

# MEDIEVAL SOUNDSPACE IN THE NEW DIGITAL LEISURE TIME MEDIA

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SPAIN - ARGENTINA

Date of receipt: 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 2013

Final date of acceptance: 10<sup>th</sup> of September, 2014

## ABSTRACT

Videogames have become a very important cultural reference in our society, especially for the younger generation. The music, sound effects and noises that appear in them are examples of the general iconography we have of the past, in this case the medieval period. This study presents an approach to this phenomenon that represents one of the best examples to analyse the idea of what we think the Middle Ages was like, and, in particular, its soundscape.

## KEYWORDS

Videogames, Middle Ages, Soundscape, New Information and Communications Technology (NICT).

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Videoludi, Medium Aevum, Locus Sonorus, novae Informationis Communicationum Technologiae.

## 1. Definition of Soundscape<sup>1</sup>

The term *soundscape* was coined by the Canadian composer and researcher Raymond Murray Schafer<sup>2</sup> to refer to the study of the natural milieu of a real place, comprising the analysis of all the sounds originated by the forces of nature, animals and human beings, as the latter are closely envisaged through the individual and its cultural environment.

Soundscapes are, therefore, in continuous evolution and follow the changes in the environment. That is why we can claim that they possess historicity, since they go hand in hand with the transformation of a social group. Any registration of a soundscape (a written description, a pictorial or sculptural representation, a recording) can be considered as a sound historical document, insofar as its temporal characteristics are demarcated. Referring to these registrations —this registered sound documentation— Jordi Pigem proposes that we should *escuchar las voces del mundo, dado que hemos creído que él era sordo y mudo*.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, we intend to analyse the paradigms of those sounds in order to outline the perception we have today of what might have been then, of how that auditory context we are referring to was perceived. There is not a technology to retrieve those testimonies or a system for us to be able to hear them. That is why, since there are no records, the reflections we deal with in this paper are aimed at hypotheses tackling what is the truthfulness of the collective sound image we keep of the Middle Ages; and ultimately what we consider to be *Medieval* music or sounds, as it is clear that, if we refer to Medieval music, a great part of the population could respond identifying a certain piece of melody or noise with a typically Medieval context.<sup>4</sup> This question, analysed in its more global aspect from the peculiarity of the videogame framework, is the priority objective in this article.

One of the current challenges consists of delimiting and analysing the sound environment of the different Medieval milieus. For example, the inhabitants of a

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1. This work is framed in the research project: *Historia y videojuegos. El impacto de los nuevos medios de ocio en el conocimiento del pasado medieval* (HAR2011-25548), funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain, and in that of *Paisajes sensoriales, sonidos y silencios de la Edad Media* (HUM 396/12, cód. 15/F-456), funded by the Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (Argentina).

2. Schafer, Raymond M. *The Tuning of the World*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.

3. "Listen to the voices from the world, as we have thought that it was deaf and mute" (Jordi Pigem. "Escuchar las voces del mundo", *Observatori del Paisatge*. Dossier "Paisajes sonoros", 2009. 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014 <[www.catpaisatge.net/dossiers/psonors/esp/docs/article\\_pigem.pdf](http://www.catpaisatge.net/dossiers/psonors/esp/docs/article_pigem.pdf)>).

4. There is a huge quantity of literature on Medieval music, from specific monographies (Hoppin, Richard H. *La música medieval*. Madrid: Akal, 1991; Caldwell, John. *La música medieval*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1991). To recent specific studies on any precise topic: Tello, Arturo. "Sobre el amor y el fervor. Música, piedad y corte en los reinos hispanos medievales". *Anales de Historia del Arte*, 23 (2013): 369-386; Mussons, Anna Maria. "Antes y después de Muret: cantos y silencios". *La encrucijada de Muret. ¿Una nueva definición para Europa y el Mediterráneo?*. Madrid: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2014: 94-136. Nonetheless, we would like to refer particularly to the very interesting contribution by Clara Cortázar: Cortázar, Clara. "La música medieval. Iniciadora de la música moderna". *Teología*, 72 (1998): 30-45, because of the simplicity of her explanation as well as because it is quite advisable as an introduction to this topic.



Lower Middle Ages Castilian town must have known the sounds they heard and produced. And by sound we understand from proper music to any kind of noise. Every street, neighborhood and town must have had its own sonority, which would change at every minute. These sounds represent a space full of activity and movement: in the same way as the sounds of nature inform of the phenomena occurring in it, those produced by people inform of their presence and their corresponding activities. The sound manifestations of a human group are more the echo of a social experience than a musical activity in itself. We are focusing our attention on that sound icon, as an image is, along with a sound, the most representative aspect of what a memory stands for. The image configures the memory, in its more general sense, as a feeling which has been perceived — a particular or collective profile. It is connected with Clara Cortázar's assertion: *Querámoslo o no, somos medievales en nuestra música como lo somos en nuestras lenguas*.<sup>5</sup>

We rule out the strictly musical videogames with which people can interpret or accompany specific pieces of music or singing<sup>6</sup>, as is the case of *Wii Music*, *Guitar Hero*, *Sing Star*, and those specific for dancing, like the various *Just Dance* (Ubisoft) and *Dance Central* (Harmonix). It is not the objective of this paper to mention any manifestation of music or sound on videogames but (let us insist) the sensorial reflection the user perceives while they are utilising and playing with titles linked to scripts relating to Medieval times, whether they are historical or legendary.

## 2. Definition and Scope of Historical Videogames

A videogame is a kind of electronic entertainment which is configured through computer programs which have a multimedia application. Wikipedia defines a videogame like this: *an electronic game that involves human interaction with a user interface to generate visual feedback on a video device*.<sup>7</sup> We prefer this definition rather than that offered by the Real Academia de la Lengua Española, which is less updated.<sup>8</sup> In both cases the scope of the medium is limited to the technical field, as it is an accepted cultural device.<sup>9</sup> But one of the basic elements which confer a videogame

5. "Whether we like it or not, we are Medieval in our music in the same way as we are that in our languages". Also: Cortázar, Clara. "La música medieval...": 43.

6. About this group, the following Wikipedia page is recomendable: "Music videogame". *Wikipedia*. 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_video\\_game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_video_game)>.

7. "Videojuego". *Wikipedia*. 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014. <[es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Videojuego](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Videojuego)>.

8. Videojuego: "Dispositivo electrónico que permite, mediante mandos apropiados, simular juegos en las pantallas de un televisor o de un ordenador" (An electronic dispositive which allows through appropriate controls to simulate games on the screens of a TV or computer). Real Academia Española de la Lengua. "Videojuego". 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014. <[lema.rae.es/drae/?val=videojuego](http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=videojuego)>.

