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Race and historical authenticity

Kingdom Come: Deliverance

Helen Young

Introduction

In February 2018, Czech developer Warhorse Studios released its long-awaited medievalist game *Kingdom Come: Deliverance*¹ to initial commercial success.² The game had been touted as ‘realistic’ by its makers since the very early stages of development in 2011,³ including in a hugely successful Kickstarter campaign that raised about USD2.5 million in 2014. The Kickstarter campaign used the tagline ‘Dungeons and no Dragons’ to differentiate the games from fantasy roleplaying games (RPGs) such as Bethesda’s *The Elder Scrolls*, Blizzard’s *World of Warcraft*, Bioware’s *Dragon Age* and Wizard of the Coast’s *Dungeons and Dragons* franchises. Historical authenticity was credited with at least some of the game’s early success,⁴ but was also a charged issue in discussions of race and representation during the development process. A Tumblr-user, @medievalpoc, was targeted with a barrage of rape and death threats after suggesting that it might include diverse characters without being historically inaccurate during the 2014 Kickstarter campaign.⁵ In 2015, Daniel Vávra, the lead designer on the game tweeted, ‘would you please explain to me whats racist about telling the truth? There were no black people in medieval Bohemia. Period’.⁶ He also insisted on the game’s historical accuracy linking ‘realism’ to representation of race and gender in *Kingdom Come* in an interview with the alt-right outlet *Breitbart*.⁷ The game and its makers were also praised in other venues for ‘resisting’ what Vávra had positioned as modern identity politics.⁸ A number of reviewers who credited the games’ success to its realism also pointed out that that inclusion of historical detail was selective and used to justify its ideological position.⁹

Kingdom Come is one of many medievalist popular culture texts about which claims to historical accuracy have been made to justify *not* representing people of colour; other games include CD Projekt RED’s *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*¹⁰ and, more recently, Triternion’s *Mordhau*.¹¹ Games and their makers have also been criticized on the same grounds for *including* characters of colour, for example, Bioware’s *Dragon Age* franchise.¹² The discourse of historical authenticity is also deployed by those who

argue for racial diversity in medievalist texts;¹³ this was the case for @medievalpoc and others' comments about *Kingdom Come*. Claims about historical authenticity are made (with or without supporting evidence) in polar-opposite arguments about representing race; these are not limited to being about medievalist texts.¹⁴ The question then is not 'why are the Middle Ages so strongly associated with racial whiteness?' but 'what connects ideas about historical authenticity and race?' In order to answer, this chapter now offers outlines of these core concepts, followed by a case study centred on *Kingdom Come* which explores what was said about the game during production and early release by its makers, audiences and in games media and the ways which that commentary generates a discourse of historical authenticity.

Race is a system of social categorization in that it is produced by collective belief, and because it structures relationships between people.¹⁵ Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks argues that race is a semiotic system in which Whiteness is 'a master signifier (without a signified) that establishes a structure of relations, a signifying chain that through a process of inclusions and exclusions constitutes a pattern for organizing human difference.'¹⁶ Without Whiteness at its centre, both the system and the raced subjectivities it produces collapse. 'Visual difference', Seshadri-Crooks argues, 'is critical to securing the power of race: the phenotype secures our belief in racial difference.'¹⁷ Race literally appears to be real because physical features of the body (skin tone, hair, eye colour etc.) that have been assigned significance in a semiotic system are *seen* and thus seem to be empirically verifiable. The observable reality of signifying phenotypical features is (incorrectly) taken to verify the reality of the signified race. Visual representations of the past, such as historical film and videogames, are thus particularly powerful media sites for generation and perpetuation of racial subjectivities and of race as a semiotic social system. When phenotypical features (signifiers) are seen in historical games (and other visual media), they seem to attest to the existence of the signified – specific racial subjectivities – and the system of race itself as an ontological given. Constructing a text as 'historically authentic' reinforces this appearance of reality.

