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Artifacts of Empire: Orientalism and Inner-Texts in *Tomb Raider* (2013)

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Chapter 11
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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines Crystal Dynamics' 2013 Tomb Raider *reboot, arguing that the game makes use of intertextual references to the original Core Design* Tomb Raider *(1996) and popular culture archaeology in an effort to revise the original franchise's exploitative depiction of both Lara Croft and archaeological practice. Framed by a theoretical understanding of Orientalism (Said, 1979) and the constraints of symbolic order (Kristeva, 1986a) and the recognition that video games in general and the* Tomb Raider *franchise in specific are "games of empire" (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009), it becomes clear that the 2013* Tomb Raider *ultimately fails to escape the constraints of imperial procedural semiotics.*

INTRODUCTION

In 1996, Core Design released *Tomb Raider*, a digital exploration-adventure role-playing game (RPG) featuring a treasure-hunting female protagonist named Lara Croft. By the early 2000s, Lara had been featured on more than 200 magazine covers, listed as one of the "Sexiest Women of the Year," and nominated as British Ambassador for Technology (Lancaster, 2004, p. 87). She had also been repeatedly lambasted as a digital sex object and as representative of the exploitation of native peoples in the name of archaeological discovery. In 2013, Crystal Dynamics "rebooted" the *Tomb Raider* franchise, redesigning the appearance, origins, and ideology of Lara Croft in order to reflect a more inclusive ethos. At its core, the franchise relies upon a set of Western cultural assumptions of superiority which manifest in ways categorized by cultural theorist Edward Said (1979) as "Orientalist." These practices—which appear in *Tomb Raider* games as exploration, combat, and collection mechanics—situate the franchise within a framework of "games of empire" (Dyer-Witheford &de Peuter, 2009), games which manifest in theme, gameplay, and marketing certain sociological codes explicitly associated with capitalist imperialism and conquest.

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In order to adequately understand how a video game can be both supportive of and subversive toward an imperialist paradigm, it is important to first understand how paradigms come to have cultural meaning, how imperialism functions as a cultural force, how that force causes harm to those it oppresses, how games participate in an imperial paradigm, and, most importantly, how that paradigm makes resistance to its oppression all but impossible. Crystal Dynamics' 2013 reboot enters into this paradox of resistant complicity both consciously and—to an extent—critically through intertextual reference to its direct predecessors, as well as to objects and practices of colonial imperialism. The 2013 *Tomb Raider* deliberately engages with colonial (and post-colonial) criticism of hegemonic masculine imperialism in an attempt to refigure the series, and Lara herself, as a different kind of exploratory agent, more concerned with knowledge acquisition than exploitation or conquest. Yet despite significant revisions to Lara's backstory, the 2013 *Tomb Raider* remains trapped in an imperialist framework; in spite of its desire to escape its own intertextual past of oppressive colonial violence by producing a narrative centered around female-coded space and a capable female protagonist, the 2013 *Tomb Raider* is ultimately constrained by its own procedural imperialism, unable to fully escape its cultural past.

DEFINING GAMES AS ARTIFACTS OF EMPIRE

Games as Semiotic and Symbolic

In the twenty-first century, the globalization of cultural and material markets has produced a planet-wide lexicon of imperialism, an institutionalized system of signifiers, both linguistic and extra-linguistic, that articulates a hierarchical value-system based on an implicit presumption of Western superiority. Described by cultural theorist Julia Kristeva (1986b) as the "symbolic order," such a system "is determined by a set of signifying rules...a general social law" of social and institutional forces which establish and negotiate specific paradigms of authority and identity (p. 25). Put more simply, language both determines and is determined by social mores and conventions, ultimately coming to depict the hierarchical authority of the dominant social paradigm. For Kristeva (1986a), this symbolic order may be resisted by means of the semiotic chora, "a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (p. 93); the constraints of the imperial symbolic order (the rigidity of lexical communication) can only be subverted by means of the extra-linguistic. Yet games—composed of both lexical and mechanical components—reveal that extra-linguistic elements are just as subject to institutional oppressors as symbolic language.

By virtue of their complexity, games (analog and digital) both rely upon existing linguistic constructs and create new lexica of mechanical signifiers in the process of interacting with players. Games thus produce what Ian Bogost (2007) terms "procedural rhetoric": "the art of persuasion through rule-based representations and interactions rather than the spoken word, writing, images, or moving pictures" (p. ix). Procedural rhetoric structures both rules and gameplay, inhibiting players from transgressing boundaries while also providing the mechanics available to them, and is as functionally rigid as Kristeva's symbolic order.[1] Procedural rhetoric works by means of implicit rather than explicit persuasion; players interact with the design components of a game and are given feedback for those interactions which tell them how the game situates those actions relative to the rest of the gameworld. These rhetorics are inherently intertextual in the sense that they draw on established conventions of

gaming, as well as linguistic and symbolic structures. Primary among these is the procedural economy of rewards in terms of experience points and avatar gear, which Edward Castronova (2005) explains "are incredibly powerful tools for shaping behavior" (p. 110), since, he continues, such procedural "mechanisms turn the synthetic world into a place where value can be assigned to anything, and behavior directed accordingly" (p. 111).

Play, as it appears in this study, has multiple meanings. First, and most obviously, is that "play" is the verb assigned to games. Second, following Johan Huizinga (1950) and Roger Caillois (2001), play is "a free and voluntary activity, a source of joy and amusement" (p. 6) which may be augmented by secondary purposes, such as income, social status, or education. Brian Sutton-Smith (2001) recognizes that "major forms of play are introduced and manipulated for their own benefit by the rulers of society," and that these forms of play can be manipulated by "the subordinate classes...to express their own hidden rhetorics of resistance or subversion" (p. 74). Play is thus voluntary activity undertaken for the purpose of deriving joy (qua entertainment) or satisfaction, and which may also seek to engage with, interrogate, or even undermine some component of the dominant socio-political paradigm. Kristeva uses the term "play" in a Derridean sense, in which "play" is "permitted by the lack or absence" of restrictions or boundaries (Derrida, 1978, p. 289), and "is the disruption of presence" (p. 292). In gaming, Caillois (2001) suggests, "The game consists of the need to find or continue at once a response *which is free within the limits set by the rules*. This latitude of the player, this margin accorded to his action is essential to the game and partly explains the pleasure which it excites" (p. 8). Caillois (2001) terms this free-form play within rules *paidia*. During digital gameplay, players are constrained by rules, but are still permitted to take actions which are not necessarily intended by the developer. This desire to enter non-useful areas is an example of choric *paidia* in which the player makes use of the game's procedural mechanics (jumping, mantling, etc.) in order to transgress the prescribed path. Lusory (or ludic) play—gameplay—includes both procedural play which takes place within the bounds of the game's presumed mechanics and *paidia* which takes place outside them. Highly linear games—like *Tomb Raider*—allow less space for this type of play, while open-world or "sandbox" games—like *Grand Theft Auto* (Rockstar, 2002) or *Skyrim* (Bethesda, 2011)—have more. This type of play, described by Huizinga (1950), is "irrational," "the direct opposite of seriousness," "a voluntary activity," and, most importantly, "it is free, is in fact freedom" (pp. 4, 5, 7, 8). *Paidia*, Kristevan/Derridian play, is thus a voluntary activity of freedom which also reacts against the procedural limitations of a paradigmatic system of oppression; games which permit or even encourage this type of play thus simultaneously embody and allow for the undermining of imperial ideology.

