



**INVISIBLE FEMALE SUPPORT FIGURES: CONSTRUING PATRIARCHAL
REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER PERFORMATIVITY, AGENCY, AND MALE
CENTRALITY IN US WESTERN ANGLOPHONE MILITARY-THEMED
INTERACTIVE NARRATIVES**

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ABSTRACT. This article analyses the representation of female agency in *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (2014) and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* (2020), two influential military-themed interactive narratives in contemporary Anglophone digital culture. From a qualitative-interpretative perspective and a close-reading approach, the article identifies narrative and mechanical patterns that naturalise male centrality as a structuring principle of socio-political organisation. Within this framework, female figures are positioned as subordinate agents who care for, assist and validate male protagonists. The apparent modernisation of the imagery of military video game narratives by including female characters in military plots operates as a superficial gesture of inclusion. As observed in the confinement of Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park to private and combat-free environments, US top-selling military interactive texts reproduce the ideals of Western Anglophone patriarchies. The salvific mission as the male hero's providential task and women's voluntary alignment with male heroic agency displace female characters from victory, recognition, and the legitimisation of power.

Keywords: Interactive video game text, female agency, Western Anglophone patriarchies, military video games.

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LA ASISTENCIA FEMENINA INVISIBLE: REPRESENTACIONES PATRIARCALES DE PERFORMATIVIDAD DE GÉNERO, AGENCIA Y CENTRALIDAD MASCULINA EN LAS NARRATIVAS INTERACTIVAS DE TEMÁTICA MILITAR DEL OCCIDENTE ANGLÓFONO ESTADOUNIDENSE

RESUMEN. Esta investigación analiza la representación de la agencia femenina en *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (2014) y *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* (2020), dos franquicias militares influyentes de la cultura interactiva digital angloparlante contemporánea. Desde una perspectiva cualitativa-interpretativa y de lectura cercana, se descubren patrones narrativos y mecánicos que naturalizan la centralidad masculina como principio capital de organización sociopolítica, entidad a asistir y cuidar por figuras femeninas subordinadas. Como se observa en el confinamiento de Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker y Helen Park en esferas privadas alejadas del combate, estos textos interactivos superventas en los EEUU incluyen personajes femeninos en tramas militarizadas, mientras reproducen los ideales de los patriarcados angloparlantes occidentales. La misión salvífica como tarea providencial asignada al héroe masculino y el apoyo voluntario de los personajes femeninos a la agencia masculina desplazan a las mujeres de la victoria, el reconocimiento y la legitimación de poder.

Palabras clave: Videojuego como texto interactivo, agencia femenina, patriarcados angloparlantes occidentales, videojuegos militares.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary video games have become one of the most influential US interactive forms of entertainment, preferred by 52% of US consumers (Ipsos MediaCT, 2016). The prominence of military-themed shooters within the US video game market is reflected in their presence in top sales rankings. According to Circana's (2025) "Top 10 Selling Video Games (Retail and Digital), year-to-date 2025", *Battlefield 6*, *Call of Duty: Black Ops 7*, and *Call of Duty: Black Ops 6* rank first, seventh, and eighth, respectively. The impact of military video games may help researchers understand the cultural reach of this form of entertainment.

Despite the prominence of military-themed video games in the current US entertainment industry, these interactive products are framed within the commercial tradition of First-Person Shooters (FPS). In this broader context, military-themed shooters constitute a distinct subgenre, since they rely on specific representational conventions. The specificity of military video games justifies delimiting the analytical corpus in order to distinguish military-themed video games from the overall industry. In any event, the industry of contemporary video games cannot be conceived as a generic repertoire of interactive products anymore. Conversely, the demographic expansion of gamers and the diversity of consumption formats are engendering an ever-growing plurality of players, genres, and ludic experiences.

The importance of video game products in the US gamers' everyday lives calls for their analysis as symbolic cultural forms. Their symbolic relevance stems from their effective interaction and manipulation of the system of values of Anglophone video game consumers. Undoubtedly, video games should not be conceived merely as a form of interactive entertainment. Instead, video games function as narrative and aesthetic devices capable of shaping collective imaginaries of war, heroism, and authority. These imageries shape gamers' views of ideal social organisation in 21st-century Anglophone Western patriarchies.

Military video game franchises such as *Call of Duty* and *Wolfenstein* regularly top sales charts. This commercial prominence helps shape the symbolic repertoires of millions of US players. In such a symbolic repertoire, military action is usually linked to strategic efficiency, understood as "operational effectiveness" (Croghan, 2011, p. 2), technomilitary imaginaries of "precision and real-time control" (p. 10), and "sacrifice of civil liberties" (p. 171). These video games catalyse the cultural militarisation of society by extrapolating military values and practices to civilian gaming environments (Enloe, 2000). Far from being innocuous, military video games insert players in combat settings which legitimise Western patriarchal models of heroism, subordination, and gender agency.

In this context, female figures in Western Anglophone video games are defined by automatic attribution of male-projected values, concepts, and characterisations. The 2010s witnessed a trend towards the inclusion of female characters in video games and challenged the perception of gaming as an exclusively male leisure activity. As previous research observes, "[v]ideo games may now feature female characters more positively and the number of playable female characters has generally increased" (Lynch et al., 2016, p. 14). However, it may be critically assessed as an instrumental supremachist concession to revitalise the entrenched masculinist assumptions. As conceptualised by Yagüe-Pasamón (2023), "supremachism" constitutes a specific manifestation of supremacy that associates governance legitimacy to the stereotypical patriarchal ideal of the "macho".

Specialised literature on the representation of femininity in video games exposes gender tensions through iconic figures such as Lara Croft, from the *Tomb Raider* saga, which is read by feminist criticism ambivalently as an emblem of empowerment and an instance of hypersexualisation for masculine visual consumption. Kennedy (2002) reconciles both approaches by evidencing the coexistence of agency and male-gaze representations of femininity in video game figures. This convergence is confirmed by the observation that "quite a few women became leaders in the games, but they continue to be presented in a sexualized way" (Jansz & Martis, 2007, p. 147). In line with the observation that "only few women become leaders" (Jansz & Martis, 2007, p. 147), it may be asserted that, despite the inclusion of female characters, there is no substantial alteration in playable agency or female narrative agency, which prevents the association of female figures with victory and success in players' minds. Feminine agency in video games is not only quantitatively limited. Ruberg and Scully-Blaker (2021) indicate that feminine agency in video games may take specific forms, such as care provision.