'Accuracy' and 'authenticity' are often used interchangeably in popular culture. It is axiomatic among scholars that historical fictions in any medium represent the past 'within the constraints of the chosen form and style';¹⁸ representation is always selective. As the following case study shows, creators and audiences are quite willing to acknowledge this within certain parameters. Historical authenticity has little to do with verifiable historical fact even though it is predicated as a concept on existence of an objective and knowable historical truth. Contemporary scholarly approaches to historical authenticity are generally rooted in theories of reception. In his important work on medievalist film, Andrew B. R. Elliott draws on the ideas of Hans Robert Jauss to argue that 'to be authentic a film need not conform to historical reality (whatever this might have been) but only to what audiences think the period looked like'; those expectations are shaped by genre and habit, and can encompass both outright inventions and inaccuracies.¹⁹ Historical authenticity, however, is not a quality of the text created by its producers through their aesthetic, formal and content choices more or less successfully depending on how well they have understood and met the expectations of their audience. Rather it is a discourse that circulates through processes of production and consumption to manage anachronisms and inventions and the

constraints of form, genre and audiences' expectations, resulting in representation that is 'historical' in the sense that it has the character of History: it is socially and culturally constructed but also widely understood as objectively true. The discourse of historical authenticity manages what can and cannot be represented without drawing attention to the constructed nature of the text and thus disrupting truth-claims about both the past and the text.

Nickolas Haydock, writing of medievalist cinema, argues that claims to historical authenticity are made 'to lay the framework for the film's reality effects and to authorize it as a site of what Lacan calls "imaginary identifications" for a mass audience'.²⁰ Such an approach suggests that the textual Whiteness of the typical popular culture medievalism is a fantasy of racial purity which organizes the White identity of the (imagined ideal) spectator who recognizes a Self in it. Seshadri-Crooks, however, argues that ideological readings are based on an overly simplistic understanding of the Lacanian mirror stage and require race to be accepted as 'an *a priori* fact of human difference' with the result that there is no possibility of interrogating the underlying racial system.²¹ Rather, the (at times violent) debates about race and representation in *Kingdom Come* and other texts like it are symptoms of what Seshadri-Crooks terms 'racial anxiety',²² which is initiated by 'the subject's encounter with the historicity of Whiteness'.²³ The core challenge is not the suggestion that people of colour may have been present in medieval Bohemia but rather an imminent realization that race is a culturally and historically produced social category.²⁴ The threat of such a realization is the fragmentation not only of a particular White identity but of the entire system that produced raced subjectivities. Arguing that characters of colour should be included on the grounds of historical accuracy ultimately gives the same support to the social system of race as arguing that they should be excluded on the grounds of historical authenticity, because both work to suggest that racial subjectivities are ahistorical – essentially stable and consistent over time rather than contextually constructed.

Kingdom Come: Deliverance

Kingdom Come is what Adam Chapman terms a 'realistic simulation', a category that refers to 'stylistic approach to representation rather than [...] historical content'.²⁵ Such games tend to take a 'reconstructionist' approach to historical epistemology which positions (and understands) itself as objective and untouched by ideology; claims to represent a single, true narrative; and masks its condition as a representation.²⁶ They historicize the represented world by making truth-claims about and through representation of the past. Discourses of historical authenticity are easily deployed around realistic simulations, although they are not limited to realist genres. The following paragraphs explore how key narrative, ludic and technical elements of *Kingdom Come* function in both the text and discussions of it to historicize the game world through a discourse of historical authenticity.

Kingdom Come is set in 1403 in a sixteen-square-kilometre rural part of Bohemia, then part of the Holy Roman Empire (now in the Western Czech Republic).²⁷ The action of the game takes place against the backdrop of an invasion by King Sigismund

of Hungary, half-brother of the ruling King Wenceslaus the Fourth. The player's character is Henry, who believes he is the son of a blacksmith in the games' early stages, but is later revealed to be the bastard of a local lord, Sir Radzig Kobyla. The narrative is precipitated when a band of Sigismund's mercenaries raid Henry's home town, Skalitz. Henry escapes but sees both his parents murdered, and swears vengeance on their killer. Henry joins Radzig's retinue (although he is unaware of his parentage at the time), and although he is initially restricted to being a regular soldier because of his peasant background, through courage and by befriending and saving the lord's heir, he becomes Radzig's envoy. At the end of the game, the fate of the kingdom of Bohemia is still undecided; it closes with Henry being sent as part of a delegation with an offer to end the war.

