

Contextualizing Gender
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Lecture - 55
Biopolitics, Gender Representation and Video Games

Welcome dear participants in the previous modules we have discussed the politics of the word 'gender', genealogy of the biopolitics of gender and the intersections of gender bodies and biopolitics. In the present module we will extend our reading of gender and its engagement with biopolitics in the virtual sphere by presenting a discussion on 'Horizon Zero Dawn'. 'Horizon Zero Dawn' is an action role playing game which is set in a post apocalyptic future.


Our discussion will analyze the role of gender and the biopolitics of control in the digital sphere. We have established in module 1 the biopolitical assertions in policy making, in module 2 we have established gender as a paradigm. In module 3 biopolitics, gender and science fiction and in module 4 we have looked at the Marxist genealogy of gender.

In the current module we will extend the argument in considering new media and our constant engagement with the virtual world to develop a holistic understanding of our human standing not only in the personal and the public spheres, but also in the virtual sphere. Today the virtuality defines our quintessential post human existence and we are more than a singularity. This assertion will be taken up further in detail in the 12th week. But today let us begin our discussion by defining the term video game.


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Video Game and Play as the Text

- A video game is an electronic game which involves interaction with a user interface or motion detective devices to generate visual feedback and action.
- This visual feedback is produced on a screen, such as television, touchscreen, or virtual reality headset.
- Video games are defined based on their platform, as the playing arena; such as Video Games Consoles.
- Video games are classified into a wide range of genres based on the type of gameplay and purpose.
 - For example: role playing video games, multiplayer online battle arena, adventure video games, simulation, interactive fiction, survival horror etc.



Source: Indiewire.com



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A video game is an electronic game which involves interaction with a user interface or motion detective devices to generate visual feedback and action. The visual feedback is produced on a screen, such as television, or touchscreen, or a virtual reality headset. Video games are defined based on their platform as the playing arena; such as video game consoles. Video games are classified into a wide range of genres based on the type of gameplay and purpose.

For example, there may be role playing video games multiplayer online battle arena adventure video games simulation and interactive fiction survival horror etcetera, it decoding the technical aspect of video games is a technology. We witness a room of one's own as it provides a fantasy environment while playing a game of one's choice as the pleasure of representation or being represented and entertainment are subjective constructs.

Today the gaming industry has become a form of mediation between the self and self as on-screen avatar in the self as in one's own physical self. It has been propounded by many game study theorist also, the play has acquired a new meaning as a rewards in a game along with the play can be seen as a performing generating pleasure.

Adrienne Shaw in her 2014 book gaming at the edge sexuality and gender at the margins of game culture has extended her reading of pleasure to the joy of being represented in the games. As a medium of representation instruction and entertainment the 21st century

marks the emergence of the digital gaming industry with an increased interest on the part of the academicians, researchers and also the youth.

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Video Gaming Today

- More recently, the gaming industry has expanded onto mobile gaming, virtual gaming, cloud gaming, streaming games online etc.
- It has arguably become one of the most important and innovative sectors in technology today. It shapes culture, social networking and entertainment.
- Therefore, the term “entertainment industry” is no longer reserved for cinema, music and sports.
- Today gaming can provide an immersive experience. It is a +\$200 billion enterprise and increasing as it continues to push the boundaries of technology and entertainment.

Source: streamingviasupport.com.

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More recently, the gaming industry has expanded onto mobile gaming, virtual gaming, cloud gaming, streaming games online etcetera. It has arguably become one of the most important and innovative sectors in technology today. It shapes culture, social networking and also entertainment.

Therefore, the term entertainment industry is no longer reserved for cinema, music and sports. Today gaming can provide an immersive experience. It is a 200 billion plus dollars enterprise and increasing as it continues to push the boundaries of technology and entertainment.

Various gaming platforms such as Caffeine, Own Cast, Twitch, Mob Crush, YouTube allow the players to stream their play and also earn a fan base. This has also become a source of monetization and subscription as well as developing a virtual relationship between the player and the audience. However, the biopolitics of control and exhibitionist violence on a screen has always been a fellow centric narrative dominated by men. The consumption of video games has also been a male centric discourse.