As discussed, “[g]ames of this sort center caring rather than conflict and shift the medium toward what Code characterizes as more ‘feminine’ modes of play” (Ruberg & Scully-Blaker, 2021, p. 656).

Recent studies on the matter have indicated that hegemonic perspectives in video games, as an influential cultural product, do not exclusively operate on the representational content of the interactive text. The regulation and determination of the gaming environment and players’ possibilities are a crucial factor. As defended by Consalvo and Paul (2013, p. 2), the discourse of real games, where some games are depicted as “authentic”, constitutes a rhetorical and cultural framework of boundary-making to delimit legitimacy. “Developers’ pedigree”, understood as their reputation in the industry, “game mechanics”, “depth and complexity”, and the payment structure converge in the boundary-making of the “real game” (Consalvo & Paul, 2013, p. 1). Consalvo and Paul (2013, p. 2) argue that the effects of authenticity facilitate players’ identification with “real games” by positioning audiences within the real gamer subject position, naturalising ideological effects, such as exclusion.

Cote (2020) explains that the diversification of platforms and audiences has triggered a defensive reaction among the traditional young male target audience, who seek to preserve gaming as an exclusionary cultural space. Their delimitation of “traditional core” gamers as legitimate hegemony and “newer casual” players as periphery (Cote, 2020, p.3, where feminine players are relegated to the other, could contribute to hierarchise the system into a ludic first and second class). Sexism, thus, is deployed as a stratification criterion, within a cultural rhetoric where feminised casual games with “women [...] gamers” are approached as non “core” games, and their target audience as non-hegemonic gamers (Cote, 2020, p. 25). Cote (2020, pp. 54–55) interprets self-denominated traditional players’ concerns towards casual games and gamers as a “crisis of authority” where masculine hegemonic players fear a loss of control over the system, which intensifies the use of misogyny as an exclusion tactic. As video gaming is conceptualised as an arena for cultural conflict, gender identity is discussed as a point of friction in a video game industry which was construed as a masculine space, where “geek masculinity” is hegemonic and operates as an “anti-gender identity” (Romero-Medina, 2025, p. 187). Within the video game and its marketing materials, the promotion of sexism through representation regimes is explored by Peck et al. (2011), who show that sexism in video game representation often revolves around sexualised or stereotypical roles. Alongside sexualisation, female characters are criticised for being underrepresented, with proportions below 20% and far from centrality (Breuer et al., 2015).

In the specific context of military-themed shooters, military video games are described as providing “ways of training players for military service or of building support for wars” (Schulzke, 2013, p. 59). Saklofske et al. (2020) highlight the governing representational tendency of military video games to naturalise militarised masculinity, within a “war’s patriarchal morphology” that correlates masculinity with authority and displaces women to secondary roles (pp. 15–18). According to Saklofske et al. (2020), women in military video games have been historically

conceptualised through their supposed need for protection, in order to present them as motivation for the masculine soldier's quest.

This article aims to evaluate the representation of female agency within the Western patriarchal universe of *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* (Raven Software, 2020) and *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (MachineGames, 2014). For the research purposes of this article, agency is identified as a "capacity for action" (Mahmood, 2006, p. 33). The persistent representation of female support figures in contemporary best-selling military video games as mission assistants from private spaces will be a focus. Such representation will be contrasted with the figure of the virtuous male hero, who was created in the "image and likeness" of the Christian divinity (New American Standard Bible, 2020, Gen. 1:26–27). The subtexts of agency distribution in the plot reveal permeating patriarchal views in the cybertextual landscape of 21st-century military video games.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Analysis methods, techniques and focus

A qualitative-interpretative approach will explore military video games as complex cultural texts. In these multimodal units, verbal language, audiovisual resources, and specific mechanics construct influential binary narratives.

The resemblance of the inner narrative world with gamers' reality enhances players' acquisition of patriarchal ideologies (Murray, 1997; Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). Simultaneously, the implicit guiding of gamers through the plot by means of playability limitation rules enhances the sensation of non-manipulated action and interpretation.

Close reading makes it possible to identify textual, paratextual, and mechanical patterns of alterity personality and bodily characterisation. Characters' centrality and responsiveness to patriarchal duty expectations may reveal socio-political salience and displacement tendencies. Players' degree of interaction with protagonists and central characters helps identify the circumstances and worldview of the often-male protagonists. Likewise, their location in the community public and private *topoi* may unveil symbolic gender frontiers, which restrict characters' operativity. The patriarchal projection of duties per gender may be the criterion for the naturalisation of spatial hierarchies, based on the association of femininity with privacy and masculinity with public action.

The close-reading analysis is systematised through the segmentation of *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops* into climactic scenes. These segments are analytically relevant due to their narrative and mechanical decisiveness, given their ideological density and their focalised agency allocation. Segments where the conflict is presented and redefined by circumstances were prioritised. Likewise, scenes of strategic planning, heroic risk, and conflict resolution

were considered eligible for analysis, on grounds of their structural functionality within the narrative.

Specifically, in *Wolfenstein: The New Order*, the segments selected for analysis involve the traumatic coma of US spy William B.J. Blazkowicz in General Deathhead's complex and his recovery at a Polish asylum, under the care of Nurse Anya Oliwa. Similarly, Blazkowicz's escape from Eisenwald prison, the transitional scenes at the Kreisau Circle's Hideout and the final sequence are explored. Selected segments from *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* are "Nowhere Left to Run", the transitional interactions with Park at the team hideout, the preparation for the final mission, and the alternative endings players may opt to follow ("The final countdown" and "Ashes to ashes" missions). *Wolfenstein: The New Order* paratextual elements and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* gender customisation menu and micro-segments are also explored in Appendix A.

The analysed video game segments are qualitatively coded through detailed observation, according to specific focal indicators of decisional, operative, risk, recognition, and interactive agency. The agency of particular characters and their respective roles within the scene, along with the typology of sequence (cinematic, playable, or mixed) where agency is depicted, are coded in Appendix A. Decisional agency refers to the framing, alteration, or resolution of mission goals. Operational agency alludes to the performance of logistical, care-related, and technical tasks that enable mission progression. Risk agency applies when a character is exposed to harm or sacrifices for the mission to progress or complete. Recognition agency alludes to operations related to social merit or acknowledgment. Interactive agency addresses action focalisation and playability concerns. The simultaneous overlapping of certain categories in different characters may allow us to observe whether a representational pattern applies uniformly to female- and male-coded characters.