A blacksmith's son becoming a knight is one of the anachronisms that backers – and the game developers – typically elide in their discussions of historical authenticity. This is fundamentally a modern neoliberal storyline. Henry is rewarded – able to advance socially – because he is useful to the ruling classes in their quests for power at both a local and national level, and not because he is one (illegitimately) of them. Although he is notionally motivated by revenge, that quest is unfulfilled at the end of the game, and the personally motivated actions that he takes as a specific result of it end badly. A return to Skalitz motivated by a desire to see his parents properly buried, made against his lord's orders, sees the loss of the sword his father had been making, and he is almost killed. It is only through a governmental process of reshaping his peasant self into a fighter who is useful and has value in the feudal political system and war-torn context, underpinned by the mechanics of the game (discussed further below), that Henry and the player are rewarded: Henry by improving his social position, and the player through progress in the central narrative of the game.²⁸ Poor decisions (not understanding the logic of the game) and execution (insufficient expertise or knowledge) can lead to frustration for the player as they struggle to complete quests. Within the game itself, however, while Henry may die, he is always respawned at the last save point and thus effectively insulated – as the privileged are in reality – from the consequences of 'wrong' choices. This is a narrativized and gamified version of neoliberal discourse which, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues, is closely linked to colour-blind racism through its erasing of the realities of unequal social power.²⁹ Henry achieves his goals in a neoliberal medievalist world. The form and content of the game insert a noticeably modern neoliberal subjectivity into a representation of the past which hides its constructedness by insisting on its own reality through discourses of historical authenticity.

The Kickstarter campaign positioned player choice and agency as a major drawcard: 'Enjoy a world of endless options. [. . .] Overcome objects in multiple ways whether by diplomatic skills or brute force.'³⁰ The design of the game functions to bolster the players' sense of agency. *Kingdom Come* is a first-person, non-linear roleplaying game (RPG) with an open-world environment. These design decisions maximize the realism of the game by masking the constructedness of the digitally represented world, as does the game play. Through the first-person positioning, the player has what Chapman terms 'spatial agency', that is, control (within the limits of the game world) over movement and field of vision.³¹ The player's freedom to go anywhere in the

sixteen-square-kilometre game world, and to act as they choose in pursuing quests, contributes to the sense of free agency for players. Agency, as in all games, is inherently constrained by the scope and rules of *Kingdom Come* (despite the emphasis in publicity on openness and choice).³² In *Kingdom Come*, players can take Henry anywhere within the game world, but only by choosing to be in the right place at the right time can they progress the central quest.

The mechanics of the game are complex and require players to manage multiple systems including weapons, clothing, building skills and stamina, and managing food and rest. A range of weapons can be used in fight sequences, for example, and the combat system is designed so that each is effective in different situations; the player must decide. Clothing and weapons require repair, and food rots. *Kingdom Come* is designed so that player choices – including but not limited to weapons, whether clothing is repaired, conversations in dialogue cut scenes and interactions with non-player characters (NPCs) – have lasting effects within the game world. When Henry is clean and well-dressed, for example, NPCs with whom he interacts are more likely to treat him with respect. Learning to manage those systems, and doing so throughout the game, is a key element of the governmental formation of neoliberal subjectivity: the player must continually work at keeping their character valued and useful within the game world in ways that are not typically part of active play in RPGs. The game is designed to mimic the quotidian complexities of everyday life, but as is typical of realistic simulations, successful play depends on understanding the internal logic and systems of the game rather than those of the external world (either medieval or modern).³³ The game mechanics connect to the discourse of historical authenticity: one reviewer said it is ‘designed to deliver an authentic medieval experience’. although the effect ‘can be more than a little confusing’³⁴ even for an experienced player because of the complexity and number of the systems.