From a creator's perspective, "play" in the Kristevan/Derridean sense is more complex. In language, explains María Alfaro (1996), this play manifests as a "writer's efforts to detach him/herself from the work of previous authors as well as to proclaim his/her own creative space" (p. 270). In gaming, such creative play would thus be an attempt to simultaneously engage with and "detach from" the preexisting narrative and procedural rhetorics of extant games. In the case of Crystal Dynamics' 2013 *Tomb Raider*, such "play" forms a central part of the game's attempt to re-envision the central character of Lara Croft as a more intellectual and less exploitative (and less exploited) figure as the developers redesigned Lara's physique, her origins, and her motives for interacting with the artifacts in the gameworld. However, even given this "play" with the original franchise, the rebooted *Tomb Raider* series nevertheless remains constrained—as must any attempt at Kristevan/Derridean play—by the very narrative and procedural systems it is attempting to escape.

Games as Imperial Agents

As artifacts which are simultaneously both lusory and procedural, games (video or analog) possess the capacity to linguistically and mechanically reflect and/or critique imperial symbolic order, both as material objects purchased in a capitalist market and as cultural artifacts which perpetuate an imperial ethos through narrative, artistic, and procedural content.[2] In their 2009 study, *Games of Empire*, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter state that "video games are paradigmatic media of Empire—planetary, militarized hypercapitalism—and of some of the forces presently challenging it" (p. xv, emphasis in original). But what does it mean to say that video games (primarily mass market or AAA games, like those in the *Tomb Raider* franchise) are "media of Empire"? Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2009) define "empire" as "governance by global capitalism" which incorporates specific "conditions of work, forms of subjectivity, and types of struggle" (p. xx); specifically, "the global capitalist ascendancy of the early twenty-first century, a system administered and policed by a consortium of competitively collaborative neoliberal states" which "occupies a strategic position because of its role in intellectually and affectively shaping subjectivities throughout other parts of the system" (p. xxiii). In short, "empire," in the twenty-first century, is a set of paradigmatic systems of intellectual and material (capitalistic) properties which structure a hierarchy of Western privilege and institutionalized oppression. Because they are constructed within this paradigm, most AAA games are necessarily inscribed by imperial discourse—whether they choose to embrace, reject, or remain ambivalent to it.

In terms of AAA titles like *Tomb Raider*, capitalist enterprise coerces games into an imperial framework, which Pierre Bourdieu (1991) suggests is an essential part of cultural production. The "global capitalism" to which Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2009) refer ensures that the markets with the highest purchase capacity—predominantly Western markets in Europe and the Americas—are those to which most video games cater. This Western market essentially demands to see itself in the heroic role; this provides an essential structure to the procedural components of most AAA titles in terms of the inclusion of combat, collection, exploration, and survival, all mechanics which are inherently imperial. These expectations become coded into the video game industry as natural components of gameplay, and preordain much of the imperialism inherent in most AAA games. In the case of *Tomb Raider*, the expansive franchise—including video games, graphic novels, action figures, living models, and films—is especially tied to the capitalist markets and the imperial framework which structures them.

To say, then, that games are agents of empire is to suggest that games participate in the dissemination and enforcement of these intellectual and material systems, whether intentionally or incidentally. Such participation, it must be recognized, is not unique to games; all media, whether popular, critical, artistic, political, or otherwise, are necessarily part of either promoting or resisting the discourse and functions of empire. In fact, it would be impossible for any such media not to participate—as either proponent or antagonist, or both—in imperial discourse. Yet at the same time that games participate in an imperial symbolic order, they also necessarily—because they are games—create space for play in both the lusory and paidian senses. In short, being part of the imperial symbolic order is the very thing which enables games to question that order; however, even though a game might attempt to escape its own oppressive hierarchy, the semiotic nature of games is permanently inextricable from imperial order.

Archaeology, Intertextuality, and Orientalism

Having established that games are artifacts of the imperial order bound to that order by procedural semiotics, it is important to consider the ramifications of this ludic imperialism. The procedural rhetoric of the *Tomb Raider* franchise (from 1996 to the present) contains a dominant strain of Western imperial order: the practice of archaeological exploration and exploitation. For Derrida (1978), archaeology—the practice of cataloguing historical events and artifacts—sits in direct opposition to play. Archaeology, he explains, "is an accomplice of this reduction of the structurality of structure and always attempts to conceive of structure on the basis of a full presence which is beyond play" (Derrida, 1978, p. 279). In other words, the purpose of archaeology is to reduce a thing (object, event, person, or belief) to a static totality in which and beyond which there is no uncertainty or flexibility. The work of archaeology is thus to take the unknown, mythic, or mysterious and delineate it, defining and bounding it into certainty. The process of collection and identification eliminates that which is playful by inscribing a use-value or purpose to an artifact, precluding it from the realm of lusory freedom.

For the majority of history from the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries, archaeology has been predominantly practiced by Western civilizations, producing an ideological paradigm referred to by Said (1979) as "Orientalism." In essence, Orientalism defines 'Oriental' culture by means of the collection, cataloguing, and intertextual cross-referencing of physical and intellectual artifacts in order to create a sterile and static conception of what it meant (or means) to be 'Oriental.' This process of identification is also necessarily relational; the objects, practices, and people of the Orient come to be defined based on what they are not (which is to say, Western) rather than in their own terms, often tending toward dismissal; in a comparison to the West, the Orient appears inferior, lesser than, and therefore deserving of subjugation. Orientalism, continues Said (1979), results in the formation of a "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (p. 3). It is both the producer and product of Western archaeological imperialism in that it dictates not only the intertextual methodology by which the West approaches the East—cataloguing and collecting—but also the justification of these actions by presuming Oriental inferiority. In specific, the eighteenth and nineteenth century practice of archaeology produced highly problematic understandings of Asian and African cultures under the ostensible guise of "rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation, and strangeness" of the East (Said, 1979, p. 121).

