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Stefan Schubert

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1. Introduction

- 1 A scene depicting the imminent stoning of an interracial couple, a painting showing George Washington warning the people to “guard against the foreign hordes,” the misrepresentation of the Massacre at Wounded Knee as a heroic battle—the 2013 video game *BioShock Infinite* is replete with jarring and controversial images of injustice that especially relate and allude to US history. In the game, set in the year 1912, players explore and shoot their way through the fictional floating city of Columbia, which seceded from the US mainland a few years before. While the game’s main setting is clearly fantastic, it exhibits a world influenced by political movements and ideologies that were prominent in the US around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century: Columbia’s leaders and large parts of its society exhibit exaggerated traits of American exceptionalism, nationalism, patriotism, and (particularly religious) fanaticism—and the racism and sexism usually found in extreme versions of these tendencies. With its historically inspired setting and distinct focus on telling a compelling story, *BioShock Infinite* found both critical and commercial success, having sold more than eleven million copies (Handrahan) and thus testifying to the influential position video games have assumed as part of American popular culture.
- 2 In this article, I will analyze how *BioShock Infinite* interweaves visual depictions of injustice and immorality with ludic and narrative elements. I will argue that these themes are not actually, as one might expect, evoked most strongly through its “mandatory” ludic elements, the playing of *BioShock Infinite*, or its main plot but via its (often optional) visual aspects, the way it presents the city of Columbia to players. This visual representation constitutes a compressed zeitgeist of the historical US of the

time, exaggerating some of the reactionary political trends that characterized parts of US society. Particularly, I will demonstrate that while Columbia's rulers envisioned the city as a utopia, the city's visual depiction actually reveals it to be fraught with questionable morals and violations of rights—a kind of multi-layered oppression and discrimination expressed specifically in the game as injustices based on race and class.¹ Additionally, in connection with the game's ludic and narrative elements, these visual depictions are finally revealed to be quite ambivalent, going beyond a mere satirization, parody, or critique of the excesses of nationalism, patriotism, and similar ideologies. Instead, the game paints a more complicated picture about the interpretation and the “writing” of history, and of the history of injustice in particular.

- 3 To arrive at this argument, I will first provide some theoretical background for understanding video games as ludic, narrative, and visual media, before introducing *BioShock Infinite* in slightly more detail. The main part of this paper will then concentrate on an analysis of three distinct ways in which the game visualizes injustice. These close readings of individual visual depictions, from the perspective of literary and cultural studies, will form the backbone of my argument, yet I will also contextualize these single images within the overall game. Finally, and to that effect, I will connect these visual depictions to some of *BioShock Infinite*'s narrative and ludic elements to further demonstrate their interweaving.

2. Narrativity, Visuality, and Morality in Video Games

- 4 With the field of game studies starting to emerge in the 1990s, the academic study of video games has become increasingly interdisciplinary in recent years and is now also beginning to gain more traction in American studies. While the early paradigms of the field mostly centered around the debate between so-called ludologists and narratologists, formalistically arguing about what video games “are,”² more recent inquiries have covered a variety of topics, including questions of difference and representation (cf. Malkowski and Russworm; Ruberg and Shaw), the depiction of history (cf. Chapman; Kapell and Elliott), the remediation of specific genres (cf. Perron; Tringham), or contextualizations of video games in a narrative/transmedia context (cf. Thon; Eichner), to name just a few, many of which intersect importantly with inquiries at the heart of American studies as well. As an immensely large industry and an entertainment product that reaches millions of consumers, video games thus have a particular cultural currency that renders them important for popular culture studies, visual studies, and also American studies. Looking at how they depict and deal with questions of rights and justice, then, is equally something worth studying both in itself and for how insights gained from this particular medium are relevant for other investigations as well. Particularly, video games stand as a prominent example of how the ludic, the cultural activity of playing, figures into American visual culture. In *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga defines play as “a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ‘ordinary life’ (28). While later studies have further refined conceptions of the role of play in culture, its central elements—focused on interactivity, nonlinearity, performativity, and agency—complicate understandings of narrativity and visuality in potentially productive ways.

- 5 In this article, I understand video games as a narratively liminal medium; that is, instead of conceiving of video games as similar to *only* narratives or the activity of playing or an (audio)visual medium, I see them as exactly in the borderlands of these, and potentially other, symbolic forms—partly narrative, partly play, partly visual.³ Coming from literary and cultural studies, I particularly look at video games by adapting the narratological concept of the storyworld: For David Herman, storyworlds are “mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which interpreters relocate ... as they work to comprehend a narrative” (9). He thus emphasizes the audience’s mental activity in making sense of a text, actively interpreting its parts to form meaning. Adapting this concept for how players engage with video games is particularly productive because games, too, stress the input of the recipient, accommodating active choices and potentially nonlinear narratives, and because the active exploration of space (and the choices in that exploration) take up a significant part in many games. Space, emphasized via the concept of the storyworld, thus often assumes a more important role than narrative proper (cf. also Jenkins); in turn, space is primarily represented visually in video games. While very early studies of games tended to focus on text adventures and thus highlighted the importance of textuality and narrativity in gaming (cf. Buckles), contemporary video games make use of the vast opportunities afforded to the creation of fictional worlds rendered as three-dimensional spaces (Nitsche 4). The visual depiction of a game’s world can thus attain important meaning(s) for its overall narrative, for how a game tells a story to players.
- 6 For *BioShock Infinite*, I understand the way the city of Columbia is constructed and presented to players as part of the game’s narrative “background,” similar to Shoshana Magnet’s definition of the term “gamescape” as “a way of thinking about the implications of the way in which landscape is actively constructed within video games—one that highlights how the gamespace works to shape a player’s particular understanding of a larger set of spatial ideologies inherent to the game” (143). As she also notes, this is not a “static” background; instead, gamescapes “are dynamic and require the active involvement of the player in their construction” (143). This, in turn, links it to the concept of the storyworld, highlighting the player’s involvement in that construction. While *BioShock Infinite*’s gamescape can barely be interacted with, that is, it cannot be changed or manipulated, it can be explored by players, since many areas offer additional optional information on the history and inhabitants of the city, adding “background” to the narrative. In this sense, I understand *BioShock Infinite*’s use of the gamescape as an effective interweaving of visuals and narrative to create meaning. This is also particularly noteworthy because the exploration of the game’s visuals largely forms part of the game’s optional aspects and its nonlinearity, since it offers players choices in how deeply they engage with these visuals. In that sense, the storyworlds players recreate when playing the game are largely similar concerning *BioShock Infinite*’s core ludic elements and its main plot, yet they can differ considerably in terms of how carefully players look at visual depictions in the game or how much time they invest in trying to find optional areas that include additional images and posters. Surprisingly, then, it is through these (sometimes optional and subtle) visuals that the game most significantly engages with questions of justice and morality, rather than primarily through its narrative and ludic aspects, which warrants a close examination of the game’s visual elements in the following subchapters.