9. Aranda, Daniel; Sánchez, Jordi. "Algunas claves para entender los videojuegos", *Aprovecha el tiempo y juega. Algunas claves para entender los videojuegos*, Daniel Aranda, Jordi Sánchez, eds. Barcelona: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, 2009: 8. On the first pages of Pilar Lacasa's book we find an interesting contrastive table on the various interpretations of what a videogame is according to different authors, taking as a



the character of a complete and full cultural product never comes up, since if the image is prioritised, the sound becomes a key substrate to achieve the formal objective of the medium. As it combines the multiplication of sensorial stimuli with the user's active participation, it is rather considered as an interactive multimedia product. Starting from there, the communication is established through the various visual and sound devices which, working mainly in an integrated way, stimulate multisensory perception and the continuous dialogue between the individual and the operative system or between individuals through technological media, which in this case are digital ones.

On other occasions<sup>10</sup> our intention has been to highlight the playful function of video games in the framework of the historical discipline, and we have considered it possible to adapt them as an educational resource, particularly those which have a historical content and script considering their distinctive features, which are related to the treatment of time and the reconstructions of the period. Let us remember that in this kind of games the following features are basic:

- The treatment of the *time* factor.
- The stories which intertwine in videogames, between each other and with lived experiences and general experiences, personal stories, etc.
- The relationships between story, legend, truthfulness and verisimilitude.
- Iconography as the base for historical communication.

In the latest videogame developments, the historicity of many of their components has been one of their outstanding characteristics, both in what refers to the reconstruction of cities and combats, weapons and clothes. All this process has been improved by the spectacular progress of digital technology. Meaningful advances have been achieved in accuracy and details, and by doing so settings are more real to accomplish a more and more perfect *simulation* effect. The visual interface is shown as something specific which seeks to trap the user in such a way

reference the words by Huizinga (*Homo ludens*) about what a game is in itself. Lacasa, Pilar. *Los videojuegos. Aprender en mundos reales y virtuales*. Madrid: Morata, 2011: 20-25.

10. Jiménez, Juan Francisco. "Videogames and Middle Ages". *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum*, 3 (2009): 311-365; Jiménez, Juan Francisco. "El reto de las tecnologías de la información y comunicación en Humanidades. Medievalismo, medievalistas y el ordenador", *El estudiante en el sistema ECTS. Innovaciones docentes para clases teóricas y prácticas*. Granada: Ed. Copicentro, 2010: 95-112; Jiménez, Juan Francisco. "Cruzadas, cruzados y videojuegos". *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 17 (2011): 363-407; Jiménez, Juan Francisco. "El otro pasado posible: la simulación del Medievo en los videojuegos". *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum*, 5 (2011): 491-517; Jiménez, Juan Francisco. "El arte de la guerra medieval: combates digitales y experiencias de juego". *Revista Eletrônica sobre Antiguidade e Medievo Roda da Fortuna*, 1/1 (2014): 516-546. Jiménez, Juan Francisco; Rodríguez, Gerardo F. "La visión del musulmán en los videojuegos de contenido histórico", *IX Estudios de Frontera. Economía, Derecho y sociedad en la Frontera*. Jaen: Diputación Provincial, 2014: 317-336; Jiménez, Juan Francisco; Rodríguez, Gerardo Fabián "Sexualidades jugadas. El sexo en los videojuegos históricos", *I Jornadas Interdisciplinarias sobre Estudios de Género y Estudios Visuales*. (Mar del Plata: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, 2014). Historia y videojuegos. El impacto de los nuevos medios de ocio sobre el conocimiento del pasado medieval. 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014 <[www.historiayvideojuegos.com/?9=node=67](http://www.historiayvideojuegos.com/?9=node=67)>; Jiménez, Juan Francisco; Mugueta, Iñigo. "Estudiar la Edad Media desde el presente: un taller didáctico en aulas de ESO con videojuegos", *Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Videojuegos y Educación*, Francisco Revuelta, María Rosa Fernández, María Inmaculada Pedrera, Jesús Valverde, coords. Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 2014: 273-276.



that his or her experience throughout the game is the aim of the product itself. Melodies have also advanced in a parallel sense but rather towards a degree of musical and technical quality.

The soundscape which goes together with these videogames has not progressed, though, in the same historicist direction; rather, it offers a reconstruction which is along the line of the game interests and of what the designer would like to use, which many times depends on what the designer imagines the player desires to hear and not on historical recreation. In a lecture given by the developer of the Noguera Games<sup>11</sup> during the *Murcia Game Party* (April 2014)<sup>12</sup>, he showed a game which was in the initial designing phase, *Quest*, whose plot had a “Medieval setting” (sic); when asked what kind of music would be used in the game finally, he responded by saying that it would be “Medieval” music. All the presents heard the assertion with perfect comprehension, as they *understood* what the expression “Medieval music” meant. Quite a different thing is what it really is. In this paper we intend to go deep into this topic and some others.

### 3. Music and Sounds

Edgardo Rudnitzky<sup>13</sup> claims that we can stop seeing when we stop looking but we cannot stop listening when we stop hearing, since there are no lids for ears in the same way as we have lids for our eyes.

In this sense, sound turns out to be ubiquitous—it is always around us, it is never a private affair. It has only one point of origin but multiple points of listening—receivers. Sound *is* in the space, allows us to perceive that area totally no matter where we are looking. It is the medium through which we understand oral language and perceive music. Sound is presence and is ambivalent in the sense that it has an immense referential capacity towards topics which are alien to it when it is a sign or language, and the quality of being absolute abstraction when it is pure sound with no linguistic significant—a stimulus in itself. These assertions, which may seem metatheoretical in their approach, are really an intrinsic part of the success of the *videogame* product. We could argue that we can play without sounds or music. That is true, but the *complete experience of the game*—that experience which is the definition of the medium—is obliterated. In fact, there are already melodies which are identified with some titles. Let us remember just *My Patch*, by Jim Noir, for *Little*

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11. Bad Juju Games, Inc.-Noguera Juegos. *Desura*. 13<sup>rd</sup> January 2015. <[www.desura.com/company/noguera-juegos](http://www.desura.com/company/noguera-juegos)>.

12. Game Party Entertainment. *Murcia Game Party*. 13<sup>rd</sup> June 2014. <[www.murciagameparty.com](http://www.murciagameparty.com)>.

