Beyond Good and Evil… and Gender and Humanism? Exploring Jade as a Posthuman Protagonist

In the following chapter, I will analyse the figure of the tomboy through the main protagonist, Jade, from the 2003 videogame *Beyond Good and Evil,* directed by Michel Ancel and produced by Ubisoft. I explore the ways in which humanist history has capitalised on binary categorisations to privilege certain subject positions over others, enacting a patriarchal society that creates clear differences between “masculine” and “feminine” traits. By outlining a posthuman perspective, I demonstrate the ways in which posthumanism seeks to move toward postdualistic perspectives, including those of gender. “Tomboyism can be seen as a resistance to narrow and strict gender delineations” (Jones 1999, 132) and offers a non-normative site of gender performance. This resistive action against binary gender performances therefore allows a consideration of tomboy-as-posthuman-subjectivity. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Jade embodies this subjectivity, and through my analysis of the game, I demonstrate the various ways in which Jade encapsulates both stereotypically “feminine” and stereotypically “masculine” traits and remixes them to create an alternative gender performance that defies clear categorisation.

There is a tension in the term “tomboy”; if binaries such as masculinity and femininity are deconstructed through posthumanism, can such a classification as “tomboy” exist? As Carr (1998) notes, the tomboy “is associated with both the subversion of gender roles and the perpetuation of an oppressive, dichotomous gender system” because it is specifically linked to socially constructed notions of gender (531). However, I believe the “tomboy” as a subversion of gender roles allows us the opportunity to explore how texts such as *Beyond Good and Evil* embody a postdualistic configuration of the “human.”

Humanist Histories, Posthuman Possibilities

Humanism operates in a variety of ways to construct a particular mode or model of the human and its corresponding place in the world. This is based centrally around the idea that humans are the most important creatures on earth; autonomous creatures, in control of their own lives and free to make their own choices. Within that ideological construction, humanism favours specific attributes: the rational mind, self-control, and self-responsibility. These foundations of humanism, as I will explain below, have enacted specific categorizations that enforce dualistic binaries. These binaries serve to separate the "self" from the "other" in ways that dominate much of how humanistic, neoliberal societies see the world today.

The Breakdown of God

Following a history of deeply religious belief, the Enlightenment period signified a cultural shift wherein key philosophical thinkers attempted to dispose of God, arguing, for example, that "[e]nlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity" (Kant 1784), which is to say, the "immaturity" of allowing others to think for them and determine their actions. Through this "enlightenment," then, humans no longer needed to defer to God, but instead occupied god-like positions themselves; with no competing species and no higher power, an anthropocentric worldview was adopted. Accordingly, humans saw themselves as the centre of all things and saw the earth, animals, and machines as there to do our bidding. This historical shift has allowed humans to shape the earth in ways that suit them, to see machines and objects

as subordinate, and to enforce control and power over other animals, deciding their status and fate.

Humans as Autonomous

The viewpoint that human beings are in control of others leads to the notion that they are also in control of their own destiny: the significance of “free will,” autonomy, and individuality are therefore paramount and integral to this view of the human. Braidotti (2013) highlights humanism’s assertion of the singularity and individuality of human existence; the belief of being in control suggests that each of us operates in isolation and that we are self-reflexive, self-managed, and self-made. This view is enforced and embodied through a series of binary understandings – nature/culture, body/mind, material/immaterial, human/machine, human/animal – and gender has often been included in this list, with a binary consideration of male/female. In the same way that human is privileged over animal, each binary has an implicit hierarchy, which Derrida (1981 [1972] refers to as a “violent hierarchy,” wherein “one of the two terms governs the other […] or has the upper hand” (41). These violent hierarchies create relationships of subject over object, controller over controlled.

Favouring the Rational Mind

What was deemed to place human beings above the others of this world—earth, animal, machine—was their ability to think. This position is linked with Descartes’ ([1637] 1924) infamous quote: “I think, therefore I am” (31). Descartes argued that it was not his ability to feel

that made him human, but his ability to think. Descartes utilised this idea to draw a strict divide between humans, animals, and machines, which contributed to anthropocentric hierarchies of thought. However, this also created hierarchies among "humans" and this idea has specific ideological roots. If the human thinker can be placed above everyone and everything else, then not only are nonhuman "others" categorised as less important but an immediate hierarchy within humans is also implied. Of course, this hierarchy favours those in power. After all, who are the thinkers other than the educated, and who can be educated other than the male, the powerful, the wealthy—the White, able-bodied, upper-class human? This is therefore a double edged sword—by valuing only those who were White, masculine, able-bodied etc. any other subjectivities were "othered"—made *less than*. By then denying certain groups access to that which was valued, such as education, as well as basic rights such as land-ownership and the right to vote, that othering was perpetuated. Humanism, therefore categorises the *subhuman* as much as the human—denying full "humanity" to some, and therefore alienating them from the "norm."

Because humanism privileges the rational, thinking mind, women, historically seen to be creatures more of the body than the mind, were, and still are, unsurprisingly, disadvantaged, as are others who were already oppressed: people of colour, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, for example. By enforcing these categorisations and embedding these ideologies within the political and social understandings of the day, a variety of humanistic dualisms were applied and enhanced. This version of humanism privileges the male, rational, thinker, restricting the female to the realms of the irrational, emotion, and feeling.