The analysis relies on research on procedural rhetoric to examine the ideological encoding of values and hierarchies by means of rules, mechanics, and representational systems (Bogost, 2007). However, no univocal correspondence between gaming systems and players' decoding is intended. In line with critiques of procedurality (Sicart, 2011), video games are approached as structured cultural artefacts whose ideological encodings emerge from the convergence of design choices, narrative framing, mechanics, player engagement, and cultural imageries, and not exclusively from rules. Such an approach embraces Ruberg's (2019) defence of interpretative plurality in gaming, while focusing on the analysis of both design elements and the representational trends embedded in them.

2.2. Analytical corpus

Several criteria guided the corpus selection. This study is framed as a comparative case study of two military-thematised FPS games from the 2010–2020 period in order to offer a current picture of gender-based representation in contemporary "AAA"

shooter narratives. When applied to video games, the denomination “AAA” is deployed “to classify the title with the largest budgets on game conventions” (Bernevega & Gekker, 2022, p. 48). Focusing on military video games released between 2010 and 2020 offers a coherent view of the patriarchal construction of femininity in contemporary video games. Video games from the period 2021–2025 will not be analysed because later expansions may reshape the video game conceptual line. Video games released before 2010 are also excluded in favour of corpus coherence, given the natural evolutionary shifts of the industry in broader time frames.

The military thematic scope imposes the selection of “shooter” as an analytical video game genre. The historical glass ceiling of US women to participate in combat operations enhances the exploratory interest of shooter military video games. The 1994 *Directive of Defense on Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* (U.S. Department of Defense, 1994, p.1) explicitly ordered that female service members be excluded “from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat”. It is not until its abolition in 2013 that “all positions became open to women), upon the passing of *Memorandum Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013). The sample of eligible shooter games will be further narrowed down to exclusively include FPS games. In these interactive texts, the avatars under gamers’ control are the focalisers of the action. Players’ witnessing of the action through their own eyes is particularly significant, as it maximizes avatar–player identification and facilitates ideological transmission. In this regard, Klimmt et al. (2009, p. 351) conceptualise “video game identification” as “a temporal shift of players’ self-perception through adoption of valued properties of the game character”. Gast supports the identification between player and character by arguing that “a character may play a significant role in creating more immersive games and enhance the overall gaming experience” (2017, p. 6).

Additionally, only shooters designed for personal computer (PC), a major cross-platform access point for video games, will be selected. According to the consultancy Newzoo (2025), PC video games represent a similar percentage of annual revenues in the industry, accounting for 21% of the total, compared to the combined share of all video consoles (24%). Such a criterion will be adopted with the purpose of mitigating multiplatform overlapping. The range of video games that appear on several platforms is wide. Players may acquire the title on various consoles for reasons of portability. However, the purchase of several copies of the same game for a single computer may be comparatively rare.

Finally, the analytical focus will be narrowed to those video games that have topped annual sales charts. The recognition of their status as “game of the year” will be considered equivalent to sales-chart leadership. Other influential military shooters, such as *Battlefield 4* (2013) or *Battlefield 1* (2016) could meet these criteria. However, deep qualitative analysis is prioritised over extensive corpus analysis.

The application of the criteria described justifies the adoption of *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* as the analytical corpus. The former received the “Big Apple Award for the Best Game of the Year” in the New York Video Game Awards . The latter is reported by NPD Group (Licensing International, 2021) to have ranked “as the 20th best-selling video game in U.S. tracked history (life-time dollar sales)” a few months after its release. As indicated in Section 2.1., selected climactic segments of these video games were coded, in terms of sequence typology, focal agency indicators, agency bearers, and roles. The segment coding of both video games may be consulted in Appendix A. The titles selected are not representative of the representational trends of the whole genre. However, these enable comparison between two mass-consumed titles from major franchises in the military-thematised FPS video game industry and exhibit persistent gender agency patterns in contemporary democratic Anglophone settings, which justifies the delimitation of the analysis scope to these two cases, from an intensive close reading approach. Within the growing diversity of the video game ecosystem, the existence of video game narratives that offer counter-hegemonic views is recognised. However, these fall beyond the scope of this study and are considered potential lines of future research.

3. ANALYSIS

Wolfenstein: The New Order follows American Captain William J. Blazkowitz in an alternative WWII aftermath, where Nazi Germany prevails. During the 1946 assault on General Deathshead’s compound, Blazkowitz falls into a 14-year coma, under the care of asylum Nurse Anya Oliwa. When the asylum is attacked, Blazkowitz awakens and joins the resistance group Kreisau Circle to defeat Deathshead in a sacrificial mission that closes the narrative.

Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War presents FBI agent Bell’s pursuit of USSR spy Perseus during the 1980s Cold War. Throughout the game, Bell emerges as a former member of Perseus’s team, brainwashed by the FBI, which forces him to choose between neutralising the USSR nuclear threat or destroying major European capital cities.

The close reading of both titles examines recurrent narrative, mechanical, and paratextual patterns that distribute decisional, operative, risk, recognition, and interactive agency unevenly in gender-coded characters (Appendix A). As previously discussed in Section 2.1., the analysis relies on climactic segments from each game to explore the agency distribution through decisional, operative, risk, recognition, and interactive indicators. Segment references in the sections below correspond to the analysis segments in Appendix A.

3.1. Masculine centrality in military interactive narratives

At first glance, one of the most evident factors is the centrality of male characters in the plot of the interactive text. On the one hand, playable characters are specifically designed to focalise the gaming experience of video game users. In this particular case, the players' avatar operates as an interactive interface for players to immerse themselves in the virtual world. On the other hand, Non-playable characters are utilised to shape players' perceptions through third-person exposition.

Considering the protagonist avatars in *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, the centrality of masculine heroism is unmistakable. In the former, Blazkowicz is cinematically depicted as an American special operations veteran soldier whose providential destiny is to head the last bastion of the resistance against the Third Reich. Blazkowicz's physical configuration responds to the traditional archetype of protective macho heroism. His tall, robust and athletic complexion, his hard-lined face, and his legacy of war scars from protecting the US give him a hardened appearance. Throughout the narrative, Blazkowicz's determination to save the Godly creation and the community guides him through suffering and endurance. Blazkowicz survives several plane crashes, a coma-inducing explosion, drug poisonings, and extreme torture sessions at Eisenwald Prison and London Nautica Prison. As illuminated from his self-reflections, Blazkowicz's sense of justice and duty to protect makes him transcend human bodily limitations and trauma.