- 7 In scholarly discussions about video games so far, issues of justice and morality have mostly been considered in the context of the depiction of violence, particularly in war-themed games and first-person shooters. While some examples of such scholarship look at this issue from a more moralistic point of view, sometimes condemning video games for their proliferation of violence or specifically arguing against that (cf. Happ and Melzer; Markey and Ferguson), other approaches focus on the representation of violence in games and link it to typical concerns of cultural studies, such as power or agency (cf. Rogers 63-82; Champion 153-64). In this article, since I am not interested in the empirical study of video games' effects, the question of representation in *BioShock Infinite* will be central. Analyzing how exactly certain elements are represented in the game, how they work narratively and visually, will allow me to contextualize the game within questions of morality and justice. As Ryan Rogers notes, this importance of representation is directly related to a game's visuals: "When graphic fidelity is increased in video games and the narrative calls attention to the players' actions, morality will likely become much more salient" (67).
- 8 For the discussion of *BioShock Infinite*'s visuals, my primary interest lies in how the game ties these representations to questions of justice and, particularly, the history of injustice (and, to a lesser extent, questions of morality that I see as tied to justice). For that, following John Rawls, I understand justice as "the first virtue of social institutions," i.e., "in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled." A just society "denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others" (3). In the context of the history of the United States that *BioShock Infinite* engages in, race and class will be the most significant issues when judging a society by how it treats its individual members. More specifically, rather than justice itself, the *history* of racial and social justice will play a central role in analyzing the game's visuals—what US society perhaps once deemed just compared to how unjust it might seem from a contemporary perspective.
- 9 More specifically, with this focus on *BioShock Infinite*, I want to emphasize another angle of discussing morality and justice in video games by examining a game that is consciously fantastic, one that does not engage in the realist mode of representing, for instance, World War II "authentically" (even though it is still certainly a first-person shooter with a lot of violent elements). Concepts of realism in video games are often framed within the context of "authenticity" (cf. Atkins 7, 16, 21), which risks confusing realism with reality. Instead of reiterating such discussions surrounding questions of authenticity and reality in video games, I want to focus on *BioShock Infinite* making use of both the realist and the fantastic *mode* of representation (cf. Jackson 13-60). As a kind of alternate history (cf. Lizardi) that features the fantastically floating city of Columbia, *BioShock Infinite* clearly engages in the fantastic mode, yet while that mode "violates verisimilitude, describes things and events that either could not happen (according to our rationality) or have not happened yet," it also always "has to incorporate a certain amount of 'realism' to be effective as communication" (Koenen 42). That is, it somehow has to evoke references to the audience's reality in order to be able to then fantastically deviate from it. Fantastic texts thus "assert that what they are telling is real—relying upon all the conventions of realistic fiction to do so—and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what—within those terms—is manifestly unreal" (Jackson 34). Accordingly, *BioShock Infinite* includes numerous references to US history, which "accurately" position it in the United States around 1912, yet it then

departs from that representation by placing its main action in a floating city. Consequently, it can use the “freedom” that the fantastic mode grants for exaggeration and satire, in turn relating back to American historical reality perhaps even more effectively than a game trying to accurately represent a historical event or era might be able to. Similar to Roger Whitson, I thus understand *BioShock Infinite*’s Columbia as “a possibility space ... enact[ing] a set of historical experiments” (195). How its visual depictions of injustice in a clearly fantastic setting thus still relate meaningfully to the historical US will become clearer in a close reading of some of the game’s visuals.

3. Visualizing Injustice in *BioShock Infinite*

- 10 In *BioShock Infinite*, players take control of the protagonist Booker DeWitt, from whose perspective they explore the floating city of Columbia. Booker is a former Pinkerton agent who now works as a private investigator, searching through Columbia for a woman named Elizabeth, who he is meant to rescue from the city. Elizabeth is held captive by Columbia’s ruler and the game’s antagonist, Zachary Hale Comstock, who quickly notices Booker’s presence in Columbia, denounces him as the “false shepherd” whose arrival he has foreseen in a vision, and then sends a variety of Columbia’s soldiers and war machinery to fight off Booker. The game’s story first revolves around finding Elizabeth but later on, after having accomplished that, shifts its focus towards trying to end Comstock’s oppressive rule over Columbia and, in the process, finding out more about the mysterious past of all three main characters and of the history of Columbia itself. One central part of these findings will be the discovery that Booker and Comstock are actually the same person, albeit from different universes, a revelation stylized as a narrative twist,⁴ which I will come back to later.
- 11 As a first-person shooter, the main gameplay of *BioShock Infinite* consists of players fighting against the enemies Comstock sends after Booker and advancing through Columbia’s different areas (or levels). All of that is presented in “first person,” that is, players see through Booker’s eyes, witnessing what he perceives (corresponding to internal focalization). In addition to combat, exploring the world and its various environments takes up a relatively large part of the game, since there are a number of optional areas in which Booker can find various items as well as additional background information. For an investigation of the game’s visual presentation, the way Columbia is depicted as a city that affords exploration by the players stands out, as does the way in which its various buildings and locations are stylized. The game’s setting, and its gamescape, are thus not just “ornaments” against which the gameplay or the story take place, but rather, they take on meaning of their own.⁵ In fact, as I will argue in the following, these visual elements, taken by themselves, are more significant than the game’s narrative or ludic aspects in establishing *BioShock Infinite*’s concern with racial and social injustice in US history, even though overall they work more subtly than the mandatory narrative and ludic elements.
- 12 While there are a number of single important elements to potentially discuss in terms of how the game’s aesthetics relate to questions of justice, I will look specifically (and exemplarily) at three different angles in which visuals are significant and filled with meaning in the game’s portrayal of Columbia: as part of the plot, in terms of the gamescape, and in relation to the depiction of (US) history. They all combine to render Columbia into a visual spectacle, a magically floating city with bright colors, fantastic

means of transportation, and a civil war looming underneath the surface of its society. Such a spectacle has meaning in itself, even beyond its connection to narrative elements, through “sense-based affective experiences” (Darley 4); that is, “[s]pectacle ... works through visual stimulation; its chief appeal is affective” (Kanzler 187). Overall, all of these visual elements work together to expose the oppression and brutality of Columbia’s ruling elite by foregrounding particularly racial and class injustice.