Posthuman Possibilities

Posthumanism, in its essential form, argues that, due to the above issues of anthropocentrism, exclusivity, and the privileging of certain traits and qualities over others, the category of the "human" is based on historically flawed assumptions about the nature of being human. By highlighting the ideologies that have underwritten humanism, posthumanism has suggested that the full rights of the "human" have only ever been accessible to a select few, as "[s]exism, racism, classism, ageism, homophobia, and ableism, alongside other forms of discrimination, have informed the written and unwritten laws of recognition as to who was to be considered human" (Ferrando 2019, 4). As such, the "human" is in need of redefinition (see Braidotti 2013).

The sexism that Ferrando mentions is apparent in the ways in which women have historically been ostracised from prominent positions in society, which continues in contemporary culture. Toffoletti (2007) argues that "woman is aligned with nature, irrationality and the body, in direct opposition to culture, reason and the mind, she cannot occupy the position of the human subject. Woman is never 'fully' human" (19). The category of "human" is a political issue, as it draws boundaries between rights and expectations and therefore creates hierarchies and, accordingly, prejudices and discrimination. Posthumanism seeks to address these issues and disrupt many of these taken-for-granted assumptions about what it is to be "human" with regards to notions of control, individuality, and agency.

Before shifting my focus to the specifics of posthumanism and gender in the next section, it is worth spending some more time working through posthumanism's aim in deconstructing humanism's categorisations, binaries, and implicit hierarchies. Rather than limiting the remit of posthumanism to consideration of binaries and boundaries between humans, by opening up conversations around the anthropocentric ideologies of humanism, posthumanism makes apparent the ways in which "others" are involved in a complex entanglement with humans, and it

is only through these “others” that humans can come to be. Much of the work of posthumanism is also, therefore, postanthropocentric, as in questioning, dismantling, and disrupting these demarcations, we can see how they were initially formed from an anthropocentric worldview, privileging what were perceived to be human attributes above those of animals, machines, and nature.

The critique of the “control” that the liberal humanist subject is supposed to possess is about considering how much humans are shaped by that which is apparently “outside” or apart from them. Viewing “others” (animals, machines, nature, and so on) as of equal importance to the human is the first step; however, much critical posthumanism is concerned with more radical interventions that look to our entanglements and the complex ways in which we intra-act with entities around us in order to form subjectivity. Rather than considering the self as individually constructed and made, posthumanism instead looks to the boundaries of the human as porous, in constant flux, or undefinable (see, for example, Hayles 1999; Barad 2007). For example, Pepperell’s (2003) work suggests that the human is a “fuzzy-edged” entity, and he points out the exchange of liquids, gasses, food, sound, heat, and so on, that the human relies upon to live, stating that “[b]ecause of this perpetual exchange between the living human organism and its surroundings, there can be no fixed state of a living human” (20). This can radically alter the concept of the human from a supposedly autonomous being to a “non-unitary” subject—if we are in constant negotiation with “others” around us, where does one end and one begin? As Gane (2006) states, the posthuman is “a new culture of transversalism in which the ‘purity’ of human nature gives way to new forms of creative evolution that refuse to keep different species, or even machines and humans, apart” (432). This is what Elaine Graham (2002) refers to as “a dissolution of the ‘ontological hygiene’ by which for the past three hundred years Western

culture has drawn the fault-lines that separate humans, nature and machines" (11). Barad (2007) uses intra-action rather than *inter*action to theorise that entities are not ontologically distinct prior to their encounter, but that it is through their intra-action that distinct agencies emerge.

Rather than considering the gamer as "in control" of the avatar, I have instead previously theorised the ways in which the avatar-gamer is an example of posthuman subjectivity (Wilde and Evans 2019; Wilde 2020). Through the intra-action of avatar and gamer, alongside specific other entities (e.g. computer, game, etc.), a specific form of subjectivity is able to emerge. This allows an empathetic experience, whereby the avatar-gamer embodies a "posthuman subjectivity, recognising that there is no primary subject, and instead demonstrating the ways in which feelings emerge through a network of intra-acting forces" (Wilde 2018). This experience is affective and, through the avatar-gamer assemblage, the binary between "self" and "other" is disrupted in favour of an understanding of subjectivity as emergent and entangled. Yet, as previously mentioned, beyond disruptions of self and other or human and machine, posthuman thought is evident in other postdualisms, such as those that move beyond the binary of male and female. The focus of this chapter, the "tomboy," is one such postdualism.