13. Edgardo Rudnitzky (1956) is an Argentinian composer and sound artist whose work has been linked to contemporary music and whose sound has been associated to performance practices. He lives in Berlin and in the years 2012-2013 he presented *Nocturno. Instalación sonora para 15 monocordios* in Fundación Proa. His thought was registered in Ezequiel Alemián's interview in: “No hay párpados para los oídos”. *Ñ. Revista de Cultura*, 497 (06/04/2013): 36.



*Big Planet* (Media Molecule-Sony, 2008), and soundtracks are even published for their marketing—that is the case of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (Activision, 2010) or *Medal of Honor* (several titles of the saga, released by EA Recordings), or inserted as a supplement in editions for collectors: let us quote the following examples: *Total War*, *Anno 1404*, *Age of Empires*, *The Children of the Nile* and *The Sims Medieval*—illustration 1—. A collection of soundtracks for videogames interpreted by the London Philharmonic Orchestra came out onto the market a few months ago.<sup>14</sup>



ILLUSTRATION 1: COVER OF THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK OF *THE SIMS MEDIEVAL*, INSERT IN THE COLLECTOR'S EDITION.

That is why developing companies invest higher and higher quantities in soundtracks of those titles we can describe as *superproductions*. It is no wonder that great masters, very well-known composers of film soundtracks, get involved in products specific for videogames. Hans Zimmer is a good example; he is the author of the melodies to *Rain man* (Barry Levinson, 1988), *Driving Miss Daisy* (Bruce Beresford, 1989), *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), *The Lion King* (Rob Minkoff-Roger Allers, 1994), *Crimson Tide* (Tony Scott, 1995), *The Thin Red Line* (Terrence Malick, 1998), *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000), *Black Hawk Down* (also by Ridley Scott, 2001), *Pearl Harbor* (Michael Bay, 2001), *The Last Samurai* (Edward Zwick, 2003),

14. London Philharmonic Orchestra. *The Greatest videogames music*. New York: X5 Music, 2011.

*The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008), *Inception* (also by Christopher Nolan, 2010), *12 Years a Slave* (Steve McQueen, 2013) and the series *The Pacific* (HBO).<sup>15</sup> The renown German musician can also add to his CV the soundtrack of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (Activision, 2010)<sup>16</sup>, and *Crysis 2* (EA, 2011). Steve Jablonsky is not less known; he is the composer of the music to *Gears of War 2* (Epic Games, 2008) and *The Sims 3* (EA, 2009), but he has also reflected his creativity in films like *Transformers* (Paramount Pictures, 2007) and *Ender's Game* (Chartoff Productions and others, 2013).

Once we have settled that the *sound* factor in videogames is essential, we have come to the point of asking about the way it shows in the medium and whether it is possible to recognise and differentiate music and melody in a videogame.

For Josep Martí Pérez<sup>17</sup> the question of the meaning in music goes beyond a purely denotative stage of musical concepts; it has to do with the ideas external to the musical code agreed to it by society. Since these associations have been closely related to the systems of beliefs and values in a certain sociocultural area, they have incorporated selective criteria establishing an identity link between music and a social order cognitive category. Needless to say that this proposition suggests that the meaningful contents of music arise from the relationship between the inner structure of music itself and an outer concept based on social experiences. Some examples quoted by the Catalan author are the associations of the Gregorian chant with religion (particularly with the Catholic Church); of rock and heavy music with youth, innovation, rebellion, nonconformity, and independence; of opera, and classical music in general, with the intellectual and economic elite. In this sense, the use of a specific sound that the player would like to listen to while playing depends on what the developer uses in order to fully meet the user's demand, and also in order to get a harmonic product which reaches a minimum standard indispensable to be successful on the market. Nonetheless, there are certain factors which resort to plot links when using specific kinds of music. This is the case of the Overture in the *Halo* videogame (Bungie Studios and Gearbox Software), a composition which can be fully described as coral Gregorian chant because of its connection with the main character, the Masterchief, the 117 Warrior (St. John, *Apocalypse*, 1: 17). The narrative in the videogame setting is not exclusive of the imagery and the written

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15. On occasion associated to composer Nick Glennie-Smith (*We Were Soldiers*, Paramount Pictures, 2002), he worked under the shelter of the Media Ventures Company, which derived into Remote Control Productions. The best known product of that collaboration was the soundtrack to *The Rock* (Don Simpson/Jerry Bruckheimer Films, 1996).

16. About that there is an article by Raúl Álvarez. "Bandas sonoras de tus videojuegos: el estruendo de *Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2*". *Xombit Games*. 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014. <[xombitgames.com/2013/07/bso-call-of-duty-mw2](http://xombitgames.com/2013/07/bso-call-of-duty-mw2)>.

17. Martí, Josep. "La idea de 'relevancia social' aplicada al estudio del fenómeno musical". *Trans: Revista Transcultural de Música*, 1 (1995). As the author does not clarify what he means by "categorías cognitivas", we understand that they are general concepts which are established starting from man's rational knowledge of reality. 1 June 2014. <<http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/articulo/301/la-idea-de-relevancia-social-aplicada-al-estudio-del-fenomeno-musical>>.



script; its music becomes, thus, the inseparable companion of the player's experience of the game.

Let us now retake the topic of the musical meaning. Steven Feld<sup>18</sup> suggests that the *musical object*, understood as a *symbolic entity*, contains *interpretive tensions* which can only be solved when auditory impressions are transformed into concepts. In order to achieve that, the author considers *social experience*, rather than psychological factors, as *estructuras que amoldan lass ensaciones perceptivas en realidades conceptuales*<sup>19</sup> whether they are musical or non musical; he refers, thus, to the *outlines of classification* shared socially, through which the apprehension of symbols is carried out. To sum up, what Feld suggests is that the communicative process of meaning and of the musical interpretation takes as its bases, on the one hand, the dialectics of the sound object/event as the concurrence of a musical (structure) or non musical (its placement in historical time and space) reality; and, on the other hand, the *interpretive moves* which, through their variants of *placement, categorisation, association, reflection* and *evaluation*, transform auditory experience into a practice based on the selection and juxtaposition of deep and shallow knowledge. The author explains that, rather than fixing meanings, these movements seek to focus *frontiers* of meaning in the adjustments and changes of attention patterns at the time of any auditory experience. Feld calls this procedure *framing*, and simultaneously involves the understanding of general and specific aspects, as well as forms and references. In this way, what the author intends to emphasise is the fact that *the significant characteristics of musical communication are not those untransferable or irreducible to the verbal mood, but rather those whose generality or multiplicity in their possible messages and interpretations provoke a special type of affective activity and an involvement on the part of the listener*. Let us keep this latter factor, *involvement*, since the music and the global sound in a videogame just seek to generate a setting, a context with a particular or shared experience which identifies the user with the thing he or she is playing with, whether it is a trench in the I World War, like, for example, in the *Verdun* videogame, or the battle of Muret, in *Medieval Warfare* (1c Company-FX). Generally developers use specific sounds to make the player *orientate* him or herself, since one of the objectives in the game is to make the setting look *verisimilar*. Even with respect to apocalyptic contexts with certain titles, like *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios), the sense of the music that can be heard (and purchased as an album from iTunes), takes us back to the 50's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Roy Brown, Billie Holiday, Billy Munn, Cole Porter...), as the script specifies that, after the nuclear catastrophe occurred in the future, the cultural progress of western civilization had come to a standstill. And here it is where, besides the melody, the element *special sounds*, or *noises*, is basic to get the *gamer's* involvement or the increase on the simulated sensation as an experience of the game. If a sword is being brandished, one might expect to hear its strident metallic sound when hitting another metal object or its hissing cut in the air.