3.1 Plot Elements

- 13 A first angle in which the visual representation of injustice in Columbia is highlighted concerns larger as well as more specific plot elements. The game’s larger plot pits Columbia’s (predominantly white) ruling class, The Founders, against a working- and lower-class uprising led by a black woman, Daisy Fitzroy, who call themselves the Vox Populi. Initially, players only experience The Founders’ pristine and utopian vision of the city, with few hints of dissent. As the game progresses, however, cracks and fissures in their ideology (and unrest within the population) become more visible. Eventually, players witness the success of the Vox Populi’s revolution, as they take over the city, ransack its wealthier districts, and drive out much of the upper-class population. While this overall struggle clearly relates to questions of rights and justice, players mostly glean deeper insights into the conflict between the two factions from the narrative background, which I will focus on further below. Although the game’s plot is set against this struggle, the main narrative focuses more on Booker, Elizabeth, and Comstock specifically. Still, there are a few instances where the main plot—i.e., nonoptional events that players (have to) witness and that will always form some part of the reconstructed storyworld—visually highlights Columbia’s injustice as well, two of which I will now turn to.

Figure 1. Mock wedding of an interracial couple.

- 14 The first such scene happens at the beginning of the game, during a level meant to introduce players to Columbia. When Booker first sets foot in the city, a large fair celebrates the anniversary of Columbia’s secession from the mainland. The festivities of the parade add to the city’s initial impression of visual splendor, one in which, as

Martin T. Buinicki argues, the many references to US history have a nostalgic effect as well, with “the lush world of Columbia marshal[ing] various aspects of American popular culture to present a seductive view of American life, at first glance even a potentially utopian one” (725).⁶ Part of these festivities is a raffle that Booker wins. The prize is revealed to be the opportunity to throw the first “stone”—actually a baseball—in what amounts to a public “stoning” of an interracial couple. The couple is presented on a stage, in front of a crowd of citizens, with an announcer, Jeremiah Fink, taunting Booker to throw the baseball. The white man, on the left, and the black woman, on the right, are poorly dressed, their hands tied behind their backs. Behind them, stage props are raised that depict a jungle, a monkey to each side framing the couple, and a black man centrally behind them (fig. 1). These three figures are supposed to form a mock wedding, with one of the monkeys carrying a wedding ring, the other acting as a flower girl, while the man wears a black hat and carries a book, serving as an officiant. The overall depiction is thus not only degrading, it also recurs to well-worn racist stereotypes of representing African American characters. The jungle scene and the two animals, whose brown fur is the same color as the black figure’s skin, also associate the black woman with monkeys, a stereotypically racist representation supposed to convey low intelligence. While the couple looks sad and desperate, the monkeys and the officiant are depicted laughing and happy, creating a stark contrast between the intended effect of the framing and the couple’s reality—overall, the scene is presented as a spectacle for the Columbian audience, as something to gain pleasure from through its visual appearance and staging. Publicly “stoning” the interracial couple by throwing baseballs at them seems to be an entertaining event for these well-off citizens, even the highlight of the parade’s festivities, as they mock and boo the couple. While it is never explicitly mentioned, apparently, such a union is illegal in Columbia—similar to so-called anti-miscegenation laws in the historical US, which were only nationally abolished in the 1960s (Moran 6).⁷

- 15 The game’s graphics also add to the eeriness of the scene, since its generally bright colors and its slightly “cartoonish” depiction of characters are at odds with the haunting image portrayed here. Serving as the end of Booker’s first steps through Columbia and his exploration of the parade’s festivities, the way the scene is visually set up particularly works to highlight the “racism that Columbia’s elite embraces” (DeHaven and Hendrickson 117), which had been there all along but only came to the fore through this event. Accordingly, the end of the sequence, as the stoning is stopped at the last moment⁸ and Booker is instead exposed as the “false shepherd” about whom Comstock warned the citizens of Columbia, also marks a gameplay transition: Until then, players were only exploring the city, without any combat scenes. Immediately following Booker’s disruption of the stoning, *BioShock Infinite*’s actual gameplay begins, as players have to fight off a few of Columbia’s policemen. From then on, battling against various enemies will be the primary means of traversing Columbia’s different areas. The overall scene can thus be read as the “unmasking” of Columbia’s society, with Booker’s witnessing of this racial injustice serving as a catalyst for players’ realization that Columbia’s society is deeply flawed. That realization, in turn, is engendered both by the racist depiction of the interracial couple and by the framing of the entire scene, with Columbians shown as enjoying this public injustice—or, rather, their twisted idea of serving justice against an illegal union in Columbia.

- 16 A second example of such rather overt displays of injustice as part of the game's main plot occurs much later, in the district of Finkton (overseen by Jeremiah Fink), where the city's factories and working-class areas are located. While the previous scene highlighted racial injustice, this one works similarly but emphasizes class: When Booker and Elizabeth enter the so-called Plaza of Zeal, they first see a tall building with a statue of Fink atop, demonstrating the wealth and splendor of (and cult of personality surrounding) Columbia's elites. Right in front of them, a large wall with the word "Employment" lists several different unskilled jobs and manual-labor tasks, such as "Coal Porter," "Shovel Boy," and "Pit Monkey" (fig. 2). When players enter the area, they see a man behind a lectern auctioning off these different jobs to a crowd of people below him. The workers are bidding on the jobs the auctioneer "sells" by calling out in how little time they can perform them—accordingly, they try to out-bid each other by shouting increasingly smaller (and seemingly impossible) amounts of time at him. When one of them wins the auction, another worker beats up the winner and takes his job instead, upon which the auctioneer comments approvingly. Afterward, he ends the auction by announcing that no more jobs are available, to which one of the remaining worker shouts: "My family's gotta eat! We need work!"—before the group is dispersed by a police man.

Figure 2. Wall of employment.