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- The best gamers in the world compete in the e-sports arena and online through streaming platforms like Twitch and Mixer which has increased the popularity of virtual gaming.
- Platforms, like Twitch and Youtube Gaming give individual gamers the opportunity to livestream their in-game play to subscribers all over the world. This invention has allowed millions of streamers to gain a fanbase, interact with one another and monetize their gaming skills.
- However, gaming and the video games are historically dominated by a phallogentric narrative. The portrayal of men vs women and sexism in the video games has always been a point of contention for the gender and sexuality studies.



Source: Pcmag.com.



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The best gamers in the world compete in the e-sports arena and online through streaming platforms which has increased the popularity of virtual gaming platforms like Twitch and YouTube gaming give individual gamers the opportunity to live stream there in game play to subscribers all over the world. This invasion has allowed millions of streamers to gain a fan base interact with one another and monetize their gaming skills.

However, gaming and the video games are historically dominated by a phallogentric narrative. The portrayal of men versus women and sexism in the video games has always been a point of contention for the gender and sexuality studies.

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- The portrayal of women in games often reflects traditional gender roles, sexual objectification, or stereotypes such as the “damsel in distress”, the “sexy sidekicks”, the “rewards”. For example: Princess Zelda from “The Legend of Zelda”.
- Male characters are often stereotypically depicted as big and muscular, and LGBTQIA+ characters are marginalised or non-existent in most cases.
- However, this heteronormativity has started to change.
- For example: Bioware introduced same sex relationships in *Star Wars: The Old Republic (SWTOR)*. Similarly, Aloy from *Horizon Zero Dawn* represents a strong female lead. She is neither sexualized nor objectified in the video game.



Source: zeldafandom.com



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The portrayal of women in games often reflects traditional gender roles, sexual objectification or stereotypes such as the damsel in distress, the sexy sidekicks, the rewards. For example, Princess Zelda from The Legend Zelda. Male characters are often stereotypically depicted as big and muscular, and LGBTQIA plus characters are marginalised or nonexistent in most cases.

However, this heteronormativity has started to change. For example, Bio ware has introduced same sex relationships in star war the old republic. Similarly Aloy from ‘Horizon Zero Dawn’ represents a strong female lead. She is neither sexualized nor objectified in the video game.

However, game scholar Mia Consalvo points out that we ought to contextualize sexism misogyny and other biases present in the game culture as modes of oppression. Games are part of reality too and to treat gaming as an isolated sphere is to disregard the violence experienced by women, people of colour or queer in real life. Therefore, we must encourage gender equity, equality and representation in video games as mainstream media texts.

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Promoting Gender Equality in Video Games

- In 1982, a feature in *Electronic Games Magazine* proclaimed that “women have officially arrived in the world of electronic gaming” (Shaw, 2014). Today numerous twenty-first-century articles have announced that “nearly half of all video-gamers are women”. (Forbes.com: *Female Gamers are on the Rise...*)
- We see that video games as media texts are responding to the “problem of representation”. According to Adrienne Shaw, “Representation in games has always been tied to expectations about audiences”. (133)
- More importantly, we must contextualize the sexism, racism, homophobia, and other biases of game culture as real problems as opposed to virtual fiction.



Source: Femicom.com



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In 1982, a feature in *Electronic Games Magazine* proclaimed that women have officially arrived in the world of electronic gaming. Today numerous twenty first century articles have announced that nearly half of all video gamers are women. We say that video games as media texts are responding to the problem of representation. According to Adrienne Shaw, representation in games has always been tied to expectations about audiences.

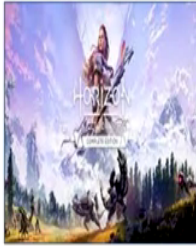
More importantly, we must contextualize the sexism, racism, homophobia, and other biases of game culture as real problems as opposed to virtual fiction. Our discussion shall in particular unpack the female character Aloy in the 2017 video game ‘*Horizon Zero Dawn*’ and we try to decode the biopolitics of gender via representation and misrepresentation in virtual games.