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18. Steven, Feld. "Communication, music, and speech about Music". *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 16 (1984): 303-317.

19. "Structures which shape perceptive sensations into conceptual realities".



A parallel topic in the framework of what can be heard on a videogame is voices. In the case of the aforementioned *Fallout 3* we can hear Liam Neeson, in its original version, dubbing the father of the main character; Ron Perlman as the narrator of the plot; and Malcolm MacDowell as the chairman of the *Enclave*. This case serves us to refer to the importance of dubbing in videogames; something that adds, no doubt, to the player's involvement in the inner setting of the game. Hearing Ramón Langa's voice in *The Abbey* (Alcachofa Soft), a game inspired in *The Name of the Rose*, contributes to associate its plot with its narrative quality. It is a sort of permanent feedback between the cinema and videogames which was already taken for granted since the great studios absorbed or promoted companies dealing with the development of digital leisure time —a process which started in 1976 after Atari was absorbed by Warner Bros and whose latest case could be Lucas Arts, absorbed by Disney.<sup>20</sup> There are no extant sounds from the Middle Ages. Therefore, there is nothing better than a deep voice, particularly if it is easily recognisable, to position the player's *mind* in the context he or she wants to re-create or at least simulate.

### 3.1. Music

By definition, videogame music is any kind of music that appears in it; mainly background music and some sound effects. In its origins it used to have a style of its own, characterised by the abundance of loops and a simple melody, which was executed with synthesised sounds. At present the border between videogame music and film music is rather diffuse due to the fact that both media interact each other and there is continuous communication between them, as they have a two-way character.

According to Francisco Javier Pérez Quevedo<sup>21</sup>, videogame music must enrich the player's experience —it must be adaptable, dynamic, informative and immersive. It must:

1. Accompany the player throughout the game; that is why it is usually instrumental music.
2. Create a setting, favouring entertainment and the immersion in the world of the game.
3. Create uneasiness, tension and expectations.
4. Position the player inside the action, generating different climaxes.
5. Help to reach the end allowing the player to relax once he or she has reached the final objective.

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20. Levis, Diego. *Los videojuegos, un fenómeno de masas. Qué impacto produce sobre la infancia y la juventud la industria más próspera del sistema audiovisual*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1997: 101 and following.

21. The assesement by Francisco Javier Pérez Quevedo was made during the course "Animación y videojuegos" directed by Alberto Prieto and José Luis Bernier, Centro Mediterráneo de la Universidad de Granada, Granada, 23 to 27 July, 2012. 1 June 2014 <[http://secretariageneral.ugr.es/pages/tablon/\\*/noticias-canal-ugr/ala-musica-de-los-videojuegos-debe-enriquecer-la-experiencia-del-jugadora-dice-f-javier-perez-quevedo-en-el-centro-mediterraneo-de-la-ugr?login\\_form\\_register](http://secretariageneral.ugr.es/pages/tablon/*/noticias-canal-ugr/ala-musica-de-los-videojuegos-debe-enriquecer-la-experiencia-del-jugadora-dice-f-javier-perez-quevedo-en-el-centro-mediterraneo-de-la-ugr?login_form_register)>.



In this sense, and for the objective we have set ourselves, the second factor is particularly important, since the use of a specific melody which brings before the user's eyes a specific setting developed in a *Medieval* context becomes one of the crucial elements in the development of the game. But not in the final stage, when the experience of the game is already manifest, but at the initial moments, when the designer is thinking of creating a setting for the videogame employing all the resources he or she can get hold of. If infography and rendering, and, in general, all the graphic apparatus used, are configured as clear visual characteristics—we need only to know the great economic effort of Ubisoft to digitally recreate the Great Bazaar of Constantinople in *Assassin's Creed. Revelations* (Ubisoft, 2011, illustration 2)—, the music is what, not leaving us for a minute, positions us in a specific special context.



ILLUSTRATION 2: SCENE IN THE GREAT BAZAAR OF CONSTANTINOPLE. *ASSASSIN'S CREED. REVELATIONS*.

Manuel Gértrudix Barrio<sup>22</sup> thinks that music is a dramatic narrative resource because of the plasticity of its language, the versatility of its resources and the potential of its discourse, which make it an essential component in the audiovisual

22. Gértrudix, Manuel. *Música y narración en los medios audiovisuales*. Madrid: Laberinto, 2003; Gértrudix, Manuel. "La música en el relato audiovisual y multimedia: aplicaciones y funciones narrativas", *Narrativa audiovisual: televisiva, fílmica, radiofónica, hipermedia y publicitaria*, Francisco García, ed. Madrid: Laberinto, 2006: 209-224.

story. He has discovered different functions in videogame music, which he classifies like this:

- Narrative functions, linked to the characters: 1. referentiality, 2. characterisation, 3. focalisation.
- Functions relating to the action: 1. comments, 2. underlining, 3. setting, 4. specification.
- Functions relating to time, whether they refer to the essence of time or are used to introduce nuances: 1. transitive: it unites the different points on the time line, 2. Constitutive: it enhances imagery, 3. Indicative: it expresses argumental values, 4. Topographic: it expresses the face value of time, 5. Hagiographic: it influences the reading time.
- Functions relating to space: the videogame music modulates and shapes space, as it replaces real sound. So the function can be: 1. focusing, 2. pragmatic, 3. formant, 4. expressive/ emotive.

From the various perspectives mentioned, the music used in videogames which have historical contents, and more precisely in those with a Medieval setting, whether those with a more historicist outline or those that reflect oneiric worlds —*WoW*, the saga *The Elder Scrolls...*— or myths —*The Lord of the Rings: The War in the North; Beowulf; King Arthur...*—, aims to bring before the user's eyes a quite recognisable sensorial context, not seeking to be surprising or to reflect historical accuracy. What the *gamer* expects to hear is what is employed —something that sounds *Medieval* above any other melody that might suit better to that kind of game. There are certainly specific cases of identity soundtracks for games, and probably *Zelda* is the best known.