- 17 While not framed in the same way as the spectacle of the public stoning, the overall scene is also a harrowing depiction: Players witness it against the backdrop of the tall Finkton buildings, which are all colored in similar tones, mostly brown and gold, but still shiny.⁹ The people bidding on the jobs are all dressed with little and dirty clothing, and they are mostly black and (judging from the accents and earlier hints) Irish. The enormity of the "Employment" wall renders the people below bidding on the tasks much smaller, symbolically pitting these individuals against a large oppressive system. This particular setup adds to the absurdity of the scene, which casts employment as a good to be bought with one's labor power, where the sheer "efficiency" of being able to perform a task—indicated as a number, further taking away human elements—is the most important parameter for performing one's job, and where one is in constant competition with other laborers. The scene thus epitomizes what players can witness

throughout Finkton via various propaganda posters and public announcements: Fink's distinctly anti-union and anti-workers' rights stance, which builds on the exploitation of laborers and on keeping them uneducated in order to "[perpetuate] the status quo, a system of exploitation that works to serve the city" (DeHaven and Hendrickson 118), satirizing a hypercapitalist ideology.¹⁰ For highlighting how Columbia's society is actually characterized, it also functions somewhat similarly to the stoning scene in being a kind of "threshold" for the player: The public stoning questioned the previously "pristine" image of Columbian society by pointing to racial injustice, whereas the auction scene highlights very clearly that the grandiose architecture and pristine aesthetics of the wealthier areas that players have witnessed before in the city are equally built on social and class exploitation, something they might have suspected before but that becomes much more apparent through this episode. Life for the poorer classes in Columbia is thus depicted as harsh and oppressive, demonstrating how the utopian vision Comstock had in mind for Columbia has turned into a dystopian nightmare for large parts of its population and thus exposing Comstock's "fascist-xenophobic regime" (Kajtár 130).

3.2 Columbia's Narrative Background

- 18 A second larger angle in which the city's visual depiction speaks to injustices concerns the game's narrative background, the gamescape—how the spatial construction of Columbia, in a way, is "filled" with meaning. This, then, does not involve elements happening as part of or alongside the main plot but, rather, optional aspects. Players either have to discover these in specific areas that they do not necessarily have to explore, or they must actively choose to look at or listen to them, while also having the choice of simply ignoring them, in turn affecting the reconstruction of the storyworld. Some of this narrative background is filled with audible elements—particularly through public announcements (e.g., by Fink) heard throughout the game, specific (partly anachronistic) music (cf. Ivănescu), and the voxophones (audio recordings) that can be collected—yet the majority of knowledge we gain about Columbia and its society comes from its visuals. Beyond the way certain characters and buildings are designed (and the omnipresence of flags mentioned before), this especially concerns the different statues found around Columbia as well as a large variety of propaganda posters and images.¹¹ In addition, there are a number of more specific elements of the game's setting that also hint at racial and social injustice: In the area Battleship Bay, for instance, Elizabeth notices the existence of segregated washrooms, one designated for "Colored & Irish." This establishes a link to racial segregation in US history, and it also hints at the arbitrariness of race, alluding to a time when Irish immigrants to the US were not considered white either (cf. Ignatiev). Of these many examples, I want to look at two sets of propaganda images in more detail to, again, demonstrate how they catalyze questions of injustice in Columbia specifically along race and class.
- 19 The propaganda posters in Columbia that focus on racial issues all follow a similar pattern and serve the same goal: to divide Columbia's society into an "us vs. them" mentality by casting what the city's rulers consider nonwhite inhabitants as ethnic "Others." At the same time, they are meant to remind Columbia's white citizens to be vigilant of this "Othered" threat within their ranks, without ever specifying or arguing for reasons why they should be considered so dangerous. A poster advocating Columbia's police force, for instance, states that the police's job consists of "Protecting

Our Faith, Wealth, and Racial Purity.” Besides the text, a white man, white woman, and white girl are standing closely together, suggesting a happy family unit. As with all of the propaganda posters and images, the characters are drawn in a more realistic style than the usual graphics of the game, also strengthening their link to US historical reality. If there was any doubt, the family thus specifies that with “Racial Purity,” Columbia’s authority means preserving whiteness as the city’s hegemonic norm. Additionally, the poster curiously links that goal to religion and class, alleging that the oppression of people of other ethnicities or nationalities will also secure the white citizens’ wealthy status. Another propaganda poster about this obsession with “racial purity” shows a presumably white woman alongside the text: “Her eyes ... so blue! Her skin ... so white! Or are they? We must *all* be vigilant to ensure the purity of our people!” The poster thus spells out how the city’s rulers want its citizens to be suspicious of their neighbors, but it also alludes to a paranoia about “racial purity,” in turn hinting at the constructedness of race: A person might look white, but they still might not be considered white or “racially pure” by Columbia’s racist ideology. While this had already become evident by how the city treats people of Irish descent as nonwhite, this poster instead alludes to the “one-drop rule” and the fear of racial passing that were once a stronger presence in the historical US as well (Wald 11).

Figure 3. Mural painting depicting Washington.

- 20 Arguably, though, the most prominent image conveying the Founders’ racist underpinnings is found inside the headquarters of the Fraternal Order of the Raven, an organization stylized similarly to the Ku Klux Klan, whose members worship John Wilkes Booth for having assassinated Abraham Lincoln.¹² Throughout the building, badges state “Protect Our Race,” and a large mural painting found in the room where the members of the order are meeting pinpoints who is meant by the phrasing “[o]ur [r]ace.” The image shows George Washington in the center, holding the Liberty Bell and the Ten Commandments in his hands, with a white woman (presumably Columbia, the traditional personification of America) and a banner stating “For God and Country”

above him. The background consists of clouds, suggesting a heaven-like setting, whereas Washington and Columbia are surrounded by a golden glow, distinguishing and foregrounding them. Below Washington, multiple flags are draped to form a kind of pedestal, and in a variation of this image circulated as promotional material for the game (fig. 3), the text “It Is Our Holy Duty to Guard against the Foreign Hordes” is added. To the left and right of Washington, various shadowy figures stand next to each other, looking towards him. All of them show people of different ethnicities and nationalities through established racist stereotypes: There is an Irishman drinking beer, a Jewish man with a long face and long claws for hands, two Asian (possibly Chinese) figures with slanted eyes, and other people that seem to be of Arab, Mexican, and Native American origin.

