1-2004

"Two Guns, A Girl and a PlayStation™": Gender in the Tomb Raider Series

Marc A. Ouellette

"Two Guns, A Girl and a PlayStation™": Gender in the *Tomb Raider* Series

M. Ouellette
maouelle@ican.net

Abstract

This paper hopes to explore the relatively recently acknowledged phenomenon of cross-gender identification as it appears in the Tomb Raider series. By placing a female protagonist in roles previously occupied exclusively by male heroes, video game creators have produced an environment which defies the previously accepted notions of spectatorship and the gaze. As such, this paper not only reopens the discussion of the gaze (as an a priori), it problematizes the stability of gender.

Introduction

The *Tomb Raider* series of video games is one of the most successful ever, with more than sixteen million copies having been sold world-wide (Bauman 52). Although *Tomb Raider*'s formula — shoot your way through several puzzle-filled levels set in buildings or compounds — comes from earlier games such as *Castle Wolfenstein* (1983) and *Doom* (1993), there is one significant difference: the female protagonist, Lara Croft. As Gary Eng Walk recognizes, "Lara Croft is a bona fide legend, an indelible tattoo on the biceps of '90s pop culture. There are Lara T-Shirts. Watches. Posters. A coffee table book. A movie deal" (100). Walk does not mention that there is almost as much negative attention devoted to Lara Croft. Academic criticism of *Tomb Raider* focuses mainly on the protagonist's chest, waist, and hip measurements, and what Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins call the game's "overt pandering to adolescent male interests in 'tits and ass'" (32). Such a statement discounts players' new-found ability to identify with the protagonists because of advances in "virtual reality" technology. For example, in a 1999 commercial, two gamers argue over which one gets to play the role of Ken Griffey Jr. in a game of *Major League Baseball Featuring Ken Griffey Jr.*, on the Nintendo 64 platform. They exchange cries of "No! I'm Ken Griffey Jr." to indicate that the level of "virtual reality" in the game enhances the role-playing effect, such that the players ignore the real Ken Griffey Jr. as he knocks on their door. To simulate baseball in as detailed a fashion as possible, the game includes the

possibility of trades, injuries, fatigue, and play based on statistical models of actual baseball players. Those playing the video game can act as owner, manager, and player. The virtual reality of the games improves with each successive generation of consoles and video cards.

For *Tomb Raider*, the virtual reality created by the cinematic animation of the game produces an environment for male-to-female cross-gender identification, a topic that has received little critical attention. It is worth noting that Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis describe identification as the "psychological process in which a subject assimilates an aspect, a property, a characteristic of another and transforms himself [or herself] totally or partially on the basis of this model" (184). Indeed, psychoanalytic literature considers such an identification to be atypical if not abnormal. For example, in "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," Carol Clover briefly examines the possibility of such an identification between the largely male audience and the female character who ultimately defeats the monster(s) or "bad guy(s)" in slasher films, a stereotypical figure she refers to as the "final girl" (216). Since she was not aware of other settings and productions that achieved a similar effect, or of analyses that consider cross-gender identification, Clover calls for more research into this phenomenon. More than ten years later, little has been done to heed Clover's call. In *Bad Girls and Sick Boys* (1999), Linda Kauffman merely echoes Clover's sentiments: "Since Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking work on spectatorship, the male gaze has become a critical commonplace, but Clover suggests the need for further research about *men's* identification with *women*" (132). Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins, in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat*, actually connect *Tomb Raider* with Clover's analysis but proceed no further. They acknowledge that "Arguments explaining male gamers' close trans-gender identification with Lara Crofts (sic) closely parallel Carol Clover's discussion of the 'final girl' convention in 1980s slasher films. [However] the success of 'Tomb Raiders' (sic) has been linked to the exaggeration of Lara Crofts' (sic) feminine characteristics" (30-1). Unfortunately, this outright dismissal of the existence of cross-gender identification during game play, and as an underlying factor in the success of the game, is as close to an analysis of the phenomenon as they get. Like many critics, Cassell and Jenkins are far more interested in critiquing what they perceive to be examples of patriarchal hegemony than in actually analyzing the text. Thus, I examine the cross-gender identification between the (male) audience and Lara Croft. While the reverse phenomenon, females identifying with male protagonists, has been explored, for

example, by Constance Penley, in *Technoculture* (1991) and elsewhere, this study is (currently) alone. This essay both draws on previous works for its theoretical basis while providing a challenge to the conception of the "male gaze" as well as the stability of gender as a construct.

Admittedly, video games may appear at first glance to be a more fantastic and (therefore) culturally less relevant site of popular culture than even the carnivalesque atmosphere of professional wrestling. However, as Elizabeth and Geoffrey Loftus observe,

> video games probably have more power than other previous instruments of socialization (for example, TV) to affect socialization, because of the highly interactive nature of the computers that underlies the games. Computers and computer games can literally replace other people in many respects. Indeed we find some striking differences between socialization in the video arcades and socialization in more traditional settings. (89)

Furthermore, Fabian Blache and Lauren Fielder remind us that the game characters become more "like 'real' people [. . .] with each year that passes. Games are now seen, by those who play them, as viable entertainment in lieu of activities like going to movies, so it stands to reason that games are being made less superficial in scope with each installment or generation that passes" (1). More and more video games also have interactivity as a built-in feature, which alters the experience from one of passive viewing to active participation. This point is raised frequently in relation to the violence contained in many video games. The combination, it is assumed, leads (young) game players to become violent themselves. Not surprisingly, the topic has become the focus of most analyses of video games. In this regard, Elizabeth and Geoffrey Loftus remark that "What are not usually considered are the indirect benefits that video games can and do yield. These can be unexpected and enormously powerful" (8). The argument that players of video games assume the violent personalities of their on-screen counterparts assumes an identification with those personae, but this is as far as the critiques go. The need exists, therefore, to consider the nature of these identifications and what occurs when the player and the persona are of different genders.