We will also press on the topic of biopolitical simulation as the gamer manages the relationship between the player and the play. While contextualizing a gendered narrative of control and virtual biopower, we will also identify the post human undercurrents while contextualizing life and death in the virtual sphere a topic which we shall cover in the coming week in more detail.


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Horizon Zero Dawn

- *Horizon Zero Dawn* (Guerrilla Games, 2017) is an open-world video game played in third-person mode. It is developed by Guerrilla Games and distributed by Sony Interactive Entertainment for the PlayStation.
- The story is set in the backdrop of the 31st century, a post-apocalyptic world, where humanity has regressed to tribal organizations.
- The protagonist is Aloy, a young girl who is an outcast adopted by Rost, another outcast.
- She explores the post-apocalyptic world, trying to figure out her identity and what happened to the Earth.



Source: gog.com



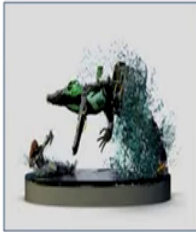
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Horizon Zero Dawn is an open world video game played in third person mode. It is developed by Guerrilla games and distributed by Sony interactive entertainment for the play station. The story is set in the backdrop of the 31st century, a post apocalyptic world, where humanity has regressed to tribal organizations. The protagonist is Aloy, a young girl who is an outcast adopted by another outcast with the name of Rost. She explores the post apocalyptic world, trying to figure out her identity and what had happened to the earth.

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- The game is highly acclaimed for storytelling, gameplay, visual aesthetics and character development.
- It was awarded the Gold Prize and Users Choice Prize at the 2017 PlayStation Awards, Best Story Award at DICE which showcases its popularity among users, players and the fanbase. The game sold over 10 million copies by February 2019, making it one of the best-selling PlayStation 4 games.
- Owing to its popularity, an expansion, *The Frozen Wilds*, was released in November 2017. A sequel, *Horizon Forbidden West*, is currently scheduled to be released for the PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5 in February 2022.



Aloy-Horizon zero dawn Fan Art
Source: zbrushcentral.com




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The game is highly acclaimed for storytelling game play, visual aesthetics and character development. It was also awarded the Gold Prize and Users Choice Prize at the 2017 PlayStation Awards. And also awards for the best story the game sold over 10 million copies by February 29th making it one of the best-selling PlayStation 4 games.

Owing to its popularity, an expansion, with the title of The Frozen Wilds, was released in November 2017. A sequel, 'Horizon Forbidden West', is currently scheduled to be released for the PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5 in February 2022. Let us watch a video to understand the origin of Aloy as a character subverting gender roles in her quest to find her own identity.

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Aloy's Origin

- Launched on February 28, 2017, *Horizon Zero Dawn* opens a world action role playing game.
- Aloy is labelled as an outcast and she takes on the journey to find her own identity.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=us4-FCsif5x4> © 2017 Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe. Horizon Zero Dawn is a trademark of Sony Interactive Entertainment America LLC. Developed by Guerrilla.

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“Aloy is labelled as an outcast and she takes on the journey to find her own identity.

Your whole life you have been searching and the elders they have been holding you back.

The girl is a curse she came from nowhere she is no one.

When they told me to raise you, I did not ask questions.

Why am I an outcast who was my mother?

Always you pushed for answers push yourself to the edge.

Here in the valley, we may be outcast, but it is safe out there girl you will be lost you are know where to turn for who to trust you will be chasing a riddle into a wilderness of mysteries the world of the old ones. What secrets lay buried beneath their crumbling ruins why earth is ours no more.

These questions Aloy the tribe has forbidden what if the answers are worse than not knowing.

You can help or you can get out of my way.

Then be ready for the darkness and be careful what you bring the light even if you do catch what you are after how do you know it will not bite back.

Outcast you came from nothing you will die a nothing”.

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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4-FGuf5x4> ©2017 Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe. Horizon Zero Dawn is a trademark of Sony Interactive Entertainment America LLC. Developed by Guerrilla.