As for *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, Bell embodies the capable individual who suffers the Cold War tensions and conflicting interests of the Soviet and US Powers. Bell's psychological profile is shaped by the specific operativity of in-game missions. Players may shape the gaming experience by choosing two perks from a list of psychological profiles. Paranoid, violent tendencies, lone wolf, professional, fearless, reliable, and tormented may be selected to provide gameplay bonuses during the adventure. Likewise, aggressive behaviour, survivor, calm under pressure, methodical, relentless, dependable, and impatient further define the personality of Bell.

An overview of the features players might assign to Bell may reveal certain correspondence with the patriarchal archetype of the macho, as previously analysed in the case of *Wolfenstein: The New Order*. Such a characterisation pivots around physical superiority and aggressiveness, which is key to protecting the community from external hostilities. The macho is conceptualised as a dominant normative model that exhibits his manliness daily, is "brave and tough", and is "ready to defend family honour" (Gutmann, 2000, p. 55). This conceptualisation resonates with the biblical axiom of man's creation in God's "image and likeness" (New American Standard Bible, 2020, Gen. 1:26–27), which legitimises masculine government, as an expression of divine will, over women, constructed within this patriarchal framework as 'heirs of Eve' and, thus, physically, mentally and morally inferior.

In a purported attempt at modernisation, *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* allows players to ineffectively customise their avatar gender under a veil of superficial

inclusiveness. In theory, gamers can select a male, female, or non-binary avatar, which may be ideal for the gender identification of players with the protagonist character. However, the cinematics that show the protagonist avatar as a third-person entity are quantitatively inadequate for gamers to become aware of the avatar's gender. The menu used to customise gender options, as an interface analytical segment (Appendix A), is also relevant in a socio-political sense. In the gender selection field, the options are displayed vertically as a list. Male is at the top, female in the middle, and non-binary at the bottom. In an imitation of the socio-political prioritisation of male figures over female figures in Western Anglophone patriarchies, such a peculiar disposition imprints on players' minds a hierarchy of relevance in the community.

In addition to male hierarchisation, the limited cinematic resources that depict the protagonist avatar from a third-person perspective are insufficient for gamers to become aware of the gender entity they are controlling. The male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) which has been studied to govern cinema, literature, and video games from a male-centric approach, leads to the assumption of male identity as reference, unless stated otherwise in Western Anglophone communities. In the character design process, the anticipation of psychological traits and professional background determination, before prompting gamers about avatars' gender, favours an automatic identification of professionalism and typically male-assigned traits with a male-coded character. Rather than claiming a uniform cognitive effect on players, this research argues that Bell may be structurally male-coded by default in the video game's representational environment. This factor could be favoured by the vertical hierarchising display of gender options in the gender customisation menu and the limited third-person representation of the player's avatar in the video game cinematics. Additionally, it resonates with the construction of geek masculinity "as an anti-gender identity that it's born from a rhetoric of victimhood and betrayal" (Romero-Medina, 2025, p. 187). Thus, the protagonists' gender customisation system may be partially neutralised by persisting masculine hegemonic framings. Seemingly, gender selection may merely function as an aesthetic postfeminist device that apparently rejects the binary approach to gender identities, but, in practical terms, maintains masculine centrality unaltered. Alternative readings when players select a female or non-binary version of Bell may coexist with the dominant heroic masculinity and the tendency to align recognition structures with military masculinities.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the presence of female characters in the protagonists' teams, which include the most frequently encountered non-playable characters, is proportionally diminished. These male NPCs symbolically respond to the archetypes of the technological shaman (Set Roth, from the Da'at Yichaud secret organisation), the unconditional loyal man (private Reid/Wyatt and Max Hass), and the loving father and repentant Nazi Klaus Kreutz.

In contrast to the *Wolfenstein* male NPCs, female characters utilise theoretical expertise to assist the hero and the team's male operatives in their quest, but do not engage in combat. Midgame Caroline Becker resorts to strategy to define the hero's

line of intervention. Caroline's strategic planning at the narrative hub (Appendix A) influences mission direction from decisional agency and operatively supplies intel, but the mission execution remains at Blazkowicz's interactive and risk agency discretion. The case of Anya Oliwa is of particular interest, as she represents an abnegated caretaker who assists the hero during his 14-year coma. As recreated by the cyclic succession of seasons in the hero's coma cinematic, Anya attends patients, makes beds, inspects Blazkowicz's consciousness, feeds him, and caresses his face. Upon the Nazi kidnapping of patients from her parents' asylum, Anya devotedly calms the comatose hero and places his wheelchair under the window sunlight. The voice-over narration by Blazkowicz confirms Anya in the role of the wife-like caregiver. As Blazkowicz declares, "I'm better because of her. Her name is Anya. She takes good care of me. She takes good care of everyone. Supposed to be married by now, but... hasn't happened" (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014).

Remarkably, the female NPCs' interventions are subject to limitations that restrict players' perceptions of their capabilities. In the case of Anya, the range of action of the Polish nurse is delimited to the guidance of the hero's action by means of emotional care and instructions. The second most important female NPC in relation to Blazkowicz's mission is Caroline Becker. The activist exhibits a similar limitation of agency, but its aetiology is bodily paraplegia, which condemns her to a hideout in her wheelchair. The postfeminist pressure urges the interactive text to permit Anya's active intervention at very specific points, such as the escape from Eisenwald prison. In the Eisenwald prison escape (Appendix A), Anya intervenes as an enabling support, opening an escape route that allows the hero to save the world from Nazism, while interactive agency remains centred on the playable protagonist. However, the orientation of Anya's life towards the hero's quest constructs Anya's subjectivity as dependent on Blazkowicz's heroic mission. As confirmed by Anya Oliwa in her statement "I have waited for you for so long" (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014), the female support character suggests that the protagonist and his quest are what give meaning to her existence. The use of the camera and male character playability reinforce the male-gaze salience of the masculine agency, which contribute to the defocalisation of female characters in favour of male prominence, as studied by Mulvey (1975) in classical narrative cinema.