Primary sources like photographs are often used to construct realism within historical games set in the relatively recent past, and in their publicity material.³⁵ The fifteenth-century setting of *Kingdom Come* precludes this, so the game instead represents other physical remnants of the past, particularly buildings. Warhorse’s PR Manager, Tobias Stolz-Swilling, claimed: ‘all of the buildings really existed.’³⁶ Vávra commented that the setting was close to the studio in Prague and said:

our team has had chance to visit those castles, churches, landscapes and deep forests. We are talking to locals and we take as many reference pictures as possible to use in bringing our world to life. [. . .] We actually want to show how 15th century life looked like.³⁷

The comments collapse time, constructing the game world as a complete digital recreation of a past that has survived to the present only in part. They function to link the game directly to historical reality, not least by minimizing the role of the developers.³⁸ Warhorse is positioned as a faithful transmitter of past reality rather than creative agents making specific and deliberate choices about the digital representation of an imagined past. In-game representations of buildings that stood in the Skalitz area in 1403, such as the Sasau Monastery and Rovna Church, avoid anachronistic

recreation of post-medieval additions and renovations that are found in other games which use architecture in similar ways.³⁹ This avoidance of visual anachronism might be considered an historical authenticity effect; the digital representations seem accurate because they do not include post-medieval features, but are still based on, at best, educated guesswork about what the buildings looked like in the early fifteenth century.

Warhorse's commitment to creating a realistic fifteenth-century Bohemian rural setting was presented as the key factor in technical decision-making: 'Being that KCD's environment was supposed to be a dense forest with lots of grass, CryEngine 3 was the only way to go. It handled our test scenes with a much higher framerate.'⁴⁰ Warhorse insisted throughout the production process that *Kingdom Come* would visually represent the material world of fifteenth-century Bohemia, intimately linking this to broader claims of historical authenticity. Vávra, for example, commented:

When a swordsman plays our game, he should feel that the combat is as authentic as everything else – architecture, flora, the way people lived and spoke. It's like a time machine. A historian's dream come true [. . .] And we don't try to hide anything, we are showing it with all the dirt as it really was.⁴¹

This emphasis on graphics and the visual world reinforces the positioning of the game and its makers as transmitters of historical realities rather than imaginative, agential creators. The detailed digital visual landscape with its de-modernized medieval buildings functions to lend credence to Warhorse's claims to have represented past reality. This discourse of historical authenticity around what is seen in the game works to reify the digital representation of somatic markers of race, perpetuating its function as a semiotic system in which, as discussed earlier, visible signifiers are understood as evidence of the (arbitrarily and socially assigned) signified. That is, seeing 'race' represented in a game world that purports to visual historical authenticity makes it appear real.

Warhorse was, however, also willing to acknowledge that its commitment to faithful representation of the past was selective at times. In a late-2016 interview, Stolz-Swilling said: 'we had real sword fighters who came to the studio. [. . .] These professionals told us exactly how a fight would look in real life [. . .] this is not possible in a game, from a technical standpoint [. . .] we have to adjust the idea to make it playable.'⁴² This acknowledgement that the game sacrificed accuracy for playability was uncontroversial to the interviewer who wrote: 'Warhorse is still pretty confident with how legitimate the game's combat is.'⁴³ The deviation from detail functioned as a pivot to reinforce the claim to authenticity. The move can be understood through Elliott's work on historical cinema: 'deviations from the historical record when there is either a narrative necessity [. . .] or in which there is simply no historical record.'⁴⁴ In the case of gaming, the technical limitations of game systems and considerations of playability may be added to these.

The discussion boards of the Kickstarter campaign, where potential players who had backed the project financially interacted with each other and (less frequently) Warhorse employees, demonstrate that consumers are aware of the technical and practical limits of historical representations and see them as acceptable constraints

in the space between strict (perceived) accuracy and historical authenticity. This comment exemplifies common themes:

that's the whole dilemma. Whether to use actual authentic period language (medieval German/Czech/etc.), pseudo-'Shakespearean' English [. . .] or just straight-up modern languages. Each have their gameplay and marketing advantages and disadvantages, I guess.⁴⁵

The discussion boards also highlight how broader ideological discourses shape historical authenticity. A thread asking backers what they did not want to see in the game included multiple comments arguing against racial and cultural diversity posted over the span of almost two years, for example:

Please do not destroy it with mostly unnecessary political correctness. In the 15th century in Bohemia region there certainly was not some 'Babilon' with a multicultural society and equal opportunities for men and women! Middle age was not perfect, but it was as it was.⁴⁶

The unsupported truth-claims about racial composition and gendered roles in medieval Bohemia resonate closely with statements from Warhorse employees throughout the game's production.

