, and engage with the cultures and philosophies embedded in the game design.

*Pathologic* rewards intelligent pathfinding- planning out a route through the town at the start of each day can add efficiency to the gameplay look. Good pathfinding prioritises hospital work and delivering medication to the “bound”, as both can provide extra food and story beats. Players must make decisions regarding their passage through plague-infected areas, forcing them to use valuable immunity boosters on themselves. If they wish to avoid infected districts, they may have to pass through “ravaged” districts. As Plague leaves a district, normal NPCs will not return for a day. Instead, hostile “bandit” NPCs will spawn. Fighting bandits is not an easy task. The melee combat system of the game is extremely difficult to master, and firearms have limited ammo and can break down over time. A group of bandits can kill the player extremely quickly. Death causes setbacks to game progress and reductions in overall health and abilities. The
continuous passage of time within the game world means that taking “the long way” is also impractical, forcing the player to choose between safety and efficiency.

The primary survival consideration is finding enough food to survive, and the barter system can greatly assist in this goal. For example, small food items such as raisins and nuts replenish very little hunger, but a savvy player will know that these items are highly valued by children. Carefully collecting and managing barter items allows for trading for more filling food items, medicines, and ammunition. Each “type” of NPC has certain trade requests, and players learn to recognise these NPCs on sight, preparing items that they know are desirable. Additional barter and survival items can be scavenged from abandoned houses. If the player is confident (or desperate), bandits can be killed using sneak attacks, guns, and using lockpicks as a two-hit-kill weapon. Players should also ensure that they complete their hospital assignments and fill up the “fund” bar, as this rewards a great deal of money and food every day. Unsurprisingly, there is a strong correlation between “roleplaying your job”, and “not starving”.

Figure 9: A community created flowchart of NPC types and the items they will trade for.

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156 Although this destroys the lockpick, a valuable tool when looting homes.
A key to completing the daily gameplay loop is the understanding of survival tolerances. Exhaustion very slowly removes health, is possible to mostly put off sleeping should the situation demand it; starvation drains health faster; exhaustion and starvation combined can quickly kill the player character. Health-replenishing items such as bandages and tourniquets can also help mitigate the loss of health caused by exhaustion and starvation.\(^{158}\) Understanding these tolerances can assist in survival and time management, although these are not explicitly taught through a tutorial and must be gleaned through observation and mechanical understanding.

*Pathologic 2*’s game design is an excellent example of how games can simulate contingency. *Pathologic* makes an argument about the nature of historical events—paths of different events connect the game and narrative mechanics. Within the philosophy presented by Ice-Pick Lodge, this is referred to as “knowing the lines”. Understanding the game world and how chains of community and agents affect the story is the only way to achieve narrative fulfilment. Narrative contingencies may only emerge after the player has made enough connections or saved enough people. These narrative elements can even include key clues to solving the mystery of the plague, only accessible after truly connecting with the Kin and Town. As I have noted, *Pathologic 2* is remarkably easier on a second playthrough; eased mechanical interaction allows the game to reveal deeper narrative mechanics and previously unseen contingencies. For example, on my second playthrough, an important character takes a drastic and suicidal action that completely blindsided me. I had not seen this contingency coming, since she had been dead by that point in my first playthrough. I was forced to scramble in an

\(^{158}\) For some reason, a bandage is capable of healing the health damage caused by not sleeping. One of the few times that *Pathologic 2* allows a distinctly “game-y” solution to a problem.
attempt to save her, having to re-path an entire section of a day in a more efficient route.

Allowing the bound to die can prevent these sorts of emergent narrative contingencies—after all, dead people lose the ability to express their own agency.

2.1.5- Genre Conventions: Games. the Theatrical. the Traditional

“The actor must understand how to work death. I’m not making this one for the audience, but for the actors themselves. *Their inner world* is the stage. Their worldview. Hence the…unusual methods. Unusual and rough. It’s the theatre of cruelty.” - Mark Immortell, *Pathologic 2*

Within *Pathologic 2*, game and narrative mechanics are deeply intertwined. A key element to the narrative design of *Pathologic 2* is the metaphysical and genre conventions contained within the game. The gameworld itself is presented theatrically, directly acknowledging the player’s role as an actor within the narrative. It is an ontological hybrid of game, theatrical, and philosophical genre conventions. This hybridity is emphasised by the presence of several plays-within-the-play. The end of the game also demonstrates this framing through this striking dialogue exchange with Mark Immortell 159, an NPC that acts as the developer’s mouthpiece within the game:

Mark: Where was the real Haruspex?

Player-chosen responses:

a) “Around, somewhere… on his own”

b) “He belonged to history… or just a story? In any case, you knew about his adventures beforehand. You *planned* them.”

c) “Gradually, the actor became him. They would only act the part while replaying a section… and *become* Haruspex upon unlocking new events.”

d) “When one died, another took their place. This line is made of small segments. It could be infinite… if not in length, then in width”.

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159 It should be noted that this character is a theatre director within the game world.
I am most intrigued by the second and third answers to this exchange, as they reflect many of the game design considerations discussed in *Here be Dragons*. The third answer to the above question suggests that within the metaphysics of the game, the player only truly becomes the Haruspex when they have understood the narrative causalities and themes of the game. When a player follows the Haruspex’s path “correctly”\textsuperscript{160}, more of the story is revealed\textsuperscript{161}. This exchange suggests that the developers placed role-playing and problem solving as a core element of the Haruspex’s game and narrative design. The player is expected to embrace the theatrical energies of the game, deepening the player’s role of actor and agent. A player’s ability to embrace theatrical energies to express a narrative role resembles C. Thi Nguyen’s concept of the Striving Player, and Freddie Rokem’s “Hyper Historian”. Success is not only measured through overcoming survival mechanics, but by engaging with theatrical, philosophical, and traditional processes. When a player is able to embody their role and “know the lines”, they absorb the philosophical arguments presented by the game.

A core philosophical debate within the game is centred around one of Kain's building projects: “The Polyhedron”. The Polyhedron acts as a metaphor for dreams of progress, simultaneously destroying “the old ways” of the Kin and Town but also preventing the town from moving forward, tied down by dreams of utopia. The actions and reactions between the Townsfolk and the Kin can be taken as one of the metanarratives of the story: reflecting the effects of colonialism and capitalism on indigenous philosophies and ways of life, as well as a commentary on the impact of

\textsuperscript{160} I would frame this as “fully embodying the Haruspex’s agency”

\textsuperscript{161} Think back to my earlier discussion where a NPC takes an unexpected action, forcing me to replay a section in an attempt to save her
modernization on both communities. This meditation on the price of progress forms a key narrative within the game. Within the game, the Earth is “alive”. Miracles and wonders come from the Earth, the source of the supernatural elements of the story. Both the plague and the cure come from the Earth, with the plague being the Earth’s attempt to protect itself. The Kin and the Townsfolk have several internal divisions that can be construed as emotional communities: The Kin want the Polyhedron destroyed as an affront to their beliefs. The Kains and their followers see their creation as the symbol of a new era of progress. A faction of children, “The Dogheads”, choose to live in the Polyhedron and rarely leave. In opposition, another gang of children, “The Soul and a Halves”, oppose the Polyhedron and prefer a simple life living among animals. These groups are all distinct emotional communities. They share a common origin but differ in their beliefs regarding the nature of progress.

Through embodying the agency of Artemy Burakh, “The Haruspex”, the player is invited to engage with all the various factions of the town, learning about the ideas, cultures, and ideologies that bind each group together. The player is not required to conform to any of these ideologies but can gain an understanding of each emotional community through their interactions. This understanding, gained through agential interaction and striving play, allows players to interrogate the procedural rhetoric embedded within the cultures and philosophies simulated by the game. At the end of the game, the player is presented with the choice to destroy or preserve the Polyhedron. This choice represents the player’s final rejection or acceptance to the various philosophies presented to them.
In the “Nocturnal” ending (where the player chooses to save the Polyhedron), the Kin are able to reclaim the town and their previous way of life, and the townsfolk are forced to leave. The Polyhedron remains behind as a reminder of a failed plan for utopia. This leaves the town stagnant— the Kin’s rigid beliefs will not allow them to progress. They are people that wish to live alongside nature, but they find that they have gained a degree of separation from the natural world. The Kin choose to confront death on their own terms, and although they may be doomed to stagnate and fade, they retain what is left of their culture. Such is the impact of progress, especially when that progress comes at the cost of tradition. On the other side is the “Diurnal” ending, wherein the Polyhedron is destroyed. This allows “the lifeblood of the earth” to flow throughout the town, curing the plague while simultaneously killing the Earth. The townsfolk and the Kin unify under new leadership and look to the future, leaving behind the failed utopia promised by the Polyhedron. However, this is a future without “wonder”. To save the town and secure the future, the Haruspex sacrifices tradition and spirituality. Overall, both endings consider the impacts of progress, cultural destruction, and stagnation on communities and people. The relative “goodness” of each ending is left open to debate, leaving the player with a deep moral quandary regarding their actions.

2.1.6- Conclusion

Ice-Pick Lodge uses to embody their player within a specific physical, philosophical, and emotional imaginary space. Pathologic 2 is an example of a game that does more than simply exist as an entertainment product. While the game does not take place in a specific past, it incorporates historical texture in a meaningful way. It uses the genre conventions of video games, literature, and theatre to immerse the player in the
imaginary space of “The Town”; the gameworld and narrative present opportunities for
the player to learn and develop by simulating narrative contingencies. It expects the
player to learn and develop choices, strategies, and behaviours through observation and
agential adaptation. Pathologic 2 has already provided a number of examples of concepts
discussed in Chapter 1, revealed through the analysing the game via the HPS. It is at its
core an **agential narrative**- demonstrating through gameplay and narrative how the
decisions of narrative agents can alter the flow of a narrative. The gameplay encourages
the player to develop their **imaginary geography** and **mental mapping** of the town by
linking efficient pathfinding with gameplay and narrative success. It uses theatrical
energies to engage the player within the game world, through a “staged” presentation and
environmental storytelling. It combines these elements to give “The Town” and its
residents a sense of historical presence. It uses the Kin’s traditional medical and spiritual
practices as game and narrative mechanics, allowing the player to make autoethnographic
claims about the Kin’s culture and experiences. It uses historical precedents from Russian
history as metaphor and procedural rhetoric, presenting the player with the impact of
issues of colonialism, industrialisation on cultural environments and practices. It is an
invaluable example of an engine of agency and affect.
### 2.2- The Forgotten City (Modern Storyteller, 2021)

“This is a mystery adventure game with multiple endings. It rewards thoughtful conversation and exploration, not brute force. The fate of the city is in your hands”--Opening card, The Forgotten City

The second game to discuss is Modern Storyteller’s *The Forgotten City* (2021). *The Forgotten City* is a mystery adventure game set in a fictional ancient Roman City. Originally developed as a mod for *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, it tells the story of a Roman city cursed to suffer under a perversion “the Golden Rule”; a supernatural law that enforces ‘do unto others as you would have done unto you’ under the threat of “the many will suffer for the sins of the few”. If any person within the city is caught committing a “sin”\(^\text{162}\), everyone in the city will be turned to gold. The player assumes the role of a time-traveller from the modern world, tasked with solving the mystery of the golden rule and saving the city from its fate. At the core of the story is a philosophical debate regarding society’s relationship to laws and morality, which the player must engage with to solve the mystery. As the game is set in ancient Rome, it incorporates a great deal of historical texture and detail. The narrative does an excellent job of highlighting the differences between modern and ancient worldviews, especially when considering the Roman views on legality and morality. Like *Pathologic*, it represents an interactive experience that prioritises an affective narrative, conveyed through interaction and procedural rhetoric.

\(^{162}\) Violence, stealing, and attempting to escape are the main three “sins”.

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The Forgotten City

AGENCY

In The Forgotten City, the player embodies the agency of "The Prophet" - a time-traveller from the Modern World.

AGENTIAL AESTHETICS

which are created when the player engages in

STRIVING PLAY

The player must confront many aspects of modern society that would be normally considered immoral in the modern world. As the game explores the fundamental relationship between society, religion, and morality, it uses the player's modern agency as a lens of exploration of this concept. The player will find many characters to be inherently unreasonable and leverage against them to form the key strategy.

AGENTIAL LIBRARIES

The game demonstrates how historical concepts of law and morality often differ from our own, forming different emotional regimes and communities, and how Romans worked within and around their own system of law and morality.

THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM SPACE

A PLAYER AGENT

"The Time-traveller" - a non-historical agent that fulfills the "stranger in a strange land" archetype.

A VIRTUAL GAMEMAWORLD

The Forgotten City takes place in an ancient Roman city, modeled after the cities of the early Imperial period. The titular city is entirely fictional, using an Italo-Roman architectural style. The visual presentation is archetypical to the Imperial Roman City.

GAMEMAWORLD ELEMENTS

At its core, the Forgotten City is a mystery game that focuses on solving the mystery of "The Golden Rule," and the god that enforces it. The game uses dialogue and character interaction as its main narrative mechanics. One of the major restrictions on the player's agency is the restriction on the use of force.

STRATEGIES, CHOICES, AND BEHAVIOURS

The Forgotten City is based on predictable time-loop gameplay. The player has roughly an hour of gameplay time, assuming the golden rule is not broken. The first order of business is to stop several deaths that happen every day. This establishes a core strategy for the game: the carrying over of items from day to day. Gathering evidence and leverage forms the key strategy for the latter half of the game, and is the primary formant of player behavior.

GENRE CONVENTIONS

The succession of afterlives presented by The Forgotten City forms a core commentary on the nature of cultural, moral, and religious superstition. This metafiction is focused on how religions and morality develop from contact with other systems. It is a philosophically effective game that asks the player to consider their positions on laws and morality.

HISTORICAL EMOTIONAL CULTURES

The game is able to reinforce the cultural, moral, and legal differences between the player and the community they find themselves in. Roman views on law and morality differed greatly from modern conceptions. Many opponents will only back down when presented with evidence of their own wrongdoing, and the threat that they will be exposed to the community.

EMOTIONAL REGIMES

The Forgotten City uses its historical setting to juxtapose ancient and modern moral, religious, and legal systems and use an extremely literal application of an "emotional regime" to demonstrate the dangers of absolute morality. Player agency is a bound to the moral system of the game, as violent actions and theft are punished by the "Golden Rule." The player must quickly grasp the core moral message of the story, that imposed morality under an absolute system is little better than tyranny.

PROCEDURAL LITERACY

The Forgotten City is an excellent example of a "persuasive game," that utilizes historical testimony, game, and narrative mechanics to emphasize its precepts. This narrative literacy, combined with the logical and procedural rhetoric to make its argument, a procedural rhetoric about the nature of enforced morality under an absolute system.

PROCEDURAL RHETORIC

It is a philosophically effective game that asks the player to consider their positions on laws and morality. To do this, it asks the player to engage with the history and agencies of the game and to solve the mystery and observe the nature of enforced morality under an absolute system.

EMULATING HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES AND BEHAVIOUR

As a non-historical agent, the player is expected to learn not to emulate historical behaviors. The Forgotten City emphasizes thoughtful investigation and conversation, solving the citizen's individual conflicts to advance the main narrative. Overall, the game world closely simulates thoughtful exploration, observation, and conversation over the use of force, and restricts the player's agency to this end.

NARRATIVITY

The game has a reasonably large cast of characters, each with their own role to play within the narrative. The game uses dialogue and character interaction as its main narrative mechanics, retaining their own agency in less demanding on a user's imagination, but useful in expanding the player's historical understanding. Modern Storyteller incorporates many popular afterlife myths by suggesting that humans gained knowledge of the afterlife from those who escaped it. The succession of afterlives presented by The Forgotten City forms a core commentary on the nature of cultural, moral, and religious superstition. This metafiction is focused on how religions and morality develop from contact with other systems.

PERFORMATIVITY

The player-character plays a role of an investigator and time-traveller, but is limited in their ability to role-play any other role. Non-player characters are expressive and well-performed, but the game overall limits in its ability to perform the "presence" of history, while the residents of the city each have distinct personalities and backstories, the game shows its roots as a Skyrim mod by providing NPCs very limited pathfinding and dialogue options.

SENSORY EXPERIENCE

The visual presentation is archetypical to the imperial Roman city, with a great deal of detail paid to architectural details and the urban environment. Details such as column types, architectural flourishes, and the style of floor mosaics and wall paintings have been recreated with a high degree of accuracy and attention to detail. It should be noted that the visual presentation has been designed with the public historical imagination in mind. It fits the popular imagine of "ancient Rome," rather than the more imaginatively "accurate" image of Rome that historians or enthusiastic may recognize. The Forgotten City also includes depictions of the American, Egyptian, and Greek afterlives. All of these are significant by the rules of their respective cultures, reconstructed to a great deal of visual accuracy. The Forgotten City is visually appealing, but lacks other sensory inputs.

SPATIAL IMAGINATION

The city has many of the features typical to a Roman city, including a theatre, baths, marketplace, forum, aqueduct, and various temples. Modern Storyteller uses environmental storytelling to their advantage, with the clutter of urban life giving the city a lived-in feel. However, it is this "lived-in" aspect of the game world's presentation that lends The Forgotten City a sense of authenticity. The city feels right to the player and is believable as a Roman environment. However, this is set down somewhat by lacking a sense of life.

Figure 10: Combined framework diagram for The Forgotten City
Chapter 2.2.1 - The Player-Agent: A Stranger in a Strange Land

“It gladdens me to see another foreigner in our midst. We must stick together, you and I! Tell me, I must know: from which exotic part of the world do you hail?” - Georgius, *The Forgotten City*

The player assumes the agency of a modern person who finds themselves washed up on the banks of the river Tiber. The player is given the ability to choose their name, gender, skin tone, and backgrounds. The backgrounds available are “The Archaeologist”, “The Soldier”, “The Fugitive”, and “The Amnesiac”. All backgrounds confer minor mechanical benefits, although these do not impact the mystery-solving element of the game. For my playthrough, I chose “The Archaeologist”, as it provides extra dialogue options with additional facts about ancient Rome. Within the HPS, this form of player-agent is categorised as a “non-historical agency”. Since the main character is a modern individual, the player-agent is not expected to adopt or conform to a historical agency or emulate a historical culture. The majority of mechanical interactions within the game are accomplished through dialogue selection, and the player is expected to listen, respond, and observe the behaviours of others. The non-player characters within the game are broadly accepting of the player, viewing them as an interesting foreigner, and often comment on the differences in their approach to problem-solving.

This is a different approach to player agency for historical role-playing games. While I have largely recommended immersing the player in a historical agency, the “stranger in a strange land” approach works well within *The Forgotten City*. Because of this, the game is able to reinforce the cultural, moral, and legal differences between the player and the community they find themselves in. Roman views on law and morality differed greatly from modern conceptions. The player must confront many aspects of
Roman society that would be normally considered immoral in the modern world. Debt-bondage, persecution of the disabled and religious minorities, stark differences between men and women, and a punitive legal system are all elements the player must contend with. As the game explores the fundamental relationship between society, religion, and morality, it uses the player’s modern agency as a lens of exploration of this concept. It demonstrates how these social issues impacted the society of ancient Rome, while presenting an argument that modern society has not truly moved past the social ills presented within the game. *The Forgotten City* empowers the player with a great deal of agency in how they wish to tackle the issues presented by the game, but their agency is also bound to the moral system of the game, as violent actions and theft are punished by the “Golden Rule” in an extremely literal application of an “Emotional Regime”.