Call of Duty agent Helen Park also confirms to devote her dependent existence to the support for the protagonist's providential duty. As illustrated by dialogue lines such as "I feel I owe you..." (*Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, 2020), in the frame of "Nowhere Left to Run", Helen Park downplays her contribution to the mission in order to foreground the protagonist's intervention, validating and recognising the hero (Appendix A). Self-agency denial is further expressed by declarations such as "We need you to hang in there for one more assignment" (*Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, 2020), during the preparation of the final mission, reinforcing an asymmetric recognition pattern (Appendix A). Likewise, Helen Park makes an ultimate statement appreciating male duty right before "The Final Countdown/Ashes to Ashes" alternative ending missions. In these alternative endings, the male protagonist concentrates the decisional agency and decides the fate of the world

(Appendix A). Simultaneously, the risk assumed and the goals achieved become a female existential debt that motivates the feminine social recognition of the hero, while renouncing her own contribution to the mission (Appendix A).

Objectively, the role of Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park may be deemed essential to locating Deathshead or Perseus. However, the final encounter effaces female characters. Instead, the female figures become mere spectators of the grand finale, which is presented as a man-to-man confrontation between Blazkowicz and the Nazi general, and FBI agents Bell and Adler. In the “final sequence” (Appendix A), recognition and credit are assigned to the militarised masculinity, while feminine NPCs are displaced to spectator positions. Upon the culmination of the respective missions, the glory of socio-political recognition is reserved for the male protagonist.

Remarkably, female characters actively renounce their share of glory in favour of male heroic figures, as dramatised in Helen Park’s congratulatory remark to players’ avatar, “Good work out there” (*Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, 2020). In parallel, Anya Oliwa’s confession, “We did it” is rectified to “you did it” (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014), as if correcting her presumably arrogant claim to share credit. Without the intervention of Anya Oliwa, there is no anti-Nazi hero, but she functions as an exclusively structural entity with no glory entitlement. Such a symbolic annihilation, as theorised by Tuchman (1978), of the female military support figures is further reinforced by the satellite paratextual promotion materials and video game cover of *Wolfenstein: The New Order*. The official cover art is analysed as a paratextual coded segment (Appendix A), given its assignment of recognition and centrality to specific characters. In this design, the only explicit human figure is a heavily armed Blazkowicz in war-like imagery, with no trace of Anya Oliwa or Caroline Becker. Similarly, the cover of *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* portrays Bell as a split-faced male soldier in two different military outfits. The absence of a female half-face makes a unidirectional connection between the protagonist avatar and masculinity, despite the aforementioned falsely modernising character customisation system.

Following the historical conventions on socio-political structuration of the Western Anglophone patriarchy, these female characters are assigned to the private sphere of the asylum, the train roomette, and Kreisau Circle’s hideout. In these private contexts, Anya and Caroline’s agency is restricted to assistance operations, through the provision of care or intel, reserving interactive and risk agencies to the male-coded protagonists (Appendix A). Remarkably, outings are very sporadic in Anya’s case, and they are practically non-existent in the case of Caroline Becker and Helen Park. Thus, the combat action is providentially reserved for supposedly physically stronger male characters.

In the particular case of *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, the player’s avatar is accompanied by five male and one female character. In a sort of parallel with *Wolfenstein: The New Order*, Russell Adler incarnates the figure of the team leader. By contrast, Alex Mason and Frank Woods embody the archetype of the wise male

veteran. Lazar Azoulay and Jason Hudson represent the cold-minded, reliable male professional. Notably, the only female NPC in the game, Helen Park, operates as a theoretical intelligence specialist who supplies the hero with intel, instructions, debriefing, and counselling. In interactions with Park at the team hideout (Appendix A), Park exhibits an operative agency when providing intel or debriefing, while recognising the protagonist's role in mission completion. As in the previous cases, the private sphere setting of the safe house headquarters in West Berlin is the private space where the female character operates. To further reinforce the modern archetype of the Western Anglophone female military professional, Helen Park is placed at a desk in the analysis area of the hideout. The male characters of the team and the first-person player avatar, however, execute the actions required to fulfil their providential missions and receive the narrative acknowledgement for their completion of the providential quests to save the world.

3.2. Legitimisation of the socio-political hierarchisation of the community spaces through capacitive narratives

Thus, the naturalisation of the gender-based attribution and the distribution of spaces for the hierarchisation of the community private and public spheres constitute, in themselves, a narrative that defines competence through gendered alterity. The physical handicap of Caroline Becker and the psychological trauma of Anya Oliwa and Helen Park invoke biblical constructions of women as inferior beings. In addition to the ethical deviation of the disobedient Eve, who condemned humankind to eternal damnation, the supposedly first woman was recreated as an intellectually inferior entity. This view is reinforced in 1 Timothy: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression" (New American Standard Bible, 2020, 1 Tim. 2:13–14). A similar ethical logic applies to Anya Oliwa's prioritisation of the comatose male hero, before protecting her parents during the Nazi assault. A similar view appears in Ecclesiastes: "while I was still searching but not finding—I found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all" (New American Standard Bible, 2020, Eccl. 7:28).

The contrastive competences narratively projected by the Western Anglophone patriarchy onto male and female characters from *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* legitimise condemnation of women to male-custodied private performance. The symbolic confinement of female characters to private spaces in these interactive military narratives is justified by the sense of urgency of a two-fold protection protocol. On the one hand, male-supervised, risk-free private settings are oriented at safeguarding female characters' physical and mental integrity in the hostile environment of a Nazified Europe and the expansionist ambitions of a decaying Soviet Union respectively. The patriarchally projected female inability to assume the physical and intellectual demands of self-protection is used to justify their confinement. On the other hand, the male custody of the female characters represented as disabled or vulnerable in private spaces also

operates to guard the Western patriarchal Anglophone community from the alleged incompetence attributed to female characters. Thus, female NPCs are framed within non-combat private spaces of the asylum or the Kreisau Circle and the FBI headquarters. Interestingly, the military thematic framework of the video game plot is framed as intensely urgent in the military and combat environment of *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*. In line with the aforementioned *Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* (United States, Department of Defense, 1994), regarding the roles assigned to female soldiers in the US Army, female soldiers are to be segregated from potentially risky encounters with enemy operators. As recreated, the participation of supposedly incompetent female characters in armed combat could compromise the course of the campaign and the safety of the military and civilian communities. Hence, the Western Anglophone patriarchy resorts to a protective rationale which justifies the confinement of militarised female characters in the private sphere and their deprivation from heroic agency. According to the subtext, it is not the patriarchy which confines undervalued female characters. Instead, the prioritisation of community safety and wellbeing in war circumstances justifies women's exclusion from public military spaces of political and professional agency.