Warhorse employees were willing to abandon 'accuracy' when doing so met their needs, but were equally willing to fall back on it as a justification for other design and content decisions. In January 2018, just prior to the game's release, studio co-founder Martin Klíma said: 'after more than four years of intensive research, it can be stated that there is no proof that there were no dark-skinned people in Bohemia and vice versa.'⁴⁷ Vávra invoked historical accuracy to explain the racial composition of the game in a statement released alongside Klíma's, saying *Kingdom Come* does not

limit itself to any ethnic group. In the course of history, based on our knowledge of historical events, there are, besides Czechs, Germans and Jewish residents, the largest grouping in the game, the Kumans (in German also Kipchak) a Turkic tribe from the Eurasian steppe.⁴⁸

The Kuman (commonly spelled Cuman) are invading mercenaries hired by Sigismund to invade Bohemia in *Kingdom Come*. The linguistic descriptor 'Turkic' emphasizes that they are not Slavic people like the Czechs who mainly populate *Kingdom Come*; the resonance with 'Turkish' – a people strongly Othered in contemporary discourses of European identity – is notable. The Kuman are outsiders, foreign invaders who are driven away or killed in the game, thus preserving the cultural and racial purity of rural Bohemia. This type of plot device is typical of medievalist popular culture in which the presumed exclusive presence of White bodies means that all other bodies must be narratively explained.⁴⁹

Arguments for including people of colour in popular culture representations of the European Middle Ages also typically invoke historical authenticity and detail to

support their cause. In the case of *Kingdom Come*, a 2018 *Eurogamer* review quoted historian Sean Miller as saying:

we know of African kings in Constantinople on pilgrimage to Spain; we know of black Moors in Spain; we know of extensive travel of Jews from the courts of Cordoba and Damascus; we also know of black people in large cities in Germany.⁵⁰

The reviewer added: 'Czech cities Olomouc and Prague were on the famous Silk Road which facilitated the trade of goods all over the world. If you plot a line between them, it runs directly through the area recreated in *Kingdom Come*'.⁵¹ In 2014, @medievalpoc had offered evidence based on fifteenth-century Bohemian art as well as scholarship to argue that the game could include racial and ethnic diversity – including but not limited to representing people of African origin.⁵² Such details can temporarily disrupt fantasies of racial and cultural purity; the statements by Klíma and Vávra quoted earlier, however, demonstrate that those fantasies are relatively easily maintained by dismissing such evidence as, for example, inaccurate, poorly researched, politically motivated or too specific.

Whiteness and the Middle Ages

Historical authenticity discourse places the digital world of the game within the past but outside history through its claims to represent minimally or un-mediated reality. Although it is deployed to rationalize white-centric representations of many places and times, I would argue that the discourse resonates particularly with medievalisms; the European Middle Ages have been understood since their inception as a 'simpler, more organic past', that is, a time of 'wholeness' un-constructed (or re-constructed) by civilized modernity.⁵³ As a result, in the racial medievalisms of White identity formations, the European Middle Ages hold out a (false) promise of White racial completeness and purity.⁵⁴ The Western 'cultural archive'⁵⁵ works to create belief in the European Middle Ages as a naturally and genuinely 'Whites-only' place and time; historical authenticity discourse orients texts to 'conform to custom and audience expectation'⁵⁶ – in medievalist texts this includes centring Whiteness.