Analysis of media such as video games requires a comprehensive approach. Geoffrey Rockwell expresses surprise that the academic

community has largely ignored video games as a site of study, other than to point out the "adolescent audience intended by most computer games, [and] the violent and sexist character of many games" (1). Henry Jenkins, of MIT, offers further reasons for the lack of serious attention paid to video games:

> I don't think there's any question that video games became a media scapegoat in the post-Columbine era. I think that there [is] an enormous anxiety within the culture about digital media in general. Computers were not a central part of the lives of the current generation of parents when they were growing up, but they are a central part of the lives of their children. (qtd. in Russo 57)

As evidence of the technophobia, Tom Russo cites a *Washington Post* survey conducted after the Columbine shootings which asked the public what they thought was a significant cause of the shooting: "The top answer was the Internet (82%), while the availability of guns was cited by less than 60% of respondents" (57). An often unacknowledged reason for academic prejudice against video games is, as Rockwell observes, "the general failure of traditional disciplines to deal with games of any sort as a form of human expression worthy of study" (1). Clearly, then, the combination of fast-paced action and puzzle solving means that action-adventure games, such as the *Tomb Raider games*, are hybrids. An important part of the success of such a formula rests in its intertextuality; that is, its incorporation of familiar plots, themes, characterizations, and symbols that have been borrowed from other genres and other media.

From Pixel to Persona: Action-Adventure Video Games

Although they do represent a significant shift and advancement in computer games, the *Tomb Raider* games incorporate features found in many of their predecessors, in many different genres. The action-adventure genre combines the graphical features of arcade-style games with the scenarios of role-playing or adventure games such as *Castle Wolfenstein* and *Doom*. *Resident Evil* (1996), released six months before *Tomb Raider*, introduced third-person perspective and an optional female protagonist, Jill Valentine. *Tomb Raider* represents another and more important paradigm shift in that it was "the first hit action game to use a real-time 3D engine with

a third-person perspective" (Rouse 9). One of the other important differences between *Tomb Raider* and earlier games is that the camera position necessarily must change. In a first-person game, the camera is always in the right position, in what film critics call the "I-camera," for the first-person, singular, pronoun, position. In a third-person game, the camera has to move in order to provide the best angle from which to view the action while always remaining within the game world. Moreover, views from behind Lara Croft comprise the majority of the game play and the "camera angle" is automatically adjusted to maintain this position, affording the player an excellent view of the game world and the protagonist. In fact, this feature of the game serves to minimize the available views and therefore the effect of Lara's much maligned physique. In any case, the largest single difference is the increased visibility of the protagonist achieved through the improved graphics engine: Lara Croft becomes a real(istic) character and the presentation is meant to mimic cinematography.

In addition to the shift of perspective, the game play in *Tomb Raider* has several important changes compared to previous games. In this regard, the most important change is the auto-aiming feature in *Tomb Raider*. While this point might seem counter-intuitive, it does move *Tomb Raider* away from the realm of the pure action "shoot'em up" and into the adventure genre. Richard Rouse explains the difference:

> In *Doom* much of the challenge is hitting your demonic adversaries, and the player's ability to determine exactly what [he or she is] shooting at is key to this style of game play. When the player is no longer seeing through the eyes of [his or her] game world character, aiming becomes much more difficult and counterintuitive, and a change to a style of game play in which aiming is not so central becomes necessary. (9-10)

Resident Evil, in spite of its third-person perspective, has greater affinities with action "shooters" like *Doom*. Its categorization in a different genre, "survival horror," which it is said to have initiated, reflects the distinction (ZDNet). Instead of extra-terrestrial mutants, players of *Resident Evil* (and the characters they control) must eliminate zombies and other monsters borrowed from horror movies. In contrast, *Tomb Raider* is

> more of an action adventure, with the player needing to

> figure out puzzles, and divine means of attaining difficult to reach positions. Though *Tomb Raider* has its fast action moments, these are separated by long puzzle-solving passages. However, the switch from pure action to action adventure was not done merely because the developers felt like it; the removed view of a third-person game lends itself more to navigating the player's surrogate through the world instead of aiming and shooting its inhabitants. (Rouse 9)

It is not until *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, the fourth game in the series, that the player has the option of aiming Lara's guns. In the third-person perspective, it is incredibly difficult to do so. The nature of the gameplay reinforces the cinematic style of presentation by changing the nature of what game developers call "player immersion," or the way in which the player is drawn into the game world. Again Rouse adds insight:

> By being able to view their surrogate performing the actions they command, players intuitively realize that the character doing all those cool moves is very much not them. In a first-person game, the player sees their actions (sic) carried out by the movement of the camera through the world as viewed by their (sic) character. Thus the player is more drawn into the game and might — for brief moments in time — even think they (sic) actually are in the game world. (10)

As previously stated, in a first-person game, like *Doom* and the *Wolfenstein* games, the player sees through the eyes of the character and it is therefore much easier to become immersed in the game. Simulators use a similar technique to give players the sense of being "in the game." Indeed, military combat simulators employ the same perspective used in *Doom* to prepare soldiers for *actual* battle.

In a first-person game, the player, for all intents and purposes, is the character; in a third-person game, the distance between player and character removes this possibility. As with TV and movies, the player is invited to identify with the character rather than become the character. As Toby Gard, one of the original designers of *Tomb Raider* suggests,

> Generally speaking, if it's third-person, then you're watching and controlling a character external to yourself. This allows us to give that character more personality of their (sic) own, and the player, suitably distanced, doesn't find it disconcerting when the character does things of its own accord. In a first-person game you can't do that because you're meant to be taking on that role, and as a player you expect to put all the personality of that character in yourself. (qtd. in Rouse 10)

Indeed, the player is not only "suitably distanced" from the character in a game that uses a third-person perspective, the player is also at a greater distance from the game world. Although the player still guides the protagonist around through the various levels of the game, the view-point for the game is analogous to that of film or television. Interestingly, in the latest installment, *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, the designers included first-person perspectives when Lara performs certain functions, such as looking through binoculars or the scope of a cross-bow. However, she is such a well-established character — due to previous games, the attention she receives, and the primarily third-person perspective in the rest of the game(s) — that it will be difficult for players to believe that they are Lara Croft. They do not share her personality or her gender but instead occasionally share her point-of-view through a video game adaptation of the traditional three camera approach to cinema. While their distantiation is maintained in the fourth edition, the more cinematic approach results in an increased identification with the protagonist.