3.3. Representational female instrumentalisation

These female characters' support for male protagonists in *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* plays an ambivalent role. At first glance, women exemplify the ideal model of female servitude to male protagonists, as prescribed in Ephesians: "Wives, obey your husbands as you obey the Lord" (New American Standard Bible, 2020, Eph. 5:22–24). Indeed, the instrumentalisation of female characters by providential male figures to accomplish their community mission transcends the plot itself to operate as a driver of the action at the narrative structural level. Even when they are given some biographical background with limited narrative development, the female NPCs' biographies only justify their narrative function as satellites of the hero's quest to save the US free world.

Their reduced biographies are, in practical terms, mere résumés to explain their legitimacy to participate in the resistance Kreisau Circle and Adler's FBI team. Their biographies reveal their total dependence on the hero's storyline and the binding of their intervention to the line of action of the male characters. In the particular narrative framework of the interactive texts analysed, *Wolfenstein: The New Order* presents Anya's life as collateral to Blazkowicz's trajectory. Anya is the nurse and caretaker of the asylum where Blazkowicz was admitted after falling into a coma. Upon the assassination of her parents, and the awakening of Blazkowicz to save the damsel in distress, she progressively becomes his romantic and sexual partner, waiting for his safe return to the train roomette or the Kreisau Circle's headquarters. In the case of *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, intelligence analyst Helen Park is mentioned to have certain academic achievements. However, just as Caroline

Becker, her discourse is mainly operational, as in her demand “We’re running out of time. Move to the extraction point now” (*Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, 2020).

The limited attention paid to female characters’ life experiences, feelings, interests and desires, along with their necessary coexistence with male characters for them to be ‘invited’ to the centrality of the patriarchal interactive narration, causes a suppression of female subjectivity. In such an undesirable dynamic, female characters’ circumstances are devoiced and disappear in a system of community values and interpretation of reality created by men and for men. Beyond their former professional backgrounds, there is only logistical, coordinative, and medical support. According to Butler (1990), the gender of these female NPCs is reduced to a mere repetition of the patriarchally imposed tasks, as projected from the Christian foundational values. The performativity of these female characters is essentially an act of service to the Western Anglophone patriarchy, through a non-interventionist position in the central narrative axis.

None of these female characters actually exist if they were not involved in the male character’s providential quest. The narrative binding of female characters to male existence contrasts with Blazkowicz, who has repeatedly appeared in video games of the saga since *Wolfenstein 3D* (Id Software, 1992). Likewise, archetypal soldiers such as Reid/Wyatt, or recognisable characters such as Mason, Hudson, and Woods from *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (Infinity Ward, Treyarch, and Raven Software, 2010) demonstrate that male characters exist independently. In the case of the latter, no external mediation is required for either their existence or their conceptualisation.

3.4. *The military professionalisation of the female-coded care and support duties*

The recurrent performativity of care, mediation, and assistance of Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park in the explored top-selling military-themed video games results in the professionalisation of the patriarchal traditional gender-based division of labour. Recurrence as the engine of the representation of femininity is overtly evident in the Polish asylum of *Wolfenstein: The New Order*, where Anya and her mother look after the hero and the patients of the mental institution with abnegation, consistency, and care. As Anya’s father jokes, before his assassination by the Nazi assault forces, Anya had “mysterious powers!” (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014), in reference to her ability to perceive that the comatose hero was awake. While her psychiatrist father is a cold-minded, analytical, and scientific professional, Anya’s care work in her family asylum is framed as a naturalised feminine gift that restores the male hero, in a professionalisation of her private role. Upon her enrolment in Blazkowicz’s military quest to topple the Nazi reign of horror over London and the rest of Europe, her patriarchy-assigned role of support becomes militarised.

Such militarisation is evident when Anya says, “I’ll keep the radio open. Tell me what you need” (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014), where care is translated into a military-action context. Similarly, Caroline Becker and her *Call of Duty* homologue,

Helen Park, retrieve and manage intel to safeguard the male protagonists and support their respective military campaigns. However, no real female intervention in the military combat frames, where actual agency resides, is facilitated. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the differential distribution of agency between male and female characters in both interactive texts encodes an ideological subtext. Within this ideological encoding, female characters are not to be completely excluded from the armies of Western Anglophone patriarchies, as occurred in earlier historical periods. In any case, female characters must adopt very specific care- and assistance-related formats to guarantee the proper functioning of the military institution in the corresponding war conflicts.

Thus, in compliance with the governing supremacist logic, players are indoctrinated to accept that female characters must assume a position of abnegated service to the virtuous male heroes. As Anglophone communities' social agents and potential members of the armed forces, gamers extrapolate the mindset subliminally acquired during gameplay. In the military video game narratives analysed, the professionalisation of traditional female care and assistance duties reinforces the historical invisibility of such a patriarchal role under a military aesthetic framework. This relates to the reframing of socially reproductive labour as support for masculine action that enables heroes to focus on action away from the care of the dependent members of the group, which excludes femininity from climactic risk and recognition through women's displacement to private spaces of care (Federici, 2012).

Remarkably, the military professionalisation of this historical female role could be deemed as a superficial modernisation of women's assigned roles in Western contemporary Anglophone patriarchies. Paradoxically, such an aesthetic reworking amounts, in practical terms, to a continuation of the gender-based task distribution into modern times. The renovation does not transform the duties assigned to women themselves, but rather their format to comply, in appearance, with the democratic standards of non-discrimination on gender grounds. In *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park transcend their formerly exclusive care-related roles to acquire an additional theoretical and technical role. Notwithstanding this, they still concede protagonism and centrality to Blazkowicz and the male members of Adler's team. Indeed, the militarisation of women's role does not imply a rejection of maternal care, as evidenced by Anya Oliwa's tag question, "You're not wearing that to battle, are you?" (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014). In the verbal confrontation with Blazkowicz on the appropriateness of his outfit for combat situations, Anya Oliwa's questioning may evoke for players the archetype of the caring mother. Men are positioned as leaders and managers of the family unit, in credit terms, while female characters invisibly safeguard the male hero's reputation through care. The described task distribution, once again, renders women's work invisible and fully aligns with the governing values and expectations in the socio-cultural context of the Western Anglophone community. Thus, the prescriptive maternal functions assigned to women within the family unit are transferred to female-coded roles in the armed forces.