The logic of race, and mastering significance of Whiteness within that logic, depends on the apparent ahistoricity of racial categorization, that is, on the belief that racial identity is fixed among individuals who share it in all places and times. Race must 'deny knowledge of its own historicity or risk surrendering [. . .] the possibility of wholeness and supremacy'.⁵⁷ Race refuses to acknowledge own historicity as a crucial aspect of refusing its own unreality; it can maintain social power only through 'international belief in race as real'.⁵⁸ For Whiteness (and the system of race constructed around it) to exist in the present, it must have existed in the past. To maintain its place as the master signifier, Whiteness must be simultaneously pan-historical (existing in all times), historical (have existed) and ahistorical (denying its own temporality and socially contextual nature). Even the suggestion that people of colour might be represented in a text that claims to be an historically accurate recreation of the European Middle

Ages, such as *Kingdom Come*, makes the historicity of race imminent. Representation of people of colour in medievalist texts in ways that disrupt historical authenticity discourse threatens not only fantasies of White purity but the entire social semiotic system of race. Their presence (and its possibility) makes visible the lack of signified behind the master signifier of Whiteness not only in iterations of race that are directly predicated on the supposed racial purity of the European Middle Ages but on all iterations. If pure Whiteness cannot be located there, it cannot be located anywhere and the fraudulence of its offer of wholeness to the subject is revealed.

Notes

- 1 *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* (Deep Silver, 2018).
- 2 Sherif Saed, 'Kingdom Come Deliverance Has Sold 1 Million Copies', *VG24/7*, 22 February 2018. <https://www.vg247.com/2018/02/22/kingdom-come-deliverance-has-sold-1-million-copies/>; this early success was not sustained, see Shabana Arif, 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance's Player Base Has Dropped by 95% on Steam', *IGN India*, 22 February 2018. <https://in.ign.com/kingdom-come-deliverance/122081/news/kingdom-come-deliverance-player-base-has-dropped-by-95-on-s>.
- 3 Jim Rossignol, 'Czech Veterans Form New Studio, Warhorse', *Rock, Paper, Shotgun*, 26 July 2011. <https://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2011/07/26/czech-veterans-form-new-studio-warhorse/>.
- 4 Phil Iwaniuk, 'The Obsessive Historical Accuracy of Kingdom Come: Deliverance, and How It Makes for a Better RPG', *PCGamesN*, 2016. <https://www.pcgamesn.com/kingdom-come-deliverance/kingdom-come-deliverance-historical-accuracy?amp>; Nathan Grayson, 'Kingdom Come Owes Its Popularity to "Realism" and Conservative Politics', *Kotaku Australia*, 2018. <https://www.kotaku.com.au/2018/03/kingdom-come-owes-its-popularity-to-realism-and-conservative-politics/>.
- 5 @medievalpoc, 'On Telling the Truth', *People of Colour in European Art History*, 2014. <http://medievalpoc.tumblr.com/post/88796194073/on-telling-the-truth>; @medievalpoc, 'Hi! I've Been Looking at a Kickstarter for a 'Realistic' Medieval-Era Game Called 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance' and Realized It Looked Rather . . . White', *People of Colour in European Art History*, 2014. <http://medievalpoc.tumblr.com/post/75252294049/hi-ive-been-looking-at-a-kickstarter-for-a>; Gavia Baker-Whitelaw, 'Is a Medieval Video Game Historically Accurate without People of Color?' *The Daily Dot*, 2014. <http://www.dailydot.com/gaming/reddit-tumblr-medieval-video-game-poc/>.
- 6 A similar statement was made on the Kickstarter page in 2014. Daniel Vavra, 'Tweet', *Twitter*, 2015. <https://twitter.com/DanielVavra/status/569686445344079872>.
- 7 Robert Shimshock, 'Developer Speaks Out Over Claim "Historical Accuracy" Pushes White Supremacy in Games', *Breitbart*, 2015. <http://www.breitbart.com/big-hollywood/2015/07/28/developer-speaks-out-over-claim-historical-accuracy-pushes-white-supremacy-in-games/>.
- 8 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance – Historical Accuracy Isn't Whitewashing : Kingdomcome', *Reddit*, 2018. https://www.reddit.com/r/kingdomcome/comments/7zgt4f/kingdom_come_deliverance_historical_accuracy_isnt/; other examples are noted in Grayson, 'Kingdom Come Owes Its Popularity to "Realism" and Conservative Politics'.
- 9 Grayson, 'Kingdom Come Owes Its Popularity to "Realism" and Conservative Politics'; Robert Purchase, 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance Review - History Is a