Although it is now the twenty-first century, Orientalism persists, surfacing in modern acts of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, practices which continue to place "the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (Said, 1979, p. 7), often as an unintended byproduct of the oppressive "autonomy of language" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 41). The consequence of such an interaction reduces the complexity of the 'inferior' position, justifying archaeological imperialist practice:

In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these. (Said, 1979, p. 177)

This archaeological process makes heavy use of the Kristevan symbolic order, eliminating the choric elements—the non-linguistic and non-representative—which open up space for play and resistance. Said's characterization focuses on the fact that Orientalism relies on *intertextuality*, in which an object specifically recalls a text: a quotation, a citation, a reference to a previous body of specifically Western texts which already claim to circumscribe the Orient. As such, Orientalism itself is inherently intertextual, relying on already extant understandings of what is "Other" or "Oriental" based on historical or fictionalized accounts which may or may not be based in fact.

Orientalism and archaeology as imperial practices rely specifically on the existence of "a space in which a potentially vast number of [such] relations coalesce" (Allen, 2000, p. 12), a framework of often undetermined "texts" which define the "East" as exotic, often tropical, uneducated, barbaric, and technologically un-advanced. These "texts" are presumptions and stereotypes easily recognizable to the Western general public and which form the basis for their contextualization of artifacts, cultures, and peoples of non-Western origin. Codified in popular culture works of fiction (literary and cinematic in particular), this intertextual system forms the basis for the imperial symbolic order's understanding of the "Orient," thus reducing it to a series of intertexts to be analyzed and circumscribed, to be understood, known, and thereby dominated. In essence, the practice of reducing a culture and society to the sum of its collectable artifacts minimizes its human complexity and eliminating its capacity for resistance and play. By entering into this discourse, works of popular culture may seek to perpetuate or undermine these existing paradigms by engaging with, replicating, or seeking to explode extant stereotypes. Modern revisionist works—such as J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), a retelling of Daniel Defoe's (1719)*Robinson Crusoe*—often attempt to undermine imperial authority by recontextualizing dominant narratives from native perspectives. These works, like Crystal Dynamics' 2013 reboot of the *Tomb Raider* franchise, often encounter the problem of falling into the same imperialist patterns as their predecessors, being (unintentionally) reshaped by the very paradigms they seek to question.

Feminized Colonial Space

One significant and frequent consequence of the Orientalist practice of categorization is a tendency to affiliate the East with various marginalized positions, as Said (1979) explains: "The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien," a tendency which "also encouraged a peculiarly (not to say invidiously) male conception of the world" (p. 207). This penchant for feminization was produced in part because, particularly prior to the twentieth century, exploration and intellectual Orientalism (archaeology) were "an exclusively male province" (Said, 1979, p. 207). This 'natural' feminization of the Orient reproduced a Western-centric paradigm which enforced belief in the supremacy of the Christian, European, male intellect, thereby enabling imperial powers to justify the disparagement, exploitation, and even destruction of the cultures encountered during imperialist expansion as a part of their patriarchal duty.

By extension, explains Ella Shohat (1991), Orientalist practice led to a tradition of Western depictions in text and media that specifically characterized "the (non-European) land as a virgin coyly awaiting the touch of the colonizer," which also "implied that whole continents—Africa, the Americas, Asia and Australia—could only benefit from the emanation of colonial praxis" (p. 52). However, when the land or peoples were unable to be controlled, Shohat (1991) continues, the virginal image was inverted into "that of libidinous, wild femininity. The wilderness, 'no man's land,' is characterized as resistant, harsh

and violent" (p. 55). Thus, colonial texts and images frequently "oscillate[] between these two master tropes, alternatively positing the colonized 'other' as blissfully ignorant, pure and welcoming as well as an uncontrollable savage, wild native whose chaotic hysteric presence requires the imposition of the law" (Shohat, 1991, p. 55). The trope of nature as female and therefore dangerous predates the expansionism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but was reinforced by imperial Orientalist practice and textual accounts (Domosh &Seager, 2001). The gendering of colonial space thus served to reinforce both Orientalist and sexist stereotypes, enabling and justifying the continued oppression of both female and non-European (and North American) perspectives.

The Colonization of Digital Worlds

The praxis of empire appears in the twenty-first century in digital gamespaces, with players frequently assuming the role of colonizer or conqueror. The vast majority of procedural mechanics focus on actions of empire and archaeology: exploring unknown space, claiming territory, collecting loot and resources, killing enemies (usually alien or Otherized). Often, gamespaces are explicitly colonial, unsettled territory (tropical islands, unpopulated medieval or fantasy landscapes, deep space), and the challenges faced by players are directly related to taming the gamespace's 'wildness.' Adele Bealer (2012) explains that "Successful gameplay demands that players read the gamescape" for procedural cues which dictate behavior (p. 28): a red reticule indicates an enemy; loot-glint identifies an object with which to interact. These procedural clues tell players how they should behave in the gamescape: reticules suggest the need for combat; loot glint indicates a collection mechanic; button prompts over non-player characters (NPCs) demand interaction. In many games, survival for the player-character through combat, evasion, collection, and/or puzzle-solving is a core component of gameplay; in these games, observes James Newman (2013), "What is really important to the player is staying alive... long enough to explore, conquer and colonize the space of the gameworld" (p. 110). The most basic player actions in many games are therefore inherently imperialist, whether or not the game's narrative context is overtly imperial. In a game of exploration-and-conquest, the rewards which a player earns for taking these actions—in terms of resources, narrative praise, or even ease of victory over enemies—reinforces the 'goodness' of such procedural actions and the player's relative (imperial) power over the subject-position of enemies and friendly NPCs. Even if the player is not explicitly occupying the territory (as in real-time-strategy games), the process of cataloging, collecting, and conquering replicates colonial praxis and thereby participates in imperialism, much as citizens of an imperial nation—like the United States—are complicit in the country's imperialist actions overseas.