"Bigger Action, Better Outfits:" Film Theory and Video Games

The influence of film on the animation in computer games should not be under-estimated. For example, in *The Last Express*, designer Jordan Mechner admits that he tried to mimic the filming techniques used in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (Rouse 11). *Tomb Raider*'s creators similarly intended to animate the game as if it were being filmed. Thus, it is entirely logical to apply methods and theories adapted from criticisms of film and spectatorship to analyze a game like *Tomb Raider* and a character like Lara Croft. The most influential of the critical approaches for the consideration of gender in film is Laura Mulvey's critique of what has come to be known as the "male gaze," in her essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

(1989). According to Mulvey, there are two contradictory aspects of looking in conventional cinema:

> The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen. Thus, in terms, one implies a separation of the erotic identity from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido. (18)

In "Visual Pleasure," Mulvey considers only male-centred forms. The primary reason for this is that "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (Mulvey 19). The split between active and passive roles reduces female characters to two roles. They are either erotic objects for the characters on the screen or they are erotic objects for the spectators. This critique, not so much of cinema, but of the patriarchal apparatus that Mulvey perceives as being behind its production, has contributed to a substantial body of scholarship for the last twenty-five years and has only recently come to be questioned.

Although he wants to analyze *Tomb Raider* and its protagonist in terms of the gaze, Steve Spittle admits that the game "offers a much more ambivalent experience" for which the gaze is unable to account. Spittle explains that the ambivalence in *Tomb Raider* lies in the unusual tension between its basis in the male gaze and its simultaneous identification with an active female protagonist. That my female students felt empowered by, and attracted to, *Tomb Raider* suggests it does mark a shift in conceptions of subjectivity and identity. However, this shift is not total and still appears to be rooted in existing gender definitions. (9)

Lara Croft is not just the only female, she is the only protagonist in every version of *Tomb Raider*. Since her primary role within the narrative structure of the game is to kill the bad guys and monsters, Lara Croft fits the basic profile of a character traditionally found in horror films:

> the image of the distressed female most likely to linger in the memory [. . .] the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl. She is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the receding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. (Clover 1987, 200)

In addition, the Final Girl is "presented from the outset as the main character. The practiced viewer distinguishes her from her friends minutes into the film. She is the girl scout, the bookworm, the mechanic. Unlike [other girls] she is not sexually active" (Clover 1987, 204). This aspect of Lara's life is documented in the official biography Core Design released in 1999. Rather than stay with her family, "An adventurous soul, Lara found the idea of being sent away from home an exciting prospect.... Preferring her own company to that of others, Lara would often take off at dawn, returning only at nightfall for supper" (Walk 103). In fact, as is reported on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's program, *Undercurrents*, the makers and creators of Lara Croft and *Tomb Raider* were approached by advertisers for a feminine hygiene product. Lara's handlers refused to allow her image to appear in the ads partly for fear that it would alienate her largely male following, but partly out of fear that it would alter the image of their star. As well, Lara conducts all of her archaeological expeditions alone, except for the first two levels of the fourth installment, *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* (2000). Initially, she is accompanied during the training level by Prof. von Croy, of whom more will be said, and in the second level she has an Egyptian guide who eventually runs away, screaming. Neither of these is a suitable partner, in any sense, for Lara. While she is partly a sexual object, she is an unattainable object.

Moreover, in the most recent release in the *Tomb Raider* series, Lara's non-sexual image is furthered by the opening sequence in which she is depicted at the age of sixteen. She appears along with her mentor, Prof. Werner von Croy, who also serves to reinforce the non-sexual, "look don't touch," nature of the relationship between Lara and her audience by assuming a protective, fatherly, role in the initial sequences. In contrast, according to Mulvey, in an analysis Spittle (and others) would like to apply to *Tomb Raider*, the presentation begins with the woman as the object of the combined gaze of the male spectator and male protagonist alike and "By means of identification with [the protagonist], through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too" (Mulvey 21). This

analysis is based on the premise of a male spectator who identifies with a male protagonist simply and wholly because they are both male. The spectator, then, cannot "possess" the protagonist and cannot identify with the female figure. Yet it is precisely the female protagonist with whom the player of *Tomb Raider* identifies and in whose power he (or she) participates.

Part of the problem with Mulvey's formulation arises because she attributes all of the power in a given scene to the male protagonist and the male spectators on the basis of gender. She does not consider power to be a separate category of analysis because she sees it as being part of and determined by gender. Sean Nixon neatly summarizes what is lacking in Mulvey's critique:

> Historical and social factors which determine identity are — in the end — reduced to the calculus of psychosexual structures. In addition, the emphasis on psychosexual structures produces a reductive account of identity conceived fundamentally in terms of sexual difference. In other words, psychoanalysis privileges acquisition of gender and sexual identity as the bedrock of identity. Other determinants upon identity (such as class) are effectively sidelined. (321)

Since gender is the "bedrock of identity," it is permanently fixed. Since gender is fixed, the positions of men and women are fixed. Therefore, Mulvey adds that in psychoanalytic terms,

> the female figure poses a deeper problem. She also connotes something that the look continually circles around but disavows: her lack of a penis, implying a threat of castration and hence, unpleasure. Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the visually ascertainable absence of the penis, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organisation of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified. (21)

However, Lara Croft's overtly feminine appearance immediately problematizes this type of analysis when coupled with her dexterity in performing tasks that are stereotypically male as well as her insertion into a narrative formula that has been historically male. She is never a passive object, but is instead an active (and violent) agent. The camera does follow her around, but it is in response to her movements. The player directs those movements, but Lara's actions are limited and defined by the artificial intelligence built into the game.