4. DISCUSSION

As illustrated by the analysis grid in Appendix A segment coding, the representational patterns addressed in this section stem from the recurrent attribution of interactive and risk agencies to masculine protagonists, which confines female NPCs to operative support and to the recognition of the masculine hero's contribution to the team or the community.

From the comparative analysis of the high-impact top-selling interactive narratives of *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, the underlying narrative and mechanical pattern, which structurally subordinates female characters to male socio-political salience and agency, emerges. Prior literature has correlated masculinity with authority in military-themed video games (Saklofske et al., 2020). This article specifies this correlation by showing how climactic risks and recognition are reserved for masculine figures.

The narrative subordination of female characters in these military-themed interactive texts is not merely anecdotal or fortuitous. Rather, it is the result of a coherent set of cross-cutting encodings in mission design and in-game operative mechanics, such as playability and the use of the camera. Similarly, the gender hierarchisation is achieved by a strategic distribution of characters in private and public spaces, the alterity of the verbal expression of characters and the subtexts in speech and performance. The convergence of all these technical and narrative elements into a playable and immersive narration recreates a deceptive sense of freedom of perception and choice. This framing facilitates the naturalisation of gender hierarchies through playability. Thus, the ideals of the Western Anglophone patriarchies culminate in a supremacist colonisation of the contemporary virtual narrative forms.

The consistency of the pattern described in other top-selling titles such as *Ace Combat 7: Skies Unknown* (Bandai Namco Studios, 2019), *Gears of War* (Namco, 2006), and *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* (Danger Close Games, 2012) suggests that the findings of this study are not a mere exception. These titles are mentioned illustratively, as contextual parallels, and are not part of the systematic corpus analysis.

In these titles, female soldiers Anya Stroud, Lena, and Mei Ling illuminate the path of the male hero with expertise and intelligence. The transversal character of this phenomenon confirms the cultural continuation of supremacism into interactive textual formats, in a modernisation and adaptation of the inherited forms of representation (Hall, 1997). In the context of military-themed interactive texts, an aesthetic cover for female professional inclusion in the Armed Forces hierarchies has updated traditional roles assigned to women in Western Anglophone patriarchies. Specifically, the illusory professionalisation of the traditional caretaking and husband-assistance duties restricts the intervention of female soldiers to the provision of care, intel, and orientation, in line with *Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* (United States, Department of Defense, 1994). The adaptation of supremacist mechanisms that segregate women in 21st-century video

games not only aims to satisfy the new equality-seeking democratic standards of acceptability. Interestingly, the militarisation of patriarchal female roles also confines women in the armed forces by conceding their participation under very restrictive assistance positions, far from glory and the narrative climax.

Notably, restrictions on female soldiers' agency are not a mere representational issue in military video games. As analysed in the interactive narratives of *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, a carefully planned distribution of the mechanical control of characters causes an inevitable centralisation of the action-related agency. By means of this design strategy, male characters are highlighted to the detriment of the invisibilisation of crucial female structural figures. Consequently, players enjoy frenetic ideologically controlled narratives through FPS male characters and connect with both their circumstances and the series of gender-based values they are purposefully designed to embody by the video game. This pattern resonates with the description of care as "more feminine modes of play" (Ruberg & Scully-Blaker, 2021, p. 656). By contrast, female characters seem functional and emotionally distant to gamers, who are not encouraged to familiarise themselves with their desires, life aspirations, and backgrounds. The gratitude of the female characters and the concession of glory and recognition foster their distance from players and reinforces the perceived lack of need for the recognition of female characters.

The manipulated female characters express no need for players to fight, outside the narrative frame of the interactive text, for the provision of a privileged status they do not believe they deserve. Without making claims about reception effects, the boundary-making video game texts reserve climactic risk and recognition to combatant masculinities, matching the ideal of patriarchal legitimacy in "real" games (Consalvo & Paul, 2013). The representative feminisation of care in the video games analysed in this article hierarchises characters into legitimate masculinities and the feminine other (Cote, 2020). Such a stance is observed, for instance, in Anya Oliwa's progressive renunciation to credit, "We did it... you did it" (*Wolfenstein: The New Order*, 2014). Anya Oliwa's conformity to her position of secondary importance, and the devoicing of Caroline Becker and Helen Park in victory may normalise abnegation as a feminine-coded ideal within the representational frame of the video game.

The alignment with the infallible initiatives of the everyday male heroes in their respective Western Anglophone patriarchal communities is presented as an option, but it is the only real option. As tacitly dramatised by the female military characters examined in these video games, they are valid, accepted, and recognised members of military institutions, and gender equality is presented as already achieved and no longer requiring struggle. The subtext embodied by Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park reinforces the positioning of women soldiers within gender-hierarchised military structures in the Anglophone world. As initially suggested by the narrative and later voiced by the female NPCs studied, the inclusion of female characters in military contexts is possible so long as it does not entail a symbolic alteration of the patriarchal status quo.

The sober Victorian emotionality of Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park leaves no room for the expression of subversive aspirations to narrative centrality. They hold no feelings of inferiority, do not contest the system of segregation, and deny any connotation of discomfort towards the centrality of the male hero. They lack ambition for the subversion of the male gaze that historically repressed them for having been assigned a binary female identity. Paradoxically, they feel content to orient and bind their existence to the accomplishment of the male salvific quest to liberate the world from the imperialist ambitions of external powers. Far from reproach, Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park express profound gratitude for having had the opportunity to praise the virtuous male hero, framed through the biblical notion of being created in the Christian God's "image and likeness" (New American Standard Bible, 2020, Gen. 1:26–27).

Anya's caregiving role, Caroline Becker's strategic resilience, and Helen Park's traumatic intelligence-analyst past contain significant narrative potential, which are ignored and under-exploited by the male gaze in military video games. However, gamers' recurrent exposure to male-oriented fictional worlds may constrain players' perceptions of women's military potential outside the narrative framework of the interactive text.

5. CONCLUSION

Throughout this article, *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* have been analysed as best-selling and highly influential interactive texts in US Anglophone entertainment. Specifically, these video games constitute instances of the 21st-century adaptation of the historical patriarchal construction of women as binary and inferior, in opposition to the virtuous God-like man. This opposition constitutes a structural pattern in military-themed video games. Contextualised in a post-WWII Nazified world and amid the Cold War tensions, respectively, both video games systematically present female characters as professionalised military caretakers and assistants of central male figures. The dramatised incorporation of female characters into military units emerges as a deceptive aesthetic modernisation of the tasks imposed on women by Western Anglophone patriarchies.