In addition to these procedural cues, "the same gamescape deserves to be read critically for its social constructions and cultural assumptions" (Bealer, 2012, p. 28). These "constructions" and "assumptions" may be encoded in gameplay, but appear in the visual and auditory aesthetics of the gamespace, as well; a game's setting (time period, geographic location, etc.), musical score, character/voice acting, and artistic style, as well as overall genre (RPG, adventure, shooter, platformer, etc.) all contribute to the production of a game's "cultural assumptions." Similarly, Castronova (2005) explains that players entering digital space are "carrying their behavioral assumptions and attitudes with them. As a result, the valuation of things in cyberspace becomes enmeshed in the valuation of things outside cyberspace" (p. 147), a permeability of ideological conceptions that moves in both directions. As the medium of video games matures, these cultural assumptions also incorporate increasingly complex intertextual references. For instance, some games "bear arresting similarities to the New World travel narratives of sixteenth- and

seventeenth-century voyages and explorers" (Newman, 2013, p. 109), featuring encounters with alien peoples and landscapes. Such intertextual references can be structural, as above; thematic, such as the essential fantasy theme of the *Warcraft* games (Blizzard, 1994); specific, such as when a character quotes Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Ulysses" in *Mass Effect* (BioWare, 2007); or tropic, as in *Halo* (Bungie, 2001), which Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter describe as "virtual cowboys and Indians, or Allies and Nazis, or any of the other us-against-them scenarios boys perennially enjoy" (p. 82). A series or franchise may also make intertextual reference to its predecessors, a frequent occurrence in series such as *Tomb Raider.*

AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF *TOMB RAIDER*

Origins: Core Design's *Tomb Raider* (1996)

The first game in the *Tomb Raider* franchise was released by Core Design in 1996, featuring Lara Croft, a female, British, aristocratic treasure-hunter. At the game's beginning, Lara is hired to track down a piece of an ancient and mysterious talisman, a job which leads her on a global chase through ruins, fighting enemies animal, human, and supernatural before defeating the final enemy—an ancient Atlantean—and saving humanity. Played from a third-person, over-the-shoulder perspective, the player controls Lara's movements during exploration and combat, collecting objects useful as resources or keys (such as a totem or amulet that may be used to open a door or solve a puzzle) and using her iconic dual pistols to shoot enemies. The game's popularity led to the production of twelve additional titles and rereleases prior to Crystal Dynamics' 2013 reboot. In addition, the franchise has spawned two major motion pictures (West, 2001; Bont, 2003) and several graphic novel series. Lara's notoriety as a figure has often been ascribed to her physical proportions and tight clothing, but much of the game's success relies on the popular culture image of archaeology from the 1980s and 1990s, famously captured in Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* series (1981-1989). As such, the 2013 reboot of the series always already contains explicit intertextual reference to its own archaeological history as a game.

Tomb Raider's original concept "was for a treasure-hunting adventure set in the ruins of ancient Egypt" (Anderson & Levene, 2012, p. 238), drawing from glamorized popular culture archaeological tropes. According to Core Design's director, Jeremy Heath-Smith, *Tomb Raider*'s protagonist "did look like Indiana Jones, and I said, 'You must be insane, we'll get sued from here to kingdom come!'" (Anderson & Levene, 2012, p. 239). Designer Toby Gard had already considered a female protagonist, but "The rules at the time were: if you're going to make a game, make sure the main character is male and make sure he's American" (Anderson & Levene, 2012, p. 239), a practice which reinforced games' patriarchal imperialism. Instead, Gard decided "the lead character [would be] female and as British as I can make her" (Anderson & Levene, 2012, p. 239). Although Heath-Smith was initially skeptical, he allowed the project to proceed (Deuber-Mankowsky, 2001).

Lara's original biography—contained in the game's manual—reads as follows:

Lara Croft, daughter of Lord Henshingly Croft, was raised to be an aristocrat from birth. After attending finishing school at the age of 21, Lara's marriage into wealth had seemed assured, but on her way home from a skiing trip her chartered plane had crashed deep in the heart of the Himalayas. The only survivor, Lara learned how to depend on her wits to stay alive in hostile conditions a world away from her sheltered upbringing. 2 weeks later when she walked into the village of Tokakeriby her experiences

had had a profound effect on her. Unable to stand the claustrophobic suffocating atmosphere of upper-class British society, she realised that she was only truly alive when she was travelling alone. Over the 8 following years she acquired an intimate knowledge of ancient civilisations across the globe. Her family soon disowned their prodigal daughter, and she turned to writing to fund her trips. Famed for discovering several ancient sites of profound archaeological interest she made a name for herself by publishing travel books and detailed journals of her exploits. (Core Design, 1996b, p. 3)

As Clauda Breger (2008) observes, Lara's interest in "archaeology is thus presented as a subversive displacement of the traditional Indian adventures of privileged British travelers" (p. 47), especially since Lara's adventures in the 1996 *Tomb Raider* began in Calcutta (Core Design, 1996a). In essence, Lara's origins rely heavily on an intertextual relationship to historical British Imperialism, as well as the popular American cultural trope of the adventuring archaeologist, both of which firmly situate Lara as the embodiment of empire.

Yet, as Breger (2008) notes, Lara's imperial status is mitigated, specifically by her gender, as well as her refusal, in the game's original fiction, to be constrained by aristocratic heteronormativity. Despite this, Lara's rebellion against social roles—both within the game's fiction and as Gard's against-type creation—is rendered acceptable by her visual appearance of extreme femininity, widely criticized by feminists.[3] Kurt Lancaster (2004) explains that Lara's visual appearance mixed with her pursuit of masculine pastimes, "rather than challenging masculine dominance, feeds it and makes this dominance acceptable through feminine curves, seductive lips, and over-sized eyes" (p. 88). Along similar lines, Diane Carr (2002) suggests that while Lara's "physicality and gender invite objectification, yet she operates as a perpetrating and penetrative subject within the narrative" (p. 175). Thus, Lara has historically been a figure of both sexual objectification and subjective agency, imperialism and defiance, a duality which continues in the 2013 reboot.