Mulvey maintains that the male protagonist is the on-screen surrogate of the (male) viewer. This is made possible, she says "through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify" (20). However, such a position, based as it is on the study of only Hitchcock and von Sternberg, is reductive. John Ellis offers a more nuanced approach to identification, involving two different tendencies:

> First, there is that of dreaming and fantasy that involves the multiple and contradictory tendencies within the construction of the individual. Second, there is the experience of narcissistic identification with the image of a human figure perceived as other. Both these processes are invoked in the conditions of entertainment cinema. The spectator does not therefore "identify" with the hero or heroine: an identification that would, if put in its conventional sense, involve socially constructed males identifying with male heroes, and socially constructed females identifying with women heroines. (43)

Heroes are not always in control nor are they always male. For example, the same can be said of the spectator. Ellis elaborates:

> The situation is more complex than this, as identification involves both the recognition of self in the image on the screen, a narcissistic identification, and the identification of self with the various positions that are involved in the fictional narration: those of hero and heroine, villain, bit-part player, active and passive character. Identification is therefore multiple and fractured, a sense of seeing the constituent parts of the spectator's own psyche paraded

before her or him. (43)

In many genres, such as westerns and professional wrestling, the hero oscillates from beater to beaten. Based on Mulvey's premise this requires either multiple changes in allegiance, so that the viewer always aligns with the victor. This would require rapid changes in identification; changes too rapid to be feasible. Additionally, the male as the focus of the gaze, with a female controlling the gaze, commonly occurs in sports films (which typically feature female coaches or owners) and advertisements for clothes or cosmetics (for men). When involved in a video game, the player can spend hours viewing not just the female's body, but also her perspective, and we know that the constituent parts of socially constructed males include those that are feminine.

If she is asked to perform a task she is incapable of completing or which is not possible at that point in the game, Lara Croft responds with an emphatic "No!" In the terms of the game, Lara has ultimate say and therefore ultimate control over what happens. True, the programmers created her limits, but for the practical purposes of playing the game, the on-screen figure (and her capabilities) dictate the realm of possible movements and possible events. Lara Croft is not the figure Laura Mulvey describes in the introduction to her famous essay:

To summarise briefly: the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold: she firstly symbolises the castration threat by her real lack of a penis and secondly thereby raises her child into the symbolic. [. . .]Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning. (14-15)

Unquestionably, Lara Croft lacks a penis, but does not automatically represent the threat of castration. Instead, because of the structure of the game, Lara represents the obviation of castration, for you cannot castrate that which cannot be castrated or is already castrated. The fact that Lara is not sexually active means that she will not (be able to) raise a child into the patriarchal order, even if the player of the game is a male. She will not, as Mulvey maintains, "[turn] her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis" (14). Furthermore, she does not lack a phallus. In the game, the phallus or Law of the Father, is represented by Lara's

gun(s) and, more frequently, Lara's ability to solve the required riddles. The latter form, especially, signifies not servitude, but rather a mastery over the Symbolic Order.

As the game progresses, Lara acquires larger and more powerful guns as well as more valuable treasures and magical items. Ultimately, Lara uses the phallic objects to destroy the bad guys and monsters. These actions constitute the "castration, literal or symbolic, of the killer at [the Final Girl's] hands" (Clover 1987, 208). Thus, Lara Croft's presence not only removes the threat of castration, it instead relocates the threat by projecting it onto its real source: the bad guys. In Clover's terms, the importance of this act is that "At the moment that the Final Girl becomes her own savior, she becomes a hero; and the moment that she becomes a hero is the moment that the male viewer gives up the last pretense of male identification" (Clover 1987, 218-19). Clover means this both in terms of identifying strictly with on-screen males and in terms of not considering the Final Girl as a sexual object. The viewer identifies with heroes, not sexual objects. Lara Croft's life is in danger from the moment the game begins. Therefore, movement through the various levels of the games is predicated on Lara having already been a savior and/or being a savior again. Given the type of scenario the games involve — that the player spends most of the game staring at Lara Croft's back, and/or solving puzzles — the male spectator's gaze effectively ends when he stops looking at Lara, opens the box and begins playing. In addition, as soon as the first puzzle is solved, or the first enemy shot, male identification ceases to occur because the hero, the possessor of the phallus, is not male.

It is curious that Clover recognizes that the first significant mention of the concept of male-to-female cross-gender identification comes from Susan Barrowclough's review of the National Film Board of Canada's documentary, *Not a Love Story* (1982). This NFB production purports to demonstrate the threat to society, and especially to women, posed by pornography. A corollary goal of the documentary is a thorough and damning critique of patriarchy. Barrowclough suggests that

> contrary to the assumption that the male uses pornography to confirm and celebrate his gender's sexual activity and dominance, is the possibility of his pleasure in identifying with a "feminine" [perspective.] [. . .] Whose part does he take when, as often occurs in such representations, the woman is the [. . .] active, dominant or aggressive part-

ner? Does the passive role offer fantasy relief from the strains of phallic performance? (35)

Given the earlier analysis of *Tomb Raider*, the word "pornography" could be replaced seamlessly by the words "video games" in the scenario Barrowclough describes. Criticizing the games on the mere basis of the protagonist's phenotypic qualities assumes too much, explores too little, and obscures the complex relationships created by the games' environment. I must ask, along with Barrowclough, "What are the connections between representations of sexuality and sexual activity, between fantasy and enactment [because the] ways meanings are produced and consumed — and their relation to other aspects of sexed and sexual behaviour — demand an analysis which cannot be conducted within a moral parable of the lost sheep reclaimed from the Big Bad Wolf" (36), or in this case, *Wolfenstein*, *Doom*, or *Tomb Raider*.

"When a Killer Body Isn't Enough:" The Impact of Narrative on Gender

Although spectatorship is central to their consumption, without a plot the action-adventure or action-horror video games would not be terribly different from early action games like *Space Invaders*, *Missile Command*, and *Asteroids*. As insignificant as it is, even these games have a modest plot: the earth is in danger and must be saved by eliminating the threat. The importance of narrative, indeed its very existence, in video games is often overlooked by critics and scholars. Carol Clover notes that the role of the Final Girl has changed significantly as the horror film genre has progressed. The protagonist's position has shifted from passive to active defense. That is to say, she no longer flees the monster or bad guy until she is saved by a man, *à la* Little Red Riding Hood. The video game equivalent of the fairy tale heroine is Pauline, the princess in *Donkey Kong*, who must be rescued from the gorilla by Mario (later of *Super Mario* and *Mario Bros.* fame). As the movie formula has developed successive heroines have defended themselves with force and ultimately have killed the assailants by themselves. For example, in the *Alien* series, Ripley kills the mother of the parasitic aliens and successfully defends the space station. A further progression can be seen in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and in *Tomb Raider*. Like Buffy, Lara Croft's role is one of pure offense. Though they acknowledge the shift that has occurred, Cassell and Jenkins express

reservations regarding the new roles of female protagonists:

> The success with women of self-defense classes and of female-centered action films, such as *Thelma and Louise* or *Aliens*, shows that violent imagery is compatible with not only feminine taste but feminist politics. Female action protagonists, such as television's Xena and the comic-book heroine, Tank Girl, have attracted strong female followings, including lesbians, who celebrate their refusal to conform to traditional gender roles and their ability to hold their own against male opponents. Much of what gets read as female empowerment within popular culture represents feminist appropriation of violent images for their own ends. (29)

Part of the skepticism Cassell and Jenkins express results from the focus of their critique. They only consider the political impact of powerful female protagonists from an essentialist viewpoint that is based on the visual aspects of the texts they cite. Rather than analyzing games, their ultimate goal is to find methods of encouraging more females to use computers. Thus, they do not examine the impact of female protagonists on the narrative structure, nor do they consider the identifications that arise from the insertion of female characters into roles traditionally occupied by male heroes.

Simply put, there is more to a character than her phenotype. In addition, the character should be investigated within the context of the narrative conventions of the genre. In this regard, Lara Croft is a natural successor to the Final Girl lineage. In fact, Lara Croft is part of a much longer line than just that of the Final Girl, for, properly speaking, *Tomb Raider* follows the narrative conventions of the romance. According to the archetypal taxonomies of Northrop Frye,

> The essential element of plot in romance is adventure, which means that romance is naturally a sequential and processional form [. . .] At its most naive it is an endless form in which a central character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another [. . .] We see this form in comic strips, where the central characters persist for years in a state of refrigerated deathlessness. (Frye 1957, 186)

With the exception of *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation's* opening sequence, Lara Croft does not age at all. Other games have followed suit. *Perfect Dark* is derived from *GoldenEye* which is in turn based on the James Bond movie of the same name. Ian Fleming's super spy is perhaps the most faithful follower of the formula Frye finds in romance. The movie version of the hero has been played by five actors who span forty years, all without aging. One can assume that Mr. Bond's colleague, Joanna Dark, will enjoy a similar career. That is to say, the female protagonists in contemporary video games have been inserted into heroic roles hitherto occupied by males and have become fixtures in the genre.

Although seemingly lost on Cassell and Jenkins, the plot is an important part of the game for players and designers alike. For example, in the fourth *Tomb Raider*, "The entire game takes place in Egypt. [This] allows us to focus a lot more on the game, the game play, and most of all, the story" explains Adrian Smith, Core's director of operations (qtd. in Walk 102). Sharon Sherman draws on another archetypal theorist, Joseph Campbell, and his concept of the "monomyth" to illustrate the intertextual allusions that structure the plots of video games. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1973), Campbell summarizes the pattern: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (30). In Sherman's view, the journey described by Campbell is "so significant that popular culture creators from Disney to George Lucas to Steven Spielberg to Nintendo game producers recreate the themes most important to them from their own remembered childhood pasts and, at the same time, create an intertextual framework instantly recognized and reinforced by children on a global scale never dreamt of by historic-geographic researchers" (246). The notion of intertextuality takes on greater significance with regard to cross-gender identification when thematic elements and characterizations are added to the analysis. Frye's model of fiction also includes the quest narrative. He writes that the "complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero" (Frye 1957, 187). The final *Tomb Raider* game, for instance, follows this structure closely: the game begins with a training level constructed around a flashback to the time when Lara was a sixteen-

year-old, then the crucial struggle requires that Lara return the spirit of an evil Egyptian god to its resting place, and, curiously, both the gamer and Lara are exalted when the game is finished. A special animated sequence, in which Lara is honoured, plays after each successful completion. Other games treat their heroes similarly and in many cases, the only way to view certain scenes, play certain levels or view the credits is to complete the game.

Since Lara Croft is, in a literary sense, the hero in a romance, it is fitting that she maintain the conventionalized attributes required of such a character. Consulting Frye again, we learn the following about the hero of romance:

> If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established. (Frye 1957, 33)

Clearly, it never occurred to Frye that there could arise a female hero in a romance. However, the conventions of the genre, or mode, as Frye calls it, still apply. Lara Croft is superior in degree to other women and men. Her cunning, as supplied by the gamer, and her physical prowess — incredible endurance, strength enough to climb ropes and swing hand-over-hand, *etc.* — set her apart. For Frye, the hero stands out because "The success of the hero derives from a current of energy which is partly from him and partly outside him. It depends partly on the merit of his courage, partly on certain things given him: unusual strength, noble blood, or a destiny prophesied by an oracle" (Frye 1975, 67). Lara meets all of these criteria, which serve to solidify her position as a hero in a romance. For example, in Lara's official biography we learn that as

> The daughter of Lord Henshingley Croft, Lara was brought up in the secure world of aristocracy — wanting for nothing she was surrounded by servants, social

> events and high society. Having attended Wimbledon High School for Girls from the age of eleven years, Lara's parents decided that since she was sixteen, she should broaden her education by studying for her A levels at one of England's most prominent boarding schools. (qtd. in Walk 103)

By making Lara of noble birth, Croft's creators present her as being like us, but somehow above us; someone whom we should admire and aspire to be.

This is in keeping with the traditions of romance, for as Frye concludes, "The social affinities of the romance, with its grave idealizing of heroism and purity, are with the aristocracy" (Frye 1957, 306). In his subsequent study, *The Secular Scripture* (1975), Frye elaborates on the concept:

> One very obvious feature of romance is its pervasive social snobbery. Naive romance confines itself largely to royal families; sentimental romance gives us patterns of aristocratic courage and courtesy, and much of it adopts a "blood will tell" convention, the association of moral virtue and social rank implied in the word "noble." A hero may appear to be of low social origin, but if he is a real hero he is likely to be revealed at the end of the story as belonging to the gentry. . . . Detective stories often feature an elegant upperclass amateur who is ever so much smarter than the merely professional police. (161)

As much as Corrosive Software's Kate Roberts might lament, "Would Tomb Raider have sold as many copies if Lara had been wearing a nice warm sweater and sweatpants," the convention would never allow her to be anything but fantastic in every way (qtd. in Cassell and Jenkins 30). In Frye's words,

> The essential difference [in] romance lies in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create "real people" so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. [. . .] The romancer deals with individuality, with characters *in vacuo* idealized by revery, and, however conservative [the romancer] may be, something nihilistic and untamable is likely to keep breaking out. (Frye 1957, 304-5)

Within the confines of a video game which is clearly part of a subset of romance, a character like Lara Croft is necessarily lacking in personality and overflowing in physicality.