- 21 The painting, like most of these propaganda images, is quite explicit in portraying white Columbians, represented by Washington, as superior to nonwhite people, who are all depicted as longing to come to the city of Columbia. It also links faith and (Christian) religion with this nationalistic view, through the Ten Commandments, the heaven-like setting, and the way in which Washington is positioned similarly to depictions of Jesus, with the poor masses below him and reaching towards him.¹³ As an added dimension, though, the mural painstakingly includes details for very individualized racist depictions of other ethnicities, among them Native Americans (recognizable through their feathery ornaments). The depiction thus also sees these Native inhabitants of the American continent as “foreign hordes” against which to guard, disregarding their original claim to the continent and clearly identifying only white Columbians as a “race” worthy of “protection.” Additionally, while emphasis is laid on the individual stereotypical details of the various ethnicities depicted, the mural simultaneously lumps all of them together—they are all drawn in the same dark brown colors, closely huddled together, standing in stark contrast to the gold-tinted figure of Washington. This specific framing underscores the “us vs. them” binary, seeing all nonwhite people as a threat to all white people. In this sense, the depiction highlights the racist ideology’s inherent contradiction of pointing out individual details to clearly make them identifiable as a certain ethnicity while also homogenizing all of them as the Other, regardless of their individual characteristics, simply because they are not (arbitrarily) considered white.
- 22 Overall, the image epitomizes the Founders’ racist ideology of casting the city’s white population as constantly under threat from people of color while simultaneously projecting the superiority of white Columbians over the “foreign hordes,” a contradictory attitude of feeling at once threatened and superior that characterizes real-life racism (and right-wing nationalism and fascism) as well. Curiously, the variation of this particular image with the added “foreign hordes” text also became famous outside of *BioShock Infinite* itself: It was used unironically in a Facebook post by a Florida-based Tea Party group, called the National Liberty Federation, in 2013 (the post has since been removed). In turn, this event prompted a number of news stories criticizing parts of the Tea Party and noting the irony in using this image without awareness of its contexts and origins (cf. Tassi; Fillari), particularly since the hyperbolically xenophobic and racist depiction of the Founders in the game can be read as a criticism and parody of movements exactly like the modern Tea Party. Accordingly, this episode demonstrates the “reach” into contemporary political

discourse that *BioShock Infinite* achieved and the effectiveness that its visual displays of discourses surrounding injustice has had.

- 23 A second set of propaganda posters and images can be read as furthering not (just) a racial but a class divide within the city's society. These posters particularly appear in the working-class area of Finkton, where, together with Fink's public announcements, they attempt to convince workers to accept and cherish their lot, compelling them to work efficiently. The posters, for instance, tell citizens that "Killing Time Kills Columbia," depicting a man smoking and sitting atop a woman, apparently unconscious or dead, draped in the US flag, while another asks them "Are You a Time Thief?" while recounting somebody's "offense" as having "dropped a crane-load of containers." Both illustrations thus propose the speedy completion of labor as the highest priority for workers, disregarding the circumstances and conditions in which that work might have to be done and constantly reminding everybody of their duty to perform their work diligently—and to be on the lookout for those that do not. This becomes equally apparent through the public display of two bodies at the beginning of Finkton, which are chained in a pillory, with the words "Guilty" and "Labor Agitator" beneath them, suggesting that workers' unrest and calls for labor rights are quickly suppressed by Fink's men. The importance of wealth, on the other hand, is also visible in the later upper-class area of Emporia, where posters for the "Bank of the Prophet," for instance, remind citizens to "Protect Your Dynasty," fusing wealth (and class) with family. The entrance of Finkton takes up this idea as well, since a large sign tells potential workers that "Your Life of Prosperity Begins Today!" Both instances underscore the importance of material wealth, and both suggest that prosperity, and working hard towards it, will eventually usher in happiness. Together with Fink's propaganda messages, they thus suggest that hard work will be rewarded, alluding to the promise of the American dream, while at the same time ensuring that this dream is unattainable for the vast majority of Columbia's poorer citizens by suppressing their rights. As Tyler DeHaven and Chris Hendrickson argue, "Columbia's media seeks to convert the disenfranchised lower class into cogs for the machine that is Columbia's means of production, further empowering the Founders" (123), "us[ing] visual and audio indoctrination to design and instill a culture of servitude into the lower class" (124).

Figure 4. Propaganda poster found in Finkton.

- 24 One poster in particular, also found in Finkton, combines this focus on class with racial anxieties. It depicts a white man in the foreground, dressed in a business suit and apparently looking at a pocket watch (fig. 4)—although the depiction of his eyes could also be understood as looking directly at us, breaking the fourth wall. Behind him, in the dark, a few figures are lurking, with the caption on the poster reading: “Leaving early? Watching the clock opens the door for others to take your job!” The figures all appear very dark, partly in shadows, but still, they resemble clearly differentiated racist stereotypes, presumably depicting men of Arab, Mexican, Chinese, Native American, and Irish descent. The poster thus works on two levels by combining racial and class anxiety: On the one hand, it reminds workers to work diligently, since they might otherwise lose their job. On the other hand, it connects the already established threat of ethnic minorities directly to that potential loss of employment as well, alleging that their jobs might be taken by immigrants. This economic anxiety, in turn, strengthens the discrimination against Columbia’s nonwhite population, functioning similarly to populist-nationalist myths that cast foreigners as scapegoats for economic worries and thus demonstrating how race and class intersect in this discriminatory logic.
- 25 Overall, these sometimes large and obvious, sometimes small and optional visual displays all combine to fill the narrative background of the game, exposing Columbia’s society as based on systematic oppression and discrimination. Of the many kinds of violations of rights that appear to be part of Columbia, the visuals of the game particularly highlight them through racial and social injustices—and by pointing out their intersectionality. While the main plot of the game does eventually culminate in the Vox Populi’s revolution against the city’s ruling class, it is only through the gamescape that the previously looming ethnic and social conflict in its society—i.e., the

actual oppression that many citizens had to suffer from, the reasons for their uprising—becomes more apparent. As this analysis has shown, only if players take the time to explore the (often optional) visuals that form the narrative background and thus arrive at a more detailed reconstruction of the storyworld will they fully understand the oppressive and discriminatory world of *BioShock Infinite*.

