
The Signs of Chaos: A Semiotic Analysis of Just Cause 3

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Introduction

In this paper I will analyse the 2015 open world action-adventure game, Just Cause 3, from a semiotic [[47]] perspective. There are a wide variety of possible semiotic topics within this game that could be discussed, however I have chosen to only focus on a select group of items. Danesi's book on semiotics is used often throughout this paper when discussing semiotic topics. ((3)) There are six main sections of semiotic discussion within this paper:

The second section of this paper, titled "Welcome to Medici" provides a brief introduction to Just Cause 3. It focuses on what the game is, its setting of the fictional island of Medici, the various factions within the nation fighting for control, and provides a brief introduction to the narrative of the game. This section is primarily focused on providing context for the rest of the paper, and as such does not provide much semiotic analysis, as that is covered in later sections. ((1))

The third section of this paper, titled "The Clash of Color" focuses on the importance of color and faction symbols in Just Cause 3. In this section, a number of symbols within the game are discussed, most notably the "color code" [[2]] of the factions and their respective flags. ((1)) The notion of markedness, especially when applied to the color red, is discussed frequently within this section ((10)). This section also touches upon the history of these colors throughout the game's development, and how they have changed. ((2, 6, 7)) The connotations [[6]] of these colors are also discussed, and supported through testimony by the game's art director ((8)). Also, what happens when this "color code" is broken is discussed ((4)).

The fourth section of this paper, titled "Conveying Evil" focuses on the designs of the various antagonistic factions within the game, and how the game makes them look evil. Specific focus is placed upon the importance of connotations, the use of gestures [[16]] and gesticulants [[17]], and other symbolism used in conveying evil, alongside other dialogue and texts. ((1, 2, 7, 8, 9))

The fifth section of this paper, titled "Heat and Liberation as Codes" focuses on the Heat system in Just Cause 3, which is the code that determines how the government

responds to the player's actions, and the "liberation" system in Just Cause 3 as well ((1)). This section analyses both of these codes at length, and also discusses the associated signs [[51]], specifically icons. [[20]]

The sixth section of this paper, titled "How Medici Itself Tells a Story" focuses on how the design of the world of Medici itself is used to convey meaning, specifically in regards to the history and past important events within the world ((1)). Much of this section focuses on diachronic [[11]] analysis of how various construction and destruction within the world is used to convey important events and how the world has been shaped by the two main factions, focusing on things such as the various architectural styles, graffiti, and destruction.

The seventh section of this paper, titled "The Importance of Music" focuses on how music is used within Just Cause 3 to convey meaning ((1, 5)). Connotation [[6]] is a very important notion discussed within this section, specifically in relation to a few major types of music within the game and variations within said music.

Welcome to Medici

I want to write about what Just Cause 3 is, the world and important factions/people that serve as its setting, and a basic introduction to the game's story and gameplay. **I plan to focus on** providing a detailed introduction to the game that is the focus of this paper. **I would like my reader to** have a basic understanding of the game to give them a foundation for understanding later sections of the paper.

¶ A basic, general introduction to Just Cause 3.

¶ A basic introduction to the gameplay loop of Just Cause 3.

¶ A basic introduction to Medici as a setting.

¶ A basic introduction to the factions of Medici and the ongoing Medician Civil War.

¶ A basic introduction to the plot of Just Cause 3.

The Clash of Color

I want to write about the importance of color and faction symbols in Just Cause 3, specifically in regards to the government and rebel factions. **I plan to focus on** what these colors are, how they are used, how they evolved throughout the game's development and to focus on the colors red, brown, and tan, especially the former, are considered "marked" in a very important way. **I would like my reader to** gain an

understanding of the main colors relevant to gameplay, and the importance of this “color code” being adhered to.

¶ I will talk about the flags of the two main factions, and their associated denotation and connotation.

¶ I will talk about the primary colors of the two main factions, and why they were chosen by the developers.

¶ I will talk about the importance of color relative to an action game and the importance of quick target recognition.

¶ I will briefly discuss the history of faction coloration throughout the development of the game.

¶ I will discuss what happens when this “color code” is not followed when designing content for the game.