2.2.2- The Gameworld: Representing “Roman-ness”

“(The Aqueducts) are an ingenious feat of Roman engineering with a very practical purpose: They take fresh water coming from outside the city, and distribute it all across the chasm”- The Storekeeper Vergil, *The Forgotten City*

As already noted, *The Forgotten City* takes place in an ancient Roman city, modelled after the cities of the early Imperial period. The titular city is entirely fictional, using an Italo-Roman architectural style. The visual presentation is archetypical to the imperial Roman city, with a great deal of attention paid to architectural detail and the urban environment. Details such as column types, architectural flourishes, and the style of floor mosaics and wall paintings have been recreated with a high degree of accuracy and attention to detail. It should be noted that the visual presentation has been designed with the public historical imagination in mind; it fits the popular imagination of “ancient Rome”, rather than the more imaginatively “accurate” image of Rome that historians or
enthusiasts may recognise. As discussed in Chapter 1, popular media is often able to use “historical shortcuts” in visual presentation to conform to audience expectations of the past. Overall, the visual design of the city does an excellent job at appearing archetypically “Roman”. It is full of accurate architectural details, but the world lacks colour: the vibrancy of the Roman environment is lost, and the city is too “clean”. To echo the words of Troels Myrup Kristensen in his criticism of Rome Reborn: there is somewhat of an absence of signs of genuine city life as the Romans would have known it, no animals, no smells, no decay.

The city has many of the features typical to a Roman city, including a theatre, baths, marketplace, forum, aqueduct, and various temples. There is also an implied class divide, with the elites of the city living in the few villas, and the poorer members of the community housed in a more run-down environment. Notably, this is not historically accurate, as Roman cities like Pompeii and Ostia do not show a clear division of class within residential districts. Despite these historical inaccuracies, Modern Storyteller uses environmental storytelling to their advantage, with the clutter of urban life giving the city a lived-in feel. This is supplemented by the prevalence of graffiti around the city, with the residents writing out messages and warnings. It could be noted that the graffiti found within the game is markedly less vulgar than the graffiti found within real Roman

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163 The supernatural elements of the narrative help handwave this archetypicality.
164 The city does not have animals and only has a small population (who have very little else to occupy their time), so narratively this makes sense, but a historical game set in a real Roman town should address these concerns.
sites such as Pompeii.\footnote{167} However, it is this “lived-in” aspect of the gameworld’s presentation that lends *The Forgotten City* a sense of authenticity- the city “feels right” to the player and is believable as a Roman environment. However, this is let down somewhat by lacking a sense of life (this does tie into the core narrative, as the city is actually the underworld, and everyone living within is dead). While the residents of the city each have distinct personalities and backgrounds, the game shows its roots as a *Skyrim* mod by providing NPCs very limited pathfinding and dialogue options. Once the player is narratively “done” with an NPC, they are not provided any additional agency, with a great deal of expansion available for depicting the day-to-day life of the Roman city.

Figures 11 & 12: Game Screenshots- The grand arches and temples in the wealthier section of the city, contrasted with the cluttered, homey environment of Claudia’s Taverna

2.2.3- Gameworld Elements:(Strategically) Breaking the Golden Rule

“You see out there, in the world, being uncertain about right and wrong was acceptable, because our mistakes rarely had consequences .... But under The Golden Rule, morality matters. The slightest wrong-doing could result in a mass execution”- The Hermit Philosopher, *The Forgotten City*

\footnote{167 This is most likely to maintain the “Teen” Electronic Ratings Board rating. Although, the presentation of past societies' more vulgar aspects is a discussion worth having when considering games as an educational tool.}
At its core, *The Forgotten City* is a mystery game that focuses on solving the mystery of “The Golden Rule”, and the god that enforces it. The game has a reasonably large cast of characters, each with their own part to play within the narrative. The core gameplay loop revolves around speaking to these characters, retrieving physical items, and uncovering the true name of the god enforcing the Golden Rule. Another core gameplay element is what happens when the Golden Rule is broken (deliberately by the player or otherwise). If this occurs, the statues placed throughout the city will come to life and attack the player and the other characters, with individuals hit by arrows turning to gold. The city’s magistrate, Sentillus, will then open a portal for the player to leap through. This portal will send the player back to the start of the day, where events will be reset. The player is then free to attempt different strategies and investigative methods. To reach the “True Ending” of the game, the player will have to use this reset mechanic a number of times, as certain events are predicated on the survival of characters who would otherwise die early in the game.\(^{168}\) The next step for players is to acquire tools needed for pathfinding, and then go on a “McGuffin hunt” for the four objects needed to unlock a meeting with the creator of the Golden Rule.

The game uses dialogue and character interaction as its main narrative mechanics. Solving the citizen’s individual conflicts can assist in forwarding the main narrative. One of the major restrictions on the player’s agency is the restriction on the use of force. As any attack breaks the golden rule, it is generally inadvisable to take this option. Any potential conflict must be resolved through reasoned dialogue, reinforcing the game’s key

\(^{168}\) For example, Iulia will die from poisoning early in a game loop if she is not given life-saving medicine. Saving her in later loops will reveal the true extent of other character’s misdeeds, including forcing others into debt-bondage.
message regarding morality. NPCs can often be persuaded away from taking drastic actions, and the game rewards thoughtful dialogue choices. The game uses the language of classical philosophy to reinforce this message, with players being able to encounter “the Hermit Philosopher” early in the game, and engage him in a Socratic dialogue about morality. Convincing the non-player characters of the (im)morality of their actions is thus featured as a core gameplay mechanic. Additionally, many objects in the game can only be purchased with money. With stealing also breaking the golden rule, the only way to gain money is to scavenge from a number of points that contain a reliable source of money, or to gather money once the rule has been broken. The game presents physical barriers to progress that can only be overcome through the use of a specific item: “The Golden Bow”, which can transform previously impassable objects into gold, which allow the player to traverse them into new areas of the game. Overall, the game world clearly incentivises thoughtful exploration, observation, and conversation over the use of force, and restricts the player’s agency to this end.

2.2.4- Strategies, Choices, and Behaviours: An Antidote to Tyranny

“If there is one thing I have observed about rules, it is that virtuous people do not need them, and evil people will always find a way around them”- The Hermit Philosopher, The Forgotten City

The Forgotten City is based on predictable time-loop gameplay. The player has roughly an hour of gameplay time, assuming the Golden Rule is not broken. The Golden Rule is guaranteed to be broken following the magistrate election, either through political

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169 In particular, the merchant Decius refuses to give life-saving medicine, instead demanding an exorbitant price.
170 With the exception of the final confrontation with the god, where you can threaten to shoot their wife if they don’t yield to your demands. This still results in a good ending, and nets the player the “Psycho” achievement.
violence or when a mentally handicapped man steals from a merchant’s stall. In particular, this instance of theft integrates the Roman disdain for the mentally handicapped as the character, “Duli”, had been locked in a cage to prevent this from happening. It also serves to demonstrate a procedural rhetoric about the nature of enforced morality under an absolute system—“crime” cannot be evenly enforced if the individual in question has diminished capacity. Even the Romans understood this, as in normal Roman society the intellectually disabled were exempt from criminal punishment. Since the same events happen every day, and the player has to work out how to solve them. The first order of business is to stop several deaths that happen early in the day, as they are essential to later plot points. This establishes a core strategy for the game, the carrying over of items from day to day. Typically, an item will only need to be acquired once, as the player will take it with them on the next loop. This mechanic ensures that plot-essential quests do not need to be redone and can be quickly accomplished. This means that the player should make the most of every game loop in order to learn and acquire as much as possible before their time runs out. This also has the effect that money is no object for subsequent loops, as the player can quickly gather money from the same points in each loop. The player should overcome the challenges of material and mortality within the first few loops, leaving them free to investigate.

As The Forgotten City emphasises thoughtful investigation and conversation, the player must quickly grasp the core moral message of the story—that imposed morality under an absolute system is little better than tyranny. The creator of the Golden Rule seems to enforce the rule of “Do unto others as they would do unto you”, but they apply

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171 For more on this, see Laes 2018, Disabilities and the Disabled in the Roman World, 46-54.
this rule with extreme literalism. For example, many of the wrongdoers within the story do technically follow this rule. One of the shopkeepers, Decius, is perfectly happy to scam and undermine people, because he believes that everyone else would be justified in scamming and undermining him in turn. He is also not doing anything technically illegal under Roman law, so “The Golden Rule” does not apply to him.\textsuperscript{172} The player will find that such immoral people are hard to convince of their own wrongdoing, even with their victims threatening suicide. This is also the case when confronting the creator of the Golden Rule. Many opponents will only back down when presented with evidence of their own wrongdoing, and the threat that they will be exposed to the community. This careful gathering and application of knowledge is a useful game mechanic, especially when used in a historical context, where real historical knowledge can be turned into a gameplay mechanic. Gathering evidence and leverage forms the key strategy for the latter half of the game, and is the primary informant of player behaviour.

2.2.5- Genre Conventions: Layers of History\textsuperscript{173}

“No attempt to lay out rules, like your Code of Hammurabi or your Twelves Tables of the Roman Republic, can ever cover all possible scenarios. Yet none of the peoples who expressed this rule were able to uphold it. Curious, is it not?”- God of the Underworld, 

\textit{The Forgotten City}

\textsuperscript{172} In particular, Decius engages in the practice of usury, lending money at unreasonable conditions. Additionally, selling life-saving medicine at exorbitant prices is not technically illegal. I will discuss the issues of morality and legality in the “genre conventions” section.

\textsuperscript{173} This section will contain unavoidable spoilers for The Forgotten City. It is a very worthwhile and short (around 8 hours) gameplay experience, so if you have an interest in playing it, I would do so before proceeding.
While the city itself is the main environment that the player will explore, there are also underground cavern and sewer systems that can be explored to reveal deeper secrets. It is revealed that “City” is not what it first appears to be. It is actually the Underworld, and the god enforcing the Golden Rule is Pluto. *The Forgotten City* also includes depictions of the Sumerian, Egyptian and Greek afterlives. All of these are signified by the ruins of their respective cultures, reconstructed to a great deal of visual accuracy. Within the fiction of *The Forgotten City*, ancient gods are considered to be real, with each ancient culture worshipping some aspect of the same set of deities.

Modern Storyteller incorporates many popular afterlife myths by suggesting that humans gained knowledge of the afterlife from those who escaped it. The succession of afterlives presented by *The Forgotten City* forms a core commentary on the nature of cultural, moral, and religious supersession. This metafiction is focused on how religions and morality develop from contact with other systems. It is noted that “The Golden Rule” of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” has been expressed across a multitude of cultures, being a common moral teaching across many Indo-European mythologies.

*The Forgotten City* uses moral rules as game mechanics, restricting the player’s agency under the threat of collective punishment. As noted earlier, many characters in the story skirt the definition of “immoral” by remaining within the technical wordings of the rules. For example, several characters engage in a scheme to force community members

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174 “The God of the Underworld” is called by several names: Nergal, Osiris, Hades, and Pluto. He is the same god and concept under several names.

175 *The Forgotten City* reveals its mythological roots by referencing the myths of Gilgamesh, Hercules, Orpheus, Sisyphus, and Aeneas as heroes that have escaped the underworld and given knowledge of the afterlife to humanity.
into debt servitude, through falsely promising a way to escape. These sort of debt-bonds were not uncommon in Rome, and it was not considered immoral to force labour on the indebted. Some ancient authors considered the practice immoral and a blight on Roman society, but Roman law never managed to fully restrict the process. Using the Romans as an example, the game makes an argument that the relation of humans to their own laws and morality is flexible; no moral system can be universally applied. To demonstrate this, it uses an extreme example of an Emotional Regime, wherein the law is applied literally with no concern for mitigating factors. Like Pathologic 2, The Forgotten City acts as a (literal) Socratic dialogue between the writer and player. It is a philosophically affective game that asks the player to consider their positions on laws and morality. To do this, it asks the player to engage with the agency and processes of the game, employing both logical and procedural rhetoric to make its argument.

2.2.6 Conclusion

When making games containing historical texture, the player-agent as time traveller is an interesting framing device as it allows a player to interact with the past while not having to adopt an entirely new pattern of behaviour. The time traveller element is an appealing and familiar concept to the general public, and can be easily adopted. Framing an agency in this way may be useful for short museum displays for

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176 The so-called “way to escape” is suicide- a useless bit of information sold for an exorbitant price, but technically true.
177 The practice of Usury (making loans at an unreasonably high gain to the lender) was well-established and persistent within the ancient Roman Empire. For a recent analysis on this topic, see: Eberle 2022, “Debt, Death, and Destruction in Ancient Rome”. Debt in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East.
178 See: Tacitus, Annals 6.16.1 for examples of the civil unrest caused by a swell in the practice of usury, and Cicero, De Officiis 2.25.1 for the conflicted moral view on the practice.
classroom experiences. Retaining their own agency is less demanding on a user’s imagination, but useful in expanding the player’s historical understanding. When interactive media focuses on historical cultural differences, they can display an example of how historical concepts of law and morality often differ from our own. The Forgotten City shows that this form of agential framing can be very useful when highlighting historical differences in socio-imaginary space. As a historical representation, it lacks a certain degree of representative power, and is not designed with the goal of true accuracy. In Chapter 3, I will consider how an accurate simulation of Roman social and urban life can be created. Despite this, The Forgotten City is an excellent example of a “persuasive game”, that utilises historical texture, game, and narrative mechanics to emphasise its procedural and literary rhetoric, challenging the player’s view on law and morality.

2.3- Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments (Saidiya Hartman, 2019)

“Every historian of the multitude, the dispossessed, the subaltern, and the enslaved is forced to grapple with the power and authority of the archive and the limits it sets on what can be known, whose perspective matters, and who is endowed with the gravity and authority of historical actor”179 - Saidiya Hartman

Saidiya Hartman’s Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments is a reconstructive history that focuses on the experiences of early 20th-century urban Black women, reconstructing their historical experiences through a series of focused vignettes. Despite not being a piece of interactive media, it reflects many of the concepts discussed in Here be Dragons. In particular, Hartman’s work intersects with the concepts of emotional regimes and communities, microhistories, and historical vignettes that I have previously discussed. The work provides a unique narrative history of the dispossessed and

subaltern. It contains a number of genre conventions and historical methods that are viable to adapt to interactive histories. Of primary importance is Hartman’s method and approach to historical storytelling, which provides a means of reading “against the archive”. In researching *Wayward Lives*, Hartman reports that she used archival sources that primarily represented young Black women “as a problem”.\(^{180}\) Instead of replicating this portrayal, she crafts a counter-narrative against this historical view, recognizing and reconstructing their agency as “sexual modernists, free lovers, radicals, and anarchists”.\(^{181}\)

Hartman’s narrative is partially derived from her practice of “critical fabulation. She uses real individuals in her narratives, uncovering their stories within the archive, and using their own words when possible. Hartman describes her narration as coming from “within the circle”\(^{182}\), bringing the reader within the communities and lives under consideration. Her historical research and narrative style resonate with the ideas of agency and effect considered in my framework. Some of her concepts can be incorporated as a tool for considering marginalised histories and communities. To uncover this utility, I will apply a slight modification of the Historical Problem Space Framework. Hartman’s depiction of urban Black America can be viewed as a historical problem space as defined by the *HPS*; while *Wayward Lives* takes the form of a historical narrative text, it is concerned with historical agencies, receptions of space, and systems of help and hindrance, all elements that are also considered by the *HPS* and by my work so far.

\(^{180}\) Documents that serve as tools of the moral, legal, and emotional regime.

\(^{181}\) Hartman 2019, 7.

\(^{182}\) This is a concept that has a significant degree of overlap with the “magic circle” of interactive experiences.
Figure 13: Combined framework diagram for Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments

**Agency**

Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments is a reconstructive history that focuses on the experiences and of early 20th-century urban Black women.

**Agnital Aesthetics**

which are depicted by descriptions of

**Agnital Restrictions and Hardships**

Agential hindrance drives a major theme of the book, reflecting the closing restrictions on agency that can be imposed by an emotional regime. Hartman’s recounting of “beautiful experiments” reflects attempts to live freely in defiance of white social expectations. Her presentation of these lives and experiments takes the form of narrative snapshots and individual episodes uncovered through the archive.

**Agnital Libraries**

Individual histories and ways of life—expressing agency through refusal, sexual expression, collective living, and social reconstruction

**The Historical Problem Space**

**Agents**

“*The Harpers*: a historical archetype—a composite figure of modern scientist and traditional practitioner

**A Historical Space**

The “Black Belts” of New York and Philadelphia—There is a strong sense of memory within Hartman’s recounts of space. She uncovers memories of the effort that these marginalized people put into their spaces—to make them less terrible; to find beauty in the worst places; to never forget that they are segregated.

Hartman’s work helps to demonstrate how close attention to environmental detail can enhance a historical reconstruction.

**Strategies, Choices, and Behaviors**

Hartman’s subjects took very different approaches to living and surviving through the afterlife of slavery. However, there is a common thread in how they all existed in opposition to the emotional regime (or the regime existed in opposition to them).

This opposition manifested among the urban Black and marginalized communities as they found collective-oriented and clever solutions to their problems.

**Genre Conventions**

Hartman’s primary re-creative approach in the concept of “critical fabulation,” an approach that emphasizes a creative approach to filling gaps in the historical narrative. While some details of the narrative are imaginatively recreated, Hartman places great emphasis on “familiar tracks,” where sources report similar unifying experiences, they can be represented as archetypes within the narrative.

**Historical Emotional Cultures**

A recurring theme throughout the book is the “afterlife” of slavery. This “afterlife” is characterized within Black communities as a sense of fractured kinship and community, and a deep remembrance of hardship and violence.

A core strength of Hartman’s work is the degree to which it is capable of affecting emotion. It involves a degree of the anger and frustration felt by urban Black communities, especially when regarding the blinding actions of the emotional regime. Hartman’s work displays how such struggles can be represented with empathy towards real historical agencies.

**Emotional Regimes**

White communities, on the other hand, are shown to have viewed Black attempts to find place and meaning as a threat to the social and moral order. They would respond through the imposition of legal and “reformatory” measures on Black communities. This can be identified as the formation of an emotional regime: the moral demands of a dominant social group imposed on a marginalized community under the guise of law and order. Hartman presents mainstream society as reversing Black spaces almost exclusively through an emotional and moral lens. Agents of the emotional regime viewed Black spaces as representing the wayward lifestyle they sought to fix.

**Emotional Communities**

The communal role is emphasized: survival and day-to-day life was predicated on mutuality and creativity. Neighbors and friends shared resources, work opportunities, and solutions to problems as a way of overcoming the hindrances imposed on them.

**Narrativity**

Hartman’s consistent use of “*you*” to address the reader in her descriptive sections is a powerful rhetorical device. It draws the reader into the space, and is about as close as we can come to “*immersive*” as it is possible to get in a textual mode. It is difficult for a historical narrative to depict the fragmented stories of wayward and disrupted lives. Apart from a few individuals, it is impossible to reconstruct full lives histories of historically (linked) figures. To tell a compelling narrative, Hartman instead uses vignette-style storytelling, recovering specific illustrative narrative fragments that map the lives of her subjects and recasting them in close detail. She looks at the lives of individuals “*firsthand*” and uncovers the emotional scripts and familiar tracks of the spaces that her subjects inhabited.

Hartman uses known historical experiences, emotional scripts, and practices to create a convincing narrative. The narrative device employed in the style of “*close narration,” which places the voice of the character and narrator in close relation.

**Performativity**

Hartman’s style is explicitly designed to draw the reader “within the circle” of lived experience with close and immersive descriptions. Her descriptions often tend towards the theatrical, referencing the genre conventions of stage and cinema to reinforce her reconstructed agencies. As the concept of agency is closely intertwined with theatrical energies, it makes sense that Hartman often uses the concept of “*the chorus*” as a framing device. As a genre convention, the theatrical concept of “*the chorus*” has ancient provenance. Another form of *chorus* is also relevant to Hartman’s work: the chorus line, a popular form of entertainment in the early 20th century. Chorus lines provided an alternate form of opportunity for some young Black women.

