Race, colonial history and national identity: *Resident Evil 5* as a Japanese game

26\(^{th}\) October 2015, The Institute for Research in Digital Culture and Humanities, Open University of Hong Kong

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Popular culture texts are “polysemic”


“Encoding/Decoding”

What is *Resident Evil 5* about?

- Japan’s colonial memory as it relates to contemporary Japan’s place in the international community

- Game announced in 2005 and released in 2009
Chris
Sheva
Jill
Wesker
Zombies
Bioterrorism
Security
Assessment
Alliance
Umbrella Corporation
“a surface upon which humanity reflects anxieties”

“barometer of cultural anxiety”
Games and action


Africa as “backdrop”

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Koizumi Junichiro, Prime Minister 2001-2006

“it is time [for the region] to look towards the future and escape the bondage of history.”
“Normal country”
“Normal country”

“Japan ought to become a ‘normal country’ by stepping up and shouldering its rightful international responsibilities and by cooperating with other states to build prosperous societies around the globe”

The Self-Defense Force (SDF)
Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister 2006-7

Issues of apologies, textbooks and the Yasukuni shrine were (and are) “deeply contested domestically”

Hybrid characters
Hybrid monsters
Player-avatar structure
Gameplay as virtual travel

Games are “explorations and colonizations of space”

Travel writing and imperial subjectivity

Travel writing was “one of the key instruments that made people ‘at home’ in Europe feel part of a planetary project; a key instrument, in other words in creating the ‘domestic subject’ of empire”

Two performative opportunities

To perform a sanitized and exuberant version of colonialism without guilt

To perform a normalized contemporary global Japanese subjectivity
Zombie as victim