A Critical Reboot: Crystal Dynamics' 2013 *Tomb Raider*

In the 2013 reboot of the franchise, Lara has been physically and narratively recrafted in an attempt to reframe her story in a way that is less imperialist, more sympathetic, and more socially critical than her earlier incarnation. Her appearance—in particular, her "feminine curves"—has been normalized, her clothing made less revealing and more practical. While she is still unquestioningly British, the narrative of an aristocratic marriage, plane crash in the Himalayas, and disownment has been replaced with a more educated background and long-deceased but beloved parents.[4] Furthermore, the Lara Croft of the 2013 *Tomb Raider* does not have extensive treasure-hunting experience, and at one point even ironically says "I hate tombs" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). The new Lara has a more intellectual motive for her explorations, as she and archaeologist Dr. James Whitman are leading a research team in search of a lost civilization, the most obvious attempt made by the game to escape the more exploitative imperialism of the original franchise's "treasure hunter" Lara. Although the game does not explicitly give Lara's level of education, it does contain a photograph of Lara and her friend Sam (Samantha Nishimura) in academic regalia from University College London, indicating that Lara is an academically trained archaeologist.[5] These explicit alterations—which are themselves intertextual references to the 'original' Lara Croft—seek to resituate the 2013 *Tomb Raider* as distinct from its predecessors, a new version of the popular culture archaeologist who has respect for and knowledge about the artifacts she collects rather than viewing them solely as sources of financial gain. Yet despite this, the 2013 Lara Croft is necessarily accompanied by

her own character history; she is always an allusion to her own former self, an intertext the game can never fully escape (nor does it truly wish to—after all, the success of the original franchise is something upon which Crystal Dynamics undoubtedly wishes to capitalize).

In the 2013 *Tomb Raider*, Lara is a leader of an expedition on the ship *Endurance* to find the lost ancient Japanese kingdom of Yamatai.[6] Early in the game, Whitman turns to Lara and exclaims that finding Yamatai is "like finding Atlantis!" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013), an explicit reference to the 1996 game in which the final villain is an Atlantean (Core Design, 1996a). When the ship is caught in a storm and wrecks on a reef, Lara and her companions are trapped on the island. Over the course of the game, Lara discovers that it is impossible to escape due to the mystical power of Himiko, a supernatural being whose soul has been trapped on the island. Himiko herself alludes to the final boss of the original 1996 game, an ancient Atlantean named Natla, and Lara's quest to destroy her echoes the original game's quest to destroy Natla, whose soul was also trapped (Core Design, 1996a). Throughout the game, Lara must explore various locations around the island, scavenge resources, build and improve tools and weapons, solve puzzles, collect or destroy artifacts, and defeat enemies. As such, the procedural actions available to the 2013 Lara provide intertextual (inter-procedural?) links to those of her 1996 predecessor. However, in the 2013 *Tomb Raider*, Lara is confined to a solitary island rather than roaming the world, a geographic restriction that attempts to reverse the earlier trope of Lara-as-colonizer but ultimately fails to separate her from her imperial origins.

Yamatai itself embodies a geography borrowed from Western popular culture, the type of space to which Gregory Woods (1995) refers as a "fantasy island":

Typically, the island refuge from tempest (or, latterly, from nuclear war) includes the following physical features: a coral reef which, once crossed without mishap, offers shelter from the direct force of the ocean and abundant fishing grounds; a calm and shallow lagoon; a curved, sandy beach (where the castaway first comes round from an exhausted sleep after fighting to survive the shipwreck, and where various useful artefacts are also washed ashore); at either end of the beach, rocks;...thick jungle, well provided with fruit trees; a clearing in which primitive peoples have erected, or carved in rock, an inelegant idol or fetish to which, at certain phases of the moon, they return to sacrifice human beings (this place is usually on 'the other side' of the island, and it is on that 'other' side that the savages/cannibals beach their outriggers);...and, of course, a hill or mountain on which laboriously to build a signal bonfire which, at the crucial moment when a schooner is passing, will have been allowed to die out or will not have been lit at all. (p. 127)

Writing before the release of the original *Tomb Raider*, Woods here describes many of the elements used in Crystal Dynamics' 2013 reboot, which appear in colonial texts from early narrative accounts of voyages to the New World—such as the accounts of the wreckage of the *Sea Venture* in Bermuda (Purchas, 1625), which provided the source for William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611)—to modern films and television series such as *Cast Away* (Zemeckis, 2000) and *Lost* (Abrams et al, 2004-2010), the most influential of which is undoubtedly Defoe's (1719)*Robinson Crusoe*. When Lara first washes ashore in the 2013 *Tomb Raider*, she and her companions are on a sandy beach, a location to which they will return later in the game. The jungle of Yamatai provides fruit trees (a source of health for Lara), as well as game, and the rivers and waterfalls are plentiful. Instead of a hill, Yamatai has a mountain retreat with a radio tower which Lara must repair and which ultimately fails to secure aid. Interestingly, in *Tomb Raider* the "primitives" are Westerners (the Solarii) corrupted by their participation in the cult of the Sun

Queen, to whom they sacrifice other stranded travelers. Although the transposition of Western cultists for "primitive peoples" inverts the standard Orientalist trope, it ultimately cannot assuage the game's inherent imperialism, as Lara—as the game's imperial hero—still must conquer both "primitives" (Solarii) and wild island (Himiko-qua-Yamatai) in order to return to civilization. Crystal Dynamics' Yamatai, while conforming to many of the elements described above, is a previously-settled space, and part of the player's mission (as Lara) is to destroy an earlier imperial power which has corrupted the natural forces of the island. In addition, Lara's motivation—intellectual curiosity and altruism rather than capitalist profit—is designed to separate her from more traditional colonial narratives of conquest and riches.

The 2013 reboot does its best to attempt to escape—or at least undermine—heavy-handed imperialism by juxtaposing Lara against the destructive Solarii, as well as against the earlier version of herself. After she rescues Conrad Roth from wolves, he attempts to comfort Lara by telling her she "can do it," because "After all, you're a Croft" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013), a remark which is immediately recognizable as a reference to the earlier franchise titles and the old Lara's capabilities, including a penchant for encountering and killing wolves (Core Design, 1996a). However, Lara rejects the allusion, saying "I don't think I'm that kind of Croft" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013), revealing a desire on the part of the game's creators to escape at least some of the tropes of the earlier series. Yet it is evident to both creators and players that Lara Croft cannot help but be Lara Croft, as Roth rejoins "Sure you are. You just don't know it yet" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). Although this exchange, on the surface, is a discussion about how Lara does—or does not—take after her father, the intertextuality of the game as a whole demonstrates that it is equally about to what extent this new Lara will repeat or revise her 1996 predecessor. The new professional-archaeologist-Lara is interested in pursuing goals which are not explicitly capitalist in nature: she explores Yamatai to ensure her own survival, to rescue her friends (another new narrative addition), and to unearth knowledge, aligning her more with the popular culture archaeologist-hero Indiana Jones than her own former incarnation. Yet in spite of these changes, Lara is first and foremost an explorer, a "tomb raider" who invades "wild" spaces and plunders them for objects of interest, use-value, and wealth, removing these artifacts from their native context and cataloguing them in Orientalist praxis.