Hartman states the Greek etymology of the word as “*a dance within a circle*” a performance that emphasizes group dynamics: “*The chorus is the vehicle for another kind of story, not of the great man or the tragic hero, but one in which all members play a part*.” Hartman emphasizes the freedom of communal expression created within the theatrical space.

**Sensory Experience**

Hartman draws her readers into the sensory experience of New York’s “Black belt.” She uses second person narration, drawing the reader into the streets and tenement halls in which “*you*” live, and utilizes a close narration of sensations throughout the section. She describes what “*you*” hear and see as “*you*” proceed through architecture. The ghetto is described as a space of encounters, with individuals “*linking in and out, each searching for something. The space is fluid and ever-changing, an assault on the senses: everything is in short supply except sensation*.”

Hartman uses the sensory and environmental storytelling a few times, indicate information about the environment. From small details like furniture, wall decor, and even graffiti, these details carry a sense of memory and lived history; they reflect community and individual ways of living the “paths of logic” taken by their residents.

**Spatial Imagination**

Hartman describes the sense of space as wild and brutalizing, but that “*you*” love the people residing there, and it is as much of a home as you’ll get. Hartman demonstrates that the Black experiences of these spaces were transient and liminal, a space “*meanly with expectation and tense with the force of unseen desire*”, through narrative description, she brings the reader into the experience and sensory experience of her subjects. Part of Hartman’s method as I would characterize it would be a comparison of different imaginations of space. The reception of these spaces differed greatly between insiders and outsiders. Hartman’s method reads against the archive to expose the imagination of the individuals inhabiting the spaces under consideration. She uses close, intimate descriptions of Black spaces, juxtaposed with the clinical and moralistic presentations presented to the mainstream to demonstrate very different perceptions of space; it demonstrates that close descriptions of space can affect the user’s reception of historical spaces and create a greater sense of historical presence.
2.3.1- Reconstructed Agencies: Systems of Hinderance

“She knew first-hand that the offense most punished by the state was trying to live free. To wander through the streets of Harlem, to want better than what she had, and to be propelled by her whims and desires was to be ungovernable. Her way of living was nothing short of anarchy”

Saidiya Hartman

Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments recounts and reconstructs the lives of various young Black women living in New York and Philadelphia in the early 20th century. Hartman presents the revolutionary spirit of young Black women as derived from experience - both personal and generational. Each individual has different life circumstances and backgrounds, but they share common ground in facing generational trauma, sexual violence, and the repression of their agency by the state. A recurring theme throughout the book is the “afterlife” of slavery. This “afterlife” is characterised within Black communities as a sense of fractured kinship and community, and a deep remembrance of hardship and violence. White communities are shown to have viewed Black attempts to find place and meaning as a threat to the social and moral order, imposing legal and “reformatory” measures on Black communities. This can be identified as the forming of an emotional regime: the moral demands of a dominant social group imposed on a marginalised community under the guise of law and order. Agential hindrance forms a major theme of the book, reflecting the cloying restrictions on agency that can be imposed by an emotional regime. Hartman’s recounting of “beautiful experiments” reflects attempts to live freely in defiance of White social expectations.

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184 See: Hartman 2019, 51, 74, 89 for particularly relevant passages.
Her presentation of these lives and experiments takes the form of narrative snapshots and individual episodes uncovered through the archive.

The story of Esther Brown, recounted in Book 3 Chapter 3: “The Anarchy of Coloured Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner”\(^{185}\) is a useful display of some of the concepts of agential help and hindrance. The narrative presents “unruly” women like Esther as deriving their revolutionary drive not through education and ideology, but through their own personal experiences and agency. When discussing Esther Brown, Hartman notes that Esther did “not write a political tract on the refusal to be governed”, and that “hers was a struggle without formal declarations of policy, slogan, or credo”.\(^{186}\) This concept is reinforced by noting that “(Smug ideologues) failed to recognize that experience was capable of opening up new ways, yielding a thousand new forms and improvisations”.\(^{187}\) For these women, agency was derived from experience. Esther Brown manifested her agency by refusing to participate in degrading work, and as a tendency to raise hell whenever possible.

Brown’s story reflects the imposition of the emotional regime onto her agency. In the early 1900s, one of the few professions open to Black women was domestic service, which closely resembled the conditions of slavery. Brown understood the degrading nature of this work, and avoided it whenever possible.\(^{188}\) Her choice to avoid such work was not overlooked by the state, and her treatment reflects the reinforcement of the moral order imposed on Black communities:

\(^{185}\) Hartman 2019, 230.  
\(^{186}\) Hartman 2019, 230.  
\(^{187}\) Hartman 2019, 231.  
\(^{188}\) Hartman 2019, 232.
“What the law designated as crime were the forms of life created by young Black women in the city. The modes of intimacy and affiliation being fashioned, the refusal to labour, the ordinary forms of gathering and assembly, the practices of subsistence and making do were under surveillance and targeted not only by the police but also by the sociologists and the reformers who gathered the information and made the case against them, forging their lives into tragic biographies of crime and pathology.”  

Hartman repeatedly emphasises that Black women’s ways of being were not only opposed by the law, but also by those who wished to “reform” the Black community. Well-meaning reformers failed to recognise the true problems, with Brown even being sentenced by an “avowed socialist” to a reformatory camp. Such reformers sought to “save” the Black community, but in doing so, they acted as agents of the regime. In opposition to the emotional and moral expectations of “polite society”, the communal role was emphasised: survival and day-to-day life was predicated on mutuality and creativity. Neighbours and friends shared resources, work opportunities, and solutions to problems as a way of overcoming the hindrances imposed on them. It is this mutuality and creativity that I find particularly interesting about Hartman’s depictions of life in the New York and Philadelphian ghettos. Mutual goal-setting and creative problem-solving forms a major mechanic within many interactive narratives, and is key to the concept of an “Emotional Community”. As noted in the previous discussions of games, especially Pathologic 2, it is possible to reflect the historical experiences and emotional communities of marginalised people with nuance. In considering Hartman’s depictions of marginalised communities and space alongside the previous discussions, a potential
model is demonstrated for how digital reconstructions might place emphasis on the communal nature of marginalised communities.

When a player is embodied within a historical space, they can be encouraged to confront the pressures of an emotional regime through recreated systems of help and hindrance. Within such a gameplay system, success is predicated on the player learning the historical solutions to these problems (and why these solutions did not always work). Should the player engage with historical emotions and struggles, they come to understand a degree of the struggles and the barriers faced by real historical communities. “Degree” is the operative word here. I am in no way suggesting that video games, or any narrative media can fully simulate the hardship experienced by historical peoples and communities. However, I suggest that these histories deserve representation. A core strength of Hartman’s work is the degree to which it is capable of affecting emotion. It invokes a degree of the anger and frustration felt by urban Black communities. Hartman’s work displays how such struggles can be represented with empathy towards real historical agencies. Her methods for reconstructing agencies through an unconventional reading of the article serves as an example for developer-historians seeking to uncover the agencies of marginalised groups192.

2.3.2- Fabulated Spaces: The Imaginary Geographies of the “Black Belt”

“They had remapped the ward, messing with the organization of the city by the ways they inhabited and used public space. Their political clubs, churches, rooming houses, barber shops, make-do establishments serving fried fish and biscuits, and saloons renowned for piano-playing, dance parties, easy women, dangerous men, sissies, and tribades had created the Black Belt in a northern city. Now the White folks wanted it back”193 - Saidiya Hartman

192 Some questions remain to be addressed regarding representations of traumatic events, and the degree to which these can be represented in interactive form. This will be discussed shortly.
193 Hartman 2019, 87.
Through considering the agencies reconstructed by Saidiya Hartman, a wide variety of lifestyles are revealed. Experiments in sexual expression, collective living, and social reconstruction constitute the “Beautiful Experiments” section of the book. Turning to the “Wayward Lives” section of the text, a great deal is revealed about the use and reception of space within the urban “slum”. In the opening sentences of “The Terrible Beauty of the Slum”, Hartman draws her readers into the sensory experience of New York’s “Black belt”. She uses second person narration, drawing the reader into the streets and tenement halls in which “you” live, and utilises a close narration of sensations throughout the section. She describes what “you” see and hear as “you” proceed through the streets. The ghetto is described as a space of encounters, with individuals flowing in and out, each searching for something. The space is fluid and ever-changing, an assault on the senses: “everything is in short supply except sensation”. Hartman’s consistent use of “you” to address the reader in her descriptive paragraphs is a powerful rhetorical device. It draws the reader into the space, and is about as close to “immersive” as it is possible to get in a textual mode.

Bringing the reader further within the circle, Hartman describes the tenement space as ugly and brutalising, but that “you” love the people residing there, and it is as much of a home as you’ll get. Hartman demonstrates that the Black experience of these

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194 Hartman 2019, 1-10.
195 I use “scare quotes” to refer to such terms as “slum” and “Black belt”, as these are labels not natively applied by the communities under discussion, rather they are the pejorative appellations of outsiders. See: Hartman 2019, 4.
196 Hartman 2019, 4-5.
197 Notably, second person is often used in interactive fiction. “Choose Your Own Adventure” Books are written in second person, and interactive television as pioneered by Netflix also uses the techniques. See: Mansky 2022, “The Long History of ‘Chose-your-own-Adventure’”, Smithsonian Magazine.
spaces was transient and liminal, a space “uneasy with expectation and tense with the force of unmet desire”\textsuperscript{198}. Part of Hartman’s method as I would characterise it would be a comparison of different imaginations of space- The reception of these spaces differed greatly between insiders and outsiders. Hartman presents mainstream\textsuperscript{199} society as receiving Black spaces almost exclusively through an emotional and moral lens. Agents of the emotional regime viewed Black spaces as representing the wayward lifestyle they sought to fix.\textsuperscript{200} The “attendant fears of promiscuity, degeneration, and interracial intimacy”\textsuperscript{201} represented by mainstream society reflects an imagination of these spaces as full of social and moral and dangers. It also represents a limited view of these spaces—“The reformers and the journalists were fixated on the kitchenette. They didn’t know that the foyer, the fire escape, and the rooftop were a stretch of urban beach”\textsuperscript{202}.

Within historical archive and memory, these limited views of space represent the majority of receptions disseminated into public record via the archive. Hartman’s method reads against the archive to uncover the imagination of the individuals inhabiting the spaces under consideration. She uses close, intimate descriptions of Black spaces, juxtaposed with the clinical and moralistic presentations presented to the mainstream to demonstrate very different receptions of space. Should these modes of presentation be adopted by interactive histories, a similar intimacy may be achieved. The next section will consider how these representations may be accomplished, along with a wider focus on the intersection between representations of space and community.

\textsuperscript{198} Hartman 2019, 33.
\textsuperscript{199} read: White society.
\textsuperscript{200} As noted earlier, these agents also included well-meaning sociologists and reformers who nevertheless reinforced the regime’s view of Black spaces through their presentation and selection of material.
\textsuperscript{201} Hartman 2019, 21.
\textsuperscript{202} Hartman 2019, 22.
2.3.3- Navigating Marginal Spaces: Errant Paths, Emotional Communities

“I traced the errant paths and the lines of flight that enclose the boundaries of the black ghetto. In the end, it became not the story of one girl, but a serial biography of a generation, a portrait of the chorus, a moving picture of the wayward. For decades I had been obsessed with anonymous figures…. retrieving minor lives from oblivion. It was my way of redressing the violence of history, crafting a love letter to all those who had been harmed”

Saidiya Hartman

I argue that the uses and receptions of liminal space as described by Hartman can be adapted for use within interactive media. The quote featured in the header of this section reflects the feeling of waywardness that encompassed the “Black Belt” experience. There is a sense of impermanence and liminality that characterises many of Hartman’s descriptions of Black spaces and communities. To suit communal requirements, they “messed with the organisation” of the space around them, adapting and altering their surroundings as needed.

There is a keen sense of memory within Hartman’s recounting of space. She uncovers memories of the effort that these marginalised people put into their spaces “to make them less terrible”; to find beauty in the worst places; to never forget that they are segregated. Hartman’s work helps to demonstrate how close attention to environmental detail can enhance a historical recreation. For example, in this description of a tenement kitchen, one can sense layers of meaning and family history through the choice of decor:

“Your mother tries to make the drab rooms home by setting out your grandmother’s tea set, which is too fancy for the small kitchen table; the set belonged to the white folks she worked for…. A Masonic Lodge calendar and lithograph of Frederick Douglass hide the crack on the plaster wall. The sheer curtain hanging in the window filters the weak light of late afternoon. The ivory

203 This section combines McCall’s “Gameworld Elements” and “Strategies, Choices, and Behaviours” into a single section more suited to literary analysis. It will consider how Hartman’s method can be adapted towards the creation of gameworld elements, and player behaviours based on research into historical communities.

204 Hartman 2019, 29.

205 Hartman 2019, 87.
“table mat covering the battered stovetop confirms that even in the worst places one finds beauty”206

I have addressed environmental storytelling a few times, a game design practice where background environmental details are used to indicate information about the environment. From small details like furniture, wall decor, and even graffiti, these details carry a sense of memory and lived history; they reflect communal and individual ways of living, the “paths of logic” taken by their residents.

When discussing Pathologic and The Forgotten City, I focused on the idea that games can encourage their players to interact with the game world in unique ways. Game and narrative mechanics encourage certain pathfinding habits and encourage specific receptions of the game world. This also interacts with the concepts of imagined space and mental mapping discussed in earlier sections; all individuals follow their own logics of space, following differing agendas and goals, which greatly influence their receptions of space. If there is an overlapping theme across all these discussions, it is the theme of tracing historical paths. A core issue that Hartman identifies is that recreating agencies from this time period can be difficult due to the disruptions present in each of the lives studied. Each individual adopted different strategies for survival; each faced different struggles and barriers. Hartman’s subjects took very different approaches to living and surviving through the afterlife of slavery. However, there is a common thread in how they all existed in opposition to the emotional regime (or the regime existed in opposition to them).

206 Hartman 2019, 32.
Opposition manifested among the urban Black and marginalised communities when they found collective-oriented and clever solutions to their problems. To frame this agentally per the HPS: their modes of agential expression reflect life under hardship, and their ways of defying agential restrictions could form the basis for game and narrative mechanics. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* is a demonstration of a narrative work that embeds depictions of space with a sense of memory; it demonstrates that close descriptions of space can affect the user’s reception of historical spaces and create a greater sense of historical presence; it juxtaposes the lived experiences of the inhabitants of the “Black Belts” with the moralising attitudes of mainstream social groups. This approach allows the reader a more well-rounded view of the various receptions of space during this time period. It recognises that archival knowledge is generally biased towards the moral regime, with the work of sociologists and official government records entering the archive more readily than the lived experiences of marginalised communities.

2.3.4- Genre Conventions: Narrative Choices and Theatrical Empowerment

“The narrative is disjunctive. The story is in fragments. The chain of cause and effect goes awry. It is impossible to be confident about what happens and what is imagined. The whole story is unbelievable, so it is hard to reconstruct the chain of events. Dream and flashback thwart the attempt to order time into tidy categories of past, present, and future. The story advances and stumbles in uncertainty.” - Saidiya Hartman

In certain reviews of the *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, Saidiya Hartman is considered to have invented a new genre of historical narrative writing. Certainly, Hartman’s approach to historical material is unique within the historical sphere. Most striking is Hartman’s use of literary and theatrical devices to represent her subject’s

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207 Hartman 2019, 156.
agencies and lived experiences. Hartman’s primary (re)creative approach is her concept of “critical fabulation”, which emphasises a creative filling of gaps in the historical narrative. While some details of the narrative are imaginatively recreated, Hartman places great emphasis on “familiar tracks”: when sources report similar unifying experiences, they can be represented as archetypes within the narrative.\textsuperscript{209} It uses known historical experiences, emotional scripts\textsuperscript{210}, and practices to create a convincing imaginary space. Another literary device employed is the style of “close narration”, which places the voice of the character and narrator in close relation.\textsuperscript{211}

Hartman’s style is explicitly designed to draw the reader “within the circle” of lived experience with close and immersive descriptions. Her descriptions often tend towards the theatrical, referencing the genre conventions of stage and cinema to reinforce her reconstructed agencies. Since the concept of agency is closely intertwined with theatrical energies, it tracks with Hartman’s use of “the Chorus” as a framing device. As a genre convention, the theatrical concept of “the Chorus” has ancient provenance. Ancient Greek theatre uses the chorus in a liminal role: a group of anonymous individuals who are typically not direct agents within the narrative. They provide narrative commentary, song, and dance. Another form of chorus is also relevant to Hartman’s work: the chorus line, a popular form of entertainment in the early 20th century. Chorus lines provided an alternate form of opportunity for some young Black women, although some were restricted from participation on the basis of skin colour\textsuperscript{212} or ability.

\textsuperscript{209} You can see an example of this in Hartman 2019, 141, where a fight between Mamie Gibbs and her husband James Shepherd plays out. Hartman does not have an exact report of what happened, but the fight between unfaithful partners is archetypical, and can be depicted with reasonable confidence.

\textsuperscript{210} See my discussion on Reddy and Rosenwein for a refresher on Emotional scripts.

\textsuperscript{211} Hartman 2019, 7.

\textsuperscript{212} Darker complexions were considered undesirable, even within mixed or all-Black chorus lines.
Hartman addresses both definitions of “Chorus”. She states the Greek etymology of the word as “a dance within a circle”, a performance that emphasises group dynamics: “The chorus is the vehicle for another kind of story, not of the great man or the tragic hero, but one in which all modalities play a part”. Hartman emphasises the freedom of communal expression created within the theatrical space. For example, Hartman considers Mabel Hampton, a prominent lesbian activist who performed as a singer and chorister. Hampton is centred within many theatrical communities, which are presented as spaces that exist as distinct emotional communities, providing a sense of agency and self-expression unavailable in other spaces. The chorus can be considered as distinctly queer and the cabaret as one of the few “desegregated democratic institutions”. The chorus (both in the ancient and modern senses) is framed as having mantled theatrical energies as a means of collective self-expression. The “chorus” is the most consistent literary and rhetorical device deployed by Hartman, who emphasises the power of communal performance as a unifying concept within the lives she considers.

The quote in the header of this section emphasises the need for a collective frame. It is difficult for a historical narrative to depict the fragmented stories of wayward and disrupted lives. Apart from a few individuals, it is impossible to reconstruct full life histories of historically liminal figures. To tell a compelling narrative, Hartman instead

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213 Hartman 2019, 348.
215 Hartman 2019, 298.
216 See: Hartman 2019, 304, wherein Mabel Hampton is stated to have had many queer friends (as was she), most of these from the theatre, who were typically accepted within broader Harlem circles.
217 See: Hartman 2019, 307 and her account of the Black view of the cabaret as represented by Chandler Owen’s essay *The Cabaret- a Useful Social Institution*. 
uses vignette-style storytelling, recovering specific illustrative moments from the lives of her subjects and recounting them in close detail. She looks at the stories of individual “choristers” and uncovers the emotional scripts and familiar tracks of the spaces that her subjects inhabited. As a literary and genre device, the “close narration” utilised by Hartman uses theatrical and literary devices to draw the reader “within the circle” of the chorus. As a tool for historical narration, it serves to highlight the personal agencies and emotional experiences of marginalised historical groups, selecting historical incidents and events that demonstrate communal experiences of space and culture.