3.3 Visualizing History

- 26 A third angle that I identify in *BioShock Infinite* as interweaving visual displays with (in)justice concerns the depiction of (US) history within Columbia. As mentioned before, there are a number of (visual) references to US history in the game, such as statues depicting the Founding Fathers, who are religiously worshiped in Columbia, or unfavorable portrayals of Abraham Lincoln. However, it is in the area called Hall of Heroes that the visual reenacting of history is vividly displayed, and where a misrepresentation of history becomes most obvious. The hall—basically a kind of museum—celebrates the history of Columbia, particularly through two exhibits, which depict the events of the Boxer Rebellion and (what the exhibition calls) the Battle at Wounded Knee. Both follow a similar pattern as previous visual representations since they both work to cast minorities as the ethnic Other, as a threat to be fought. In comparison to the previously discussed examples, however, the link to—and misrepresentation of—US history becomes even more evident.

Figure 5. Stereotypical portrayal of Native Americans in the Hall of Heroes.

- 27 Focusing specifically on Wounded Knee, the overall exhibit works to establish the events not as the massacre that it actually was but as a heroic battle won by US/Columbian forces. Unlike the previously discussed more “static” visual displays, these work as exhibitions or “life-size dioramas” (Buinicki 728), a display that players can walk through. The Wounded Knee exhibit is accompanied by war music, with the incessant sound of drums and shouts signaling the advent of a Native American war band. As players walk through the exhibit, various cardboard cutouts depicting Native Americans pop out. Many of them hide in bushes and are colored entirely in black, while others jump out of those bushes, again in line with depicting them as constant

threats that might appear very suddenly (fig. 5). Throughout the exhibit, the war chants and shouts become increasingly louder, cardboard fire appears in the bushes alongside more Native Americans, and the light starts to flash, all combining to evoke imminent danger. The Native Americans' appearance follows the same stereotypical portrayal of ethnic minorities found throughout the game: They are dressed with feathers and other ornamental gear, they are all armed (usually with bows or tomahawks), and their skin color, and in fact their overall appearance, is tinted distinctly red. The color red dominates the entire exhibit, also symbolizing danger. Additionally, all of the Native Americans are consistently associated with violence, brutality, and savagery—they are all warriors, muscular and armed, and they are particularly shown in scenes in which they act as threats to white people. One statue depicts a Native American raising a woman's scalp in the air, another shows two warriors about to execute a white woman (fig. 6).¹⁴ Their association with violence is thus also gendered, presenting Native American men as a threat to white women in particular.¹⁵ A statue dedicated to Comstock, the "hero" of Wounded Knee, makes the exhibit's intention just as obvious when it proclaims: "With hue and cry, with hatchet red, they danced amongst our noble dead. But when our soldiers took the field, the savage horde could only yield." The clear contrast of adjectives—"noble" and "savage"—used in this description fits the exhibit's visual display as well, which establishes a binary opposition between Native Americans and white Columbians, casting Native Americans as savage Others and glorifying the white soldiers.¹⁶

- 28 Overall, the exhibit displays a one-sided, distorted version of history, according to the idea that "history is written by the victors," and thus serves as "a graphic reminder of how historical narratives are shaped and refashioned, often to cover up racial injustice" (Buinicki 729). In terms of how the events at Wounded Knee are portrayed in this exhibition, the Native Americans appear as the sole aggressors, with no mention of a massacre committed by US soldiers, instead honoring their heroic battle. Again, this depiction is partly influenced by the actual history of Wounded Knee, which at times was also considered a "battle" in US history but is nowadays usually recognized as a massacre (Buinicki 729-30). The depiction at the Hall of Heroes is thus a deviation both from Columbia's diegetic history—as we learn through Booker's memories of the massacre and from the former soldier Cornelius Slate, who complains to Booker about Comstock's misrepresentation of history—and from US history. Slate, for instance, laments that his and his fellow soldiers' experience is the "history that does not fit in their books." Similarly to the previously discussed visual displays, the exhibit particularly works to antagonize racial minorities, but it adds another dimension by more explicitly distorting history to fit this agenda. The game thus showcases an awareness for the injustices that omissions and misrepresentations in the "writing" of history can engender, but it does so not by showing history as something that is (literally) written but exactly as something visually (re)presented.

Figure 6. Stereotypical depiction of Native Americans' violence against a white woman.

4. Narrative and Ludic Complications

- 29 Before concluding, I briefly want to take a step back and connect the visual analysis of the previous section back to its larger context, particularly by interweaving the game's visual elements with its ludic and narrative ones. The visual manifestations discussed above all paint a rather clear picture of Columbia's ruling elite as xenophobic nationalists. While satire and hyperbole always run the risk of being taken literally (as the aforementioned Tea Party incident illustrates), in the context of the overall game, when connecting these visuals with the game's narrative elements, it becomes evident that *BioShock Infinite* wants to indeed criticize this foundation of Columbia's society rather than condone it. Yet at the same time, in this larger context, the strict classifications into "good" and "evil" for the Founders and the Vox Populi do not quite hold up. Instead, *BioShock Infinite* also draws distinct parallels between them. On a gameplay level, this already becomes evident in the similarity of enemies that Booker has to fight before and after the Vox's revolution succeeds. Before, he faces hordes of enemies from Comstock's army that he kills without much thought, and after, he faces hordes of enemies from the Vox Populi's army that he disposes of similarly. While they might look slightly differently, there is no distinct change in the gameplay for fighting them, nor is this narratively reflected. Instead, the game points out further similarities between them, for instance when Elizabeth notes that, in her opinion, the Vox were "no better" than the Founders when she sees how the Vox publicly display the scalps of some of Comstock's murdered lieutenants.
- 30 Narratively, this ambiguation works primarily on a character level, by drawing parallels between characters who were previously portrayed as polar opposites. For instance, once the Vox Populi have taken over large parts of the city, Daisy Fitzroy, their leader, is portrayed eerily similarly to Jeremiah Fink, whom she overthrew. Particularly, Fink's propagandistic public announcements that players could hear throughout Finkton are then replaced by Fitzroy's announcements—although they differ sharply in content, their presentation is very similar. During one such message,

Fitzroy's face is also superimposed on a building, portraying her in a despotic way similar to Comstock's and Fink's cults of personality. The cruelty players saw the Founders commit onto the city's lower and working class is likewise replaced by a comparable level of violence that Booker and Elizabeth witness the Vox Populi use against Columbia's upper class, and in that sense, "the Vox prove just as violently ideological and tyrannical as Comstock" (Elmore 100), embodying "a bloody revolution that loses sight of its ideals, turns anarchistic, and becomes the new oppressor" (DeHaven and Hendrickson 114; cf. also Peaty 203-04). This also culminates in Fitzroy's fate: Eventually, she kills Fink and, afterward, wants to murder his son, too, arguing that "[i]f you wanna get rid of the weed, you got to pull it up from the root." Before she manages to do that, however, she is in turn stabbed by Elizabeth.¹⁷ Although the game generally aligns with the Vox Populi's cause in fighting the Founders' injustice, it also portrays power-hungry and overzealous leaders of any organization as problematic. Rick Elmore accordingly reads the game as highlighting "the corrupting influence of power" and suggesting that "political power always corrupts democratic and egalitarian ideals" (100).