Procedural Orientalism and Historical Inner-Texts

In the 2013 *Tomb Raider*, Crystal Dynamics has included a new class of collectable objects, called Relics, which provide no mechanical gameplay advantage; instead, they exist as an 'inner-textual' archaeological record of the many cultures which occupied Yamatai over the centuries. In addition, the act of collection serves as an example of procedurality which mechanically situates the player-qua-Lara within an Orientalist framework. When the player collects these objects—herbs, fans, dog-tags, and other miscellany—Lara offers information about them: when they were made, how they were used, what they are made of, to whom they likely belonged. Interestingly, the majority of Relics are based on actual artifacts, many of them modeled after objects currently in Western museums, such as the "Ban Chiang Pottery" vase, whose original model is held in the Krannert Art Museum (McGuire, 2013a). In part, the inclusion of these Relics is an attempt to re-humanize the absent 'natives' and non-native colonizers of the gamescape through the introduction of personal objects, thereby encouraging players to consider the impact of war and colonial occupation.

For example, in the Coastal Forest, Lara can find a Relic labeled "Hannya Mask" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). When the player picks up the Relic, the game shifts to the Relic menu, and Lara's voice says,

"This traditional Noh mask represents a hateful woman in the guise of a demon" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). If the player rotates it to examine it further, Lara reveals more information: "There are traces of white paint on the inside. Whoever used this mask was of noble birth" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). In gameplay terms, the mask serves no purpose; it does not give Lara additional health or act as a weapon or resource. Narratively and culturally, however, the mask is more interesting. Culturally, the mask makes reference to an entire set of intertexts: Noh drama, the cultural demonization of women, Western appropriation of Eastern aesthetic objects, and even Western understandings of demonology. As an 'inner-text,' although it does not directly help Lara to determine the answer to a puzzle or provide information necessary to forward progress, the mask foreshadows the game's narrative conclusion: the female demon alludes—unbeknownst to Lara or a first-time player—to Himiko's nobility and demonic nature.

In addition to Relics, there are other artifacts scattered around the island which provide little gameplay advantage: totems, posters, mines, mushrooms, cairns, and flags which Lara must destroy to accomplish quests; journals and diary entries which provide narrative explanations for the events on the island from ancient Yamatai to the present; video and audio journals from the crew of the *Endurance* which provide backstory; and—of course—ancient tombs which Lara must "raid" in order to find maps that reveal the locations of the collectible items. In addition, Lara collects weapons (a bow and firearms), salvaged scrap in order to upgrade her weapons and pickaxe, food (fruit and game, which she has to kill), and bandaging supplies. As in the 1996 *Tomb Raider*, these latter items are all required for Lara's survival; she must kill wolves and Solarii, heal damage taken from falls or injuries, and gather sustenance. Unlike her 1996 predecessor, however, this Lara is uninterested in wealth; her whole purpose is the survival of herself and her companions, a significant shift in Crystal Dynamics' attempt to reframe the franchise in opposition to—or at least not in support of—imperialism.

Altering Lara: Altruism, Orientalism, and a New Kind of "Raiding"

The addition of fellow explorers is one of the key differences between Crystal Dynamics' 2013 *Tomb Raider* and the earlier franchise. Instead of a 'lone-wolf' treasure-hunter, the 2013 Lara Croft sets out not only to survive, but to rescue those for whom she feels responsible, as she explains to Roth as she prepares to go into the Solarii Fortress:

Lara: *I'm going in.*
Roth: *Are you sure about this, Lara?*
Lara: *I'll get them. I'll come back. I promise.* (Crystal Dynamics, 2013)

This initiates a quest entitled "No One Left Behind," requiring her to rescue the rest of the surviving *Endurance* crew (Crystal Dynamics, 2013).[7] The desire to rescue her companions and escape Yamatai provides the impetus for Lara's actions throughout the game.

In the 2013 *Tomb Raider*, Whitman is the quintessential popular culture archaeologist, white, male, and American—an incompetent version of Indiana Jones. Furthermore, the 2013 *Tomb Raider* repeatedly characterizes Whitman as a capitalistic imperialist with little respect for the cultures he studies beyond their fiscal value. The game situates him as Lara's foil and opposition—the "bad" version of her character type which Lara (and the player) struggles to undermine. Most of the player's information about Whitman comes from Sam's video journals, the first of which introduces him as a celebrity

archaeologist when Grim asks him, "When were you last in the field without a tv crew behind you?" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). Even after Whitman has been captured by the Solarii, he remains staunchly capitalistic, as Lara finds a journal ("Whitman: My Great Discovery") in which Whitman announces that he will be able to make "at least two documentaries" about the Solarii, "Maybe even a series!" and Lara remarks to herself that "His obsession with fame and fortune has consumed him" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). Whitman's failure to find Yamatai on his own, in addition to his obsession with money and fame, illustrates the inadequacy of the popular culture trope of the treasure-hunter, and his opposition to Lara—who is more intellectual and less mercenary—argues against the kind of imperialist exploitation that formed the central premise of the earlier *Tomb Raider* franchise and which provides the foundation of American popular culture archaeology. Lara's interest, even at the very end of the game, is intellectual, as she says "the line between our myths and truth is fragile and blurry. I need to find answers... I must understand" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013), the developers' attempt to show the player the importance of intellectual over capitalist enterprise. Yet despite Lara's intellectual curiosity and good intentions, she nevertheless remains an agent of imperialism, and the game's depictions of both Lara and Yamatai only reinforce colonial stereotypes.

Remapping Conquest: Yamatai as Orientalized Space

However, it is her more metaphoric relationship to Himiko-qua-Yamatai that reveals the game's failure to separate Lara and the new *Tomb Raider* from systemic imperial oppression. As Said (1979) suggests, Oriental spaces are often affiliated with the feminine and insane, and, as Shohat (1991) explains, this feminized wilderness is characterized in imperial discourse as either virginal or libidinous. The first view the player has of Yamatai—after the shipwreck and Lara's escape from a site of human sacrifice in a cave—is aesthetically designed to produce awe and wonder: a land- and sea-scape dotted with the wreckage of airplanes and ships, covered in lush greenery, circling birds, and sunlight which forms a haloed rainbow, which also invokes the trope of the tropical "fantasy island." In this first view are both elements of Orientalized space: both aesthetic beauty and danger, untouched virginal nature and threatening wilderness.