But in order to achieve that (i.e. in order to be able to distinguish a kind of music with nuances that is, made up of non-metallic notes characteristic of the early videogames) technology has needed to take a spectacular jump over the last few years. At present, every sound of a product is usually a fundamental part of the design of the videogame itself, as the hardware can already cope with that. Just one example: usually on videogames there is an option to adjust the volume of the music as well as the sound effects. The consequence of this is that the experience of the game is more personal, as the player chooses the preferences of where and when to play.

In effect, the development of videogame music is closely related to technological progress. The changes that occurred between 1970 and 2010 can be summarised like this:

1. Technology: there was a progress from single-channel sound to involving sound
2. Musical techniques: from monodic loops to great orchestras.
3. Musical styles: from adapted songs to soundtracks.
4. Functionality: from extradiegesis or metadiegesis to narrative diegesis.

At the end of the 1990s and going parallel to technological developments, music gained an importance which was at the same level as images. Hence the importance of music, which acquired cinematographic characteristics, and the marketing of soundtracks, as suggested before. It is this point which we must insist



on. The limitations this medium had took a qualitative jump as pre-recorded music could be used on the media (CDs mainly)<sup>23</sup>, and it was at this point where the potential we are referring to originated. It is true that the progress was gradual, but without a pause. And it was altered only by precise jumps like the undertaking of the standard. MOD on the heels of the use of *Sound Tracker*, a free software, in 1987. We must certainly specify the crucial importance, for this matter as well as for the graphic aspect, implied in the technological media and their corresponding progress. The various kinds of sequenced music and sampled sounds had a parallel reflection in the restrictions of the prices of the machines people played on and even in the reproduction system used, like NTSC or PAL. We have already insisted upon the deep change occurred when the CD became popular as a medium, as it enabled people to hear, on any hardware, voices, sounds and music which were not distorted. There were also technological advances on that physical element, to the point that some specific chips managed the tracks that were played. In effect, their job was exclusively to decompress music files (let us read that like this: specific sound cards or those linked to matrix plaques).

Nevertheless all this framework of mixes and uses of sounds and different kinds of music aimed ultimately to involve the player in the context of a specific game so that his or her experience enjoyed originality. Thence the fact that an important achievement was the use of *expected* music in specific settings. It was the case of the game *Star Wars: X-Wing* (Lucas Arts, 1993), where they employed scores inspired in those of John Williams which were intended for the early films of that saga. The reason for that is not other than generate a setting that takes up the *gamer* and identifies him or her with what he or she sees through what he or she hears. But what is most interesting to the aim of this paper is not the use of the, by then, novel sound system iMUSE<sup>24</sup> but the fact that the sounds we hear in the videogame respond exclusively to the universe depicted in films; and that is precisely what the user expects—we could not hear noises or music in the space vacuum and, nevertheless, we have generated an audiovisual image which is hard to break however Physics explains something that is utterly the opposite. It is all the same as far as videogames set in the Middle Ages are concerned—contextualising melodies and noises generated in an imaginary product of 20th century cinematography.

It is really so. Photograms have fixed in the collective memory facts, behaviour, gestures, sounds which will be difficult to eradicate from popular culture as nitid images of what the past was like, although in fact it may have been differently. The ending of a gladiator combat in a Roman amphitheatre is always referred to as something made up by the cinema. But we can also mention that the *music of Rome* has been presented in the epic scores by Miklós Rózsa to *Ben-Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), above all in *Prelude* and *Anno Domini*, *King of Kings* (Nicholas Ray, 1961) and *Quo Vadis?* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1951), the three of them produced by MGM, not to

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23. "Música de videojuegos". *Wikipedia*. 1 June 2014. <[http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%BAsica\\_de\\_videojuegos](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%BAsica_de_videojuegos)>.

24. Interactive Music Streaming Engine, by Michael Land and Peter McConnell. Motor to the playing of videogame music. iMUSE. *Wikipedia*. 13 January 2014. <<http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/iMUSE>>.



mention the soundtrack composed by Rózsa himself to *El Cid* (Samuel Bronston, 1961).<sup>25</sup> We insist on this point because if those pieces influenced the later cinema outstandingly and helped to establish and fix even further the idea of what Roman Antiquity was, the turning point occurred unexpectedly with the premiere of the film *Gladiator*, the soundtrack of which was composed by the already mentioned Hans Zimmer. It is not surprising to check that the soundtrack to the musical videogame *Rome Total War* (The Creative Assembly), a product of Jeff van Dyck's, takes as its model the German musician's composition and ignores the kind of *classic* music generated by Rózsa's grand style.

That is why it is crucial to understand that the soundtrack applied to the videogames which have a historical content set in the Medieval period has almost always been linked to what a medium user would expect to hear —a melody which can be accepted as perfectly possible in a Medieval context. The auditory sensation is not perceived in the same way if we hear the background music played with a flute on ancient chords in *Stronghold 3* (Firefly Studios, 2011) while we are picking apples or sawing wood as if we were hearing some current pop music. The experience of the game is utterly different, and it is not what the videogame player wants. And this is not an opinion: in most cases the developer does things to meet the demand properly. That is why, in good logic, he or she will use, as far as possible and whenever he or she considers it suitable, that music which sounds *Medieval* or which, at least, inspires him or her.<sup>26</sup> The case is similar to the soundtrack used in *The Sims Medieval* (Electronic Arts, 2011). The game, one of the best-known *sandboxes*, contains melodies of a Medieval nature, a product of John Debney's. The composer, author of film soundtracks like *Cutthroat Island* (RennyHarlin, 1995), *The Passion of the Christ* (Mel Gibson, 2004), *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985), *The Scorpion King* (Chuck Russell, 2002) and *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Jim Gillespie, 1997), fully incorporates that setting which accompanies the development of the game. And that is precisely what it is all about: giving the right atmosphere, but also inspiring, and above all identifying with, the historical context of the game. Certainly it is about an epic sound, paralleled with the aim of the product: *Conquer the Middle Ages with The Sims! Your Kingdom is awaiting you!* (Blurb of the game).