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“I came from somewhere.

Identity confirmed.

Even if it destroys me, I will see this through.


Interestingly as Aloy embarks on the journey to find her own identity the game allows the players to superimpose their identity irrespective of gender. In place of the virtual

avatar of Aloy in the video game in the words of the developers they wanted to take on the role of skilled hunter Aloy”.

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Gender and *Play*

- According to Adrienne Shaw, it is fundamental to represent intersectional identities that go beyond “fixed notions of reality”. (Shaw, 2014 ch. 2).
- For example, a gender-based approach may consider a pluralistic perspective, taking into account intersectional identities and multifaceted aspects of an individual - age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, queer identities, disabilities et.
- However, irrespective of the aforementioned signifiers, the player can adopt any avatar and play the game, by becoming post-human.
- The function of “taking on the role” provided by the game developers, allows the subversion of gender roles.



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According to Adrienne Shaw it is fundamental to represent intersectional identities that go beyond fixed notions of reality. For example, a gender-based approach may consider a pluralistic perspective, taking into account intersectional identities and multifaceted aspects of an individual focusing on age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, queer identities or disabilities etcetera.

However, irrespective of the aforementioned signifiers, the player can also adopt any avatar and play the game, by becoming post human. The function of taking on the role provided by the game developers, allows the subversion of gender roles.


The agency to choose a particular character from the game allows the user to invest in the process of socialisation, experienced by the character. Therefore, recent studies in game theory suggests a need to increase representation and inclusivity.

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- Therefore, we see that “representations” are articulated and performed to cater to the wider intersectional global audiences and not limited to canonical characteristics such as huge biceps or sexy clothing.
- While playing *Horizon*, the gamer is offered the possibility to meet several characters with different personalities and characteristics, such as old women, warriors and kings etc.
 - Teersa is the High Matriarch of the Nora tribe, Rost is an outcast who adopts Aloy.
 - Aloy is also shown as a child in her backstory where she asks questions about her identity and her mother.



Source: Playstation Lifestyle.com




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Therefore, we see that representations are articulated and performed to cater to the wider intersectional global audiences and not limited to canonical characteristics such as huge biceps in a man or sexy clothing in a woman. While playing ‘Horizon’, the gamer is offered the possibility to meet several characters with different personalities and characteristics, such as old women, warriors and kings etcetera.


For example, Teersa is the high matriarch of the Nora tribe, Rost is an outcast who has adopted Aloy. Aloy is also shown as a child in her backstory where she asks questions about her identity and about her mother. In reading Aloy as a character one should not read her as the all women or a homogeneous construct depicting the ideal. She is a concept beyond her gender and the sense of connection with that concept is termed as identification to borrow a phrase from Stuart Hall.

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- Though the game does not portray Aloy, the protagonist, as an “all women”; she is the leading character in the game and headlines the changing dynamics of gender norms.
- For instance, in *Horizon*, the action takes place outdoors and the women perform in the outdoors as opposed to guarded castles, dungeons or rooms for the damsel in distress.
- Also, Aloy is not objectified and does not cater to the male gaze. Her clothes and armour are quite realistic and rarely show her body. She is depicted as a warrior with a purpose.



Source: Digit.in




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Though the game does not portray Aloy, the protagonist, as an all women; she is the leading character in the game and headlines the changing dynamics of gender norms. For instance, in this game the action takes place outdoors and women perform in the outdoors only as opposed to guarded castles, dungeons or rooms for damsels in distress.

Also, Aloy is not objectified and she does not cater to the male gaze. Her clothes and armour are quite realistic and rarely reveal her body. She is also depicted as a warrior with a purpose. For the player the experience of the game as a video text is not defined by Aloy’s sexuality or clothing a cross gender role play uses Aloy’s skills rather than her sexuality.