The plot divergence of both video games, which are contextualised in a world in which the Allies have been defeated by the Nazis and in the tensions of the Cold War, respectively, does not prevent the systematic representation of female characters as professionalised military caretakers. In the 21st-century Western Anglophone patriarchies, militarised nurse Anya Oliwa, resistance activist Caroline Becker and intelligence analyst Helen Park do have a role in war conflicts. However, female military agents are required to occupy gendered positions away from playable centrality, combat confrontations, and heroic recognition.

In the particular case of Anya Oliwa, who restored the comatose male hero of *Wolfenstein: The New Order*, the Polish nurse embodies the invisibility of female

care which only exists in connection with the male hero. *Wolfenstein's* Caroline Becker and *Call of Duty's* Helen Park are constructed as female characters marked by physical disability and psychological trauma who provide excellent intelligence support to facilitate the male characters' combat campaigns. Nevertheless, both female agents are deemed invalid by the patriarchal system to assume the risks of direct confrontation. The confinement of female characters to the private spaces of the train roomette and headquarters does not aim to protect female characters who owe obedience to the providential heir of God because of their supposed incompetence. Indeed, the fallacious urgency of excluding physically and mentally inferior women from campaigns for the common good has been utilised to legitimise male government in Western history. In line with US regulatory restrictions on female soldiers' engagement in combat, which were in force until as recently as 2013, female military NPCs are granted expertise but denied centrality in action.

The exclusion of female characters from the plot's climax is a patriarchal exercise of denial of socio-political recognition. The resulting silencing of female-specific circumstances hinders their connection with players' frames of reference and causes the suppression of female subjectivity. The renunciation of the powerful narrative potential of the psychological arcs of Nazi-traumatised Anya Oliwa, disabled resistance leader Caroline Becker, and professionally distressed Helen Park is a sacrifice to prevent the symbolic alteration of patriarchal hierarchisation.

As a shared consequence of the technical and narrative denial of agency, three of the most representative female military characters in the contemporary imagery of US video games have been analysed as undergoing symbolic annihilation. Consequently, their narrative function, motivations, and aspirations revolve around the assistance of male characters in the hero's providential mission of world salvation and heroic recognition. As explored, the gender of Anya Oliwa, Caroline Becker, and Helen Park is simply a repetitive performative projection of the patriarchal archetype of the ideal woman. In a reworking of the Victorian and biblically obedient woman, female characters in 21st-century top-selling video games do not question their subordinate position of secondary importance under the shadow of inescapable male dominance. Like the female players of these influential video games in the Western Anglophone community, the female NPCs in *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* are persuaded not to fight for their conceptual, physical, or motivational independence from the central male figure of the micro-community. Thus, the exhibition of truly democratising gender-equal models is foreclosed in order to guarantee the continuation of historical Western Anglophone supremachism in US digital interactive entertainment.

NOTE

The analysis incorporates the sex factor as a variable, acknowledging possible differences arising from sex and gender.

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APPENDIX A. ANALYSED VIDEO GAME SEGMENTS, FOCAL AGENCY INDICATORS AND AGENCY DISTRIBUTION

The climactic segments of the corpus selected for analysis are explored through five qualitative indicators of agency, namely “decisional”, “operative”, “risk”, “recognition” and “interactive”. The chart indicates the focal indicators of every segment, which does not exclude the exploration of other indicators wherever relevant.

VIDEO GAME	SEGMENT	TPOLOGY	FOCAL AGENCY INDICATORS	AGENCY BEARER AND ROLE
<i>Wolfenstein: The New Order</i>	Coma and Asylum.	Cinematic+ Playable sequence.	Decisional: providential mission assumption.	Blazkowicz- heroic.
			Interactive: focalisation.	
			Operative: caregiving.	Anya- support.
			Recognition: credit assignment and validation.	
	Eisenwald prison escape.	Playable Sequence.	Operative: enables escape	Anya- support.
			Risk: hero-dependent exposure to harm.	
			Risk: armed exposure to harm.	Blazkowicz- heroic.
			Interactive: hero-centred outcome.	
	Kreisau Circle's Hideout.	Narrative evolutive hub.	Operative: organisational tasks.	Caroline- support.
			Decisional: mission briefing	
			Decisional: assumes mission.	Blazkowicz- heroic.
			Interactive: hub-to-mission transition.	
	Final sequence.	Playable + Cinematic sequence.	Recognition: credit renunciation and validation of hero.	Anya- support.
			Risk: climactic exposure and sacrifice.	Blazkowicz- heroic.
	Cover art and promotion.	Paratextual.	Recognition: Densely armed Blazkowicz as only figure (centrality).	Blazkowicz- heroic.

INVISIBLE FEMALE SUPPORT FIGURES: CONSTRUING PATRIARCHAL REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER PERFORMATIVITY, AGENCY, AND MALE CENTRALITY IN US WESTERN ANGLOPHONE MILITARY-THEMED INTERACTIVE NARRATIVES

<i>Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War</i>	Gender customisation menu.	Interface / paratextual.	Interactive: Interface menu design.	Structural framing.
	“Nowhere Left to Run”.	Playable + cinematic sequence.	Operative: mission support and intel.	Helen Park-support.
			Recognition: validation and debt framing.	
			Interactive: player-executed mission agency.	Bell (player avatar)- Heroic.
			Risk: frontline exposure.	
	Interactions with Park (team hideout).	Playable + cinematic sequence.	Operative: support tasks and intel.	Helen Park-support.
			Recognition: recurrent validation of the hero.	
			Decisional: hero’s guidance.	
			Decisional: player-implemented choices.	Bell (player avatar)- Heroic.
			Interactive: executes the will of the player within the narrative fictional world.	
	Final preparation.	Cinematic sequence.	Recognition: hero validation.	Helen Park-support.
			Decisional: plan framing.	
			Decisional: decisive role in world history.	Bell (player avatar)- Heroic.
	Alternative endings (The final countdown/ Ashes to ashes).	Playable + cinematic sequence.	Recognition: final narrative appraisal and credit to hero.	Helen Park-support.
			Risk: assumption of extreme vital potential cost.	Bell (player avatar)- Heroic.
			Decisional: direction of sacrifice (Europe devastation or neutralising Soviet Union nuclear threat).	
	Cover art and promotion.	Paratextual.	Recognition: Half-face different soldiers as heroes. Masculinised war imagery.	Bell (male-coded)- heroic.

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