It is a case very similar to that of Jeremy Soule, *the John Williams of the videogames*, the author of soundtracks like the *Harry Potter* saga and *IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey*, but who interests us much more because he is the composer of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* and *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (illustration 3). Each one of them is fully

25. The Hungarian composer met with Ramón Menéndez Pidal, the historical consultant on the film, from whom he took several ideas for some specific pieces. Vidal, José. "El Cid. Reseña". *Score Magazine*. 8 September 2008. 1 June 2014. <[www.scoremagazine.com/Resenas\\_det.php?Codigo=9746&letra=E](http://www.scoremagazine.com/Resenas_det.php?Codigo=9746&letra=E)>.

26. For the videogame *Robin Hood: The legend of Sherwood* (Spellbound Entertainment Software, 2002, although republished by FX Interactive in 2009), Santiago Lamelo Fagilde makes the following comment: *La música está bien, está muy bien ambientada en la época y no se hace demasiado repetitiva... pero yo la desconecto* ("Its music is all right, is very well set in its epoch and does not become repetitive... but I switch it off"). *Meristation*. 24 December 2002. 13<sup>th</sup> January 2014. <<http://www.meristation.com/pc/robin-hood-the-legend-of-sherwood/analisis-juego/1510673?p=1>>. We have included this to show how partial each user may be with their particular experience of the game, something one has to count on at every moment.



identified by users not really with the oneiric and fantastic Middle Ages reflected in the latter titles but with the products themselves.



ILLUSTRATION 3: *THE ELDER SCROLLS: SKYRIM*.

We compare these cases with others that are more in harmony with the composition of soundtracks to films, like James Horner's to *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995). They are more than reminiscences of melodies identified with the Middle Ages through an updated filter of contemporary music, with the auditory image of its title (whether film or videogame). Ultimately they make up a model generated on the heels of a preestablished canon which has spread throughout the cinematographic history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as we have been suggesting. If we extrapolate this matter to the visual aspect, we can find the iconography for a Medieval combat in Orson Welles, who, in *Chimes at Midnight* (1966), opened the way for later film makers to be able to build up sequences, already classic, of a Medieval battle, and again *Braveheart* is useful to us in reference to what we are commenting. The photography in the latter is the *idea that we have*, the most plausible idea for our conceptual memory of what the world is like, of what it was like, and ultimately of how we perceive the past.

As a final reflection, we must pose a logical question —if it is clear to us that Medieval music is the music that has been possible to keep by oral tradition (a musical tradition in this case) and, above all, through the scores preserved, the question is if what we expect to hear as a *Medieval* melody corresponds with reality,

that is, if the Medieval music we hear on a videogame existed or not. The answer is evident: it is what it seems, and our society, which, like any society, follows clear and defined models, if it does not have those cultural referents, it generates or invents them, so that it matters very little if that melody is Medieval or it is not—the fundamental thing is that it can seem to be Medieval and, ultimately, that it can simulate a context to generate the experience of the game.

### 3.2. Sounds and Noises

Sound is a sensation which is generated inside the ear coming from vibrations of things. Only since a few decades ago has it been taken by history as an object to study. In the case we are dealing with here and paralleled with what is meant by a soundtrack as the melody which generates the experience of the game, the special effects produced by a good accompaniment of specific noises (a closing door, a fishing net being thrown, swords hitting, galloping or trotting, neighing, barking, shouting) succeed in recreating that involving milieu which, ultimately, is what the game aims at. In this sense, at present it is more plausible to reproduce specific noises than remember some kind of music which has not been preserved and is only kept in our imaginative cupboard, as what is needed is only to recreate it in a studio or in reality and record it. The development of melodies throughout technological progress, as we have already mentioned, is applicable as well to sounds/noises in videogames. The first-person combats in *Chivalry*, or those carried out by the hosts in *Medieval Total War II*, have their referent in ambient noises and are aimed to get a better simulation quality. There is no other aim. The user is intended to be directly introduced into a specific setting, and the advances in processing involving sound (5.1 or 7.1, the customary use of Dolby Digital for the latest console generations, which reproduce 16 bits at 48 kHz *tracks*) have taken a quite important qualitative jump.

Not much else deserves commenting, as what is obvious shows. Nonetheless, it is worth referring to Carolina Zunino's suggestion.<sup>27</sup> She establishes the following classification for sounds in videogames:

1. Diegetic sounds belong to the simulated world; let us name the noise of shouts, steps, shots and explosions in a war game, and
2. Extradiegetic ones, indifferent to the world and away from an apparent reality, like the soundtrack or music to *Pac-Man* after eating the Power Pellets. In this case, it is quite interesting to consider the fusion produced when a melody like that is incorporated as the soundtrack of a film whose script is from a videogame, as is the case with the piece *Life in the Arcade*, by Henry Jackman, in *Rompe Ralph!* (Rich Moore, 2012).

In the titles developed until the 1990s it is difficult to separate both kinds of sounds, since technological limitations did not enable us to develop those sound

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27. Zunino, Carolina. "Música y efectos de sonido en Videojuegos". Montevideo: Universidad ORT (lecture), 27 February 2012.



effect soundtracks. However, at present it is easy to know that in the *World of Warcraft* a kind of *plin* that can be heard when casting a spell is diegetic but it is extradiegetic when clicking a button. But beyond this consideration, and framed in the environmental sounds/noises of the setting, the use of such an element is quite interesting, since it helps the player to place him or herself in the right scene, in the specific space, which awaits them with no apparent surprise. Just one case: in the *Sims Medieval*, the fact of approaching a church prompts that the sound heard is that of repeated bell chiming—quite liturgical—which is also enhanced by a subtle echo of choral voices. However, the fact of approaching a tavern generates an allegro melody on the flute and with echoes of disorderly voices—the virtual recreation of environmental sounds in an open, relaxed space with no apparent formalities.

### 3.3. Voices

This section is quite interesting, since one of the most classic aspects of what we assume was the music in the Middle Ages had an oral expression. And not only because of its most characteristic expression, the Gregorian chant, but also because the popular culture of minstrels and troubadours had its truest idiosyncrasy in their representations.

The depiction of that urban soundscape sought for in the recreation and virtual simulation in any videogame is not different from that intended by anyone in charge of the soundtrack to a film. That “ambient sound” is to be equally found in *The Guild 2* (RuneForge)<sup>28</sup>, and in all the saga *Assassin's Creed* (Ubisoft), just not to say in everyone of them.

Similarly and as a fusion between music and voices, it is no wonder that other film soundtracks start with a choral chant, as is the case of *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), by Harry Gregson-Williams (who, by the way, is the author of other soundtracks with a similar interest in the topic we are dealing with, like *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as well as *Call of Duty 4-Modern Warfare*, which appears in the compilation album *The Greatest videogame music* mentioned<sup>29</sup>), and, even better known, in *Star Wars I: The Phantom Menace* (Georges Lucas, 1999), by John Williams, who resorts to the model of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* to generate a legendary image.