Posthumanism: Queering Gender Norms

A heteronormative society suggests heterosexuality as the norm and enforces the binary opposition of male/masculinity and female/femininity. As Schilt and Westbrook (2009) explain, "[h]eterosexuality—like masculinity and femininity—is taken for granted as a natural occurrence derived from biological sex. […] The taken-for-granted expectation that heterosexuality and gender identity follow from genitalia produces heteronormativity" (443). By considering these

gendered positions as intrinsic, biologically determined "facts," an argument for a heterosexual society is made that each gender is specific, rigid, and requires the "balance" of the other. This "taken for granted" ideological stance fits in with the aforementioned presumptions that humanism espouses, capitalising on binary gender distinctions as outlined above by relegating each gender to specific roles. From this perspective, as Braidotti (2013) argues, breaking down the unitary subject of humanism allows more possibilities for cultural inter-mixity, including recompositions of genders and sexuality, and the posthuman condition must work with these (54). Braidotti maintains that these opportunities are productive, and part of this productivity is evident in the ways in which alternative conceptions of subjectivity have been defined through posthumanism. If we are all composite subjects, formed of the intra-relations between our bodies and others, including society and nature, then gender is similarly constructed, formed of specific ideological and discursive enactments. This links to the idea of "doing gender" as proposed by West and Zimmerman (1987), which considers gender as emergent and based on social interaction rather than as individually defined. Butler (1990) argues that "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (45). Butler explains that "doing gender" is based on a series of expected practices and that the repetition of these practices and their associated gender (i.e. that women repeat feminine practices and men repeat masculine ones) suggests that these are innate and normalised, rather than socially constructed performances. In the same way, we create ourselves as intelligible, gendered subjects through a process of actions, but these actions are performative—there is nothing preceding them and only the actions themselves enable the subject position to emerge.

This aligns with Barad's (2007) work on performativity vs. representation. Where representation suggests the "thing" to be represented preexists the representation, a performative analysis argues that it is through performance that that thing *comes to be*. This is therefore a posthuman view, as it does not separate representation and represented, but argues that it is precisely through the embodiment or enactment of something that it is formed. Barad's posthuman approach thereby disrupts the binary of "material" and "discourse" by instead arguing that all observable phenomena are an entanglement of the two—they cannot be meaningfully separated. For Barad (2007), "[b]odies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena" (153). As such, gender is a material-discursive "phenomenon" that enforces specific subjectivities through performative "norms." By material here, I mean the materials and material surroundings that categorise gender, rather than merely the biological body which categorises biological sex, not gender identity. As Barad's work suggests, we cannot meaningfully separate the body from the societal expectations and understandings that inform our interpretation of it. Moreover, we are held to account for our gender performances and are rewarded for normative gender practices, while deviation brings the risk of threats, punishment, judgement, or shame. This is important to note once again when considering the ideological stance that has empowered a patriarchal system by enforcing certain subjectivities through societal expectations that demure, passive, and deferential is the correct way for women to behave. As Haraway (2016) suggests, gendered consciousness is forced upon us by the historical social reality of the patriarchy (16; see also Butler 1990).

From this perspective, the consideration of non-binary genders and alternative gender performances are key to posthumanism's aim of deconstructing humanist notions and moving to postdualistic perspectives (see Ferrando 2016). In the same way that posthumanism resists the

binary thinking of human/animal, human/machine, nature/culture, and mind/matter, the male/female binary should be challenged too. Yet the possibilities for posthumanism, fighting against an entrenched humanistic, hierarchical, and patriarchal history, have not yet been fully explored. As Braidotti (2013) states, "we need to experiment with resistance and intensity in order to find out what posthuman bodies can do" (99).

Holland and Harpin (2015) suggest that "tomboys challenge the gender binary by their very presence," (306) and we might therefore consider the figure of the tomboy to be what is needed in a (posthuman) revolution "which queries and queers the ways that the options are articulated and policed" (Halberstam and Livingstone 1995, 19). It could be argued that the term tomboy is in itself regressive—that it suggests that any female displaying masculine traits must be set apart and somehow "othered" with this term or that it suggests a form of gender determinism. Others have noted that the tomboy depends on "stereotypical notions of femininity and masculinity" (Carr 1998, 528), suggesting that it is akin to calling "a girl a quasi boy just because she liked to dress comfortably, play sport, climb trees, go on adventures" (Thorne 1993, 113). However, the tomboy offers an experimental resistance to the presupposed gender binary—not just to femininity—as the "tomboy identity leaves room for a person to articulate an identity that does not conform strictly to a binary gender construction" (Craig and LaCroix 2011, 452). Tomboyism has often been considered as an "active resistance" and rejection of femininity, although this can become problematised through the equally dualistic idea of "choosing masculinity" and conforming to masculine roles (Carr 1998, 540). This work is problematic in that it draws on certain ideas of "normal" tomboyism and refers to a gender binary rather than a spectrum. I reject this dichotomous view, instead arguing that the tomboy figure is neither placed entirely in opposition to femininity nor seen to "reject" or "choose" either male or female gender

roles; instead, it breaks down such binaries by blurring and borrowing across a spectrum of gender identities. The version of the tomboy I present in this chapter encapsulates a hybridity of gender identities and therefore represents an embodiment of posthuman subjectivity.

For the purposes of this chapter, I suggest that, as per Kroker (2012), "there are always gender drifters who remix, recombine, and resplice the codes of gender performance" (3) and that the tomboy is one embodiment of this that may therefore allow alternative "codes of gender"—or, indeed, the total abolishment of them—to arise. In order to analyse this emergence, I must draw upon stereotypical, gendered understandings of specific traits (e.g. masculine or feminine) to demonstrate how they are remixed and applied through the "tomboy" character of Jade in the videogame *Beyond Good and Evil.* While this may be problematic in the re-codification of heteronormative assumptions about gendered traits (a tomboy cannot be a tomboy without some "subversion"), it is my aim that the use of "tomboy" can here signify an embodiment of posthuman gender. I suggest that the adoption of multiple modes of gender performance allows the deterritorialization of certain behaviours or performances as belonging to a binary categorisation, reterritorializing them instead as a posthuman entanglement.

