Abstract

The subject of this paper is to research the interactive and aesthetic-experiential potential of pacifism in violent video games. The aim of this diploma thesis is to investigate what forms of interaction and what aesthetic experiences pacifism enables in violent video games, using the example of three titles: *This War of Mine* (11 bit studios 2014), *Elden Ring* (FromSoftware 2022), and *NieR:Automata* (PlatinumGames 2017). The research methods are two distinctive but complementary qualitative analyses. Each of the three video games studied is first analysed using textual analysis to find and explore relevant content elements related to pacifism. This is followed by a content analysis of user metatexts related to pacifism in these video games to identify common patterns and their mutual relations to reveal pacifist player interactions and aesthetic experiences. The research results demonstrate the interactive and aesthetic-experiential potential of pacifism in violent single-player video games. In addition to identifying prominent thematic areas related to pacifist interactions and aesthetic experiences, the findings also reveal common themes across the analysed user metatexts. These themes include the limitations of video game pacifism and the resulting increased difficulty of pacifist playthroughs, as well as the meaningfulness of pacifist aesthetic experiences, which may have prompted some players to engage in pacifist actions in real life. The results of this thesis further provide insight into the representation and player realisation of pacifism in video games, supplementing previous studies which were focused solely on video game content. The last significant finding is the emergence of critical evaluations or questioning of pacifism's validity, along with identifying a diverse range of interpretations and perspectives on pacifistic practice across the analysed user sample.