- Double-Edged Sword', *Eurogamer*, 20 February 2018, <https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2018-02-20-kingdom-come-deliverance-review>; Alice Bell, 'The 5 Most Extremely Historically Accurate Things in Kingdom Come: Deliverance - VideoGamer.Com', *VideoGamer*, 2018. <https://www.videogamer.com/features/the-5-most-extremely-historically-accurate-things-in-kingdom-come-deliverance>.
- 10 *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (CD Projekt, 2015); Tauriq Moosa, 'Colorblind: On The Witcher 3, Rust, and Gaming's Race Problem', *Polygon*, 6 March 2015. <https://www.polygon.com/2015/6/3/8719389/colorblind-on-witcher-3-rust-and-gamings-race-problem>.
 - 11 *Mordhau* (Triternion, 2019); Douglas Dante, "'Mordhau" and the Fantasy of an All-White Middle Ages', *Vice*, 2019. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/8xzpeg/mordhau-and-the-fantasy-of-an-all-white-middle-ages?__twitter_impression=true.
 - 12 Helen Young, "'It's the Middle Ages, Yo!": Race, Neo/Medievalism, and the World of Dragon Age', *The Year's Work in Medievalism* 27 (2012). <https://sites.google.com/site/theyearsworkinmedievalism/all-issues/27-2012>.
 - 13 Helen Young, *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 71–6.
 - 14 See, for example, 'Pharos: Doing Justice to the Classics', 2019. <http://pages.vassar.edu/pharos/>. The blog tracks examples of far-right appropriations of the Classical Greek and Roman past, including although not limited to in popular culture.
 - 15 Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Tukufu Zuberi, 'Toward a Definition of White Logic and White Methods', in *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*, eds Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Tukufu Zuberi (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 7.
 - 16 Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 3.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, 21.
 - 18 Adam Chapman, *Digital Games as History: How Video Games Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 63. See also Andrew J. Salvati and Jonathan M. Bullinger, 'Selective Authenticity and the Playable Past', in *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, eds Matthew Wilhelm Kappell and Andrew B. R. Elliott (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 153–63.
 - 19 Andrew B. R. Elliott, *Remaking the Middle Ages: The Methods of Cinema and History in Portraying the Medieval World* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), 215–16. The genre conventions of fantasy, for example, allow creators and fans to argue against inclusion of people of colour on the grounds of historical authenticity in the examples given earlier, even when those texts include magic, dragons and other supernatural elements typical of the genre.
 - 20 Nickolas Haydock, *Movie Medievalism* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 7.
 - 21 Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*, 31.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, 32.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, 21.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, 21.
 - 25 Chapman, *Digital Games as History: How Video Games Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*, 61.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, 66–8.
 - 27 This is a much more specific setting than most medievalist games, which are commonly much more expansive. C. San Nicolas Romera, M. A. Nicolas Ojeda and J. Ros Velasco, 'Video Games Set in the Middle Ages: Time Spans, Plots, and Genres', *Games and Culture*, 2016, 18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412015627068>.

- 28 Michel Foucault conceptualized governmentality as a particularly neoliberal mode of power. See, for example, Andrew Baerg, 'Governmentality, Neoliberalism, and the Digital Game', *Symploke* 17, no. 1–2 (2009): 115–27.
- 29 Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi, 'Toward a Definition of White Logic and White Methods', 1–27.
- 30 <https://www.kingdomcomerpg.com/>, accessed 8 August 2016.
- 31 Chapman, *Digital Games as History: How Video Games Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*, 66.
- 32 Rowan Tulloch argues that agency and rules are not oppositional, but rather part of a 'constructive process' of play. Rowan Tulloch, 'The Construction of Play: Rules, Restrictions, and the Repressive Hypothesis', *Games and Culture* 9, no. 5 (2014): 348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412014542807>.
- 33 Chapman, *Digital Games as History: How Video Games Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*, 62–3.
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