

You Must Remember This: Gendered Conflicts and Stereotypes within Interactive Dramas

The following presentation explores the performance of gender across a spectrum of video games that encourage player agency in shaping the narrative. As a genre, interactive games have afforded complex representations of playable female characters, such as Clementine in Telltale's *The Walking Dead*, Max from *Life is Strange*, and the women of *Until Dawn*. Despite notable women, games emphasizing player choice are grounded by female suffering, stereotyping, and silences.

Suffering: The premise of games such as *Beyond: Two Souls*, *Detroit: Become Human*, *Life is Strange*, *The Wolf Among Us*, and *Until Dawn*, rely on the murder, torture, or abuse of a diverse range of women: queer, straight, young, non-caucasian. All are linked in pain. While men are the common perpetrators of this suffering, the torment of women simultaneously functions as the exigency of male reactions in the games.

Stereotypes: Though I acknowledge the volume of women located in interactive dramas, women are nevertheless predominantly divided into the categories of love interest, caretaker, or sex object. A brief example of the pattern comes from *Detroit: Become Human*. Its sole queer characters are prostitutes in their underwear, and its vital female characters are driven by motherhood and creating a new domestic. They are tertiary to the social commentary and impactful narrative of the game. These patterns of sexualization and little import are mimicked in *Until Dawn*, *Life is Strange*, and *The Wolf Among Us*, among others.

Silence: Side-characters coded as female in numerous narratives are ignored, despite possessing vital information. They are not afforded the right to speak in male dominated spaces. Further, women who attempt to speak, to advocate, are often killed or punished.