2.3.5- Critically Fabulating Interactive Narratives

The concept of space as an archive of communal history and memory, especially the memory of the marginalised, provides a fertile ground for interactive historians and digital archaeologists seeking to recreate authentic historical spaces. For the purposes of interactive histories, a recreation of communal spaces can provide numerous opportunities for the player to encounter historical detail. The interactive medium can greatly expand on Hartman’s concepts through the added benefits of visuals, audio, and game mechanics. Hartman's genre has many intersections with the concept of “Vignette Games” discussed in Section 1.3. In fact, many of Hartman’s individual narratives are already presented in vignette form and have the potential to yield interesting game and narrative mechanics. To demonstrate, I have imagined three potential interactive experiences that might be derived from Hartman’s work and subject materials. Each of these theoretical games have their own individual strengths and weaknesses to consider and overcome in representing historical events and people.
Firstly, Hartman’s subject material could be digitised into a 3D role-playing game in a similar vein to *Pathologic* or *The Forgotten City*. In line with Hartman’s “chorister” framing device, I suggest that a good agency to use is an aspiring member of a chorus, a young black woman newly arrived from the South in search of a better life. The player could then be tasked with building a career within the chorus while navigating the hardships of life within the Harlem ghetto. Many of the elements discussed in my analysis could be operationalised, such as the systems of help and hindrance created by the emotional regimes and communities present in the ghetto space. It could incorporate a wide variety of characters, each with their own personalities and relationships to the player character, emulating the communal nature of both the chorus and wider community. Such a project would require a well-researched recreation of the Harlem environment, and focus on liminal spaces as a centre of community and memory.

Potential challenges to their approach would be the presentation of historically sensitive material, representing past communities with respect, and consideration of what is acceptable to present within an interactive narrative. Such a game would also be a technically complex undertaking, but as demonstrated by the *Pathologic* and *The Forgotten City*, 3D role-playing games can provide highly affective and compelling gameplay spaces.

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218 This is a “common script” within Hartman’s work, many of her subjects are newly arrived Southerners, moving to Northern cities in search of better opportunities.
219 Hartman’s work contains intimate depictions of legal, sexual, and domestic violence. While a written work contains a degree of agential separation, embodying the player within a gameworld that replicates historical trauma would require delicate handling. A degree of separation could be achieved by changing the presentation from a first-person to third-person perspective. ZA/UM’s *Disco Elysium* is a good example of a game that addresses sensitive subject matters through third-person gameplay.
A second approach would be mechanically simpler and also play off of Hartman’s “chorus” theme, taking the form of a management simulation game wherein the player takes on the role of a chorus promoter/manager. A management game can leverage the communal aspects of the chorus, with a key mechanic being the player’s hiring and management of applicants to a chorus line. Dialogue would be heavily emphasised, with an important interaction being dialogue characters about their pasts and experiences. Such an interactive experience can incorporate the systems of hindrance imposed by the moral regime as a core gameplay challenge. Members of the chorus can have individual issues and plotlines that the player must resolve or disregard. This mechanic is historically useful as it demonstrates the hardships experienced by individuals facing an emotional regime while at the same time disrupting the gameplay loop of managing a chorus. The players would then be faced with difficult moral choices regarding their individual choristers’ actions. A potential downside to empowering the player through this kind of agency is the historical baggage associated with entertainment promoters and managers' abusive and exploitative practices. Empowering the player in a similar way would be undesirable, and is one of the occasions where a designer may wish to design against historical realities, embodying the player in a benevolent or morally neutral agency. In this way, the experience remains centred on the choristers, and avoiding the possibility of the player replicating historical abuses.

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220 These experiences could be derived from critical fabulation and Hartman’s concept of “familiar scripts”.
221 Perhaps a talented chorister gets entangled within a marital dispute, legal trouble, or an unwanted pregnancy. The player must then make moral and business decisions that balance their choristers' well-being, the reputation of their company, and avoid drawing attention from the law. Mechanical choices can be intermeshed with emotional and rhetorical arguments surrounding the difficulty of life in such an environment and the day-to-day choices made by individuals.
Thirdly, consider a game does replicate historical abuses. A striking element of Hartman’s work is the presence of well-meaning people who acted as agents of an oppressive system. Esther Brown’s story reflects this. She was sentenced to the reformatory by an “avowed socialist” who sought to “rescue” Esther from a life on the streets as a single mother.\(^{222}\) How would a modern individual react when placed in the “avowed socialist’s” position? What form of game could replicate this well-meaning but ultimately oppressive agency? I am thinking specifically of the border guard simulator *Papers, Please* (Lucas Pope, 2013). *Papers, Please* takes place in a fictional Eastern Bloc nation, wherein the player assumes the role of a border guard. They are tasked with sorting through individuals seeking entrance to their country, and are presented with individual life stories and circumstances. The player is expected to make moral choices regarding who to allow through, balanced with the taking of bribes, allowing exceptions, and following the instructions of the state. Crossing the line may result in pay deductions, censure, and the accusation of the player being sympathetic with subversive groups. A similar approach could be taken with a game that places the player in the role of a social worker, tasked with deciding whether to commit individuals to the reformatory, prison, or to allow them to go free. As in *Papers, Please*, such a game would heavily emphasise moral dilemmas and decision-making, emphasising to the player their role as an agent of the emotional regime. It would also highlight individual life struggles and stories that could be uncovered via the archive, while also drawing from Hartman’s “familiar scripts”. As discussed earlier, embodying the player’s agency within the role of an oppressor is of course problematic, but I consider this proposed game as an excellent way

\(^{222}\) Hartman 2019, 240.
to highlight not only the lives of the oppressed, but how well-meaning individuals can contribute to historically oppressive systems.

2.3.6 Conclusion

If *Wayward Lives* can be considered to represent a novel and distinct genre, it is worth considering how to adapt this genre to the interactive medium. This analysis has already identified a wide overlap between Hartman’s work and the concepts of agency, imagined space, and emotion contained my framework and the concept of the Historical Problem Space. Hartman’s historical method is largely interested in recreating the histories of marginalised historical communities through the creative (re)interpretation of archival material. With this interpretive ability in mind, “affective games” like *Pathologic* and *The Forgotten City* display parallels to critically fabulated works like *Wayward Lives*. Persuasive games deploy their rhetoric (both persuasive and procedural) in a form that resembles Hartman’s “close narration”; they are works seek to embody the audience’s agency and imagination within their (re)constructed spaces, wherein the audience is guided through a rhetorical process that culminates in a deeper understanding of the subjects under consideration.

Despite their ostensible differences as media objects, *Pathologic*, *The Forgotten City*, and *Wayward Lives*, *Beautiful Experiments* all display elements relevant to the *Agential Engines* framework. Chapter 2 demonstrates how *Agential Engines* and the *Historical Problem Space Framework* can be used to uncover and codify historical game and narrative mechanics. In particular, all three evoke a unique imagination of historical issues. Using procedural and literary rhetoric, they highlight overlooked and under-considered aspects of the past and make arguments about historical realities. These
arguments, contained within fabulated and persuasive imaginary spaces, are excellent examples of affective narratives. I have found that for the purposes of my framework, the inclusion of the *HPS* provides a useful analytical tool which can assist interactive historians looking for mechanical and narrative inspiration. It breaks down a game into layers of player agency, gameworld, presentation, strategy, and genre; each layer can be further analysed for useful examples of historical rhetoric, agencies, and strategies for historical game design. The three examples I have deployed also contain examples of how the concepts of agency, emotion, and imagination can be embedded within interactive historical narrative. With this in mind, the final Part of this work: *Twelve Days in October 79* will draw together concepts from across the thesis to consider the reconstruction and mechanisation of the last days of Roman Pompeii, told through the eyes of a marginalised freedman.
Chapter 3: October 79: Twelve Days in Pompeii

So far, I have considered historical and game design elements that are relevant to the creation of interactive histories. The final step will be to provide an example of a possible application of the framework and the concepts so far discussed. To do this, I present October 79, a hypothetical role-playing game set in Roman Pompeii that uses the Agential Engines framework as a core design philosophy. As a game, October 79 is designed to be a narratively fulfilling experience that uses the principles introduced in Chapters 1 & 2. It uses the lens of Rome’s social underclasses to present a critically fabulated narrative about the nature of Ancient Rome’s social and urban life. In doing so, the game aims to affect the player’s imagination about the nature of day-to-day Roman life; creating a more vivid historical understanding of the agents, emotions, and imaginations that populated ancient Pompeii. A small detail worth noting is that the working title of the game in earlier proposals was Ten Days in August 79, following the traditional dating for the 79 AD eruption of Vesuvius. Recent discoveries within Pompeii have now more definitively placed the dates of the eruption in October. Environmental storytelling within the game will reflect this date, with harvests coming in from the field and the Augustalia festival being celebrated as a plot point. While not directly addressed in game, this is a narrative normalisation of the recent October dating, and one of the more subtle ways the game affects the player’s historical imagination.

224 A festival celebrating the divine Augustus taking place October 3-12.
This chapter will outline some of the research and design considerations that would go into such a project. The first section, “Recreating the Romans” will demonstrate how the concepts of agency, emotion and imagination can be extracted from historical research. It is similar in format to Chapter 2, which used the Historical Problem Space framework to extract game mechanics and concepts from historical games. The second part is an annotated Game Design Document (GDD) for the proposed game, detailing the game mechanics, design, and overall narrative. GDDs are a common practice within the games industry and the creation of this document serves as a central reference for the core design and gameplay.\textsuperscript{225} Games may have other design documents for sound, narrative, technical, and art, or these documents may be incorporated under the overall design document. This section combines the historiographical concepts introduced in Chapter 1; with the game and narrative design elements extracted in Chapter 2; with my personal research interest and focus on ancient Roman urban life. This combination of factors demonstrates how the Agential Engines framework can be used to construct an affective interactive history.

3.1- Recreating the Romans: Agencies, Emotions, Imaginations

Interactive histories seek to depict and operationalise the differences between modern and historical experiences of space and emotion, and highlight these differences through game and narrative mechanics. By doing so, they create mechanical and narrative processes that contain a historical argument about the nature of a past society. While no

\textsuperscript{225} Emerging practice in the Department of History at Carleton University has made GDD a common output for public historical work. See: Cronkite, Maximilian 2021, “Divided Kingdom, 561”, Carleton University; Emise, Jenna 2021, “Remember Us”, Carleton University.
narrative can hope to completely recreate a historical space or society, interactive storytelling contains the potential to display a broad variety of historical experiences. In the case of *October 79*, the narrative focuses on Roman social underclasses, exploring the social dynamics, beliefs, and agencies of the urban poor and disenfranchised. The game places the player in the agency of Gaius Caetronius Pudens, a (fictional) freedman living in Pompeii. Through Gaius’ eyes and agency, the game explores the social life of Pompeii, examining the “life on the street corner”, and exploring the nature of urban experiences for the average Roman. These experiences draw on Roman cultural experience and expression, recreated via both primary and secondary sources.

3.1.1- Life on the *Limens*: Embodying the Agency of a Roman Freedman

*October 79* places the player in the role of one of ancient Rome’s most interesting and overlooked social classes: a freedman. Freedmen were former slaves that were manumitted by their former masters. Freedmen were Roman citizens, and many seem to have achieved a high degree of financial and social success. The degree of social success achieved by freedmen is somewhat remarkable, but it is important to remember that the Roman elite freed slaves on the basis of service and merit; freed slaves were close to their masters and often entrusted with important affairs such as business dealings, taking care of the household gods, and even educating the master’s children. Former

226 Attempting to recreate a historical personage with the little information available on real freedmen would not yield desirable results. It would be a semi-fictional composite with most life details being inferred. I consider it best to use fully fictional characters in games that feature lesser-documented classes unless there is a sufficient amount of information.

227 The rules of manumission varied, with freedmen referred to as *Libertini*. Freed slaves could be given citizenship equal to Roman Citizens, Latin rights, or the *Dediticii* class. For a breakdown of this complex topic, see: Mouritsen 2011, “Macula servitiutis”, *The Freedman in the Roman World*, 10-35.
slaves often left their enslavement with a higher degree of literacy, education, tradesmaship, and administrative skills when compared to the average lower-class Roman. Despite the fact that many freedmen gained a degree of economic and social success, elite Roman culture retained a largely negative view of freedmen. As a social class at large, they retained the stigma of slavery, and were barred from most forms of public office and social mobility. The Roman upper class seems to view the freed class as unworthy social climbers, a threat to their social and economic authority. However, as noted by historian Henrik Mouritsen, the *libertini* class were not a natural element of Roman society, they were entirely a creation of elite slave owners. The Roman elite, despite their stated misgivings, routinely freed slaves and evidence shows the continual presence of freedmen within Roman society.\(^{228}\)

The strangely liminal figure of the freedman\(^ {229}\) presents an interesting possibility for creating an embodied agency. They are not the Roman elites or soldiers that are often the focus of popular media concerning Rome; they are also not the urban underclass, nor are they slaves by their very nature. Few Roman classes seem to have had such widespread connections to the rest of society, while simultaneously existing on the *limens* of Roman social life. This makes a freedman an ideal focus character for a narrative role-playing game. A freedman is not as strictly bound by social class, while still having a number of notable agential restrictions placed upon them. An important factor of the “freedman” role is that they are closely bound by the Roman system of patronage.

\(^{229}\) This liminality partially stems from the fact that “freedmen” are an artificial social class- the status of freedman was not passed down the generations. Freeborn children of freedmen carried the same social status as any other Roman, and often occupied powerful positions. The children of wealthy freedmen seem to have entered the deuronial class (land-owning and office-holding individuals) at a young age.
Freedmen were heavily reliant on their patrons for support, and many were bound in a pseudo-familiar relationship, taking on their patron’s *nomen gentilicium* (family name). Under this arrangement, the patron acted as a social guarantor while the freedman was expected to act with fidelity towards their former master.230 This close linkage between patron and freedman comes from the fact that freedmen had no social identity or agency of their own within the eyes of Roman society. Slavery had moral and social implications - it stripped people of their familiar ties and individual *dignitas*. Their integration into the patronage system both provided a pseudo-family but also tied the freedmans’ social “self” to their former masters.231 Without a “social self” in the eyes of Roman society, freedmen found their agency and autonomy highly restricted.

As with any natural offspring, freedmen represented their families’ dignity, with their actions seen as reflecting on themselves but also their patrons. This patronage arrangement can be operationalised as both a game and narrative mechanic; success for the player can be measured in their ability to understand and conform to the Roman expectations of the patronage system and to the *mos maiorum*232 that governed Roman social interactions. When regarding the case of a freedman’s agency, their close ties to their patrons can be considered both a help and a hindrance. While it was uncommon for freedmen to be re-enslaved, Cicero notes that a household would be lucky to not have at least one freedman “of worthless character”.233 To succeed within the narrative frame, the player must be able to prove their good character within the Roman social view.

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231 Mouritsen 2011, 42.
232 The “ancestral laws” of the Romans- a common code of social behaviour that imposed certain expectations on all members of society.
Retaining the good favour and intimacy with one’s patron provided a clear path to success for a freedman. To emulate this, October 79 will incorporate a reputation system within the game to measure the player character’s reputation both within and without the household, with narrative beats and character reactions being altered depending on the player’s social reputation.

While a somewhat overlooked social class within popular media and scholarship, freedmen are remarkably visible within the archaeological record. In the epigraphic evidence from Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Ostia, freedmen display a distinct epigraphical habit; they created dedicatory funerary inscriptions that celebrate their manumission and social success. While Freedmen were barred from public offices along the various magisterial cursus, they had access to a number of different positions within society that distinguished them from the average citizen. In particular, freedmen found influence within religious and public organisations. Freedmen were crucial to the worship of lares, the imperial cult, and practising acts of euergetism within their districts as part of the Augustales. Such works distinguished wealthy freedmen, and it is the records and dedications of such works that demonstrate the freedman’s place in public life. Such social organisations provide an additional concept to integrate into the

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234 Mouritsen 2011, 281-2, notes that many of these inscriptions do not seem to be intended for public consumption, rather are often more private funerary or religious in nature. The common view of the freedman’s conspicuously consumptive epigraphs and tombs seems to be a fabrication of Roman culture and modern research.

235 Minor household gods with a complex role within urban life. A good primer on the cult of the Lares is Flower 2017, The Dancing Lares.

236 Providing money as part of public works and entertainment.

237 See: Hartnett 2017, The Roman Street, 239-244, which notes the impact of the Augustales on urban space. As an organisation primarily composed of freedmen, it provided an outlet for wealthy freedmen to grow their influence and social prestige despite being banned from priesthods and decurionate positions.
problem space of October 79, and can be considered as emotional communities that existed somewhat outside of the social order.

A particular aspect of Roman life that freedmen were heavily involved with was the maintenance of smaller religious cults. While freedmen were disallowed from most forms of priesthood, they were allowed to act as Magistri Vici, cult caretakers and representatives. As already noted, freedmen often acted as the primary cultivators of the lares, minor protective deities of the Roman home and street, in particular the small public shrines placed on street corners and intersections.\textsuperscript{238} \textsuperscript{239} Within Pompeii specifically, the most notable cults attended by freedmen appear to be the cults of Mercury and Maia, the cult of the Deified Augustus, and the cult of Fortuna Augustalis, with numerous inscriptions dedicated by freedmen magistri and slave ministri present within the archaeological record.\textsuperscript{240} The presence of freedmen and slaves in religious life is an often overlooked facet of Roman religion.\textsuperscript{241} In fact, becoming a religious magistri or augustale provided some of the conventional trappings and signifiers of office that wealthy and successful freedmen desired.\textsuperscript{242}

The religious roles of the freedmen also hint at the emotional communities established by freedmen. Despite freedmen’s often very different backgrounds\textsuperscript{243}, they

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{238} Flower 2017, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{239} Cooley & Cooley 2014, \textit{Pompeii and Herculaneum Sourcebook}, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{240} Cooley & Cooley 2014, 133-34.
\item \textsuperscript{241} Largely, I believe, because the popular imagination of Roman religion is centred on the major Hellenised cults and the religious practices of the Roman elite. Freedmen, slaves, and most of the lower classes were excluded from many of the most important priesthoods and cults, and the folk religions of the empire are often overlooked (excepting remarkable incidents like the Bacchanalia scandal of 186 BCE). Flower 2017, 208; Hartnett 2017, 239.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Freedmen’s backgrounds differ to such a degree that it is difficult to imagine an emotional community forming in any meaningful way without the grounding of a religious and/or social organisation like a cult or the seviri augustales.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
seem to have congregated around certain cults. This shared emotional community is important to highlight within an interactive narrative, and can form a core emotional grounding for the player. This religious common-feeling can be juxtaposed with the social rejection imposed on the player from other characters. Narratively, a shared cult also allows the game to introduce a wider variety of characters, in order to highlight additional ways of life within the Roman city. The religious beliefs of the Romans can also be used as a narrative mechanic. A core narrative element could involve the player in conducting an important religious ceremony, and providing the opportunity for the player to “rig” omens of Pompeii’s destruction. This would have the dual function of involving the player within a reconstruction of Roman folk religion, while also providing an additional means of convincing the player’s emotional community to leave the city.

Finally, it is worth considering how the broader Roman society viewed freedmen. The archetypical example of freedmen within Roman literature comes from Petronius’ *Satyricon*, wherein the story *Cena Trimachonis* he depicts the eponymous freedman Trimalchio as a wealthy libertine. Trimalchio and his cadre of freedmen throw extravagant banquets in the name of conspicuous consumption, but lack the good taste or social *mores* that would allow them to integrate into elite society. William C. Fitzgerald calls Trimalchio “an anomaly in the world of the free”\(^{244}\); Trimalchio and co. insist that they are self-made and independent, seemingly divorced from the Roman system of patronage.\(^{245}\) Petronius’ depiction of a community of wealthy, libertine freedmen seems to have reflected a degree of the elite fears surrounding manumission, that (former) slaves

\(^{244}\) Fitzgerald 2004, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 87-88.
\(^{245}\) Petronius, *Satyricon*, 57.75-6.
will become the new elite- a vulgar *nouveau riche*. As noted by Mourisen “The fictional Trimalchio and his dinner guests have in many respects become the representation of the freedman against which other evidence has been judged”.²⁴⁶ Within a narrative centring the agency of a freedman, this literary depiction can be operationalised as an oppressive stereotype. The player character in fact conforms more closely to freedman such as Cicero’s secretary Tiro, a man much beloved by Cicero and his family for his fastidiousness and loyalty.²⁴⁷ The reality of freedmen as often being trusted members of elite households while also being looked down upon by the elite at large can be integrated into an interactive history as a powerful aspect of the procedural rhetoric- a system of help and hindrance that enforces the freedman’s liminal role in society.