- 31 Even more fundamentally, *BioShock Infinite's* ending parallels the game's protagonist, Booker, with its main antagonist, Comstock. As part of a longer revelation that culminates in a narrative twist, Elizabeth explains to Booker that, in the world of the game, multiple parallel universes and, thus, parallel timelines exist (with Elizabeth having the power to travel between them). After Booker kills Comstock, Elizabeth realizes that he lives on in other worlds and that he can only be stopped if they prevent him from ever being born. The game then shows a baptism that Booker contemplated many years ago, after having participated in the Wounded Knee massacre. As Booker explains, however, he did not go through with the baptism at the last second. They then realize that, in another world, when Booker did get baptized, he eventually became religious, found new meaning in his life, founded the city of Columbia, and changed his name to Zachary Hale Comstock. In a way, the protagonist Booker and the antagonist Comstock are thus one and the same person, but from different parallel universes (cf. also Horn). This twist moment serves to fundamentally ambiguate their identity and leads to a major revision of the game's storyworld constructed so far, as players realize that their player avatar, Booker, who was only a reluctant fighter for justice to begin with, also carries the potential to be an instigator of injustice like Comstock—and vice versa.¹⁸ In this sense, this realization also draws metatextual attention to the question of agency in the game, highlighting the enormous consequences of this choice in Booker's life against the backdrop of the fundamental importance of making choices in the playing of a game like *BioShock Infinite*.
- 32 Finally, the existence of multiple universes in the game speaks to *BioShock Infinite's* awareness of the narrative constructedness of time, space, and reality (and, on a metatextual level, of a narrative like *BioShock Infinite* itself). In turn, this awareness heightens its previous self-reflection on the writing and construction of history related to the exhibition of Wounded Knee. With the knowledge of the twist, this display gains another ambivalent dimension as well: Slate's main criticism of the distortion of history present at the Hall of Heroes concerned the fact that, in his words, Comstock "wasn't there." Slate is enraged that Comstock uses this part of history to stylize himself as a war hero when, in reality, he did not even take part in it. Yet with the knowledge of the game's twist, players will realize that this central part of Slate's criticism is not actually valid—Comstock was at Wounded Knee, but he was still known

as Booker DeWitt back then. While this is still clearly a misrepresentation of history that does grave injustice to the actual victims of Wounded Knee, it also foregrounds the complications of representing history “accurately” in the first place—especially, perhaps, in a visual medium—and it points to this issue going beyond simply being right or wrong, as a binary. In this sense, the game highlights that the meaning and interpretation of images and narratives always depend on their specific context, pointing to the more general complexity of representing and “writing” history. Similar to other alternate histories, *BioShock Infinite* thus makes “readers [(or players)] rethink their world and how it has become what it is. [Alternate histories] are a critique of the metaphors we use to discuss history. And they foreground the ‘constructedness’ of history and the role narrative plays in this construction” (Hellekson 5). In this sense, *BioShock Infinite* uses its visual, narrative, and ludic elements not only to make its players reflect on the US history of racial and social injustice as it is hyperbolically depicted in the game. Additionally, it points to our understandings of justice and morality as social constructions as well, influenced by the equally constructed history of justice and injustice in the US. Accordingly, the game highlights how much the “evaluation” of history and of justice depends on questions of context, framing, and power.

5. Conclusion

- 33 In this article, I have analyzed *BioShock Infinite* for its visual depiction of injustice and immorality. While understanding the game as equally narrative, ludic, and visual, I highlighted how it is particularly its visual presentation of Columbia that encapsulates the city’s oppressive tendencies, rather than the more immediate (and mandatory) ludic and narrative aspects. As I have shown through plot elements, the narrative background, and the depiction of history, the game exposes the oppression propagated by the city’s rulers particularly along the axes of race and class. In the larger narrative context of the game, though, these portrayals ultimately serve to ambiguate binary oppositions and instead point both to the dangers of nationalism and fanaticism and to the difficulty inherent in their historical portrayal. As a highly popular video game, playing this particular representation of an exaggerated, fantastic version of US history thus provides a complex site for both historical and contemporary discussions of justice and injustice in the US. While the game’s release mostly sparked debates about the contemporary United States’ relation to (social) rights, I locate the cultural work of *BioShock Infinite*’s visual manifestations of struggles and fights for rights, morality, and justice on a more abstract level: The game provides insights into underlying currents and trends that have always been part of how we construct “America,” which have surfaced as different incarnations throughout history but are all traceable to the same roots. Yet, as *BioShock Infinite* suggests, they depend on (particularly visual) representations to be recognized and understood as such.

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NOTES

1. In the overall game, gender also plays an important role, yet it is mainly developed through different characters, particularly Elizabeth and Booker, while on a visual level, discrimination based on race and class are more present. Narratively, however, particularly Elizabeth's arc from being locked in a tower to (at least physically) being freed to actually acquiring more power and agency (on a narrative, if not on a ludic level) at the end of the story is relevant from a gender perspective—cf. Origiano for a feminist reading of some of these aspects in particular.
2. For more on this debate, cf. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith, and Tosca 189-204; Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan.
3. My conception of video games as "narratively liminal," as lying in the border zones of different symbolic forms, has been informed by discussions as part of the network "Narrative

Liminality and/in the Formation of American Modernities,” funded by the German Research Foundation. When, in the following, I single out visual elements to analyze in the game, this is largely a heuristic decision, since my overall understanding of video games does not see clear boundaries to be demarcated among visual, narrative, and ludic elements. The visuals in the game, for instance, also partly tell a narrative, and the main plot of the game is also depicted visually and ludically, of course—yet to be able to meaningfully analyze the interweaving of these aspects, trying to distinguish between them is necessary.