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- As argued by Beasley and Collins Standley, clothes are one of the prime indicators of sex roles in a specific society, and also in video games (2002, p. 283).
- Aloy is depicted as an adventurous and resilient woman. She is admired for her strength, courage, cleverness and for being headstrong. For instance, Avad, the Sun-King, defines her as “strong, shrewd, and capable”.
- In the game, she is questioned for being an outsider and this becomes the starting point for her journey. However she is not criticized because of her gender. She is referred to as a “skilled hunter” and not as a “skilled female hunter” or a “huntress”.
- Being woman and being skilled are selling points for the audience and also for the players.




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As argued by Beasley and Collins Standley, clothes are one of the prime indicators of sex roles in a specific society, and similarly they are also equally significant in video games. Aloy is depicted as an adventurous and resilient woman. She is admired for her strength, courage, cleverness and for being a headstrong person. The Sun King, Avad defines her as a strong, shrewd and capable.

In the game, she is questioned for being an outsider and this becomes the starting point for her journey. However, she is not criticized because of her gender. She is referred to as a skilled hunter and not as a skilled female hunter or as a huntress. Being woman and being skilled are selling points for the audience and also for the players. The minor characters in the video game are nuanced and not used as mere props to aid the user it adds to the complexity of the game and provides an immersive experience for the user.

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- Besides Aloy, the secondary characters also contribute to a reconsideration of gender roles and educate about different possible femininities, offering new models and ideals to the players in real life as well.
 - For example, Petra Forge is a member of the Oseram tribe. She is an artisan and an inventor: she created the Oseram cannon, one of the most powerful weapons in the game.
 - Elisabet Sobeck is another unusual character. She is a scientist and an engineer, and also the genetic 'mother' of Aloy.
- In considering the Bechdel-Wallace test for *Horizon Zero Dawn*, one may argue that most of the female characters have names, and influence the story plot; the playable main character is a woman; women characters often interact; they rarely talk about men.




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Besides Aloy, the secondary characters also contribute to a reconsideration of gender roles and educate about different possible femininities, offering new models and ideals to the players in real life as well. For example, Petra forge is a member of the Oseram tribe. She is an artisan and an inventor and had created the Oseram cannon, one of the most powerful weapons in the game. Elisabet Sobeck is another unusual character who is a scientist and an engineer, and she is also the genetic mother of Aloy.


In considering the Bechdel-Wallace test for *Horizon Zero Dawn*, one may argue that most of the female characters have names, and influence the story plot; the playable main character is a woman; women characters often interact; but they rarely talk about men.

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- Behm-Morawitz and Mastro's (2009) suggest that video games influence one's understanding of gender.
- For example, playing games where women are sexualized or objectified negatively affects women's feelings of self-efficacy. It produces gendered notions of an individual's ability to access cognitive abilities.
- Similarly, "cultivation theory" (Williams, 2006) proposes that long-term media consumption can affect consumers' view of the world.
- Game studies suggest that video games indirectly influence a binary assessment of what is male and what is female.



Source: cubaneigh.com



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Video games also influence one's understanding of gender as pointed out by Behm Morawitz and Mastro in their 2009 study. For example, playing games where women are sexualized and negatively objectified affects women's feelings of self efficacy. It produces gendered notions of an individual's ability to access cognitive abilities.

Similarly, cultivation theory proposes that long term media consumption can affect consumer's view of the world. Game studies suggest that video games indirectly influence a binary assessment of what is male and what is female.

In the next slide we have a video by Professor Mary Flanagan she emphasizes on the ability of games to change how we think. She develops games for social issues and encourages the user to challenge the preconceived notions about gender, culture and technology. Flanagan artwork focuses on producing social change through technology, games and representation in cyberspace.

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- Flanagan is the founder of Tiltfactor, a game research lab in New York, producing social and conscious game designs.
- She believes that games have the tendency to showcase, provide solutions, and generate awareness for social issues.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0u4accv15c&t=5s>

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Flanagan is the founder of Tiltfactor, a game research lab in New York, producing social and conscious game designs. She believes that games have the tendency to showcase, provide solutions and generate awareness for social issues.

Every one of these technologies is this portal to other people and to other world and the surprises that players or interactor bring to the artwork is why I do it.