In addition to its wild spaces, Yamatai is home to ruins from the Neolithic period through the twentieth century, demonstrated by the inter- and inner-textual Relics Lara finds: the oldest is a "Kansu Burial Urn" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013), which, Kelly McGuire (2013b) explains, is based on a Banshan-style earthenware jar dated to 2600-2300 BCE. The historical Yamatai itself dates to early in the third century, ending with Himiko's death circa 248 CE ("Dig in Nara," 2009), although *Tomb Raider* does not explicitly explain this. The inclusion of these artifacts lends more legitimacy to Lara's exploration in intellectual terms, as most icons of popular culture archaeology—such as Indiana Jones—do not take the time to explain the historical significance of their "raids" (beyond, perhaps, the central artifact, such as the Ark of the Covenant or Holy Grail).[8] The inclusion of these intertextual references lends more academic legitimacy to Lara's actions, attempting to remove them from a predominantly capitalist paradigm.

In addition to ancient artifacts, Yamatai also contains archaeological evidence of colonial visitors throughout the early modern and modern eras, including twelfth century Japan, thirteenth and fourteenth century China, Edo Japan, early modern Portugal, nineteenth century Europe and Asia, and twentieth-century soldiers and civilians from Japan, Germany, England, and the United States. The presence of these imperial powers in Yamatai reminds the player of the harmful cycle of oppression and rebellion characteristic of colonized nations, particularly during times of war, while also

mitigating Lara's culpability as an imperialist. Aesthetically, the game makes the repeated failure of colonial power visible through the ways in which nature has reclaimed most of these ruins; the ancient villages remain largely in harmony with their surroundings, while bunkers and other modern facilities are beginning to crumble, have flooded, are missing pieces of their floors and roofs, or are otherwise damaged by the effects of storm and sea.

In addition to its history of failed colonization, Yamatai is a site of supernatural power, yet another element ascribed to Oriental space in Western imperial tradition. Before Lara reaches the Coastal Forest, she finds a soldier's diary ("Solder: On Stalkers") which explains that something on the island is killing his companions: he says that Oni, "restless, evil spirits...live in the old places of this island," and that "the entire island is a graveyard. It's only a matter of time, the Oni will come for us" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). This association of the island's 'natives' with the demonic—Himiko, the Oni, and the Stormguard—perpetuates the (specifically Western Christian) Orientalist perspective that native peoples and cultures are superstitious and even diabolical, deserving of subjugation or destruction. Himiko herself is described early in the game by Sam as "beautiful, but also ruthless and powerful," with "shamanic powers" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013), the embodiment of the dangerous feminine Other which threatens not only the island, but also the civilized world. This viewpoint is reiterated through a later reference to Nazi Germany when Lara finds another journal ("Scientist: Secret Project") which explains that the Axis sent a team to Yamatai to study the storms: "The task of identifying the source of the storms will be long and arduous, but if we succeed in our mission here, our victory in this war will be certain" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013). Associating Himiko and the Stormguard with Nazi Germany explicitly marks the island's 'original' inhabitants as demonic, evil, and worthy of destruction.[9] Associating Himiko with the failure of imperial forces to subjugate Yamatai thus valorizes (whether intentionally or not) colonial occupation.

Instead of being depicted as a virginal paradise, Yamatai is therefore depicted as a prison, enacting a kind of reverse colonialism, trapping and subsuming the colonizers into its own 'native' culture. The Solarii, in particular, are evidence of this reverse-colonization process, acting as both victims and colonizers, a paradoxical occupying force oppressed by the magic of Yamatai. Mathias explains to the Solarii that "Out in the world, we are nothing. But here... here we are the Solarii, the Sun Queen's children" (Crystal Dynamics, 2013), an assertion which echoes those made by colonial authorities in places like Trinidad, South Africa, India, and the Bahamas during the height of imperial Britain (Shaw, 2013). By implication, of course, the Solarii are seen by the player—who, after all, is likely to be a Westerner of enough privilege to be able to afford the gaming system upon which *Tomb Raider* is played—as social, cultural, and psychological inferiors, an image of inadequacy reinforced by the violence of their actions, the crudeness of their language, and the disarray of the spaces they occupy.

Despite its natural aesthetic beauty, then, Yamatai (and Himiko, the Stormguard, and the Solarii) becomes Lara's (and the player's) enemy, and the game's final goal is to destroy Himiko in order to save Sam, stop the storms, and escape the island. During the final confrontation with Himiko, the lightning from Himiko's storm and the giant Stormguard attack both Lara and the Solarii indiscriminately, helping to justify Himiko's destruction and undermining any respect which the player might have had for the 'native' space of Yamatai. Once Lara defeats the Solarii and Stormguard, she rushes to the ritual altar, stealing two pistols which she uses to kill Mathias, assuming the iconic dual-pistol-wielding stance of Lara Croft from the earlier franchise (Core Design, 1996a). Lara then kills Himiko (with a stake to the heart), and the storm clears as Lara helps Sam back to the boat, where Reyes and Jonah (the only other survivors of the *Endurance*) are waiting.[10]

The final cinematic of the game shows the boat leaving the island, the sun setting in the West as they sail toward it and away from the Orientalized space of Yamatai. In the final moments of the game, Lara assumes an identity very similar to that of her 1996 predecessor, a survivalist who has lost most of those close to her in a horrific accident (a shipwreck rather than a plane crash), and whose experiences in the untamed wilderness have made her a hardened explorer who will return to continue her Orientalist explorations (to the lost city of Kitezh in Siberia) in *Rise of the Tomb Raider* (Crystal Dynamics, 2015). Ultimately, neither *Rise of the Tomb Raider* nor the end of *Tomb Raider* address the problematic fate of Yamatai itself.[11] The island went functionally undiscovered for centuries due to the protection afforded it by Himiko's magic; with Himiko destroyed, the island is once more vulnerable to the exploitation of imperial forces, whether mercantile, mercenary, or archaeological. In short, by destroying Himiko, Lara has enabled the destruction of centuries of historical and cultural artifacts, a problem with which she appears entirely (and perhaps justifiably) unconcerned.