²⁴⁶ Mouritsen 2011, 280
²⁴⁷ Cicero’s *Familia*, book 16 contains many references to Tiro and the men seem to be remarkably close
Figure 14: Agency in *October 79*
3.1.2- Emotional Communities and Regimes in Roman Society

Historians of Roman social emotions have been influential on the broader study of historical emotions. While some aspects of the Roman way of life may seem familiar to those in the modern day, the Roman social and emotional existence differs greatly from modern perceptions. Most surviving Roman sources present society from the top down, with elite writers of history and rhetoric often presenting the urban underclasses as their moral and social lessers. These elite expectations for the behaviour, enforced on themselves and others, can be construed as a form of emotional regime. Looking beyond historical and political works to cultural materials can unveil more about the daily experiences and feelings of the average Roman. Researchers have analysed a wealth of primary materials describing Roman views on emotion, which have been utilised to gain a deeper understanding of how the Romans viewed and conceived of their society and environment. For *October 79*, a core design goal will be to come to understand how the Roman people expressed their emotions, thought about the emotions of others, formed communities centred around common-feeling, and enforced emotional expectation. This is a complex topic, and a deal of critical fabulation will always need to be applied to such narrative reconstructions of historical emotions.

A good way to establish a baseline for Roman emotion is to look at what the Romans themselves considered the basis of their social norms - the *Mos Maiorum*, their “ancestral customs”. Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp frames these *mores* as:

“a notional stock of time-honoured principles, traditional models, and rules of appropriate conduct, of time-tested policies, regulations, and well-established practices that not only prescribed social behaviour in ‘private’ life, but also
regulated all criminal and ‘public’ law, the state religion as well as the military system the ways and means of running politics at home and abroad.”

The *mos maiorum* functioned as a sort of universal Roman ethic, taking on normativity and binding force that even the most powerful within Roman society were expected to conform to. Importantly, the *mos maiorum* can be considered as a sort of soft emotional regime: a deeply institutionalised framework of values, legitimised through claims of traditionality. The *mos maiorum* takes the form of a number of core ethical principles, those being the principles of *fides*, *pietas*, *religio/cultus*, *disciplina*, *gravitas/constantia*, *virtus*, and *dignitas/auctoritas*. From a sociological perspective, the *mos maiorum* is a core ethical structure, and therefore placed certain restrictions and expectations on the behaviour and agency of individuals. This expectation can be operationalised as a game mechanic, with the player’s actions monitored by the rest of the simulated society. The common Roman *mores* must be emphasised, restricting the player’s agency; as if they do not act in good faith or with

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249 See my discussion on William M. Reddy’s concept of emotional regimes (Section 1.2.2) and the various degrees of social enforcement of emotional expectations. The *mos maiorum* are a “soft” regime as they had no legal standards of enforcement, only moral guidelines and firm expectations for behaviour.
250 Hölkeskamp 2010, 70.
251 Fidelity, the ability to act with good faith and credibility.
252 Piety towards the gods, family, and homeland.
253 Devotion towards the gods, shown through carrying out traditional and prescribed religious practices.
254 The exhibition of discipline and self-control, especially when attempting to better oneself through training and education.
255 The development and maintenance of self-control and steadfastness.
256 From *vir*, the ideal of masculine virtue, has some overlap with the Greek concept of *arete*.
257 Values displayed in service to state, the dignity and worthiness to hold office and respect within elected offices, and the authority to command other Romans.

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moderation\textsuperscript{259}, they will be shunned by the rest of the community. The presence of the
mos maiorum as an emotional regime lends historical accuracy to the game mechanics,
while at the same time serving as an implicit regulator on the player’s agency. The
gameworld does not have the same tolerances for player behaviour as, say, the Grand
Theft Auto series. As the Romans enforced moral behaviour, so will the game.

What other emotional forms should be expressed within a Roman role-playing
game? To answer this, we can look to both modern scholarship and Roman cultural
material. An early and foundational investigation into Roman emotional constructs is
considers five different emotional concepts: Verecundia (social apprehension), Pudor
(shame), Paenitentia (regret), Invidia (retribution/envy), and Fastidium (disgust). Kaster
breaks down the uniquely Roman ways of experiencing these emotions, describing the
social aspects that mediated how these emotions were to be experienced. Kaster’s
methodology is to provide a taxonomy of emotions, breaking them down into different
“scripts” of social behaviour. A particular use of Kaster's method is that by understanding
Roman emotional scripts, we can apply it to recreate emotional communities and
regimes. Kaster’s concept of “scripts” closely reflects the concept of “emotives”, and
“sequences” used by both William Reddy\textsuperscript{260} and Barbara Rosenwein\textsuperscript{261}.

The first concept covered by Kaster, verecundia, can be considered a feeling of
shame or modesty, but can be better understood as a sense of social apprehension, or as
Kaster breaks it down, an enacted script of knowing one’s place in society and an

\textsuperscript{259} Conversely, they behave like Trimalchio, thus reinforcing the public’s views on freedmen and making the player’s life harder than it needs to be.

\textsuperscript{260} Reddy 2001, 125.

\textsuperscript{261} Rosenwein 2015, 29.
awareness of others’ social needs and roles. *Verecundia* is also broken down into a number of different aspects, negative and positive, that are spoken of in Roman sources. An anecdote from Pliny is utilised to demonstrate how his grandfather-in-law’s excessive *verecundia* lead him to be excessively self-effacing when dealing with other men of equal station despite being well within rights with his requests of others. This among other examples show the balance the Roman elites navigated between pressing their own interests and respecting the social and emotional needs of their equals. This treatment of *verecundia* helps to extend the theory of the network of emotional transactions into Kaster’s model of Roman emotional space. This “transactive” nature of Roman emotional exchanges ties into the regulated nature of the *mos maiorum*, which for the purposes of the game should be incorporated by enforcing a sense of social apprehension within the dialogue choices available to the player.

Kaster adds to his reconstruction of the Roman emotional community with his discussion of *pudor*, considered a “sense of social shame”. *Pudor* encompasses the concept that actions taken without a sense of social awareness within the community can lead to negative social visibility, and therefore, a sense of shame. Kaster breaks down the concept of *pudor* into a taxonomic model of emotional scripts (fig. 1). Kaster describes a sense of *pudor* being primarily about social perception and self-value, a complex exchange of action and emotion demanded by the emotional regime. Therefore, a Roman with a proper sense of pudor is aware of the social actions within the community and the demands of the Roman emotional regime. I am particularly interested in the concept of pudor as it is a recurring element across many examples of Roman cultural materials.

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Integrating the concept as a gameplay element can provide a powerful procedural rhetoric. When used within the proposed reputation system, the player must act with regard towards their social “face” and sense of social place.

Kaster also considers a number of other emotions within Roman social dynamics, applying his taxological method to *Paenitentia* (regret/consternation). This emotion interacts with *verecundia* and *pudor* and specifically involves a strong feeling of displeasure or regret at one’s own actions or the behaviour of others, along with a need to rectify the source of discomfort. An example is brought forth from Livy (27.13. 1-6), wherein previously steadfast soldiers are shamed for breaking off from an even battle. They are expected to feel shame (*pudere*) for their actions and the need (*paenitere*) to do something about it, otherwise face the breakdown of their self-image and pride as Roman soldiers. This adds another layer to the theory of communal Roman social values, self-image, and the expected emotional scripts within Roman society. Especially prevalent is the “stain” of negative emotion and actions seen to lessen a person. Such negative emotion is also present in the concepts of *invidia* and *fastidium*. *Invidia* involves a strong feeling of jealousy towards another, and Kaster presents the scripts and taxonomy as quite complex. The core emotion is described as:

“I feel invidia toward this person because he is shamefully abusing his favourable circumstance….I am going to invidiam facere, create this invidia in you against the other. The emotion and the performances that it inspires thus produce a type of social glue, reinforcing certain kinds of judgement and unifying a group against a renegade”.

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263 Kaster 2006, 78-79  
264 Kaster 2006, 97
In theoretical terms, this form of communal *invidia* is a kind of generated emotion, aligning the community against a target of ire.\footnote{Barclay et. al. 2020, *Sources for the History of Emotions* 21} Here in particular is how the theory can be used to understand communal actions and the particular emotions and values that lead to widespread community behaviours. It provides an additional mechanic to be implemented within a reputation system, wherein if the player’s actions damage their reputation to a certain extent, those around them will express their *invidia* towards them.

The final topic Kaster discusses is the concept of *fastidium* (disgust), which is broken down into two broad categories, those of reflexive and ethical disgust. Reflexive *fastidium* is a sense of disgust typically observed in response to a sensually offending object. In many ways this is one of the least culturally mediated emotions, as there are unpleasant sights and smells that seem to be nearly universal. The more culturally interesting sense of fastidium is the *fastidium* felt towards others. That is, *fastidium* that is felt when an individual’s sense of ethics (social mores) is violated by another. Kaster notes ethical *fastidium* as containing a sense of hierarchical ranking. The idea of showing *fastidium* towards social equals and friends was socially improper, but showing disdain towards social lessers, especially slaves, was culturally expected. Kaster ties this form of *fastidium* into the concept of “snootiness”. This concept begins to reveal the emotional regime within the Roman community, specifically the emotional codes of the upper class. This in particular is useful for understanding the upper-class code of emotional behaviour, that seems to have created a regime revolving around the nobility’s expected feelings towards both their equals and lessers. This concept is useful for writing the
Roman elites within *October 79*, and provides a blueprint for how the freedman player character is to be treated within the narrative.

Kaster’s depictions of the more negative Roman emotions form a good baseline for what could be considered the “emotional regime” within the gameworld, the standards of behaviour against which the player’s actions can be measured. However, academic attention has also been directed to the more positive expressions of emotions. These can also reveal the emotions within the Roman mental landscape. For example, a fairly recent treatment of positive emotions in the ancient world is *In the Orbit of Love: Affection in Ancient Greece and Rome* by David Konstan. Konstan notes that a major difference between the modern and ancient concepts of friendship was that in the classical world a friend was considered to share one’s core *animus* (soul); two bodies sharing a single animating motive. 266 Konstan puts forward the theory that friendship in the Roman world was predicated on like-mindedness between equals. This interacts with theories of distributed cognition present within the subfield; the idea that like-minded individuals can reinforce each other’s ideas and perceptions of the world around them through communal sharing of their intelligent processes. 267 This also enforces Kaster’s theories of communal *pudor*; if the Romans in some way saw their friends as extensions of their own souls, it is no wonder they saw their friend’s negative emotion and actions as shame-inducing. Shared cognition within an emotional community also helps to explain the levels of loyalty displayed by Romans to their *amicitia*, and the high degree of social

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266 Konstan 2018, *In the orbit of love*, 33-34.
267 Konstan 2018, 56. This also interacts with the concept of emotional communities, which follow a similar trend of unifying beliefs and actions.
disdain to those who betray friends. However, the concept of *amicitia* is well-bounded and restricted.

Some stress should be put upon the idea that friendship was between nominal equals; shared cognition could not be achieved between master and slave, freedborn, or client. Konstan notes William Fitzgerald’s work on the Roman values surrounding slavery, with slaves being treated as extensions of their master’s cognition, rather than sharing a mind/soul. It is notable that within the Roman emotional regime, friendship across class and birth lines is considered off limits, with the freedborn vs enslaved divide being especially stark. After all, to see an object of *fastidium* like a slave as somehow sharing *animus* with you would be socially unacceptable. Particularly, slaves were considered extensions of their master’s cognition, having no social or intellectual identity of their own. I have already touched on this concept, but this work reinforces how a freeman would typically experience friendship and community. They could not be true “friends” with their patrons, instead having to find other groups of *amicii* outside of their *familia*. Emotional ingroups and outgroups therefore form a key aspect of the Roman social landscape, and should be focused on within a reconstructed Roman space.

Another interesting aspect of Konsta’s work is on Roman material-emotional culture. Konstan notes that the principle of gift-giving was deeply ingrained within Roman culture and was closely associated with ideas of gratitude and friendship:

“Gifts are not a substitute for commodities but take their place within a system of social relations, in which trade of any kind is simply one form of human interaction: gifts may operate according to a logic entirely distinct from the

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269 Fitzgerald 2004, 36-38.
270 There seems to be an interesting contradiction in values here, as freedmen were to be considered as pseudo-sons to their former masters. It would seem that to some degree, even freedborn sons were seen as extensions of their father’s minds, rather than being seen as equals.
economic equilibrium or give-and-take determined by the code of mutual obligation”.

This idea reflects the emotional value placed upon friendship by the Roman emotional community, the sharing of resources seen as the mark of a deep relationship.271 This ties into a broader line of research within emotions history, in particular Sara Ahmed’s concept of “affective economies”: that emotions can “do things” and that emotions can “be stuck” to objects. This is especially true of gifts, which accrue sentimental value.272 The “affective economy” of Rome extends far past the realm of gift-giving as showing proper gratitude towards one’s friends was naturally of high importance to the Romans. This could occasionally result in a conflict of social values should an (elite) Roman be accused of acting on behalf of another out of gratitude against the interests of the community or state. Konstan lays out the typical emotional scripts of Roman gratitude, using Cicero’s rhetorical categorization as a baseline. Again, somewhat of a taxonomy emerges between two kinds of indebtedness: pecuniae debito (financial debt) and gratiae debito (debt of kindness/favors), with both placing different kinds of social obligations and burdens on a person273. Konstan’s work reveals another complex network of social and emotional obligations within the Roman emotional landscape. This is a similar line of thought to Kaster’s concepts of emotional transaction. The concept of amicitia provides a narrative mechanic for recreating Roman friendships, and the theory of “affective economies” can also serve as a useful game mechanic. As mechanics, both concepts can play off of the reputation and/or economy systems. The player can use gift-giving to affect changes in NPCs' outlooks, both to fulfil narrative goals and to raise their reputation. It can also be made abundantly clear to the player who their “friends” are, and who they are agentally obligated to.

Finally, it is worth considering how the Romans formed emotional communities through cult practices. Relevant to this idea is Jacob Mackey’s Belief and cult: rethinking

272 Barclay et. al. 2020, 163-164.
273 Konstan 2018, 103-105.
Roman Religion. Mackey’s treatment of Roman cult practices incorporates elements of collective agency and imagination that have been discussed previously. He considers the shared cultural dynamics that gave rise to cult beliefs and practices. In combining his work with previously discussed concepts, Mackey provides some extremely useful language and concepts for agential immersion in a reconstructed cultural space. It is applicable to not only Roman religion, but to all the emotional expectations and mores discussed so far. In his introduction to Chapter 1, Mackey notes the debate amongst Classicists about the nature of Roman belief; with certain classicists in the 19th and 20th century presenting the idea of Roman religion being based on traditional ritual actions rather than genuine religious beliefs. Later anthropological scholarship further poisoned this well by undermining the concept of belief, suggesting that belief is a concept exclusive to Christianity and that Roman religion was a utilitarian practice. Mackey instead asserts that while Roman pagan religion took a different form of cognitive culture as opposed to the Christian expressions of faith. Instead of enforcing norms of cognitive conformity through religious practice, Romans were largely free to choose what religious beliefs to engage with. This theological flexibility leads Mackey to emphasise the need to consider belief as:

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274 Mackey 2022, Belief and Cult. As noted in the introduction (pg. xix), this book was based on a 2009 thesis supervised by Robert Kaster and read by Harriet Flower, showing a distinct academic lineage among my collection of works and ideas.

275 Mackey 2022, 32 cites Mommen (1862), W.R. Smith (1889), Wissosa (1902), Arthur Nock (1934) as some of the scholars who forwarded the idea of Roman religion as fixed traditional practices without the practical application of belief.

276 Mackey 2022, 32.

277 Mackey 2022, 35.

278 With the exception of certain class-centred cults restricted to certain subsets of the population.

279 And therefore, what emotional communities to adopt according to their personal beliefs and preferences.
“an “Intentional state”, to see how it underpinned religious emotion, investigate its role in the aetiology of cult action, and finally consider its collective dimensions. When shared collectively, belief made it possible for individuals to share agency and cooperate in group cult acts, allowed for cult norms and conventions, and contributed to the creation of Roman religious reality and its attendant social powers”\textsuperscript{280}

In many ways, Roman religious practice can be considered as a collection of interconnected emotional communities, participating in a shared collection of norms and practices. A player can be placed within this network of emotional communities, engaging with the emotional practices contained within Roman cult beliefs. In doing so, they can be asked to temporarily “believe” in the power of the gods and in cult activities, with religious procedures being embedded into gameplay as a procedural rhetoric.

As noted, Mackey considers Roman religious practices to be strongly agent-focused, forming a dichotomy between the agency of the practitioner and the (perceived) agency of a nonhuman divine entity. Much of Roman belief centres around the deliberate expression of agency (ritual), which allowed them to intuit and infer divine agency\textsuperscript{281} in a sort of feedback loop.\textsuperscript{282} This has interesting resonances with the previously discussed concepts of narrative and gameplay loops, and a simulation of Roman religion should emphasise the deliberate choices and preparations that went into Roman cult practices.

By engaging the player character within these choices and preparations. This will of course only be a simulation of belief. As non-Romans players will lack the deep cultural background that creates true belief in religious practices. However, as a narrative

\textsuperscript{280} Mackey 2022, 43.
\textsuperscript{281} Attributing divine agency to natural phenomena and associated gods.
\textsuperscript{282} Mackey 2022, 94.
mechanic the presence of the player within religious rituals allows them to grasp the emotional and agential meanings attached to cult practice.

A core concern of any historical role-playing game is the degree to which cultural “buy in” can be expected from the player. As discussed by Nguyen, the player must temporarily suspend their own agency, wants, and desires to fit into the interactive space. As I envision it, the best practice of a developer-historian is to look for socio-cultural contexts that can ease the player’s adoption of their role. To encompass socially normative phenomena\textsuperscript{283} contained within religious and social structures, Mackey coins the term “deontology”, a package of social norms that derive their motivating social force from agent’s beliefs about their legitimacy.\textsuperscript{284} To successfully reconstruct Roman social motives and mores, I suggest that these packages of values must be understood, and that coming to grips with how they motivated emotions and actions. While a player cannot be induced to truly believe in a religious practice, they can still emulate the driving force behind religious actions; in order to succeed within the narrative frame, they will need to roleplay a commitment to the social norm of pietas, emulating (if only partially) the Roman agential commitment to cult practice. As explained by Mackey:

“Pietas was a deontology. It was a package of informal social and formal legal norms that provided representations and grounded intuitions and inferences as to actions permissible (fas), obligatory (religio), and forbidden (nefas). It was also, as commonly translated, a sense of commitment to that package of norms. Pietas could be seen by Romans as the foundation of all other norms, including moral norms. Pietas was not only action oriented but also other regarding. It was not individualistic but social.”\textsuperscript{285}  

\textsuperscript{283} Social normative ideas being “codified laws, rules, social norms, obligations, permissions, prohibitions, rights, responsibilities, powers, duties, social empowerments and disempowerments to action, dos and don’ts” (Mackey 2022, 117).

\textsuperscript{284} Mackey 2022, 117-118. It can be noted that the Roman mos maiorum can be categorised as a deontological package in their own right.