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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0u4acv15c&t=5s>


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“So, Tilt factor was a concept I had a long time ago to figure out how I could get groups of people together to make games interactive, environments technologies that would somehow impact society. We have lots of different projects from games that promote bystander intervention for sexual assault public health projects.

It is important that we make sure that what when we come into a space and want to have some kind of social change that a game is in an appropriate and really useful venue. So, even if you are designing a game you have to get an understanding of the cause and

effects the you know possible solutions, the main challenges you are trying to make a model.

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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0u4accv15c&t=5s>

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- She believes that games have the tendency to showcase, provide solutions, and generate awareness for social issues.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0u4accv15c&t=5s>

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The game designers task is to really reduce the complexity enough to make the system manageable games are really great for modelling these systems and they also allow players to be free and to have choice and to express their own agency or their own being in the world.

And naturally cool because what it means is that people are interested in the choices they make and the best games are ones where there are different choices you can make and both could possibly lead to success. And really understanding how someone can build their own strategy that kind of stuff is I think really transferable to everyday life.

And that is very different than being handed a brochure on the street read about this terrible vexing issue. You know oh that is hard that is horrible this is a hard thing I want to be invited to think about the problem.

According to Flanagan if a user is willing to accept the idea that a game represents, then the user is also willing to deal with the problem that the game represents. Thus, games become liveable sphere of action and performance. The idea of accepting the game and ones presence in the virtual sphere as a construct rather than a specific gender or a particular identity maker allows us to make sense of our multiple identities and notions of othering in the real world”.

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- Shaw in “When and Why Representation Matters to Player,” claims that “being represented in media demonstrates a public, often corporate or state, acknowledgment that differences exist, that “we” exist.”
 - Demands for representation are similarly tied to social-justice activist groups’ aims to stand up and be counted.
- However, as Nancy Fraser famously critiques, “By equating the politics of recognition with identity politics, it encourages both the reification of group identities and the displacement of redistribution. Representation in popular media does not correct the lived experiences of oppression, nor does it necessarily reorganize the structures of power that have maintained inequality”. (147-8)

Shaw in his paper title “When and Why Representation Matters to Player”, claims that being represented in media demonstrates a public, often corporate or state, acknowledgment that differences exist, that we exist. Similarly demands for representation are tied to social justice activist groups aims to stand up and be counted.

However, as Nancy Fraser has famously critiqued, by equating the politics of recognition with identity politics, it encourages both the reification of group identities and the displacement of redistribution. Representation in popular media does not correct the lived experiences of oppression, nor does it necessarily reorganize the structures of power that have maintained inequality.

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- However, the video games challenge such power- structures as the users develop different game strategies to cope with various situations formulated in the games.
- Video games are evolving rapidly to cater to a global audience irrespective of class, gender, sexual orientation, race, age.
- Breaking and subverting gender stereotypes can be considered the first step towards representation of marginalised groups in digital culture.


However, the video games challenge such power structures as the users develop different game strategies to cope with various situations formulated in the games. Video games are evolving rapidly to cater to a global audience irrespective of class, gender, sexual orientation, race and age. Breaking and subverting gender stereotypes can be considered the first step towards representation of marginalised groups in digital culture.

In extending our reading of the biopower we notice that the user and their strategy to play the game allows them to make live unlock rewards, abort and let die in a game. The control keys establish a virtual relationship of control between the user and the avatar in the game. We can see that this relationship is dictated by inorganic biopower in the virtual sphere. The ability to control play, dictate ones survival, death and the player upgradation in the digital sphere is dependent on the users play and game strategy.

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Reading the Player and the Avatar:
The Biopolitics of Representation.

- As highlighted by Nardone, the player and the avatar are correlated: video games create a “complicated, multi-dimensional relationship, which involves me and the other me”(2008, p. 4).
- The players become invested in the outcomes of the decisions required to engage with the game, and thus feel responsible for the consequences of their actions within that virtual context. Therefore inhabiting and accepting the virtual world of game play.
 - For instance: Survival games, games of death establish death as an in- built concept, in other words, “loss of life” and “revival as reward” where the former measures up to losing the game and the latter allows the user to continue the game.