This is not in any way to suggest that identification as a tomboy is the same as identification as non-binary, but to instead demonstrate how a particular "representation of the tomboy" functions to blur, blend, and borrow from previously opposing categories to create new discourses that might allow further uptake of other non-binary expressions or identifications. I do not think one has to explicitly identify as non-binary in gender identity to enact and embody a non-binary subjectivity. However, before beginning my analysis, I wish to very briefly provide some historical context to the portrayal of gender in videogames and the ways in which such portrayals have been subject to attempts at queering them.

Gender Portrayals in Videogames

Videogaming has an unfortunate history of being considered a "masculine" activity, with an industry that has ostracised women and created a situation whereby "games were developed by males for males" (Hartley 2002, 93). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to give a full history, it is important to note that the representation of women in videogames is undoubtedly linked to the lack of women *behind* videogames. This problematic, gendered history has continued to the present day, and issues of gender diversity and representation are still evident. Women in videogames generally lack diversity in terms of character type and are underrepresented, oversexualised, and underclothed; attention is focused on hyperfeminine representations of female bodies (Friman 2015, 11; Beasley & Standley 2002, 289; Downs & Smith 2010, 723-724). Moreover, videogame culture is "an extraordinarily sexist affair" (Hoofd 2018, 230); flagrant sexism is evident outside of the games, most notably through the 2014 culture war of #Gamergate. This was a predominantly online harassment campaign that saw female game designers and critics, including Anita Sarkeesian, attacked for their commentary on female representation and their desire for a more balanced gender portrayal. During #Gamergate, several women in the videogame industry were viciously trolled and doxxed online, receiving death threats that led to the need for police protection and the cancellation of public appearances. These issues, of course, only served to highlight the toxicity of certain gamer cultures.

Suffice it to say that in gaming, the female figure has often failed monumentally to present a "revolutionary" representation of gender politics. From damsels in distress to sexualised others, there is concern that the repeated exposure to these characters will "begin to

develop scripts about gender stereotypes" for players; in other words, players may begin to develop expectations about gendered behaviours (Downs & Smith 2010, 723). For example, some games portray hypersexualised women who will respond positively to groping; it is therefore vital that problematic portrayals of gender and sexuality in videogames are addressed and more diverse characters, options, and imagery are introduced.

Yet videogame players have not always settled for the game-led gendering of avatars, and there are a variety of ways in which certain players have attempted to queer both avatars and play. Aesthetically non-normative gender types in *World of Warcraft* are often chosen by those who wish to disrupt traditional notions of femininity (Sundén 2012, 177), and similar activities are seen being performed by female players in *Everquest* (Taylor 2006, 97). Videogames can, for some, operate as a space to articulate different forms of femininity and identity that are not available to them in offline scenarios (Eklund 2011, 339), whereas for others it is the practice of gaming itself that allows female gamers to take pleasure in the opportunity to challenge gender norms by exploring their own aggression through game combat (Royse et al. 2007).

As a female gamer, it is refreshing to see examples of games where female characters offer a portrayal removed from the male gaze—that is to say, removed from the position of the passive woman, objectified and "displayed as sexual object" (Mulvey 1999, 837). Instead, the emergence of more female characters as active protagonists in their own adventures, with careers and relationships of their own, allows for a more diverse cast that defies prejudiced representation. Yet, while I hope that the videogame industry will continue to offer alternative modes of gendered performance, the subject of this chapter is nearly twenty years old: the 2003 Ubisoft action-adventure videogame *Beyond Good and Evil*.

I draw on this game because *Beyond Good and Evil* is notable in the study of tomboy cultures, as gender seems, for the most part, neither here nor there within the game—and not just where Jade is concerned. While Jade's femininity does not exclude her from being a figure of strength or intelligence, her masculinity does not exclude her from being caring. Although the game did not enjoy massive commercial success, this does not limit its relevance as a subject of study, as in some ways this creates a subcultural status, much like the tomboy figure. A variety of subcultural theorists have explored how participants in subcultures "challenge and reinforce social norms surrounding gender and sexuality" (Haenfler 2013, 14). We might consider tomboyism as a form of "resistance" and "deviance"—traits which are commonly attributed to subcultural groups. A videogame such as *Beyond Good and Evil*, which embodies similar values and fails to achieve commercial success, becomes potentially subcultural through "resistance to 'mainstream,' dominant, or hegemonic culture" (Haenfler 2013, 17).