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28. In reference to this game, the user is allowed to configure the character he or she is going to play with choosing between Catholic and Protestant. The videogame starts chronologically in 1400. Consequently this is one of those historical errors in which historical accuracy is sacrificed to the benefit of the designer's particular criterion. No other explanation can be found. The music “tiene la peculiaridad de coincidir en una gran cantidad de melodías con la MMORPG de Frogster, *Runes of Magic*” (“is peculiar in the sense that a great many of its melodies coincide with Frogster's MMORPG, *Runes of Magic*”). A comment by José Álvaro. Sañudo Díaz for Meristation: “Esperando al Renacimiento”. 23 August 2010. *Meristation PC*. 1 June 2014. <[www.meristation.com/pc/the-guild-2-renaissance/analisis-juego/1533255](http://www.meristation.com/pc/the-guild-2-renaissance/analisis-juego/1533255)>.

29. See footnote 14.



But we are interested in how the characters that appear produce their voices, since they do not reproduce the way of speaking in those times. This may be a too simplistic view, but we present it as a resource to express again that we are dealing with a means of marketing a product. One of the great technological advances was to give each character his or her own voice, which had an effect on the quality improvement in the experience of the game, although occasionally the synchronisation of lips with speech is not quite accurate. This is an element worth considering, since there are some factors that can be incorporated into the dynamics of the game and that are useful in the developing of the game. It is the case of *Soldier of Fortune* (Raven, 2000), in which, according to the placement of the enemy's language, the game is placed in the part of the world where the action occurs.<sup>30</sup>

The intonation and voices of dubbing actors and actresses, who participate more and more frequently in the soundtrack of some videogames, are a fundamental part of these improvements in the experience of the game we have been referring to. We have already mentioned the case of Ramón Langa, who gave his voice to fray Leonardo de Toledo in *The Abbey*, but it is common practice among film stars, who in greater and greater numbers are deciding to give their voices to give their voices to videogame characters,<sup>31</sup> which helps the player to feel more involved and comfortable. Certainly intonation is essential, as it is a feature that fits the *gamer* in the development of the plot —something indispensable to provide any kind of action in the videogame (whether violent, affectionate, mourning or other) which may come out with some verisimilitude. In this sense it should be pointed out that the military harangues heard at the beginning of some battles in the *Total War* saga provoke a great dramatic effect; and the same thing happens with the beggars' supplications in *Assassin's Creed*.

This section shows different perspectives from which the topic can be tackled. That is why we are not going to go deeper awaiting other more precise studies: the translations which have been used,<sup>32</sup> the different accents in the case of Spanish, the use of rude interjections and of what is politically correct, female voices and their role in a videogame, like the several women who appear in the various titles of the *Assassin's Creed* saga —including that of *Liberation* and its heroine Avelyne de Grandpré—, and the off narrators. This latter element is quite interesting in the case of *Age of Empires II* (Ensemble Studios, 1999), because in the introductory videos of each campaign there appears a narrative which introduces which is to be played

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30. Meristation PC. *Soldier of Fortune*. 13<sup>rd</sup> January 2015. <[www.meristation.com/pc/soldier-of-fortune/analisis-juego/1507761?p=1](http://www.meristation.com/pc/soldier-of-fortune/analisis-juego/1507761?p=1)>.

31. This topic has already been dealt with in: Jiménez, Juan Francisco. "The other possible past: simulation of the Middle Ages in videogames". *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum*, 5 (2011): 309-310. There is a very interesting updated report about this topic: Jiménez, Juan Francisco "Talento tras el micro". *Hobby Consolas*, 255 (2012): 110-115.

32. Serón, Inmaculada. "La traducción de videojuegos de contenido histórico, o documentarse para traducir historia". *Trans. Revista de Traductología*, 15 (2011): 103-114.



and gives its voice to a character, whether a fiction or real one, whose accent or intonation help to generate a historical context.

Notwithstanding, and before closing this subsection, we must allude to the cases in which *voices* are protagonists themselves. We specifically refer to the bards who appear in the *Sims Medieval* and the minstrels in *Assassin's Creed II*. They constitute the fusion of the music used as soundtrack —voices themselves— and the noises they utter, since they are characters, above all in the latter example, who play a specific role in the game, where their poor musical quality makes them a real hindrance to accomplish their mission —illustration 4—. But all of them get accommodated to the expected tones and melodies and which could be placed in the *Medieval music*.



ILLUSTRATION 4: BARD WITH EZIO. *ASSASSIN'S CREED II*.

#### 4. Medieval Sound Imagery and Conclusions

As well as certain characters (knights templar, crusaders), settings (castles) and historical references (Crusades) refer us to the Middle Ages as long as our cultural context considers it thus, what kind of music and sounds refer us, in videogames, to our imaginary Medieval world? First of all, we must point out that the diversity of what we understand by *Medieval music* is enormous, as it is a response to how



broad this phenomenon is in time and its reflection upon the various cultures; such phenomenon is even different according to social strata: ultimately, it depends on the specific tastes of individuals and groups in time and space. Throughout the present study we have alluded repeatedly to that concept—that specific audiovisual iconography—of what we understand was the sound setting in the Middle Ages. Logically it is not a phenomenon exclusive of this period—we can relate it perfectly well, and also with a similar facility, to later periods. In *Empire: Total War* (The Creative Assembly, 2009), the melodies which can be heard when a virtual battle is being loaded correspond to pieces inspired in baroque music, not to mention *Shogun Total War*, where the whole soundtrack corresponds to pieces of Japanese theme music. All of them have had to do with Jeff van Dyck's work, like in the rest of the titles in the saga, which include all those of Medieval times and their extensions (*Viking Invasion* or *Kingdoms*). Let us insist: we are dealing with experiences of game where the sound plays a crucial role.<sup>33</sup>

Francisco Pérez Quevedo underlines the fact that videogame music is characterised by its adaptability (it gets adapted to what is happening in the game), dynamism (it changes dynamically according to the player's actions), information (it informs the player of the events occurring on the screen), immersion (it simplifies the player's immersion into the virtual world) and narrative character (it helps narrate the story in the videogame). In this sense it constitutes a sound imagery joining together elements of contemporary music and acoustics with others coming from different folklore traditions which, supposedly, refer us to the Medieval world. In spite of it, this imagery is characterised by its lack of historicity.