Lara undeniably has an exaggerated chest measurement and an incredibly narrow waist, but so does Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Commando*, *Running Man*, and all of his other movies. Sylvester Stallone's character, Rambo, is a similarly portrayed action hero. Since she was originally writing in 1993, the most advanced games to which Sherman could refer were the *Mario Bros.* series for the Nintendo 64. Nevertheless, Sherman recognizes the importance of the narrative formula to intertextuality and identification: "Video game players share their identities as Mario characters; they are, at once, acting as heroes in a plot, yet also as individuals, with their self-identities shifting within the social situation" (251). The familiarity of the narrative formula, she contends, increases the players' identifications with their on-screen surrogates. When asked how the character, Lara Croft, came about, Core Design Operation Director Adrian Smith, responds:

> It's strange when people ask this question because really what came about was a game called *Tomb Raider*. It just so happened that it featured a female character . . . And what actually happened was that, when we were designing the game of *Tomb Raider*, we put down a load of different sets of attributes, different things that we wanted of a main character, and all these things turned into Lara. (44)

In response to the next logical question, "Why a female character instead of a male?" Smith replies "A number of reasons. We literally wrote down a big list of things that we wanted the character to do — we wanted to be coy, we wanted to be agile. When we wrote this long list down it didn't really point towards a male character [. . .] All the attributes we put down pointed us towards a female character. We didn't want to end up with an Arnold Schwarzenegger type" (44). Perhaps the attributes of the character are "female," but she has been thrust into a narrative structure that is

dominated by male heroes. In the same interview, Smith goes some way toward recognizing the paradox of Lara's situation. He says simply: "Lara is a female version of Indiana Jones and Indiana Jones, at the end of the day, is an adventurer, just like Lara" (45). Thus the success of the game depends on players' familiarity with the genre to which it belongs and the conventions of that genre.

Whereas Sharon Sherman sees the identifications produced from video games as being related to their intertextual affinities with quest narratives, Marsha Kinder asserts that they are part of a much larger system. Typical of other critiques, Kinder describes identifications produced by video games prior to the incorporation of three-dimensional virtual reality animations. Thus, she foresees neither female protagonists nor cross-gender identifications arising from the intertexts she observes. Nevertheless, her approach points to this eventuality. According to Kinder,

> home video games cultivate a dual form of spectatorship, which positions young spectators to combine passive and interactive modes of response as they identify with sliding signifiers that move fluidly across different modes of image production and other cultural boundaries but without challenging the rigid differentiation between genders on which patriarchal order is based. (30)

By "sliding signifiers," Kinder means the variety of shapes and forms — *e.g.*, mutant turtles, purple dinosaurs, and *Transformers* — that cartoon (and video game) characters take, and the meanings they carry. Clearly, gender is not among them because for Kinder, gender is an impermeable boundary. Yet she describes the situation of people identifying not just with real animals, but with cartoon animals on the Saturday morning shows. She claims that

> by identifying with such anthropomorphized creatures, spectators are able to acknowledge their own slipperiness as signifiers — as both animal and human — while still affirming their own uniqueness as the animal who possesses the functional difference of subjectivity. [. . .] For us adults in our congealed subject positions, such identification helps us regain some of that lost foetal flexibility which is so central to [many toys and cartoon characters.]

> Instead of evoking a single individual or species, all of these creatures evoke a system (of evolution, reproduction, biological development, acculturation, or transmedial intertextuality). Identification with these creatures serves as an entrance into these layer systems. (42)

Amazingly, Kinder admits that humans can identify with creatures not just outside of their own species but who exist only in fiction. Nevertheless, she does not allow for within-species identification across genders. Men can identify with the ogre in DreamWorks' movie, *Shrek*, but not with women!

The most important of the layer systems for Kinder is the "Oedipalization of Home Video Games" (48). She notes that "The Oedipal dimension of video games helps account for choices within its system of intertextuality. There is a heavy reliance on action genres (the epic, romance quest, and western) in which male heroes have traditionally grown into manhood and replaced father figures" (49). At the time of Kinder's writing, 1992, in most video games, "females are still figured as objects of the male quest" (49). With regard to the various *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* productions, Kinder finds "a network of intertextuality that cuts across several modes of image production, that appeals to diverse generations, classes and ethnic subcultures"(52). At the heart of this intertext is the Oedipal struggle to replace the father. *Tomb Raider* is similarly positioned. There are action figures, a movie starring Oscar winner Angelina Jolie, posters, websites, *etc.*, devoted to Lara Croft and Tomb Raider. Yet, as we discover in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, the story is based on the Oedipal dynamic. In *Tomb Raider*, Lara's father is dead and she has been placed in the custody of Dr. Werner von Croy, who serves as a father-figure for the young explorer. Indeed, he is a mentor of sorts for her. Eventually, we learn that von Croy is evil. Rather than there being two father figures, there is only the bad father. It is not even a case of the two fathers being complicitous. Indeed, von Croy is not working for an "other side," so much as he is working for himself. This is the greatest betrayal of all — he has abandoned his "child." When von Croy trains Lara to be an expert tomb raider — that is, to replace her figurative father — he does so only to take advantage of her physical prowess and her cunning. Dr. von Croy is old and unable to perform many of the tasks required to obtain the lost treasures. He also does not need to be able to do so because he can have Lara do the work for him. Then he can eliminate Lara and take all of

the credit and resultant glory for himself.