Another reason for the choice of *Beyond Good and Evil* for this analysis is that its plot (explored below) links to Proehl's suggestion that tomboy narratives "subvert gender and sexual norms, center on the experiences of a female protagonist, and appeal to emotion in order to advocate for social justice and equality" (Proehl 2018, 2). While Proehl's focus is on literature, this categorisation seems to fit the narrative of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Beyond Good and Evil: Background and Plot

Beyond Good and Evil takes place in the fictional world of Hillys, where humans co-exist with humanoid, anthropomorphised animals. The story follows Jade, our hero, and her trusty sidekick/uncle/boar-like humanoid creature Pey'j as they attempt to uncover secrets pertaining to the

ongoing alien invasion of the DomZ. The DomZ capture Hillyans and either drain their life force and convert it into power or force them into servitude by implanting them with alien spores. Jade is a photojournalist and looks after a variety of children from different species who have been orphaned in the alien invasion. Interestingly, this in itself correlates with Proehl's (2018) work on tomboy narratives, which suggests that "they [tomboys] express sympathy for other marginalized individuals" (7), with a key trope of tomboy narratives being "the formation of surrogate families" (8). The game utilises Jade's career as a way for her to gather funds—her initial task is to photograph the various species of Hillys and send the images to a science museum. Playing as Jade, you can therefore explore the world of Hillys, taking these photos, engaging in mini games, and exploring different landscapes. However, the main thrust of the story comes when Jade is approached by someone who wants photos of a DomZ creature. Jade-player[1] ends up fighting the creature to escape it, thereby revealing the true task; this was a test from the secret chief of the IRIS Network, an underground resistance movement. He reveals that the military control of Hillys, the Alpha Section, has been possessed by the alien DomZ force. The IRIS Network chief asks Jade to undertake the important task of investigating the DomZ/Alpha Section because the IRIS lead investigator, Double H, has been captured. Throughout the game, Jade-player therefore explores, investigates, and captures images of areas she has infiltrated. There are mini puzzles as well as battles within the game, and finally, Jade-player helps to overcome the DomZ invasion and rescue their victims. The game is played in the third-player style; the player works with Jade's avatar, with some elements of the game involving the direction of Pey'j or Double H.

[1] Throughout this analysis I draw on both cut-scenes as well as in-game action. I therefore use "Jade-player" to demonstrate playable moments, rather than cut-scenes during which the player watches but cannot adjust the action. Jade-player is also used in order to demonstrate the intra-action of the avatar-gamer posthuman subjectivity (see, for example, Wilde 2018).

Posthumanising Jade: Tomboy Aesthetic, Relationships, Skills and Professions

Aesthetic Embodiment and Relationship Roles

Jade presents as a "tomboy" within the game as she disrupts certain gendered expectations, initially through her aesthetic. Jade is depicted with cropped hair and baggy trousers, and Pinckard and Fernández-Vara (2015) suggest that Jade acts as a "counter" to the "hyper-gendered female representation of characters such as Lara Croft" (3). The cropping of Jade's hair contrasts Croft's swinging ponytail which, though practical, being pulled back from the face, still embodies the long hair closely associated with femininity. Jade's hairstyle, therefore, borrows from stereotypically masculine styles. Jade's body-type is far from atypical for videogames; she has a disproportionately small waist that is revealed by a short tank top. However, she does not boast an overlarge cleavage and most of her skin remains covered, thereby again countering the hypersexualised image of many female videogame characters. Sarkeesian (2015) explains, "she actually looks the part of the active, practical young woman of colour[2] who has a job to do… [W]omen in games are often depicted in wildly impractical, sexualized clothing designed to make them appealing to straight male players. But Jade isn't designed to fulfil someone else's fantasy. The midriff top is a little silly, but for the most part, she looks like someone who is dressed to accommodate her own needs. I mean, you don't get much more practical than cargo pants." This focus on practicality aligns with Craig and LaCroix's (2011) suggestion that

[2] Whilst it is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully articulate issues of race and intersectionality as they apply to Jade, it is worth mentioning that her race is also presented as somewhat ambiguous, allowing for multiple readings. (see for example Chris Kohler, ""Jade Is Black?!": Racial Ambiguity in Games", Wired, 2007).

although tomboys' clothing may be seen to be more masculine, it may have much more to do with function than form (452). This also allows us to understand the power of gendered clothing to be restrictive or empowering of certain behaviours (see, for example, Bratta 2015).

Eklund (2011) has explored the ways in which the avatars in *World of Warcraft* are "in many ways stylized for us, prefabricated with assumptions about gender and sexuality" (338); however, the assumptions about Jade's gender and sexuality are outside of the heteronormative stereotype. Buikema (2018) explains how these stereotypes are embedded from birth. She argues that as soon as a child is born, the naming of that child as "girl" or "boy" enacts certain meanings, connotations, and semiotic signifiers: "[t]he girl's domain is pink; she is sweet, passive, physical, spontaneous, beautiful, etc. Conversely, the boy is approached with an entirely different set of terms: sturdy, smart, resourceful, etc." (90). While this is often not the case in videogames, which often transcend girlish pinkness for a sexualised red instead, Jade, in contrast to this, is fully decked out in her namesake colour—her combat trousers, jacket, headband, and even her lipstick are green. By incorporating lipstick but twisting expectations (by making it masculine green rather than feminine pink), Jade plays with feminine traditions of make-up and ultimately appropriates them for her own benefit, using lipstick not as an expression of femininity so much as an expression of "Jade." Moreover, she immediately proves herself to be sturdy, as she is thrown into battle with alien invaders early in the game and is continuously depicted as smart and resourceful.