Notwithstanding, the developers' intention at all times is to involve the user in the historical context the videogame is trying to simulate. This is the case of *Medieval Total War* (The Creative Assembly, 2002), where each of the factions and kingdoms has its own melody; so the player can hear from Gregorian chants to Oriental Arabic rhythms, and besides the melody is adjusted to fit the events that happen in the game. The change in the quality of the sound effects appeared in the subsequent editions. Juan J. Fermín's advice in his critique to this title precisely, where he alluded to their excessive simplicity,<sup>34</sup> seems to have been listened to by

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33. As a sample in relation with the case of *Napoleon: Total War* (2010), let us transcribe the comment on this aspect of the videogame by Nicholas Werner in *Inside Gaming Daily* (3 March 2010): "This is a no-brainer: the game sounds amazing. Whether it will be the first volley of musket fire, the distant rumble of cannons, the yell of charging troops, or even the piper playing a marching tune, the sound design on this game is stellar from top to bottom. You'll want to dip down into the fighting just to hear the bayonets clashing. The musical score is unapologetically epic, and would almost border on the silly if it weren't for the fact that this is Napoleon, who really was that epic. This is a feast for your ears". 1 June 2014 <[www.insidegamingdaily.com/2010/03/03/napoleon-total-war-review](http://www.insidegamingdaily.com/2010/03/03/napoleon-total-war-review)>. It is obviously an opinion, a value judgement, but our purpose is, once again, to show the experience of the game itself.

34. Fermín, Juan J. "El arte de la guerra". *Meristation*. 24 October 2002. After referring to the quality of its music: "No se pueden aplicar los mismos elogios a los efectos de sonido. Si bien se ajusta a la distancia y el ángulo de la cámara, resulta deprimente oír un simple y poco entusiasta "¡Ah!" cuando más de mil hombres se lanzan a la carga. Yo hago más ruido cuando me vacunan de la gripe, sobre todo si quien esgrime la aguja es Greta, una enfermera vikinga que me saca cuarenta kilos. El resto, desde el cabalgar de la caballería al entrechocar de los aceros, son bastante apagados y carecen de convicción. Desde aquí,



the developing team, since in the following products of the series this aspect is very well achieved: they include quite realistic cinematographic scenes. And the key of all we have just been saying seems to lie here: a videogame seeks re-creation so that, ultimately, such recreation succeeds in the most appropriate simulation effect, the same auditory model as in the cinema, in that two-way process which has been produced between both media of cultural expression since over a decade ago. We can see Jeff van Dyck's inspiration in a *Rome Total War (Gladiator)*, John Williams's epic in *Save Soldier Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998)<sup>35</sup>; also in Michael Giacchino's notes in *Medal of Honor* (Electronic Arts), particularly in *Allied Assault* (2002) and *Airborne* (2007). The latter is precisely one of the best examples, together with Zimmer, of what we are just explaining. Giacchino is also the composer of so well-known soundtracks as *Star Trek Into Darkness* (J.J. Abrams, 2013), *The Incredibles* (Brad Bird, 2004), *Ratatouille* (also by Brad Bird in collaboration with Jan Pinkava, 2007), *Up* (Peter Docter, 2009) and others.

Therefore, it is necessary to count on those sound spaces to achieve the simulation of a context we imagine as plausible and which, also, accompanies and envelops the user in a placement setting generated by the Medieval *soundscape* it aspires to re-create —here it is re-creation all right— since the situation now is a feigned one—the videogame.

In order to rebuild them, we consider we can resort to some of the postulates established by Claudia Gorbman<sup>36</sup> for the narrative cinema music as well as to some concepts from Semiotics which are applied to music: both videogames and music are audiovisual communication media and, therefore, images and sounds are united in the communication and perception of their message<sup>37</sup> and, particularly, the historical videogames selected present the technical, structural and formal features compatible with classic narrative cinematography—a linear narrative development

un consejo a los responsables de sonido: la próxima vez metan en sus ordenadores el DVD de *Gladiator* o *Braveheart* y háganlo funcionar en cualquier escena de batalla con el monitor apagado. Y díganse: “Así es como debo hacerlo yo” (“The same eulogies cannot be said about the sound effects. The distance and angle of the camera are adjusted all right, but it is depressing to hear just a simple and scarcely enthusiastic ‘Oh!’ when more than a thousand men are charging. I make myself more noise when am being vaccinated for the flu, particularly if it is Greta who is brandishing the syringe —she is a Viking nurse who is forty kilos heavier than I am. The rest, from the cavalry riding to the sword clashing, are rather dull and lack in conviction. From here, a piece of advice to those in charge of the sound: next time play your *Gladiator* or *Braveheart* DVDs, and listen to any battle scene keeping your screen off, and tell yourselves, “This is the way I must do it myself”). Meristation PC. *Medieval Total War*. 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015. <[www.meristation.com/pc/medieval-total-war/analisis-juego/1508331?p=1](http://www.meristation.com/pc/medieval-total-war/analisis-juego/1508331?p=1)>.

35. The sound track to *Band of Brothers*, by Michael Kanen, or that to *The Pacific*, by Hans Zimmer, can be included in this section.

36. Gorbman, Claudia. *Unheard Melodies. Narrative Film Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

37. On building up a theory of “Audiovision”, Michel Chion addressed the relationship between sound and image as a mutual collaboration between two different languages to formulate a meaning or the intensification of a specific perception. The concept developed by Chion refers to the “value added” by sound. Thus, he refers to an expressive and informative quality with which a sound enriches a specific image, with the result from there of what he calls as “audiovisual illusion”. Chion, Michel. *La Audiovisión. Introducción a un análisis conjunto de la imagen y el sonido*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1993.



with a presentation, a climax and a resolution.<sup>38</sup> In a near future we may find hybrids which go deeper into this phenomenon.

One final question. Is it possible to distinguish between the sound imageries of the videogame creators and those of the players? Actually not, because what this is all about is to meet a previous demand coming from the latter; and the starting basic point is a decisive factor: the videogame designer is also their user. He or she intends to meet the player's demand and uses the same criterion, the same auditory memory and the same code to identify a melody and sounds with a precise past—in this case with a Medieval past in its characteristic variants, whether it is a game which involves Christian societies or a game which deals with Islamic ones.

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38. The "classic narrative" is defined by the theory of the cinema as an editing style which prioritises the narrative and dramatic continuity. Properly speaking, it is not a model but a set of options and conventions the objective of which is to preserve the unity of scenic space, creating an space intelligibility for the narrated events. See Suzana Miranda. "Escutarum Filme: Variações de uma mesma Música". *Anais do XIII Encontro Nacional da Anppom. Música do Século XXI. Tendências, Perspectivas e Paradigmas*. Belo Horizonte: Escola de Música da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2001: II, 554-560.