\textsuperscript{285} Mackey 2022, 126.
The concept of *pietas* forms a system of obligations that is not only communal, but based on imitation.\(^{286}\) It forms a reason for collective cognition and action, to, as a group, put care into the worship of a god. Reproducing this form of emotional community can provide the player with an anchoring point for understanding the emotional expectations of the historical society. It introduces an additional level of agential engagement, using the Roman ideals of collective cognition and adherence to custom as an anchoring point for the player’s agential engagement.

To conclude, Roman cult activities, and indeed the wider Roman emotional landscape, functioned on a shared system of values that was modified by individual groups with their own normative expectations; the shared beliefs and emotional practices of the Romans created a feedback loop of expectations and practices.\(^{287}\) To recall Saidya Hartman’s method, it is these shared beliefs and emotional practices that act to draw the player “within the circle” of social life. In the case of the player’s embodiment, their agency can be intertwined with the experiences presented by the game’s characters. In doing so, the game can present a procedural rhetoric on the nature of Roman social life, the social ontologies, emotional expectations, and the networks of emotional communities contained within wider Roman society.

\(^{286}\) By imitation, I mean that cults initiated their fellow citizens, and practices and beliefs were adopted through.

\(^{287}\) Mackey, 160-61.
3.1.3- Imagined Pompeii: Social and Communal Interactions on the Street Corner

So far, I have considered what agential mechanics may be deployed to embody the player within the agency of a Roman freedman, and the emotional space of Roman society. It is now time to move on to physical and imagined experiences of space. The creation of an explorable, reconstructed urban Roman space provides the user with opportunities for unique and surprising encounters with the realities of Roman life. In many ways, the true experience of the Roman city happened on the street corner, amidst the crowds of individuals going about their business. As noted by Ray Laurence in his essay *The organisation of space in Pompeii*, “the street was the organising unit of public space in the pre-modern city”.  

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on their home\textsuperscript{289}, rather on the complex encounter space of the outside world where they worked, ate, traded, worshipped, and socialised. In embodying the player within this imaginary space, the goal of a designer historian (in this case, myself), will be to allow the player to gain a mental map and imagination of the reconstructed Roman spatial-social-emotional landscape.

Pompeii was originally an Oscan (Samnite)\textsuperscript{290} town. Pompeii’s unusual street plan is owning to a hybridisation between the original non-gridded Oscan layout\textsuperscript{291} architecture and gridded layout of the Roman veteran’s \textit{colonia}.\textsuperscript{292} Pompeii as a city is an outlier to the expectations of a planned Roman town, and shows a different logic of space than contemporary cities. For example, Pompeii’s layout does not exhibit any traits of socio-economic zoning\textsuperscript{293}, with districts being loosely organised around the available amenities\textsuperscript{294} and seemingly expanded as needed. In particular, there seems to have been a distinct attempt to “Romanise” following Pompeii becoming an official \textit{colonia} in 79 BCE, with the addition of the amphitheatre and additions of Roman temples to the forum establishing the cities’ colonial identity.\textsuperscript{295} These changes seem to have placed greater emphasis on the forum as a public space with the creation of additional roads and services leading to and around the forum. A great deal of emphasis seems to have been placed on public space in Roman cities. Baths, forums, temples, theatres, and the street

\textsuperscript{289} Apart from the more familiar elite \textit{domus} home, many Roman living spaces (\textit{insulae} “apartment buildings”) did not even have kitchens or baths. They can in many ways be characterised as mostly places to rest, not social locations- most of the routines of “life” occurred outside of the living space.
\textsuperscript{290} Oscan was an Italic language spoken by a number of tribes in Southwestern Italy.
\textsuperscript{291} Read: indigenous and unplanned cities, such as Rome itself.
\textsuperscript{293} Laurence 2006, 19.
\textsuperscript{294} Forum, Temples, Baths, Theatre(s), Amphitheatre, major entrances.
\textsuperscript{295} Laurence 2006, 22-25.
corner seem to have been the main points of social gathering. With this in mind, *October 79* will put greater emphasis on the exterior spaces of Pompeii rather than the interior. Apart from a selected set of *domus*, *insula*, and *villa* that belong to non-player characters, most other homes will not be freely enterable (apart from external shops where the player may purchase goods). This is to focus the experience on the street as the primary encounter space.

This social emphasis is noted by Laurence, who notes that the greatest foot and vehicle traffic seems to have been centred on the major roads leading to the forum, theatre, and to and from the major city entrances.\(^{296}\) As a city located on a major crossroad between other major towns, Pompeii received a great deal of visitors and trade. To facilitate contact with visitors, the majority of *ostium* doorways\(^{297}\) and *tabernae*\(^{298}\) faced these major streets.\(^{299}\) This suggests that the vast majority of Pompeii’s social life occurred on the street and within the forum, with visitors and locals in a constant tide of comings and goings. It is highly likely, then, that a game design will reflect this similar flow without too much designer intervention. This is because the designer can place businesses and narrative goals along the historically dense areas of Pompeii. If players are tasked with meeting non-player characters in public space and going about their public business, they will naturally gravitate towards the main roads and public spaces.

\(^{296}\) Notable roadways are primarily the *Via Stabia, Via Dell’Abbondanza, and the Via de Mercurio* in other words, the streets leading from the city gates to the forum.

\(^{297}\) The front doorway, used for public access to a home, rather than the more private *posticum* doors that were used by servants or for discretion.

\(^{298}\) Small one-room shops and restaurants attached to domestic dwellings.

\(^{299}\) Laurence 2006, 76
They will only occasionally be impelled to take back roads when it is faster to do so or when they are asked to come in the side entrance of a home.\textsuperscript{300}

It is worth again considering how the Romans themselves talked about space and the urban experience. Of particular note here are the \textit{Satires} of Juvenal, many of which comment on the experience of the Roman street. In particular, \textit{Satire 3} depicts the overwhelming and crowded experience of the Roman street:

\begin{quote}
“If the tycoon has an appointment, he rides there in a big litter, the crowd parting before him….however fast we pedestrians may hurry, crowds surge ahead, those behind us buffet my rib-cage, poles poke into me; one lout swings a crossbeam down on my skull, another scores with a barrel. My legs are mud-encrusted, from all sides big feet kick me, a hobnailed soldier’s boot lands squarely on my toes. Do you see all that steam and bustle? A hundred hangers-on, each followed by his scullion, are getting their free dinners”\textsuperscript{301}
\end{quote}

The Roman Street was a place of gathering and transit, of seeing and being seen. It was also, as noted by Jeremy Hartnett in his book \textit{The Roman Street}, a place of sensory overload, with the intermingling smells of human and animal waste, human and vehicle traffic, and people and free-roaming animals clogging the already narrow sidewalks. Stepping into the roadway would be a mistake, as it was often covered in waste and mud.\textsuperscript{302} Despite the often overwhelming nature of walking in the city, the social aspect of walking is also emphasised in Roman culture\textsuperscript{303}; the social element of \textit{ambulatio} is associated with friendly conversation and intellectual virtue, as noted by O’Sullivan (2011), reserved for close \textit{amicii}.\textsuperscript{304} Additionally, walking could serve as a way to emphasise status, such as the daily \textit{deductio in forum}, wherein wealthy Romans would be

\textsuperscript{300} As a freedman, it would not be uncommon for the player to be forced to use the \textit{tabernae} instead of the main entrance of an elite home.
\textsuperscript{301} Juvenal, \textit{Satires}, 3.240-49.
\textsuperscript{302} Hartnett 2018, \textit{The Roman Street}, 39.
\textsuperscript{303} Cicero again provides much of the cultural nuance. See: Cicero, \textit{Familia} 2.12.2–3, 10.31.6 for Cicero’s walks with friends
\textsuperscript{304} O’Sullivan 2011, \textit{Walking in Roman Culture}, 85.
greeted by their clients, and a select few would accompany him on his way to business (usually to the forum, hence the name). This practice served as one of the ways the clients repaid their patrons, as their presence emphasised the wealthy man’s influence while also having the additional function of keeping the patron clear of the crowds and protected from harm. They may also have accompanied his litter (although would not carry it themselves as this task was reserved for slaves). Within an interactive history, the player’s near constant presence on the street can reinforce their sense of community and social place. Additionally, the player character’s social bonds can be emphasised by having many important conversations be carried out by walking with an NPC, rather than conducting a static conversation. Their patron-freedman client relationship can also be emphasised by having the player take part in some of the daily rituals that composed the patronage system.

As already noted, the street was impossible to avoid for the average Roman, as day-to-day life happened outside the home. To emphasise this point, Hartnett estimates that there was one food and drink street vendor for every 55-90 residents, and the thermopolia scattered around Pompeii are mostly placed along the main thoroughfares. It can be noted that places like thermopolia (also called cauponae or popinae) drew the attention of crowds, and as such were the most consistently populated. The elites of the city avoided such public eateries, and although Pompeii lacked a strict class divide when it came to housing, we can see the elites displaying a preference for areas away from...

305 O’Sullivan 2011, 60-61.
306 Hartnett 2018, 41.
308 These take on a more “alcoholic” connotation, being wine bars.
more public space.\textsuperscript{309} \textsuperscript{310} Another element of Roman public space I will take account of is somewhat of an elephant in the room: the presence of sex work, gambling, and lascivious graffiti & cultural matériel, which were an ever present factor in Roman sociality.\textsuperscript{311} These elements are intractable parts of Roman social life, which presents somewhat of a problem depending on the game’s target audience. Should this be intended as a classroom and educational tool, I could not imagine including this content for anything other than a university-level class.\textsuperscript{312}

When the developer-historian recreates social space, they provide opportunities for the players to experiment with the social norms and expectations of a past society. Additionally, they come to understand the logic of how space was organised and for what reasons. This forms one of the major challenges of creating such an experience, and how I intend to execute the creation of such an imaginary space. Of prime importance to such a project is to ensure that the natural “flow” of navigation is preserved. A successful interactive project would be careful to ensure that all the street features of Pompeii are present. Luckily, in the case of Pompeii, much of this work has already been completed. Archaeologists have created extensive charts and studies of Pompeian street features. Of particular use in this case are the two works by Ray Laurence that I have already cited. Laurence provides extensive diagrams for street features, ranging from density of doors on a given street, to the locations of eateries, brothels, street shrines, to noting which

\textsuperscript{309} Laurence 2006, 99.
\textsuperscript{310} For example, the Via di Mercurio and Via Della Fortuna show a greater number of well-appointed houses and less presence of eateries and brothels.
\textsuperscript{311} Mostly within the lower classes, although the elites were not free from these social ills, despite their frequent claims to the contrary.
\textsuperscript{312} This fits the typical 17+ age range for games containing such themes.
streets have the deepest vehicle ruts.\textsuperscript{313} Laurence’s work is invaluable for reconstructing the urban landscape, as his maps and findings can be digitised using GIS software and directly imported as a point cloud into a 3D modeller. This would directly highlight each important street feature, allowing for placing amenities in historically accurate locations.\textsuperscript{314} Additionally, works like Eric Pohler’s \textit{The Traffic Systems of Pompeii} can assist a researcher in understanding how people moved through the city streets. As I overviewed in my discussion of \textit{Pathologic 2}, a well-designed pathfinding experience can be invaluable in embodying the player within the space and making the “presence” of history felt.

It is worth considering how the Romans imagined their interactions with space, and the social groups that informed these imaginings. To return briefly to Mackey, he provides a good summary of how agency and imagination interact with space and mental mapping:

“Agents require a sense of a world and its affordances for action. Sometimes this sense comes through direct sensory coupling of the agent with his or her environment. However, social, other-regarding, norm-following, past respecting, future-oriented planning agents such as us require a cognitive map composed not only of immediate perceptions, but also of memories and imaginings, and most importantly here, of doxastic states, including beliefs and deontic beliefs. The latter define the space of possible, permissible, impermissible, and obligatory action.”\textsuperscript{315}

Exploring an interactive imagined space can reinforce what was discussed in previous sections. I have focused on the concept of the Roman street as a “social encounter space”, fixing the street corner as a site of social interaction. This recognises the liminality of

\textsuperscript{313} For a selection of these maps, see Laurence 2006, 43, 56, 88, 91, 96, 97, 105, 107, 108.
\textsuperscript{314} I personally document the process of importing GIS data into the Blender engine here: https://github.com/WolfclawProductions/DOMUS/wiki/A-Workflow-for-Visualizing-Legacy-Archeological-Data-with-BlenderGIS.
\textsuperscript{315} Mackey 2021, 133.
place, with the player lacking a fixed site of gameplay or “home base”. This sense of sociality can be encouraged in several ways, with many such as religion, reputation, and the patronage system already being discussed in detail. Another concept I wish to introduce is the concept of the *circulus*, a gathering of Romans on street corners. Usually composed of lower-class men, the circulus existed as a sort of informal political circle, with men discussing political and urban issues. This “widespread popular culture of discussion” is referenced a number of times in Roman history as the means by which political ideas and notions were spread. While the *circulus* did not have official influence, they served as a reinforcement of communal morality and ideals. Therefore, placing these informal gatherings around Pompeii can form another source of player interaction with the socio-emotional landscape. Using the *circulus* as a game mechanic allows the player to probe the morals and *mores* of the Roman people in a more open environment, as engaging with the *circulus* can form an open space for discussion untied from the reputation system. The circulus can be a good way of gathering information on other characters, the player’s own reputation, and the general social atmosphere of Pompeii. I believe that including a number of unique opportunities for social interaction assists in reinforcing the Roman social landscape, and the player’s own imagination of how Romans interacted with physical and social space.

Finally, I wish to highlight the complex issues surrounding prostitution and sexual content. The game presents a counternarrative to the commonly held beliefs around ancient Roman sexuality. For example, it draws from Saidiya Hartman’s addressing of the complicated issues surrounding lower-class women and sexuality. Many Roman

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316 Hartnett 2018, 52-53.
prostitutes were either slaves, social exiles, or financially destitute. While this can provide a complex and interesting narrative space for explorations and storytelling, it requires careful handling as such a narrative space can also include depictions of sexual abuse. The relative “freedom” provided to the player is also an issue in this regard. As noted, the game will include a reputation and morality system that can assist in restricting player behaviour. Additionally, I believe that when dealing with non-player characters, both player and NPC should be able to reference vulgar cultural materials and ideas. The core design decision in this case will be how to restrict a player’s agency. This will range from full freedom, including hiring prostitutes (at risk of player reputation)\textsuperscript{317}, restricting the player to being “narratively asexual”\textsuperscript{318}, or fully removing references to sexual content\textsuperscript{319}. Finally, I would like to explore the Roman’s complicated relationship with homosexuality, with a short metanarrative wherein the player plays matchmaker to a dramatic actor and a gladiator.\textsuperscript{320} All these elements occupy somewhat of a sensitive

\textsuperscript{317} Tying this into the reputation system still provides some restrictions. As noted, this is not \textit{Grand Theft Auto}. The player character is in the public eye.

\textsuperscript{318} Never providing the player and option, but still having limited representation is likely the best option for most audiences.

\textsuperscript{319} This is an option that severely compromises historical accuracy. However, should such a project be made for a non-postsecondary educational setting, this is the likely option. However, since the intention is to recreate a simulation of Pompeian social life, other elements will be accurate enough to provide at least a partially accurate picture.

\textsuperscript{320} See: Hartnett 2018, 126, for a rather amusing instance of Pompeian graffiti, wherein a man implies his rival is the submissive component of a same-sex pairing.
narrative place, however, should a narrative reconstruction of lower-class Roman life be historically valid, these elements cannot be overlooked.

Figure 16: Constructing an Imaginary Space for October 79

3.2- Footnoted Game Design Document: October 79

3.2.1 Game Summary

October 79 is a 3D narrative role-playing game, with a similar gameworld presentation as Pathologic\(^{321}\) or The Forgotten City\(^{322}\). The game would be set in the Roman colony of Pompeii, taking place in the Autumn of 79 CE, immediately prior to the eruption of Vesuvius. The gameworld is a reconstruction of Roman Pompeii as it was prior to the eruption, with much (if not all) of the city being explorable and open to the player. The player will embody the agency of one of Rome’s more overlooked social classes, a freedman. The core narrative of the game will involve the player character

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\(^{321}\) Resembling Pathologic in terms of pathfinding, gameplay loops, and spacial reception.

\(^{322}\) Naturally, resembling The Forgotten City in terms of visual and cultural presentations.
receiving a dream\textsuperscript{323} of Pompeii’s imminent destruction. They are then tasked with convincing their friends and acquaintances to leave the city within October 79. Through this agential experience, the player will experience the reconstructed space of Pompeii through the eyes of a lower-class individual. As an interactive historical experience, *October 79* draws reference from modern studies on the Roman views of freedmen, emotions, and receptions of space. It also considers the way in which the Romans themselves imagined space, drawing from the practices and tropes of Roman theatre to anchor the game within a historically relevant literary and genre space. Narratively, the only concession to the supernatural is the inciting vision of Pompeii’s destruction, presumably a vision from the gods, although the player will not often be believed regarding this element of the plot. I feel comfortable including this lone supernatural element as it is consistent with Roman religious beliefs and beliefs on dreams. As the Roman sense of theatricality plays a major role in the narrative, this also plays off of the theatrical conventions of the “unbelieved prophet/Cassandra” archetype of ancient theatre.

\textit{Pillars}\textsuperscript{324}

1. An explorable reconstruction of Ancient Roman experiences of space and social life

\textsuperscript{323} Dreams were incredibly important within Roman society- often interpreted as signs from the gods. However, dreams were also typically taken as very personal signs, and if an individual was not an ordained priest or prophet, they would not likely be believed by the majority of their fellows. See: Harris, 2009 for a breakdown of dreams in classical antiquity.

\textsuperscript{324} Game design “Pillars” are statements of the core design and narrative elements that influence an interactive design project. These are between three and five short and immediately relevant sentences that summarise a game’s core design goals.
2. The narrative focuses on the experience of the Roman freedman instead of the more commonly represented elites, gladiators and soldiers. Players interact with a wide variety of characters that highlight the diversity of Roman lifestyles and social classes and how they interacted with the “freedman”.

4. The game world draws influence from the tropes and genre conventions of Roman theatre.

5. A sense of imminent danger and tragedy drives the player’s key motivation.

**Genre, Platform, Audience**

*October 79* takes the form of a narrative role-playing game. It emphasises pathfinding, dialogue, and social logics as key gameplay elements. The platform is to be decided, but the story can be implemented within either an interactive narrative format resembling a visual novel, of a fully-realised 3D explorable space created using the Unity or Unreal game engines. The game will be built for Windows PC operating systems and intended for both entertainment and educational uses. Depending on the finished content, the game will either be appropriate for ages 13 and up (avoiding sexual content and references), or appropriate for ages 17 and up (maintaining historical accuracy while including vulgarity).

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325 As in material like *I, Claudius*, the many adaptations of the Caesar-Antony-Cleopatra story, *Gladiator* (and the entire “Sword and Sandals” genre), and the *Total War: Rome, Imperator*, and *Son of Rome* games, all of which concern themselves with the Roman elite and/or military. There are only a few examples of media that focus on the Roman underclasses. HBO’s *Rome* does a good job of depicting daily life, but it is entangled with the politics of the late republic (including adapting the Caesar-Antony-Cleopatra story), concerns war (the main characters are soldiers), and contains “the HBO effect” of gratuitous sexual content.

326 The specific genre of the game, being the broad category of narrative and gameplay genre, for example “shooter”, “strategy game”, “simulation”. Platform refers to the specific operating system, environment, or game console the game is intended to run on, as well as the specific game engine used.

327 The exact narrative and game form would of course be highly dependent on the budget, technical skill, and resources of the creators. The core form of the narrative and genre can remain relatively unaffected by platform and genre.

328 A popular form of interactive fiction originating from Japan.

329 A fully explorable space would include a 3D-modelled recreation of Pompeii, complete with accurate recreations of interior and exterior decors.

