

Contents

Acknowledgements | 9

Introduction | 11

Hypothesis: The Video Game Dystopia as a New Strategic Enterprise of Utopia and Playful Trial Action | 16

State of Research: The Assumed Position Within Video Game Studies | 18

Method: A Creative Encounter Between Guiding Structure and Playful Expression | 23

Structural Overview of the Argument | 27

PART I: TOWARDS THE VIDEO GAME DYSTOPIA

Preface to Part I | 35

1 Utopia and the Dream of a Better World | 37

1.1 Utopianism | 40

1.2 The Literary Utopia of Sir Thomas More and BIOSHOCK INFINITE's Columbia | 43

1.3 The Secret Wish Hidden Within the Dream | 52

1.4 Defining the Literary Utopia | 59

1.5 Towards the Video Game Dystopia | 62

2 Dystopia: Nightmarish Worlds as Distorted Anxiety Dreams | 65

2.1 Anti-Utopia or Dystopia? | 69

2.2 Anti-Utopia as a Rejection of Utopianism | 73

2.3 Variants of Dystopia: The Classical and Critical Dystopia | 74

2.4 Four Variants of the Video Game Dystopia: A Typology | 92

2.5 The Resistance of the One Free Man: City 17 as Orwellian Nightmare | 94

2.6 Dystopia's Plot Framework and the Video Game Dystopia | 108

- 3 Warning, Effectiveness, and Targets of the Video Game Dystopia | 113**
- 3.1 The Video Game Dystopia's Primary Function as Warning | 115
- 3.2 The Video Game Dystopia's Effectiveness in Issuing Warnings | 120
- 3.3 Targets of the Video Game Dystopia | 124
- 3.4 The Diversity of the Perspectival Network as Precondition for Dystopia's Effectiveness | 150

PART II: PLAYFUL TRIAL ACTIONS IN ESTRANGED GAMEWORLDS

Preface to Part II | 155

- 4 Towards the Implied Player | 159**
- 4.1 Video Games as Forms of Representational Art and Fiction | 165
- 4.2 The Different Games We Play with Fictions | 170
- 4.3 The Implied Player | 194
- 4.4 The Game(world) as a System of Perspectives | 210

- 5 Estrangement Through World and Agency | 251**
- 5.1 Playful Trial Actions in Dystopia | 253
- 5.2 Defamiliarised Worlds and Player Actions | 274
- 5.3 The Flux of Images and the Player's Creation of the Aesthetic Object in METRO 2033 | 301
- 5.4 The Created Reality of Fiction and its Aesthetic Effect | 317

PART III: PLAYING DYSTOPIA

Preface to Part III | 323

- 6 Night-Time Dreams and Wish-Fulfilment: The Struggle for Utopia in BIOSHOCK INFINITE | 325**
- 6.1 The Utopia of Columbia and Basic Blank Structures to Lure in the Player | 329
- 6.2 The Shadows of Utopia: Strategies of Disneyfication and the Capitalist-Racist Dystopia of Columbia | 337
- 6.3 Elizabeth as the Figure of the Temptress and her Process of Emancipation | 349

- 6.4 The Route Through the Mazes of Ideological Perspectives | 354
- 6.5 The Guilt of Having Lost Utopia and Ways to Regain it | 362
- 6.6 Conclusion | 370

7 The Last of Us and the Journey to Nature | 373

- 7.1 The Cordyceps Brain Infection as Fictional Novum and Instigator to Dystopia | 377
- 7.2 The Official Narrative: City Spaces of Violence and Conflict | 381
- 7.3 The Counter-Narrative as the Journey to Nature | 389
- 7.4 Conclusion | 401

8 Horizons and the Video Game Dystopia | 403

List of Abbreviations | 409

Glossary | 411

Ludography | 415

Bibliography | 417