¶ I will briefly discuss how these colors are lampshaded within the game by various characters.

Conveying Evil

I want to write about the designs of the various antagonistic factions within the game, and how the game makes them look evil. **I plan to focus on** the importance of connotations, the use of gestures and gesticulants, and other symbolism used in conveying evil. **I would like my reader to** gain an understanding of how the need to portray evil affected the way the various antagonistic factions of the game were designed.

¶ I will talk about the scrapped Medici Police Department and how their design may have resulted in their removal from the game.

¶ I will talk about the Di Ravello Militia and how their design is used to make them look clearly evil, and its relation to the scrapped Medici Police Department.

¶ I will talk about the Black Hand and how their design makes them look less human and more threatening.

¶ I will talk about the importance of body language and gestures used by the government factions.

¶ I will discuss the importance of how dialogue and various bits of text are utilized to convey the evil of the government.

¶ I will discuss Chaos Objects and the connotations of their destruction by the player.

Heat and Liberation as Codes

I want to write about the Heat system in Just Cause 3, which is the code that determines how the government responds to the player's actions, and I also want to discuss the "liberation" system in Just Cause 3. **I plan to focus on** how both of these systems are codes, and how the signs associated with them come into play. **I would like my reader to** have an understanding of how both the Heat and Liberation systems work.

¶ Discuss what the Heat system is and how it works.

¶ Discuss the user interface and how it is used to convey meaning related to the Heat system.

¶ Discuss what the Liberation system is and how it works.

¶ Discuss the user interface and how it is used to convey meaning related to the Liberation system.

How Medici Itself Tells a Story

I want to write about how the design of the world of Medici itself is used to convey meaning, specifically in regards to the history and past important events within the world. **I plan to focus on** a diachronic analysis of how various construction and destruction within the world is used to convey important events and how the world has been shaped by the two main factions. **I would like my reader to** gain an understanding of how the world is used to convey history and events.

¶ Discuss the various architectural styles found throughout Medici.

¶ Discuss the use of graffiti within the world by the various factions.

¶ Discuss the importance of ruins, wrecks, and other non-player caused destruction found throughout the world.

¶ Discuss the importance of alterations to the landscape and settlements by different groups within the world.

The Importance of Music

I want to write about how music is used within Just Cause 3 to convey meaning. **I plan to focus on** the connotations of three main types of music tracks, and also the connotations of subtle variations within these tracks. **I would like my reader to** have an understanding of some of the main types of music within the game and their associated meanings.

¶ Discuss the various “free roam” themes, when they are used, and their associated connotations.

¶ Discuss the heat and combat zone themes, when they are used, and their associated connotations.

¶ Discuss the variations within the heat and combat zone themes and their associated connotations.

¶ Discuss the various short music tracks used to signify important events, and what they mean.

Conclusion

In this paper I provided a brief semiotic analysis of 2015 open world action-adventure game, Just Cause 3. Although I did not discuss every single possible semiotic aspect of the game, I chose a selection of some of the most important topics to discuss through a semiotic lens. Throughout this paper I discussed a number of topics, and this following list should provide a short summary of what was discussed:

- A basic introduction to Just Cause 3 as a whole, what it is, its gameplay, its world, the important factions, and its narrative.
- The importance of symbols and color within Just Cause 3, how they’ve evolved over time, and it’s “color code”, alongside the markedness of red and the importance of adhering to the “color code”.
- The designs of the various antagonistic factions within the game, and how the game makes them look evil, specifically focusing on the importance of connotations, the use of gestures and gesticulants, and other symbolism used in conveying evil.
- How the heat and liberation systems are codes, how they work, and how they use symbols to convey meaning.
- The design of the world of Medici itself and how it is used to convey meaning, specifically in regards to the history and past important events within the world.
- The importance of music and how music is used within Just Cause 3 to convey meaning regarding what is going on within the game through various tracks and variations within those music tracks to signify certain events.

I hope that by the end of this paper the reader has gained at least some level of understanding of the semiotics of Just Cause 3, and for those who have played the game or are interested in playing it, they can start to see the game in another light and appreciate the depth of the symbolism within the game.