330 Unity and Unreal are two of the most popular free 3D game engines.
3.2.2 Gameplay Elements

The game draws inspiration from exploration, social, and investigation-driven RPGs like *Pathologic*, *The Forgotten City*, and *Disco Elysium*. The primary interaction of the game involves attempting to convince as many characters as possible to leave the city through dialogue and problem solving. It will also contain lite survival simulation elements, such as the need to purchase food\(^{331}\) and gain money. The game will be a showcase of Roman social life, wherein the player is encouraged to engage with the communities and individuals presented to them. Completing tasks and requests will reward the player with reputation, clues, and leverage\(^{332}\). The player will be restricted by their social status, and must carefully manage their reputation amongst the various social groups, adapting to the social rules and expectations presented to them.

*Timekeeping and Daily structure*

The core gameplay loop is set on a daily cycle, with new challenges and contingencies presented at the start of each day. There are 12\(^{333}\) gameplay days, each taking around 2 hours.\(^{334}\) New events may emerge and be highlighted roughly every half hour of real-time gameplay as NPCs proceed through their stories. In this way, the day is quartered into four half-hour “shifts”. Players can be taught to expect new events and tasks at roughly the half hour mark. Due to the rate of traversal and limitations of time,

\(^{331}\) Presumably from one of the many *Thermopolia* food vendors that were plentiful in Pompeii.

\(^{332}\) In a similar form to *The Forgotten City*, some people will not be able to be convinced. Instead, thoughtful investigation and dialogue will provide the leverage needed to convince them.

\(^{333}\) There is no particular gameplay or story significance to the choice of 12 “days” of gameplay although the number 12 does have a degree of cultural importance to the Romans (12 Legal Tables, Olympians, Fasces, etc.)

\(^{334}\) This amount of time change, depending on the scope of the game. If it takes too much or too little time to traverse from objective to objective, the length of a day may change.
the player may not be able to accomplish all objectives, and not all objectives are important or story-relevant. While the specific daily objectives may vary, an anchoring mechanic is the daily *salutatio*, a Roman practice wherein high-ranking Romans were greeted by their clients at dawn. The player will be expected to participate in this ritual, wherein they will receive daily tasks from their former master-cum-patron. These missions are time-consuming, but rewarding, and tie into the reputation and survival systems as a source of prestige, food, and money. As a rule, these tasks must be completed by the end of the day, but will often overlap with other side tasks and missions, encouraging the player to complete objectives within a given space before moving on.

*Game World and Pathfinding*

Pathfinding through the 3D game world will place emphasis on grasping the “flow” of the reconstructed city. Pompeii will be recreated directly from existing GIS data and street plans, with the result being that the ancient street layout is preserved. The game is designed along the assumption that the player character is a native to the city, and therefore having a general idea of where everything is. Players will therefore be provided with a map of the city and a means to track tasks, with objectives highlighted on both the map and by quest markers in the game world. The game space will be created

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335 This is another mechanic that asks the player to carefully “listen” to what they are being told. Sometimes it will be obvious that an NPC is wasting their time.
336 Freedmen were tied to the patron-client system as they became the clients of their former masters, remaining tied to the family despite being freed.
337 This section will assume that the game will be set within the fully-realised 3D recreation of Pompeii.
338 There is a hypothetical academic and educational use for an interactive project that provides the user with no map or markers, and asks the user to learn to navigate a historical space using only directions, street names, and landmarks. This would simulate a visitor to an ancient city, and if fully implemented with non-player characters could be an impressively immersive experience. However, for the purposes of a narrative historical experience, providing the player with a means of navigation will ease the frustrations of pathfinding, allow for better narrative flow, and allow the player to act as a “native” to the city.
using data from Pompeii’s ongoing archaeological project and 3D models of the Digital Open Modular Urban System (DOMUS) project. This is an open-source 3D modelling asset pack that is designed to recreate Roman architecture. DOMUS sprung out of my work as part of a research project, carried out under the auspices of Shawn Graham's partnership in the University of Toronto-led 'Computational Research in the Ancient Near East' project, on re-using legacy archaeological data. Both specific and generic Roman buildings have been created using the DOMUS pack, and will be used to populate the gameworld with historically accurate architecture. DOMUS can also be used to create “background illustrations” for narrative prototyping within a visual novel engine. Scatter props will be created through referencing and “renewing” 3D scans of day-to-day Roman objects, which will make the gameworld feel lived in.

Dialogue and Non-Player Characters

*October 79* will incorporate a standard dialogue system, focusing on naturalistic conversations. Dialogues with non-player characters can influence their later actions in the story and affect the player’s reputations. Non-player Characters (NPCs) will be sorted into two types, essential and non-essential. Essential NPCs are named characters who are relevant to the plot. In the current conception of the narrative, there are currently 18 planned characters who are central to the story. It is these individuals that serve as the main conduits and drivers of the narrative, with a core design goal to intertwine the

339 Background objects and additional props; small objects and details that add life to a space.
340 This has the goal of avoiding the problems I addressed in my analysis of *The Forgotten City*, wherein the city lacked the sensory experience of urban life. It also echoes the concerns I share with T.M. Kristenssen (2007) about purely architectural reconstructions being a poor representation for the “texture” of Roman life.
341 *The Forgotten City* and *Pathologic* each contain around 25 important, named characters.
player’s agential and emotional goals with their well-being. Non-essential NPCs form the faceless crowd of the game, populating the walkways and social spaces. These NPCs represent the breadth of Roman social classes, with their presence in each part of the city derived from modern knowledge of the Pompeiian experience of space.\footnote{In particular, Laurence Ray (2005, 2006), Pohler (2017), and Jeremy Hartnett (2017) are excellent references for the organisation and experience of space in Roman Pompeii.} Non-essential NPCs can be used to restore a sense of life to Pompeii’s streets, replete with scripted and randomised conversations, paths, and navigation.\footnote{Instead of fixed routes and conversations, many games have recently used more randomised systems, with background NPCs created from a resource pool and placed in the world with scripted pathfinding. I would place greater emphasis on background NPCs as residents of the space, rather than \textit{The Forgotten City}’s complete lack of background NPCs, or \textit{Pathologic}’s treatment of them as theatrical extras.} The player is not expected to gain as great an emotional attachment to these NPCs, beyond the baseline of care the imminent threat deserves.\footnote{Should a player be agentally immersed, they can be expected to care for the simulated lives, at least temporarily. Caring about NPCs ties back into C. Thi Nguyen’s concept of temporarily assumed goals and agency for the purposes of striving play.} That is not to say that all non-essential NPCs will be killed by the eruption. At the end of the game, any essential character that is convinced to leave will also bring other NPCs with them. For example, if an essential member of an organisation or family is convinced to leave, they will bring other members of their group with them. All NPCs interact with the reputation system to some degree, with their reactions to the player being influenced by their reputation within the community. For the most part, NPCs will be neutral, but if the player gains a poor reputation or works against their interests, they may respond negatively or want nothing to do with the player. Conversely, completing favours and side quests for particular communities\footnote{This integrates the idea of emotional communities- individual communities and cliques that can be interacted with as a gameplay mechanic.} can gain their favour.

\textit{Missions and Reputation}
An important mechanic of help and hindrance within *October 79* is the maintenance of the player character’s reputation. This is a gameplay system that mechanises a consistent cultural fixation for the Romans—the concept of *Mos Maiorum*, the Roman’s ancestral customs that allowed for the maintenance of one’s social “face”.

The player will be expected to maintain, in particular, their *dignitas* and *virtus* when dealing with the public. For example, an early line of dialogue can help to emphasise their point:

“Gaius, be sure to be careful when dealing with Mercurius. Remember, your loose tongue has gotten you into trouble with him before. Watch what you say! Your dignity depends on it!”

Such lines can imply that Gaius (the player character) has historically had a hard time maintaining his *dignitas*, while also suggesting to the player that they should pick their words carefully. Additional background banter from the NPCs can also assist in the player’s temporary adoption of Roman social *mores*. An important factor to gaining and maintaining reputation within the Pompeiian community is the completion of Patron missions. Freedmen were highly dependent on their patrons for social standing, and their reputation was tied to that of their former masters. The player can show *fidelitas* to their patron by completing their daily assigned tasks, although they should also be mindful of their own reputation while doing so. Completing the task is rewarding, and keeps the player in good favour with their master, although the mechanics of the reputation system require careful balancing between the player’s narrative goals and following instructions.

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346 The integration of the Roman obsession with social respectability is a powerful inclusion into the procedural rhetoric of the game. Indeed, a player that does not respect this system may find their agency extremely hindered as the Romans placed a great deal of emphasis on these patterns of behaviour.

347 While games like *Pathologic 2* do contain a reputation system, they do not often have a major impact on gameplay. By mechanising Roman social *mores*, the player is invited to engage with a fundamental aspect of Roman culture.
As an additional source of income and prestige, the player will be given an opportunity to invest in several business ventures. These investments will supply an additional source of income, and investing in the correct ventures can have story-impacting consequences.

**Survival and Combat**

*October 79* does not heavily emphasise survival or combat. Survival is largely predicated in managing hunger and exhaustion, as both can have negative effects on the player’s limited time. Hunger is instead present to empower player role-playing, as it incentivises them to go into the various eateries placed around the city. Combat encounters are few and far between, and should only be encountered a few times within the core narrative. During a fight, the player will not have a conventional health bar, instead, they will have a “fear” metre that goes up every time they get hit. Should the player find themselves wandering around at night, they may encounter muggers who roam the back alleys at night. While the player can fight these muggers, weapons and armour are uncommon and expensive. Should the player lose a fight to the muggers, they will be instantly teleported to the nearest friendly sleeping area and lose a portion of the money and objects currently being carried. There is no player death - Since *October 79* is a narrative game about social interactions and managing one’s reputation, survival and danger is less of a gameplay priority. The narrative tension is not placed on “will I be able to survive”, as “will my reputation be enough to convince my friends and family to leave the city?”. Instead, maxing out the hunger or exhaustion metre will black out the screen and instantly teleport the player character to either the nearest food stall, or to the nearest friendly sleeping area. This is to represent the character being overwhelmed by
hunger or starvation that they give up on anything else until that need is sated. The presence of muggers at night is designed to present an expanded decision space for the player, especially when venturing out at night. Avoiding muggers is easy, but takes time, as does going home to drop off supplies and money. Buying armour and weapons is possible, but there are other opportunities to spend money on that may be more worthwhile. These instances incur time penalties, ensuring that the player incorporates sleeping and eating into their daily gameplay loop. Combat is much the same. As the player character is, narratively, a coward, he will run away before he is in any serious danger.

3.2.3 Narrative Elements

_October 79 in October ‘79_ follows Gaius Caetronius Pudens, a recently manumitted freedman of Attius Caetronius Gravibus. As a character, Gaius is quiet and unassuming, stated to be a devout believer in the gods. Attius considers him as a replacement son, as Gaius was the slave companion of the late Attius the Younger. As a freedman, he often represents his clients’ interests, although Attius wants him to be more forward and aggressive with business dealing. Gaius is heavily involved with the cult of the Lares (minor gods that watched over homes and intersections). The core narrative mechanics revolve around business dealings and religious practices. These two mechanics intersect with both the core plot and the reputation system, as narrative choices can influence who leaves the city. There are several core narrative metastories, each emphasising different elements of Roman social and urban life.

_Metanarratives_
The first “The Balance of Power” concerns Attius’ ongoing political dealings with two other powerful men: Tiberius Aelius Antius and Paulus Tarquinius Mercurinus. This subplot uses the familiar beats of local Roman politics and drives the majority of the patron missions. As it seems that municipal politics were a year-round affair in Roman Pompeii, powerful men constantly curried influence amongst the community. This metastory ties into each other plotlines, as the player will interact with the Aelius and Tarquinius families numerous times throughout the story. This metanarrative interacts heavily with the reputation system, and is the most complex narrative decision space. In other narratives, the player will find themselves needing favours from both Tiberius and Paulus, and they must balance their fidelity to Attius with ensuring that their friends and family can escape Pompeii.

The second is called “The Play’s the Thing”, wherein an actor friend of Gaius, Lucian Calidius Felissimus will ask the freedman to assist with varying tasks regarding the production of a play. While this may on its face seem to the player like a side mission, Lucian and his theatre troupe have an important mechanical and narrative role to play. In order to save Lucian (and his troupe), the player must complete the tasks Lucian asks the player to complete. Once the play has been performed, the player is approached by Lucceia Antia, Tiberius Antius’ wife, a theatre lover who will request assistance in convincing her husband to fund the troupe’s performance in Rome. Tiberius will of

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348 Cooley & Cooley (2014) devote a chapter of their handbook to the minutiae of Pompeian politics.
349 The player’s role as a freedman is therefore a useful part of the procedural rhetoric. Freedmen often acted as agents of their patrons, making them an ideal role to showcase Roman colonial politics without having politics be the core plot of the game.
350 Additionally, it also showcases another emotional community present within all Roman cities: the Actors. As a profession generally seen as “unclean” by the Romans, actors tended to be insular and somewhat isolated from the broader community.
course demand another series of favours from the player, which the player will have to carefully navigate, as Tiberius is one of Attius’ main rivals.

The third metastory is “Blood Sports”, which focuses on Lars Rufus Lupus, a popular gladiator. Rufus is another acquaintance of Gaius, who occasionally asks him for favours having to do with the management of gladiators. At the start of the game, Rufus and his troupe are preparing for a gladiatorial exhibition against Pompeii’s rivals from Nuceria. The core problem of the narrative emerges with the fact that the troupe’s former main financier, Paulus Mercurinus has run out of money. Paulus, an elderly traditionalist, is another of Attius’ rivals. Working with him to raise money goes against Attius’ interests, and again presents a complex decision space. However, if the player makes the correct choices, Rufus’ troupe will be able to attend their gladiatorial event in Nuceria, safely putting them outside of Pompeii.

The final metastory is entitled “Omens and Tidings”, which focuses on Roman religion and beliefs. An often overlooked facet of Roman life is the smaller-scaled practice of religion. Through their narrative role as a freedman, the player engages with Roman religious practices, as Gaius is a current *magister* of the Temple to Fortuna Augusta. They are presented with a community of believers that serves as the main emotional grounding of the story. It is notable that cult *magistri* did not serve as priests in the conventional sense; rather that they were the caretakers and political

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351 Gladiators were usually slaves themselves, forming something of a kinship between Gaius and Rufus
352 Pompeii and Nuceria had a somewhat infamous Gladiatorial rivalry, and Tactius reports the often-bloody confrontations between spectators in Tac. *Annals*. 14.17
353 This is for a number of reasons, including the fact that Roman religious practices were often complex and secretive, with many mystery cults and small folk religions. These smaller-scale practices are often overshadowed by the more familiar Hellenic aspects of Roman religion within popular media.
355 This incorporates the theme of emotional communities.
representatives of the cult. This is an important distinction as the player is not provided
an option to simply declare their revelation to the masses, as they will not be immediately
believed. Instead, the player must find a way to work within the Roman religious system
to make themselves believed.\textsuperscript{356} This can be accomplished in several ways, including
deliberately fabricating omens and auguries to indicate Pompeii’s imminent doom. The
player will be able to influence the religious opinions of their cult in various ways, many
of which involve other storylines.\textsuperscript{357} For example, Lucian’s theatre troupe can be
convinced to present a dramatised, Romanised version of Plato’s \textit{Timaeus and Critias},
depicting the volcanic destruction of Atlantis.\textsuperscript{358} This would place the idea of volcanic
destruction into the communities’ minds\textsuperscript{359}, making them more susceptible to the
“rigged” omens set up by the player.

\textit{Genre and Literary Influences}

The primary narrative influence is derived from Roman literature and theatre. In
particular, the game uses many of the genre conventions of Roman tragedy. Theatre was
one of the primary modes of entertainment in the Roman world, and one of our best
narrative sources for Roman life. The Romans themselves were highly aware of
theatricality, with many of the wall frescoes in Pompeii depicting events from theatre. In
particular, \textit{October 79} can be considered a narrative that closely resembles the \textit{fabula}

\textsuperscript{356} Grasping the emotional communities that form the religious beliefs presented to the player will be
essential to convincing their “congregation” to leave.
\textsuperscript{357} Sadly, by using the newly-determined October dating for the eruption, I am no longer able to construct
a plotline revolving around the Vulcanalia festival.
\textsuperscript{358} I am not aware of such a dramatic adaptation of Plato’s work. The play presented in the game would
therefore need to be created following the traditions of Roman drama. It is not uncommon for the Romans
to have adapted.
\textsuperscript{359} The theme of an emotional community centred around religious beliefs is a major theme of \textit{October 79}. 
praetexta genre of Roman tragedy\textsuperscript{360}, in that it is a tragedy addressing an aspect of Roman history. The game will therefore take inspiration from the dramaturgy of Roman tragedies.\textsuperscript{361} As a genre, Roman tragedy uses familiar topics from Greek literature and Roman history to highlight the moral and emotional concerns of their time. It focuses on the drama of interpersonal relationships, moral decisions and dilemmas, and often sets action and violence offstage.\textsuperscript{362} It incorporates many aspects of the older Greek theatrical traditions, using character’s personalities, flaws, and psychological states as core themes of the narrative. The framing of the game within the genre of Roman tragedy helps to excuse the player’s foreknowledge of events. Roman tragedy plays off of foreknowledge of the plot—either historical knowledge or familiar Greek stories. Because of this, the audience of a Roman tragedy is never “surprised” by the outcome, greater focus is placed on the moral choices and flaws of the characters. The player operates with full knowledge of Pompeii’s fate, but their agency is hindered by the characters they interact with and the restrictions of their social class. Additionally, other works of Roman literature can assist in recreating the Roman social experience. For example, Roman comedy, such as Petronius’ \textit{Satyricon}, can often highlight the absurdities of day-to-day life.\textsuperscript{363}

\textit{Non-Player Characters}

\textsuperscript{360} Unfortunately, only one example of a \textit{fabula praetexta} survives, Pseudo-Seneca’s \textit{Octavia}. It will therefore be difficult to fully adopt the tropes of this genre, instead I will also use concepts from the genre of \textit{fabula crepidata}, tragedies with Greek subjects.

\textsuperscript{361} In particular, “Senecan” tragedies. A fairly recent treatment on the genre can be found in Koln 2013, \textit{Dramaturgy of Senecan Tragedy}

\textsuperscript{362} I will discuss the minutiae of writing a Roman tragic narrative in the next subsection.

\textsuperscript{363} The \textit{Satyricon} also contains an interesting depiction of the freedman Trimalchio, whose ostentatious behaviour reflects the Roman view of successful freedmen as a kind of vulgar \textit{nouveau riche}.  

166
October 79 contains an expansive cast of characters that reflect many different aspects of Roman society. At the time of writing, it is envisioned that the game will contain around 20-25 important, named characters. These can be broadly divided into a number of groups: The families Caetronius, Aelius, and Tarquinius, with their respective masters, wives, children, and slaves. A number of characters are involved with the theatre and the gladiator school, and the player can encounter a number of members of the Fortuna Augusta cult. While many of the named characters are existing friends and acquaintances of the player character, not all will be friendly to him. In particular, the other elites of the city are unfriendly to Gaius, as he is the representative of their political rival. Others will overlook and underestimate the player character based on his formerly servile background, and he will find that he is not always welcome amongst the elite of Pompeii. For NPCs, heavy narrative emphasis is placed on getting to know each of these characters, understanding their life circumstances and what each person wants and values is a key narrative mechanic.