Until now, this section has been concerned primarily with illustrating the intertextual framework within which video games with female protagonists operate. This framework, borrowed from fictive forms traditionally based on male protagonists, enhances the cross-gender identifications by surrounding male players with an otherwise entirely familiar medium. However, this argument opens itself to the notion that the female is merely masculinized and that this subverts the effects or possibility of cross-gender identification. However, there is an aspect of the Final Girl that indicates that she is not as masculinized as previously supposed. Clover explains that the Final Girl is

> boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine — not, in any case, feminine in the ways of [other females]. Her smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance set her apart from the other girls and ally her, ironically, with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself. (1987, 204)

As mentioned above, the Final Girl is not sexually active. Similarly, the heroines of the games studied in this chapter are not romantically or sexually involved. What Clover does not consider in her analysis is that the typical heroine of romance is an eternal virgin. Frye wryly observes that "It looks as though there were some structural principle in this type of story which makes it natural to postpone the first sexual act of the heroine, at least, until after the birth mystery in the plot has been solved" (1975, 72-3). In his exhaustive studies, Frye notes that most romances end after the lovers are united, but before the first sexual act. An excellent contemporary analogue is Princess Leia of *Star Wars*. The birth mystery is not solved until the end of the last movie of the series and the series ends before a sexual union. Moreover, the princess is cunning, adept with a laser pistol, and of noble birth. Similarly, Lara Croft's origins are not revealed until the *Last Revelation*. Lara and Princess Leia recall another of Frye's axioms: "we notice that one recurring theme in romance is the theme of incest, very often father and daughter [and] what it shows us is that some conventions of storytelling are more obsessive than others" (1975, 44). Leia is involved in two such themes: one with her father, Darth Vader, and the other with her brother, Luke Skywalker. The familial ties are not revealed until late

in the series. In *Tomb Raider*, the theme of incest is raised once the player becomes aware that von Croy is using Lara to achieve his aims and the professor chastises her for being a girl. Nevertheless, it is clear as the game progresses that he derives pleasure from her suffering.

Players of the video games cited are not merely rescuing the princess, nor are they identifying with a merely masculine female. The student of romance knows that "virginity is female honor, the symbol of the heroine's sturdy middle-class independence . . . [thus] the heroine's life is lived on two social levels" (Frye 1975, 76). The second part of the passage from Frye relates to the tendency of the heroine to marry only on her terms, especially if an elevation in social standing is involved. Lara Croft works alone. As well, Joanna Dark's name is definitely meant to emphasize this point. Obviously, her name is derived from Jeanne d'Arc, or Joan of Arc, the virgin warrior and heroine of the Hundred Years' War. Joan saved herself for her figurative marriage with Christ; no man is good enough. *Perfect Dark* gets its name from Joanna's rank in the spy service: she is "perfect," the highest level. Players of the games cited are positioned to identify with the protagonists described, including guarding their sexuality. The last function is not as the "white knight" who saves the princess, such as Daring Dirk of *Dragon's Lair* or Mario of *Donkey Kong*, in the 1980s. The "white knight" is gone. He is superfluous. This brings us to one of Frye's more enigmatic points: "the social reasons for the emphasis on virginity, however obvious, are still not enough for understanding the structure of romance" (1975, 73). Rather than the author expressing social resistance, Frye asserts, "it is the romantic convention [the author] is using that expresses the resistance [because] an element of social protest is inherent in romance" (1975, 77). It is as the simultaneous hero and heroine of romance that Lara Croft, Joanna Dark, *et al* make their most powerful statements. The intertexts with masculine elements necessarily evoke identifications. However, contrary to the notion that they are merely heroes in drag, the female protagonists maintain perhaps the most significant features of the heroines of romance. This makes their gender one of the sliding signifiers of the game and has a commensurate effect on the identifications of the players.

Conclusions

The heroines of video games have changed substantially from their earliest virtual fore-mothers such as Ms. Pac-Man and Princess Pauline from

Donkey Kong. In terms of the animations possible, female heroines have kept pace with their male counterparts, but in terms of characterizations the female protagonists have developed at a greater rate. Admittedly, the first female video game characters were little more than "eye candy" for a male audience but the criticism has not advanced to recognize hybrid games which feature all of the attributes listed above. Video games in the action-adventure category, especially, contain all of the features of games that are said to be masculine as well as those that are said to be feminine. For example, *Tomb Raider*, involves competition, control, and reactions. On occasion, tasks must be completed within a given time. The player controls most of Lara Croft's movements. Reactions are required when enemies or obstacles appear suddenly. Nevertheless, the story is central to the game and gives it additional meaning. Lara must solve dozens of puzzles involving collaboration, communication, and anticipation — both with on-screen characters and the player. Moreover, aesthetics and imagery improve with each new generation of games and hardware. Plots, too, become more sophisticated as designers are able to add more detail to the games. To paraphrase Carol Clover, what game designers, like film makers, "seem to know better than critics is that gender is less a wall than a permeable membrane" (1987, 208). Hybrid games necessarily produce hybrid identifications — using the categories and conclusions laid out by the scholars cited.

Given the widespread appeal of video games, there must be reasons for this appeal other than sexually provocative female protagonists and other identifications than those that produce mass murderers. Otherwise, they would not have reached a position such that in the United States, in 1999, "the electronic games industry was the second-most popular form of home entertainment after TV" (Quittner 30). Boys, it is assumed, play because they are male and the designers are male, the games are violent and men are violent. Yet more than half of the top games feature female protagonists. As we have seen, female protagonists do not conform to the rules of the gaze, as set out by Laura Mulvey. Rather, they are analogous to the Final Girl of horror films. Carol Clover's model is especially apt with respect to Tomb Raider and the many games which followed its lead in having a female protagonist. As well games, such as *Tomb Raider* and *Perfect Dark*, follow even more closely the narrative pattern of the romance. The major difference is that the hero is female, rather than male. The character is, admittedly, fictive, but no more so than a character in a written work. Clover would agree: "The slasher is hardly the first genre

in the literary and visual arts to invite identifications with the female; one cannot help wondering more generally whether the historical maintenance of images of women in fear and pain does not have more to do with male vicarism than is commonly acknowledged" (1992, 62). This is especially true when the female protagonist otherwise matches the traditional Oedipal model found in other, more conventional, narrative forms. The female protagonist, then, provides a buffer against castration anxiety.