4. *BioShock Infinite* thus features a narrative element similar to its predecessor *BioShock*, both of which I understand as “narratively unstable.” For an investigation of this instability in the context of questions of choice and agency in *BioShock*, cf. Schubert, “Objectivism.”

5. This is, for instance, already visible in the omnipresence of the American flag in Columbia, and of the colors red, white, and blue in general, which present the overall city in bright, optimistic tones. The US flag thus both connects Columbia to the historical US, and it already alludes to the emphasis on patriotism within the city’s society, particularly the ruling elite.

6. For a deeper investigation of the connection between nostalgia, history, and utopia/dystopia in *BioShock Infinite*, cf. Buinicki.

7. The scene thus also draws parallels to public lynchings throughout US history, as “[t]he cultural power of lynching—indeed, the cultural power of white supremacy itself—rested on spectacle,” prompting “white southerners ... to participate in and watch extraordinary acts of violence” (Wood 3).

8. In fact, the game presents players with the choice of throwing the ball at the couple or refusing to do that (however, both choices actually lead to the same outcome, i.e., the stoning does not happen). Like a number of these binary decisions in the game, this choice has no impact on the larger plot, yet it does instill a feeling of agency, the “illusion of choice,” as it is often called in game studies, in players. The revelation that these choices do not actually influence much is particularly relevant in the context of the game’s metatextual ending; in the narrower context of this article, however, it also highlights the question of morality, presenting a clearly moral and clearly immoral choice. That effect, in turn, works similarly to the first *BioShock* game’s moral choices about the fate of the Little Sisters (cf. Schubert, “Objectivism” 285-86; Tavinor 97-99, 104-05).

9. In the next larger area of the game, Shantytown, this visual depiction differs drastically: As the poorest part of the city, basically its slums or ghetto, it is colored in dark brown and black tones, with dirty buildings, broken objects, and leaking water dominating the setting.

10. As just one of the many examples of announcements by Fink that fit this pattern, one draws explicit parallels to history as well: “Now, some folks just aren’t satisfied with their place here at Fink Industries. But I tell you, there’s a purpose for all living things. Would the Pharaohs of Egypt have been able to stand at the top of their pyramids if the Israelites had not made their bricks? Would the captains of industry have been able to ride the rails had not the Chinamen laid the track for them? So, I say, chin up! History is built on the backs of men like you!” Fink thus draws sharp contrasts of people’s “worth” along class lines, and he uses this propaganda to instill this thinking on the lower class as well, in order to keep them suppressed. Tyler DeHaven and Chris Hendrickson equally link audio elements in Finkton to this pattern: “The music constantly playing to the metronome of a hammer knocking against wood subconsciously instills an unceasing, driving rhythm into the workers” (125).

11. Another prominent element are the so-called kinetoscopes found around Columbia, which show very short films that sometimes recount a part of the city’s history, sometimes propagate certain ideological views. The kinetoscope also serves as a historical link to the US of the time, but I deem it particularly relevant because it speaks to the allure and the power of (moving) images not only for Columbia’s inhabitants but also, on a metatextual level, for players of *BioShock Infinite*.

12. Accordingly, another painting in their headquarters shows Lincoln in the moment before being shot by Booth, with Booth's head positively illuminated by bright light, whereas Lincoln is depicted with red glowing eyes and devil's horns, establishing a crass heaven/hell dichotomy. Comstock shares this view of Lincoln, saying of him in a voxophone found nearby: "What exactly was the 'Great Emancipator' emancipating the Negro from? From his daily bread. From the nobility of honest work. From wealthy patrons who sponsored them from cradle to grave. From clothing and shelter," thus highlighting his racist beliefs in an equally crude way.

13. Religion is a central theme in *BioShock Infinite* as well, and it is linked to questions of fanaticism, discrimination, and propaganda. For investigations of religion in the game, cf. Heidbrink, Knoll, and Wysocki; Bosman.

14. This specific depiction in the game bears a striking resemblance to John Vanderlyn's 1804 painting *The Death of Jane McCrea*. Accordingly, the intertextual connection further links the game's fictional take to established depictions of violence in US visual culture. I want to thank Nicole Maruo-Schröder for pointing me to this similarity.

15. In this sense, this presentation alludes to women's stereotypical association with civilization (opposed to the Native Americans' association with savagery and the wilderness), appealing to the exhibit's visitors'—and hegemonic masculinity's—impulse to see both women and civilization as being in constant need of protection. Native Americans portrayed as a threat to white women is also a staple of stereotypical depictions of Natives throughout the Western genre.

16. The same principle holds for the presentation of the Boxer Rebellion, with both exhibits intended to "represent the Native Americans and Chinese as dangerous Others" through "stereotypical and racist imagery from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, along with lighting and music" (Buinicki 728).

17. That Daisy, a black woman, is stabbed in the back by Elizabeth, a white woman, is significant—and problematic—in terms of race and gender as well, pitting women of different ethnicities against each other instead of uniting them against what the game otherwise identifies as their common threat, white patriarchal masculinity. In addition, this act silences the voice of the major representative of minorities in the game, instead casting the two protagonists as white saviors.

18. In this context, that players witness the game's events through the perspective of a white male protagonist is also significant for how Booker's understanding of the world influences the depiction of race and class in the game. For a study of *BioShock Infinite* that focuses more explicitly on how the game's narrative, visual, and ludic elements relate to questions of white nationalism, cf. Schubert, "Columbian Nightmare."

ABSTRACTS

In this article, I analyze the 2013 video game *BioShock Infinite* as a popular site for the visual display of (in)justice and (im)morality. I contend that it is not so much the game's ludic elements but its visuality that most forcefully makes a compelling argument against the oppression and discrimination found in the game's fictional world, the city of Columbia. The game's visual elements—as part of its larger plot, its narrative background, and the way history is depicted—particularly work to highlight racial and social injustice at the core of Columbia's society. In turn, the game suggests to draw parallels between these fictional representations and actual US society at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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Keywords: narrative, play, US history, visibility, video games, race, class, propaganda, agency

AUTHOR

STEFAN SCHUBERT

Stefan Schubert is an assistant professor (Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter) at the Institute for American Studies at Leipzig University. In 2018, he received his PhD for a project investigating what he calls 'narrative instability' in contemporary US popular culture (specifically films, video games, and TV). His wider research interests include popular and visual culture, narrativity, textuality, new media, game studies, gender studies, and (post-) postmodernism. He is a member of the DFG research network "Narrative Liminality and/in the Formation of American Modernities."