In their analysis of 12 videogames, Jansz and Martis (2007) noted the ways in which "quite a few women became leaders in the games, but they continue to be presented in a sexualized way. As a result, these powerful women are depicted as sex objects as much as their powerless predecessors were" (147). However, this is not the case for Jade. This is notable not

only through her aesthetic, but also in the way in which she relates to other characters around her. It is worth mentioning that another act of queering in *Beyond Good and Evil* is the lack of romantic discourses within the game. Sexuality is often brought into debate in studies around tomboys, linking the tomboy figure with a rejection of sexual desire/heterosexual desire/being the object of desire. Skersi (2011), for example, posits that "the tomboy in popular culture is often signified by her refusal to view herself through the male gaze or participate in heterosexual mating rituals (the school dance, for instance)" (23), but as mentioned above, it is not only Jade who refuses to see herself through the male gaze—the male gaze is mostly lacking as a framework through which anyone is considered in the game. Friman (2015) argues that the portrayal of female characters as objects of romantic or sexual desire in videogames not only reduces the characters to gender stereotypes but also reinforces "an implied demand for a heterosexual male player" (23). However, Jade queers this expectation as her relationships are based on friendship and familial love rather than romance or desire. This is, in itself, a radical act. Despite Jade's sidekicks taking the form of two males—Pey'j and Double H—neither view her as subservient, and despite their apparent superiority (Pey'j as her uncle, and Double H as her predecessor), both defer to her strength and abilities, with no sexual objectification or gendered discrimination evident. This in itself renders Jade's sexual identity androgynous, thus enhancing her tomboy status (Creed 1995, 98).

In the opening sequence, although we see Pey'j drop in as a rescuer when Jade gets caught by the alien, he then throws her her Daï-jo staff, saying, "Free yourself, Jade. I'll create a diversion." As Sarkeesian (2015) notes, "[h]e assists her but doesn't rescue her. He knows that even in this situation, she's far from helpless, and the fact that Pey'j treats her as a capable partner encourages us to see her that way, too." Other characters also continually reference

Jade's capabilities, with members of the IRIS Network praising her achievements: "Friends… I believe Jade has just shown us an amazing demonstration of courage," "Nice work, kid…," "Jade, your last report from the factory had a large impact on the population. The Hillyans have spontaneously shown their support," and "You've done an incredible job." These affirmations come from male humans as well as females from other species, thereby demonstrating the ways in which her work is acknowledged and seen as important, active, and integral to the underground IRIS network.

Elsewhere in the game, Jade-player ends up first taking on Double H's job and then later rescuing him. Although he was the former lead reporter for the IRIS Network's investigation into the DomZ's take-over of the Alpha Section, the (male) IRIS Network chief sees no issue in replacing Double H with a young female (after, of course, the aforementioned test). Jade, notably, unlike Double H, does not get captured by the DomZ, thereby demonstrating a higher level of skill than her male counterpart.

Double H is presented in stereotypically masculine ways—he is large and taller than Jade but also heavy built, with almost impossibly broad shoulders, a chiselled jaw, and an armoured suit that also operates as a hovercraft. Relying on her small, slight, and stereotypically "feminine" frame, Jade-player is able to creep undetected past guards and into tunnels to infiltrate the area in which Double H is being kept prisoner and release him from the suspended sleep through which the DomZ were draining his energy. Upon his release, Double H drops to the floor at Jade's feet and displays his disorientation (and memory loss) while stating, "[a]nother 10 minutes and I'd have been a goner… I owe you my life," then exclaiming, "AT YOUR SERVICE, JADE THYRUS!" as he lowers his visor and jumps to attention. Double H immediately displays stereotypical masculinity through his strength (he breaks down a metal grid

keeping them captive), demonstrating the need for both “masculine” and “feminine” traits for mutual survival. Where Double H was reliant on Jade’s stealth, Jade-player is reliant on Double H’s strength for the escape to be complete. However, Double H then follows this by falling down a large ravine, immediately undermining his own capability. Jade-player is then forced to continue alone, battling further DomZ aliens in order to save Pey’J, who was captured in the rescue mission. Pey’J greets her gratefully, saying, “Thanks Jade, I’d have ended up on a silver platter with an apple in my mouth if it wasn’t for you” (referring to his pig-like species).

Furthermore, elsewhere in the game, Double H’s aforementioned size works against him when he cannot enter or navigate certain spaces that Jade can. He exclaims: “Too tight for me! I’ll cover your rear, Miss Jade!” In this way, Double H’s “masculinity” works against him while Jade’s “feminine” frame again works in Jade-player’s favour. The exchange between Double H and Jade also demonstrates a deference to her unique abilities and feminine attributes from an older, more experienced male. Similarly, in battle situations when Jade-player can direct some of Double H’s actions (such as pressing a key or button to make him deploy certain attacks), Double H responds with “Yes sir!”, ostensibly following her “order.” This also operates to legitimise Jade’s character—despite Double H’s own masculinity, he has no issue with deferring to her command and showing his appreciation for her knowledge and skill. The value of Jade’s physique is evident elsewhere; for example, Jade-player is able to shimmy across a narrow ledge, leaving Pey’j (and his large boar-like frame) behind, as he exclaims, “whoa, count me out Jade!” Yet it is not just her physique that is relied upon—the whole narrative journey is based around Jade’s character as one who will help others. For example, after crossing the narrow ledge, Jade-player then has to work out how to lower a platform for Pey’j to cross and join her, where he thanks her again for her assistance. Through the other characters’ acceptance and appreciation of

her skills, we are therefore presented with a less stereotypically gendered narrative for Jade's character.