Interactivity does play a part in the game's progression. However, whether the game is linear, *i.e.*, moving from one task to the next in succession, or non-linear, *i.e.*, allowing for various tasks to be completed at any time, the overall plot is still the exclusive domain of the author. The player is confined to operating within the limits and towards the goal laid out by the creator. Nevertheless, the interactivity of video games enhances the identifications between players and characters. In 1983, when Loftus and Loftus were writing, the most popular arcade games, such as *Pac-Man*, *Asteroids*, and *Defender*, were two-dimensional and had rudimentary graphics. The most popular computer games were text-only adventure games. Based on their understanding of the attraction of video games and the possibilities of improved animation, Loftus and Loftus prophetically envisioned a game they called "Ground-level *Pac-Man*" which combined the features of adventure games with the action of arcade games (82).

Even though a game like *Tomb Raider* was nearly a dozen years away, Loftus and Loftus were certain that their vision would become a reality. Indeed, they emphasize that, in 1983, when "people play a video game they often feel as if they are interacting with another person" (86). The ideal video game according to Elizabeth and Geoffrey Loftus contains all of the salient features of *Tomb Raider*. The only important aspect of the game that they did not foresee was the addition of a female protagonist. They noted among their research subjects that the "Turtle" icon, with which the language, Logo, is visually implemented, provided an identificatory process for users: "The Turtle is like a person in many ways. It is in a particular position and can face different directions. It's something with which the child can identify" (120). Loftus and Loftus cite social scientist G.H. Mead, who prophesied this power long ago when he said: "It is possible for inanimate objects, no less than for human organisms, to form parts of the generalized other for any given human individual, in so far as he [or she] responds to such objects socially or in a social manner" (qtd. in Loftus and Loftus 89). By "generalized other," the pair assert that Mead was referring to the social group as a whole to which a person

belongs. Obviously, Mead believed that inanimate objects might belong to this "social group" (89). We should recall that "in psychoanalytic parlance 'objects' are people, aspects of people, or symbols of people" (Chodorow 42). A virtual person, like Lara Croft, meets these criteria.

As sociologist Robert Connell has shown, grown men who have accepted the dominant, or hegemonic, form of masculinity are capable of identifying with women given the right circumstances. Several of Connell's research subjects initially embraced hegemonic masculinity but eventually discarded this positioning in favor of one that rightly is called profeminist. Rather than being fixed, "It appears, then, that an Oedipal separation of boy from mother can be renegotiated, and to some degree reversed, in later practice. This [is] not shallow change" (Connell 124). Indeed, one of Connell's respondents went from an adolescent "solidarity with his mother to solidarity, even identification, with other women. The shape of [the man's] life-history strongly suggest that the reconfiguration of family relationships in his adolescence was the emotional basis of his dissident gender politics in early adulthood" (124-5). The common thread among Connell's accounts is emotional and often physical — that is, complete absence — distance from the father. This results in an inability to identify with the father and other male role models. The boys more readily identify with females. The usual suspects, fathers who cannot express themselves emotionally and who do not have anything of value to teach their sons, are only part of the situation. As Connell indicates, the social, political, and economic milieu have an impact on the development of masculinities: "the gender order itself is contradictory, and practical experience can undermine patriarchal conventions. Five of the six [respondents in this category] described a close encounter with a woman's strength in the course of their personal formation" (125). More important is that "when they met feminism later, feminist images of women's strength could resonate with something in their own experience" (Connell 125). The key here, and it bears repeating, is that these men started with what might be called hegemonic masculinity, but their experiences opened them or prepared them for a change if and when they encountered feminism, even as adults. Among the qualities such men possess, the most notable is experience dealing with powerful women. Currently, there are few better environments than playing a video game with a female protagonist.

Works Cited

Barrowclough, Susan. Rev. of *Not a Love Story — A Motion Picture About Pornography*, dir. Bonnie Klein. Screen 23 (1982): 26-36.

Bauman, Steve. "Ready, Aim, Sequel." *Computer Games* 107 (1999): 52-60.

Blache, Fabian and Lauren Fielder. *History of Tomb Raider*. Online. Internet. 30 Apr. 2001. Available www.gamespot.com/features/tombraider_hist/index.html.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973.

Cassell, Justine and Henry Jenkins. *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender in Video Games*. Boston: MIT P, 1998.

Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: California UP, 1978.

Clover, Carol. "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film." *Representations* 20 (1987): 187-228.

---. *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.

Connell, R.W. *Masculinities* Berkeley: California UP, 1995.

Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions: Cinema: television: video*. London: Routledge, 1982.

Frye, Northrop. *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

—. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975.

Kauffman, Linda. *Bad Girls and Sick Boys*. Berkley: U California P, 1999.

Kinder, Marsha. "Playing with Power on Saturday Morning Television and on Home Video Games." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 14 (1992): 29-59.

Laplanche, Jean and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis. *The Vocabulary of Psychoanalysis*. Paris: *Presses Universitaire de France*, 1967.

Loftus, Geoffrey and Elizabeth Loftus. *Mind at Play: The Psychology of Video Games*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington, IA: Indiana UP, 1989. 14-28.

Quittner, Joshua. "Are Video Games Really So Bad?" *Time* 10 May, 1999. 30-4.

Rockwell, Geoffrey. "Gore Galore: Literary Theory and Video Games." Lecture. "The Learneds" Conference, Sept. 1999.

Rouse, Richard. "What's Your Perspective?" *Computer Graphics* 33.3 (1999): 9-12.

Russo, Tom. "Games Grow Up." *NextGen* 2 3.2 (2001): 54-60.

Sherman, Sharon. "Perils of the Princess: Gender and Genre in Video Games." *Western Folklore* 56 (1997): 243-58.

Smith, Adrian. Interview with *PSExtreme*. *PSExtreme* 4.10 (1999): 44-5.

Spittle, Steven. "Is Any Body Out There? Gender, Subjectivity and Identity in Cyberspace." Online. Dec. 1997. Internet. 23 Dec. 1999. Available www.aber.ac.uk.

"Video Vixen." *Undercurrents*. CBC. 4 Nov., 1997.

Walk, Gary Eng. "Tail from the Crypt: Lara Croft Returns to Her Roots in the Fourth Installment of *Tomb Raider*." *incite PC Gaming* Dec. 1999: 100-111.

ZDNet. "*Resident Evil*." *The History of Resident Evil*. Online. 2001. Internet. 1 May 2001. Available http://videogames.gamespot.com/features/universal/res_evil/page2.html.