CONCLUSION

At its conclusion, then, the 2013 *Tomb Raider*, despite its attempts to mitigate the clear imperialism of its predecessors, has succeeded only in rebuilding the very same Lara Croft which it sought to revise. By the end of the game, Lara has assumed nearly the same imperial identity as her predecessor, having pillaged the ruins of Yamatai for valuables which she then used to destroy the island's 'native' culture. In providing justification for these actions, the game directly undermines its own attempts to humanize the peoples—both native and colonial—who occupied Yamatai, ultimately subsuming a history of colonial struggle beneath Lara's imperialist archaeological conquest. Thus, despite its attempts to alter Lara's original identity as a "tomb raider" in the popular culture archaeological tradition of Indiana Jones by elevating her acquisitive practices to the level of intellectual archaeological pursuit, Crystal Dynamics' 2013 *Tomb Raider* is ultimately constrained by its own inter- and (especially) inner-texts, and can only demonstrate the impossibility of fully escaping the procedural semiotics of empire.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Chora: Formulated by Julia Kristeva, the chora is a space of non-linguistic expression which serves as a counterpoint to the ordered language and rules of the symbolic order.

Derridean Play: Formulated by Jacques Derrida, this definition of play is movement outside of prescribed rules and boundaries, typically subversive in nature.

Gamescape: The digital setting, including art, music, sound, narrative, and interactive options, in which a video game takes place and with which the player interacts via the player-character or avatar.

Imperialism: The oppressive use of hierarchical systems of power in order to control and subjugate geographical, cultural, and social spaces and peoples, typically enacted through the manipulation of social mores, economics, religion, and/or military force.

Inner-text: A textual artifact or object contained within a larger text which makes reference or operates allusively within the larger text.

Intertext: A textual artifact or object which makes reference either explicitly or implicitly to another textual artifact or object external to itself, often relying upon specific complex social or cultural codes in order to imbue meaning.

Lusory Play: Free action. This is the conventional type of play (as opposed to "Derridean Play," above) in which adults and children engage when acting within a game or using a toy.

Mechanics: The actions designed into gameplay, such as "shooting," "collecting," or "running."

Orientalism: Formulated by Edward Said, Orientalism describes a set of praxis used by the Occident (Western culture) in its engagement with the Orient (Eastern or 'native' culture) characterized by

exploration, exploitation, collection, categorization, and textual cross-referencing, and which produces a hierarchical relationship in which the Occident is defined as superior to the Orient.

***Paidia*:** Free play within the constraints of recorded rules, formulated by Roger Caillois.

Procedural Rhetoric: A set of signifiers which are coded into games (specifically, video games) as rules and gameplay mechanics (see "Mechanics," above) which often have particular social and cultural valences.

Semiotics: A field of study which articulates the relationship between objects and their linguistic signifiers (words, images, pictograms).

Symbolic Order: Used by Julia Kristeva as a term encompassing the systemic rules of language (see "Semiotics," above), and which includes an understanding that the symbolic order is characteristic of a masculine-dominated imperial hierarchy.

ENDNOTES

1 Certainly, it is possible to cheat in conventional table-top games and to hack video games in order to violate these rules. More interesting, however, are the ways in which players go against the procedural "recommendations" of the game while remaining within its rules.

2 For the sake of this specific study, the types of video games to which this section refers are primarily Western (European and American) AAA single-player titles—those which are heavily influenced by a capitalist market and institutionalized means of production via the AAA industry—because the *Tomb Raider* franchise falls into that category. Games produced for smaller or niche markets—indie games, art games, serious games, educational games—tend to fall outside the predominating discourse of empire. Multiplayer games contain a different set of expectations and are often less rigidly structured than single-player games, and therefore interact with the politics of empire differently (see Castronova, 2005). For the remainder of the discussion, references to "games," "video games," and the games industry may be assumed to correlate to AAA mass market titles and development houses.

In this analysis, I discuss the game as a coherent whole, combining the sum of its narrative, mechanics, and relationship to its franchise, understanding that some (if not all) of the contradictions contained within it may be the result of collaboration rather than individual intentionality. Finally, this study is one conducted from a primarily narratological perspective, with some ludological analysis. For more on the economics of the games industry and the *Tomb Raider* franchise, see Castronova (2005), Deuber-Mankowsky (2005), and Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter (2009).

3 Interestingly, Gard objected to the sexualization of Lara's character, so much so that he left Core Design, saying "he disliked the prevailing tone of the marketing for *Tomb Raider*, and of Lara Croft" (Anderson & Levene, 2012, p. 245), "because he felt that she 'had more dignity'" (as cited in Mekula, 2010, p. 82).

4 Different changes to the original narrative were already part of earlier reboots in which Lara's parents were deceased rather than having disowned her.

5 The *Tomb Raider Wiki* gives Lara's age as 21, suggesting that she has a bachelor's degree in archaeology. The image contained in the game, however, appears to show a masters' hood, so Lara may have a more advanced degree at a young age ("Lara Croft [Rise Timeline]," 2015; Crystal Dynamics, 2013).

6 It is worth noting that Yamatai is a historical place, known as "Yamatai-taikoku," ruled by Queen Himiko, who died circa 248; its geographical location remains a point of speculation, although a dig in 2009 suggests that it may be found in Nara, Japan ("Dig in Nara," 2009).

7 The *Endurance* crew: Conrad Roth, Angus "Grim" Grimaldi, and Lara Croft are all Anglo-British; Alex Weiss and Dr. James Whitman are Anglo-American; Joslin Reyes is African American; Samantha Nishimura is American of mixed Japanese and Portuguese descent; and Jonah Maiava is an American of indigenous New Zealander descent ("Angus Grimaldi," 2015; "Samantha Nishimura," 2015; "Jonah Maiava," 2015).

8 In Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989), respectively.

9 The name "Stormguard" itself may also be a reference to the Nazi Schutzstaffel, sometimes referred to as "stormtroopers." This reference may also be an allusion to the *Indiana Jones* series of films, as Jones is opposed in both *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Last Crusade* by Nazis (Spielberg, 1981, 1989).

10 This method refers to legends of vampires, undead demonic beings (in most lore) who subsist on the blood of the living, and who can only be killed by driving a stake through the heart. The allusion here serves to emphasize Himiko's demonic nature.

11 There are references to Yamatai in *Rise of the Tomb Raider*, including one scene in which several soldiers have a conversation about being "called to the island to clean up" after "some Sun cult," expressing amazement that "Croft survived that hell" (Crystal Dynamics, 2015).