In neither example of rescue does Jade reject the praise and thanks of her comrades, merely responding in cut-scenes by telling Double H that she is not sure how they will get out and replying to Pey'j teasingly: "Mmmm, shut-up! You're makin' me hungry! I'm gonna regret saving you…" Friman (2015) has argued that the gendering of female characters in videogames can operate through their behaviour "by having them act in an overly empathic or panicky manner—in other words in a stereotypically feminine manner" (19), yet through these exchanges and Jade's reactions to the capture of her friends, we can see that, while concerned, she is not hyperfeminised. Her casual exchange with Pey'j is instead "banter"-like, again emphasising comedic, familial camaraderie (elsewhere, after rescuing Pey'y *again*, she calls him an "old fart") rather than an overtly emotional "feminine" response. However, Jade is not *un*emotional: when Pey'j is captured and feared dead, there is a cut-scene during which Jade says, in a sad voice with downturned eyes, "all I know is how much he meant to me," over sentimental, slow music. When Pey'j then makes contact, she says, "Hey, that's my uncle…PEY'J!! PEY'J!! IS THAT YOU??" in excited tones with raised eyebrows and triumphant music in the background, and we are left in no doubt as to the love between these characters and the apparent relief that Jade experiences, thus demonstrating her clear affection.

Booting and Shooting: Skills and Profession

There are "stereotypes of the female body as weak, fragile, and delicate" (Adams et al. 2005, 26) and the stereotypical female character is seen to embody the supposedly "feminine" traits of

being pretty, dainty, weaker, and sexualised. In contrast, we have already seen how Jade-player is able to use her slight frame as an asset: a source of stealth. Yet her body is also used as a source of defensive strength.

Stereotypical feminine behaviour would suggest a strong focus on more domestic activities, based around the home and caring for others. Obviously, these stereotypes are highly problematic and outdated, deeply rooted within hegemonic patriarchy, which operates to both consign and constrict women to specific "roles," while also undervaluing those roles and the labour involved. Jade is presented as a caregiver within the game, as the opening sequence to the game shows her to be fostering the children of those who have been captured during the alien invasion. This role as caregiver is also evident in the fact that Jade-player is responsible for the health of Pey'j and Double H at various points within the game—when their health bars deteriorate through injury from battle, Jade-player must give them energy—they cannot "heal" themselves. Energy is exchanged through the consumption of food, and so from this perspective, Jade is giving them food or feeding them to help them heal. Once again, this is a stereotypically feminine act of nurturing through attendance to domestic tasks. Yet, when her lighthouse home is attacked and the children are threatened, the player can perform Jade's fighting skills for the first time. In this embodiment of the fierce mother archetype, Jade-player is able to employ nurturing and caregiving *through* strength and aggression, blending stereotypically feminine qualities with stereotypically masculine acts.

While fighting is usually an attribute consigned to the realm of the "masculine," Jade is proficient in a form of martial arts and utilises her Daï-jo combat staff to engage in fights with the alien forces. Although at times she has aid from her comrades, she is often the lone fighter against multiple alien entities. Through the player's use of the keyboard/controller, Jade-player is

able to engage in co-ordinated attacks against her enemies. Jade's abilities allow her to wield her staff in a variety of attack moves; Jade-player can collect energy in the Daï-jo, which stores it temporarily, before releasing a super-attack function that inflicts increased damage on surrounding enemies. If Pey'j or Double H are in the same fight as her, the avatar-gamer can instruct them to carry out their "super-action," which, according to the "Beyond Good and Evil Wiki" (n.d.) "execute[s] a ground pound, which will launch enemies into the air. Jade can then use her Daï-jo to slow down time, aim, and thrust foes in a certain direction." The range of attacks and Jade's co-ordinated deployment of them indicate skill and prowess. Of course, this is not an uncomplicated reading—Jade's efficiency at fighting is brought into being in part through the player's proficiency at the game itself, again demonstrating the intra-dependence of avatar and gamer in this posthuman subjectivity. Yet the skill is implied, and the weapon itself (Daï-jo means great staff) signifies Jade's apparent ability to both defend herself and, through the narrative of the game, to save others.