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So, we can say that the player and the avatar are correlated as pointed out by Nardone, “video games create a complicated and multi dimensional relationship” which involves quote and unquote “me and the other me”. The players become invested in the outcomes of the decisions required to engage with the game, and thus feel responsible for the consequences of their actions within that virtual context. Therefore, inhabiting and accepting the virtual world of game play.

For instance, survival games, games of death establish death as an inbuilt concept, in other words, loss of life and revival as reward where the former measures up to losing the game and the latter allows the user to continue the game. The users aim to control all life in the virtual text, alludes to our contemporary understanding of the biopolitical as an all controlling and dictating force, life functions is a reward in digital games.

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- The user experiences a control over the avatar's body, movement, choice of weapons, gender, play and actions. It is a biopolitical assertion in the virtual sphere.
- Shaw refers to a widely referenced textbook for game designers, *Fundamentals of Game Design* by Ernest Adams in this context. He states that the goal of character design "is to create characters that people *find appealing* . . . that people can *believe in*, and that the player can *identify with*." He goes on to say that men do not identify with their avatars as much as women do, though "no supporting research is cited in his text". (Shaw, 97)
- In other words, the inability to identify with oneself in the real world, can translate into identification with the virtual avatar as the user witnesses live interactivity by pushing buttons and controlling actions.



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Shaw suggest that the goal of character design is to create characters that people find appealing that people can believe in, and that the player can identify with. He goes on to say that men do not identify with their avatars as much as women do, though as he points out no supporting research is cited in Adams text.

In other words, the inability to identify with oneself in the real world, can translate into identification with the virtual avatar as the user witnesses live interactivity by pushing buttons and controlling actions this brings us to a question posed by Rosi Braidotti. When the human body is fractured into organs, fluids and genetic codes what happens to ones gender identity.

When the body is fractured into functional part and molecular codes where is the gender located? This can we really reach an understanding of gender in the real and virtual sphere.

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- This active cognition of one's embodiment as a biopolitical apparatus of control allows the user to become an in-game-character and transgress the boundaries of being human, being a gender and become an unidentifiable version of themselves.
- Interestingly, unlike our lived realities, video games allows us to inherit any character, gender and subject. Therefore, the term "avatar" refers to a wide range of signifiers for identification.
- In other words, the digital gaming industry reforms the meanings.




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This active cognition of one's embodiment as a biopolitical apparatus of control allows the user to become an in-game character and transgress the boundaries of being human, a gender and become an unidentifiable version of themselves. Interestingly, unlike our lived realities, video games allow us to inherit any character, gender and subject. Therefore, the term 'avatar' refers to a wide range of signifiers for identification. In other words, the digital gaming industry reforms the meanings.

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- The digital gaming industry has redefined certain concepts in the virtual space:
 - Power - as exhibited by the avatar in the game play
 - Surveillance - as controlled and kept in check by the player
 - Death and life - of the player
 - Survival - on the basis of ranking as provided in multiple player games
 - Biopower -as the material copresence of the physical self into the virtual space
 - Last but not the least, being human in the cybersphere as will be discussed in the coming modules.



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The digital gaming industry has redefined certain concepts in the virtual space. So, power is equated with the power exhibited by the avatar in the game play. Surveillance is controlled and kept in check by the player. Death and life are also related with the death in life of the player, survival is on the basis of ranking as provided in multiple player games. Biopower is the material co presence of the physical self into the virtual space last, but not the least being human in the cyber sphere as we will be discussed in the coming modules.

This brings us to the end of the 11th week. During this week we have discussed a range of entanglements situating gender and biopolitics as allies, friends and the future in physical material and virtual ways. A biopolitical understanding of our current situatedness has allowed us to move towards a post narrative.

Now, the question we face is whether gender can function as a reliable marker of and for a sustainable future. In the coming week that would be our last week we will refigure gender as a subject and attempt to move beyond gender as a category and deterritorialize it. We will analyze the post-human contestations of our contemporary times, while foregrounding a post gender approach towards being and becoming human.

Thank you.

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