Careful attention has been paid when creating character names; following the Roman trinomina system, character names reflect their personalities and narrative roles, as well as hint as to their origins. For example, Gaius and Attius share the same nomen gentilicium, the middle family name, as freed slaves became a part of their master’s household as pseudo-sons. Gaius’ praenomen is extremely common, but Attius is a more uncommon name of Oscan origin, reflecting that Attius is from one of the oldest

364 I will discuss this more in “agential restrictions”, but there were certainly restrictions and expectations to how Roman Freedmen were expected to behave and occupy space.
365 Greater emphasis will be placed on the more liminal characters, the lower classes and the slaves, rather on the powerful men.
366 Originally an Oscan town, Pompeii had been heavily Latinised by the time of its destruction. However, names and inscriptions still show Oscan origins, and some older indigenous families remained.
families in Pompeii. Finally, both *cognomen*, or nicknames reflect something of each man’s personality. Pudens, from *Pudor*, reflects Gaius’ self-conscious-to-a-fault nature, anxious about his public image and presentation. Gravibus means “heavy/large”, perhaps reflecting Attius’ political importance or “largeness” within the community, or perhaps Attius is just fat.\(^{367}\)

*Agential Restrictions*

The main restrictions to the player’s agency are based on the real restrictions imposed on Roman freedmen. Despite being free, *libertini* remained bound to their former masters through the Roman patron-client system. They were not considered to have their own social “persons”, rather their reputations and place in society was mediated by their patron’s support.\(^{368}\) This relationship was generally beneficial, with freedmen often becoming close confidants and agents to their patrons. However, they were also expected to act with utmost fidelity to their former masters, which has been implemented as a facet of the reputation system. The main restriction therefore is one of social support. While Attius is fond of the player character, he is also intended to have something of a stubborn personality. Attius is a perfectionist and set in his ways, and will often restrict the player’s autonomy simply through his overbearing demands. Another restriction to the player is presented by recreating the Roman elite’s popular view of freedmen. The lower classes of Roman seem to have few opinions on freedmen, as they

\(^{367}\) Observant readers may note that this is a *Pathologic* reference, as Big Vlad’s nickname has a similar connotation.

\(^{368}\) See: Mouritsen 2011, “Freedmen and their Patrons,” *Freedmen in the Roman World* for more on this complex relationship.
had functionally the same rights and social status.\textsuperscript{369} However, as many freedmen became independently wealthy and ran successful businesses\textsuperscript{370}. The Roman elite often saw them as unwanted competition, and looked down on Freedmen in a similar (though often more extreme) fashion to the \textit{Novus homo}, men who entered the senate from non-noble families.\textsuperscript{371} With this in mind, dialogue, especially with Antius and Mercurius should reflect the elite view of freedmen, enforcing the player character’s place in society.\textsuperscript{372}

\textit{User Motivations}

Establishing the player’s connection to the narrative and game world is often a key challenge of narrative design. In essence, when designing historical games and narrative of this nature, an unavoidable consideration is that the players already know the ending to the “story”- Vesuvius erupted, Pompeii was destroyed, many people died. However, as addressed earlier, this can also be a narrative strength. The player character is also informed of Pompeii’s fate ahead of time. This shared knowledge aligns the player’s incentives with the agency they are expected to embody. The prophecy of doom is the narrative “hook”, playing off of ancient theatre tropes and providing the player with their

\textsuperscript{369} Freedmen were granted varying degrees of citizenship, however, were not permitted to hold elective offices or priesthoods. While the lower classes of Rome were \textbf{technically} allowed to hold these offices, they were also functionally barred by virtue of wealth and social position.

\textsuperscript{370} On its face, the widespread success of freedmen within Roman society may seem confusing. However, it should be noted that there is a natural filtration of the kinds of slaves that were manumitted. Romans typically manumitted slaves they were close with on the basis of personal merit and service. These slaves were close members of the household that were often literate, trained tradesmen, and educated. They brought a developed skill set to their freed lives above what the average citizen would not have.

\textsuperscript{371} There is a strange dichotomy here, as the Roman elite routinely manumitted their slaves. It seems that freedmen as a “class” were looked down on, but “their” individual freedmen were accepted. Cicero’s letters in particular reflect this dual view of freedmen, with Cicero speaking well of his freemen in letters. See: Cicero, \textit{Familia} 16.10-21. However, as a \textit{Novus homo} himself, Cicero’s treatment of freedmen may not fully reflect the elite view.

\textsuperscript{372} This is to reflect what I view as the emotional regime surrounding freedmen.
initial motivation. As a character-driven narrative, the characters should be another prime motivator, as the player is embodying “Gaius”, they should come to care about Gaius’ friends and acquaintances. Clearly telegraphed narrative tasks will allow the player to engage with all characters in the game, coming to understand their personalities and motivations. Each narrative task ties into one of the larger metanarratives, ensuring the player maintains a consistent interest in narrative completion. It is important to clearly telegraph to the player that their actions will have an impact on fulfilling their goals. One of the metanarratives, “The Play’s the Thing” is intended to be completed early, serving as an introduction to the core mechanics, moral dilemmas, and problem spaces of the game. Interlinking different narratives and characters continually engages the player.

Narrative emphasis is also to be placed on Roman social life and the physical space of Pompeii. In opposition to the popular view of the Roman empire, Pompeii will be portrayed as a bustling, crowded, and unclean city. The narrative refocuses attention on the limens of Roman society, prominently featuring freedmen, slaves, gladiators, actors, women, and other marginalised Roman groups.

3.2.4 Interface and Gameplay Design

To briefly touch on the core interfaces, October 79 will contain a fairly standard RPG interface, with an emphasis on diegetic UI elements, meaning that the UI actually

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373 Personalities and motivations derived from research into Roman personal and social lives.
374 What C. Thi. Nguyen referred to as “striving play”, playing for narrative fulfilment and development of skill and understanding.
375 As a recreated historical space, it should feel familiar, but alien enough to encourage exploration. I will discuss this more later.
376 Normally, this section would be much longer, going through every menu and option within the game. This is an abridged section, largely because this section is usually filled in as the game is produced, and I have not yet taught myself how to create user interface mock-ups.
“exists” within the world. The player will track quests and objectives through a wax tablet (tabula), presented as a diptych notebook with stylus. This serves as an in-game “quest log” while still being a diegetic element. A “mental map” will be provided that highlights goals and the street layout of the town (see figure 5). This is to simulate the player character being a “local”, as there is no obscuration of the map. The game places a heavy emphasis on efficient pathfinding, and the UI empowers the player to plan their route in advance before taking action. This is supported by the recreation of Pompeii’s streets and traffic systems. This pathfinding is made visually interesting by a close recreation of the exterior buildings of Pompeii. It is on this step that I have made the most practical progress. Using photography and data taken during a trip to Pompeii, I created the Digital Open Modular Urban System (DOMUS) project, and open-source asset pack of 3D “building blocks” these building blocks are scaled to the archetypical proportions of Roman architecture, with the pack also including architectural decorations such as columns and trim. DOMUS is an ongoing and open-source project, and can be found and downloaded on Github. Building interiors pose a greater challenge, one that as of time of writing has not been fully addressed. Of greatest concern is the accurate recreation of Roman wall frescoes and interior decor. This is a process that would require reconstructing visual art as “new”, or creating a set of archetypical textures that closely resemble real wall paintings. There are several ways to implement this, but each has distinct downsides. It is for this reason that the game will be largely focused on the

377 “Diegetic” meaning that the UI elements “exist” in the game world.
378 To simulate a visitor to Pompeii, the map can be obscured until the player has visited a district themselves or been told where to go- in a similar fashion to Assassin’s Creed’s “Synchronisation” mechanic.
379 https://github.com/WolfclawProductions/DOMUS
380 AI-assisted reconstructions are the most promising avenue as of writing.
Roman street. It is not only accurate to the assumed agency of the player character, it also means that fewer indoor locations will need to be recreated in full. A selection of narratively-relevant homes is within my capacity to recreate, but the full reconstruction of a large amount of interiors will create design difficulties.

3.3- Conclusion

Popular media depicting ancient Rome tends to fall into two categories, the first being somewhat “over-sanitised”, lacking explicit references to the reality of Roman life.\(^{381}\) The second is a “grittier” take on Roman life, such as HBO’s *Rome*, which while more “accurate” to Roman social life; most examples in the second case shows a worrying tendency towards audience titillation.\(^{382}\) With the proposed historical RPG *October 79*, I have outlined a middle course between these narrative poles, rooted in appropriate scholarship, material culture, and agential engines. As an interactive history, *October 79* presents a narrative and associated procedural rhetoric that embodies the player in the role and experiences of a Roman underclass. Pompeii became a core focus due to the wealth of evidence and scholarship, and the enduring public interest in the site. It is also smaller in scale than the city of Rome, presenting the opportunity for the city to be recreated in full as a game world. In particular, the game is interested in the connections between the Roman freedman and the rest of society.

It takes inspiration from the genre conventions of Roman theatre and literature while recentring the narrative on the *limens* of Roman life. It draws inspiration from all

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\(^{381}\) The Forgotten City falls into this category, although the characters do have a narrative reason. Most media aimed towards children about Rome has this problem as well (for obvious reasons).

\(^{382}\) I colloquially call this “The HBO effect”. I would like to avoid the HBO effect.
three works discussed in Chapter 2, borrowing gameplay elements and emphasis on pathfinding from *Pathologic 2*, the historical presentation and narrative commentary from *The Forgotten City*, and the critically fabulated reconstruction of a liminal life from *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*. While I have critiqued “The HBO effect”, I was also inspired by HBO’s *Rome*; its attention to cultural detail and the role of the political underclasses provide an excellent example of media set in ancient Rome that represents the agency of the lower classes. As noted by historian Mirela Cufurovic in her analysis of the series:

“(Rome) attempts to shatter preconceived notions of the historical epic by offering an authentic retelling of Rome that challenges popular perceptions of history as being a linear sequence of events to one of unpredictability. (Main Characters) Pullo and Vorenus are considered to be constituent agents of change whereupon both their luck and misfortune becomes necessary in the events that transpire throughout Roman history in order to make it whole….Rome is able to cleverly fashion the relationship between everyday history and the history of big events and offer a new ‘branding’ of the historical epic.”

*October 79* is a microhistorical work that takes a snapshot of a historical place and time. It uses the player’s historical knowledge of Pompeii as a driving motivation and seeks to expand that knowledge through embodied agency, imaginary space, and embedded emotions. It presents a historical problem space that takes a “big event” like the eruption of Vesuvius and uses it to tell a narrative about a marginalised Roman freedman and his attempts to save his friends from impending doom. His very nature as a former slave forms an agential restriction, with the game mechanics tied into the player’s ability to gain reputation and adopt social ideas.

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Closing: Interactive Histories and Historical Writing

The Engines of Emotion and Affect framework is a methodological guide for the creation of Interactive Histories. It provides theoretical guidelines and suggestions for the aspiring developer-historian looking for a novel mode of historical knowledge dissemination. Using techniques and ideas from a broad selection of the humanities, interactive histories are presented as simulations of historical agencies, imaginations, and emotions. As a method of historical knowledge dissemination, I have argued that interactive media provides an expanded library of tools for representing historically overlooked people and events; to tell microhistorical narratives about those not well-represented by the archive; to allow the player to expand their historical imagination and perspectives on the human social experience. This survey has been deliberately broad, while still prioritising specific historical concepts and theories that I believe will best serve in the creation of engines of agency and effect. These interactive engines use the concepts of agential narratives, historical performances, imagined spaces, and emotional representations as a means of operationalising historical research into game and narrative mechanics. It has stressed academic and historical rigour; to not push the boundaries of the archive beyond limits; to not impose artificial clarity onto historical realities.

I will leave off by returning to the beginning, with the questions posed by Saidiya Hartman:

How can narrative embody life in words and at the same time respect what we cannot know? Interactive histories go beyond words. By recreating historical cultures, imaginations, and imaginations within a historical problem space, creator and player become witnesses to unthinkable histories. Engines of Agency and Effect respect the
limits of the archive and of historical depiction, embracing the value of microhistory and vignette as tools for depicting historical research and rhetorical claims.

_Is it possible to construct a story from “the locus of impossible speech” or resurrect lives from the ruins? Can beauty provide an antidote to dishonour, and love a way to “exhume buried cries” and reanimate the dead?_ Narratives that centralise agency can resurrect historical experiences. Sometimes, this is in the form of a “real” historical person, and sometimes it is as an “archetype”, created from a locus of agential experiences, uncovered via the archive. Engines of Agency and Effect allow the player to engage their agency against a historical problem space; they present the opportunity strive against real historical issues, reanimating the dead within their historical imagination.

_Or is narration its own gift and its own end, that is, all that is realisable when overcoming the past and redeeming the dead are not? And what do stories afford anyway?_ Stories, especially interactive ones, present an archive of agency and experience that seeks to affect the historical imaginations of their players. They offer a gift to both past, present, and future by carving out a further place in history for the liminal and subaltern. Engines of Agency and Affect are story machines. They afford an opportunity to represent the past and offer the gift of historical imagination.
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Glossary of Key Terms

Agency- the intentional action undertaken by an entity (‘the agent’) towards a reasoned goal--See: Chapter 1 and Section 3.1.1

- agency, Aesthetics of-- 15-19
- agency, Embodied- the user adopts a pattern of behaviour and decision-making that is different from their normal mode of agency for the purposes of functioning within an alternate structure--12-13, 15-16, 18-19, 30, 71.
- agency, Inverted—17-18, 49.
- agency, Library of- By interacting with game and narrative systems, the user emerges with a new “library” of agencies. This expanded historical view empowers the user to interrogate the systems presented by the game. Related to “Autoethnography”, similar to the

Affect- a process wherein through embedded rhetoric and aesthetics, a piece of media influences the audience’s beliefs, perceptions, and imaginations. See: Section 1.2

- affect, Archaeological—35, 37.
- affect, Theory of--35-37, 46-47.

Autoethnography- an anthropological method that creates ethnographic narratives through reflections of the writer’s own lived experiences-- 56-58, 60, 67, 73, 88.

Emotional Communities- distinct group of individuals who share a group of emotional values. Alongside shared emotions, emotional communities may also share cultural, or ideological values--See: Sections 1.2.2, 3.1.2-- Pages 54-56, 61, 67, 72, 86, 110, 114, 127-128.

Emotional Landscapes- 35, 37, 50, 55, 56, 139, 143.
**Emotional Regimes**- the cultural enforcement of shared social values and expectations within a socio-imaginary space—See: Sections 1.2.2, 3.1.2-- Pages 75, 92, 100, 104-107, 111, 115-118.

**Emotive Script/Sequences, “Familiar Tracks”**- that spoken or written emotional expressions are “drafts” of an attempt to express feelings. Emotives are embedded into cultural works and may be uncovered by a historian—35, 52, 55, 113, 115, 118, 133-135, 139.

**Fabula**- a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused and experienced by actors. An event is a transition from one state to another. – 28.

**fabulation, Critical**- narratives based upon a critical reading of the archive; tracing the real lines and experiences of individuals and create an “impossible narrative” that amplifies its own impossibility; to paint as full a picture of a historical life as possible, using as many historical facts as is feasible—28-29, 38, 42, 45, 102, 113, 121, 131.

**Habitus**- the idea that a shared set of cultural concepts, beliefs, and behaviour embed themselves within the shared emotional and imaginative landscapes of a given society 37-38, 56.

**Historical Problem Space**- a framework for analysing and understanding the game and narrative mechanics of interactive media. It breaks historical games into their component parts in order to analyse games as a mode of historical expression—17, 21, 32, 34, 38, 41, 49, 53, 56, 58, Chapter 2, 122, 170.

**Historian**- a writer and researcher of history, the intended audience of the thesis

**historian, Developer**- a game designer with the academic sensibilities of a professional historian, what the thesis suggests more historians should become—2,
historian, Emulated- when the player of an interactive history temporarily emulates the practice of a historian by making historical declarations. See: Section 1.3.

Magic Circle- The magic circle suggests that games introduce temporary, playful boundaries that restrict a player’s actions to agreed-upon rules, forming a structure that contains a virtual world—12, 58, 108.

Microhistory-- a historical work that features smaller-scale historical events, along with considering smaller and often marginalised social units. Historical studies on emotional communities are often considered as microhistorical—29, 57-59, 101, 172-175.

Narrativity- various forms of storytelling and conveying ideas and rhetoric

narratives, Agential- a narrative centring the causal impacts of individual agency and actions. It incorporates uncovered agential concepts and ideas to drive the narrative. See: “Critical Fabulation” and “Emotional Scripts” -- Section 1.1.2—89, 174.

narratives, Identity--15, 18, 42, 58.

narratives, Rhetorical--see: rhetoric, Historical/Narrative

Interactive Media- a constructed system that invites a user to engage their agency and interact with and within the constraints of the system. A broad category that encompasses not only video games, but also analog games (role-playing and tabletop games) and interactive fiction (such as visual novels and Twine games).

Interactive Histories- a subtype of interactive media; they are interactive objects that centralise historical materials and research within their narrative and design.

Ontology- a given mode of representing reality.
**deontology** - a package of social norms that derive their motivating social force from agent’s beliefs about their legitimacy—142.

**Ontological Hybridity** - the performance of history is a unification of various performative ontologies. It is a medium that unifies aesthetic, social, fictional, and historical energies in order to convey meaning --30, 43, 48, 84.

**Play (ludology)**-- 14

**Play, Suitsuan**-- games where goals are achieved by playing within certain designed inefficiencies (game mechanics and restraints) -- 15.

**play, Striving**-- a state of play where the player adopts an agency that enables them to engage and overcome the mechanical challenges of an interactive experience and to treat an alternate agency as all-encompassing--15-18, 51, 85-86.

**Presence**-- a medium’s ability to depict the reality of history to an audience-- 5, 40, 43 78, 84, 88, 150.

**Rhetoric**-- the art of presenting an argument in order to persuade and impress, often as a constructed series of arguments.

**rhetoric, Procedural**-- rhetoric that is conveyed through the interrogation and experiencing of a constructed system. In creating game and narrative mechanics, a game designer embeds their rhetoric, views, and beliefs into the system-- 13, 19-22, 27, 30, 32-34, 47, 51, 56, 67, 79, 86-89, 97, 100 129, 134, 141, 144, 159, 161, 172.

**Source Bias**-- the exclusionary effect takes place within the archive; when a narrow set of historical evidence, archives, and sources are considered to be “fact” --23, 26, 29.

**Space**--

**space, Imaginary**-- a shared imaginary construct, created at the intersection of multiple
imaginations. It is a microcosm of the larger cultural environment, influenced by an infinite number of cultural ideas, tropes, memes, practices, and values—See: Sections 1.2.1, 3.3.3—51, 54-56, 62, 64, 65, 72, 78, 88.

**space, Mapping/Imagined Geography**- Both concepts suggest that people do not only interact with the physical world. Instead, people view space as a map of functions and meanings based on their present agential goals. Locations adopt different meanings and uses depending on what is “projected” onto them by an individuals’ imagination—37, 46, 77, 78, 88, 107, 111, 145, 150.

**Spatial Turn**- a cultural historical-archaeological method that views space as repositories of symbolism and meaning as expressed by literary description and the archaeological & architectural imagination—45-46.

**Teleological Thinking**- When history is taught as a linear narrative, and not as a web of casualties, it generates a sense of narrative inevitability that can be internalised as a bias—one that suggests that present reality was the only possible outcome of the historical process—23-29, 58.

**Theatrical energies (Performativity)**- The act of performance creates at least two modes of engagement and transmission of “energy”, in this case the transmission of historical understanding between actor and audience, resurrecting the past within the imaginary space of the stage—37, 43-45, 48, 58, 72, 79, 80, 84, 85, 112-115, 165-166.

**performance, Role-playing or Emulated**-- the player using theatrical energies to emulate/role-play a historical practice, imagination, or emotion. Intersects with “Player Agency”—42-45, 58, 115.
**Vignette games** - a “genre” of games that contain short narratives with limited mechanical interactions; vignette games are designed as aesthetic experiences, reflecting very personal experiences of their respective designers. Related to “Microhistory” -- 58-59-63, 115.