Beyond fighting aliens and her underground task of exposing the Alpha Section's corruption and DomZ infiltration, Jade also owns her own photojournalism company, Jade Reporting. Jade's skill with a camera and in her profession are notable because, rather than just operating as background story, they become an integral part of the gameplay and progression. Friman (2015) notes that while some videogames attribute backgrounds or professions that hint at expertise or power to female characters, this does not equate to actually allowing them to act those out—these need to be reinforced through in-game relationships and actions. Her research found that many supposed female character "experts" actually failed to embody or act in their expert position until prompted to do so by a male character (14). This therefore reinforces the "passive female" trope, failing to promote strong and active female characters. From this

perspective, Jade's actual ability to act as expert and earn money for her skills puts her in a more pro-active "masculine" role, as "[p]aid work away from the home therefore acquires masculine connotations, whereas feminine connotations are reserved for running a household and caring for a family" (van der Tuin 2018, 15). Yet, initially, the reason that Jade-player needs to engage with photography at the very start of the game is to earn money to get the power at her lighthouse home back on, in order to protect the household and the orphans she looks after. Moreover, Jade's continued work is in order to help find those who have disappeared and been captured by the DomZ invaders, and her work is therefore motivated by care, compassion, and social justice, rather than by financial gain. Her work is therefore placed in reference to others in a wider network, positioning her as (posthumanistly) egalitarian rather than (humanistly) elitist.

Where masculinity has specific connotations of "what is active and free, the rational consciousness, mind, culture, self-determination, responsibility, and being" (van der Tuin 2018, 15), Jade's character is closely aligned with these supposedly masculine ideals. Interestingly, this corresponds with Ness's research that shows in film, unlike other heroines:

> [F]emale reporters were not as easily subjugated by the camera's gaze, since women in the genre are often responsible for investigating the action. […] They also often underwent a form of masculization, with the female reporters adopting male-associated names and modes of dress designed to downplay their femininity. (Ness 1997, 72)

This analysis may well be applicable to Jade: she operates as investigator, and with her aforementioned aesthetic, Jade adopts certain masculine forms of dress and downplays her femininity through banter. Jade therefore embodies tomboyish "resistance against a normative

femininity" (Holland & Harpin 2015, 307); however, she does not resist femininity in its entirety, as she still draws on "feminine" traits such as caregiving, nurturing, protection, and stealth by utilising her feminine frame to great effect where her male counterparts are unable to follow.

We might therefore consider that Jade embodies certain aspects of posthumanism's postdualistic agenda, as she borrows traits from both realms, blending them to such a degree that there are intertwined and entangled. Her caregiving is related to her strength, her profession to her desire for justice, her stealthy accomplishments working alongside the strength of others, and her relationships based on familial love and amicable collegiality, while not veering into sexualised discrimination or gendered subservience. Through the close integration of masculine and feminine stereotypes, Jade remixes different values, traits, behaviours, and aesthetics to accommodate a gender performance that deterritorializes her actions from a gendered "norm" and reterritorializes them in a postdualistic embodiment and narrative.

Conclusion

Little has been written on *Beyond Good and Evil* to date, and this chapter has therefore not only contributed to research surrounding the intersections of gender studies and posthuman theory but has applied that to a lesser known media product. Despite being a videogame from 2003, the game demonstrates a gendered postdualism that can be considered posthuman. The character of Jade embodies a variety of what might stereotypically be considered both feminine and masculine traits, thereby positioning her as a "tomboy" figure. Jade is an empathetic caregiver, with a slight physique that is used to her advantage in order to progress through the game. She

subverts the expectation that small equates to weak, and instead embeds small with an active power signifying stealth and access. Coupled with her feminine facial features that often express emotive responses in cut-scenes, she does not wholly disrupt "feminine" gender norms. However, her strength, skill with a Daï-jo combat stick, and profession as a photographer demonstrate a variety of active abilities that position her in a more "masculine" field of reference. One of the key things that allows Jade to disrupt certain gendered binaries is the way in which the game as a whole does not focus on her gender as an impetus for plot progression. She is neither seen as a damsel in distress nor a romantic figure or sexualised object. Through other characters' intra-actions with Jade, her abilities, skills, and personality are seen as valued, whether through praise, deference, or shared "banter" as equals. This emphasises Jade's ability to combine a variety of feminine and masculine traits that allow her to disrupt their binary categorisations, incorporating both to thereby embody a posthuman remixing of these emergent behaviours.

Barad (2007) has argued that "[a]gency is not about choice in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices" (214). From this perspective, Jade is not considered to be "choosing" one gendered performance over another, but through Jade's actions and intra-actions, the material-discursive apparatus of gender is rearticulated in a postdualistic way. Lyttleton-Smith (2015) has suggested that Barad's approach to agential-realism "offers an onto-epistemology that situates emergent, observable phenomena (under which category gender is located) as necessarily produced through the 'intra-action' of the material and the discursive" (83). Here, gender is configured through material relations and discursive, performative actions. Jade's intra-

actions draw on observable material-discursive actions situated within both feminine and masculine gender performances, allowing an alternative, postdualist gender identity to arise. Chang (2012) claims that "the posthuman subject is always a test, a border crossing, and a horizon of possibility" (86). Through the material-discursive configuration of the tomboy, the posthuman subject is able to test post-gender performances. Characters such as Jade, and our ability to play with and as her in a less obviously gendered, humanistic world than our own, allow us to embrace the tomboy as a hopeful horizon of postdualistic possibility. With *Beyond Good and Evil 2* apparently "well underway" (Ubisoft 2020) let us hope for further posthuman prospects and promises for the future.

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