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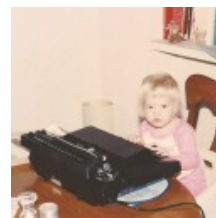
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Beyond: Two Souls – A Lesson on Internalized Patriarchy

Posted on April 25, 2014 by K8MONSTR

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Last night I received *Beyond: Two Souls* in the mail. Considering I wrote my thesis on heroines in video games, you would have thought I had gotten my mitts on this games ages ago. Alas, a grad student's salary (or lack thereof) does not allow for purchases of games on their release date, so I had to wait until all the hype was gone and it went on sale at Amazon.

My excitement for the game began to dwindle after someone on twitter warned me of the offensive sexism of the game.

RT @kellysue: Sneak Peek Bitch Planet #2
Page art by @val_delandro
tumblr.co/ZnScJn1YOxIXI - k8monstr
14 hours ago

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redditgifts.com/gallery/gift/c... #redditgifts
via @redditgifts - k8monstr 14 hours ago

RT @Lexialex: How could we get everybody else to read this? All the sheep have blocked me unfortunately:
jerichoattrition.wordpress.com/2014/12/18/a na... - k8monstr 17 hours ago

Dredging the bottomless pit of Netflix, found a movie called Mercenaries. It's like a terrible female version of Expandables, but better - k8monstr 18 hours ago

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Kate Reynolds @k8monstrsCloset 24 Apr
Just got #BeyondTwoSouls in the mail. I hope it's not as bad as everyone was saying. I remember being very excited about it back in the day

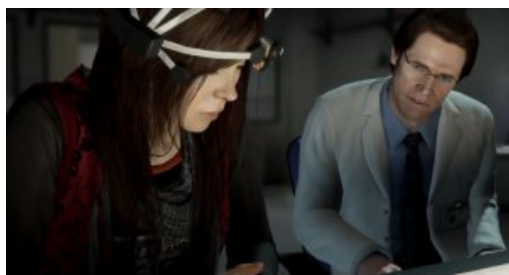
Adi Tantimedh @lookitmoves Follow

@k8monstrsCloset Yeah... good luck with David Cage's creepy brand of sexism.

5:14 PM - 24 Apr 2014

Forewarned with that knowledge, I vowed to be vigilant and critical for any hints of sexism during my game-play, all so that I could deliver an exacting and brutal review. Lambasting poor representations of heroines in games is a hobby of mine after all.

Instead, as I began immersing myself in the game-world and Jodie (the heroine) my critical eye quickly turned friendly, and my vigilance began to lapse with each new scene I encountered Jodie in. I followed her from childhood, adolescence, proto-adulthood (not in linear order) and my sympathy for the character quickly outweighed any critical insight I had intended to force upon my *Beyond: Two Souls* experience.



Ellen Page and Willem Dafoe

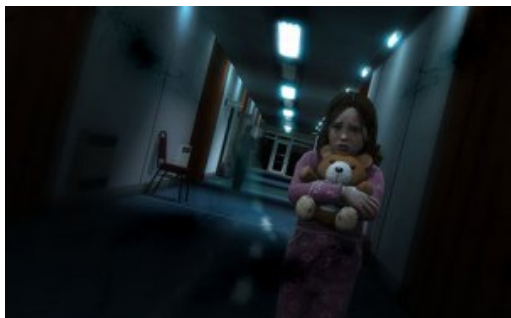
When I stopped playing the game for the evening, my critical gaze finally returned to me (thank god) and I was able to objectively think about the game and character I had been playing. At first, I felt suckered in – the game designers had roped me into the game (against my will) with a technique that only draws attention to the sexism of the game itself: the need to protect.

I was immediately reminded of [an interview with Crystal Dyanmic](#) where *Tomb Raider* executive producer Ron Rosenberg described the relationship they were attempting to foster between player and character:

“When people play Lara, they don’t really project themselves into the character. They’re more like ‘I want to protect her.’ There’s this sort of dynamic of ‘I’m going to this adventure with her and trying to protect her.’ She’s definitely the hero but— you’re kind of like her helper.

When you see her have to face these challenges, you start to root for her in a way that you might not root for a male character.”

Naturally we’re supposed to want to protect female characters because they’re “weaker” and less capable of fending for themselves without the aid of the player. Jodie seems to get a triple dose of this, with the Player, her supernatural companion Aiden, and Nathan Dawkins (Willem Dafoe) all serving as her protectors at various times in the game. If we’re assuming the player is male (and it seems like that assumption occurs in the above interview) Jodie has nothing but male protectors.



In addition to feeling the need to protect Jodie, I *did* end up projecting myself into her character. Despite the fact that I’ve never had a supernatural companion, there were several things that Jodie and I had in common.

We’ve both been told “we’re special”, we both led a somewhat sequestered life (I was brought up in a very

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Like 24

Would we ever see a male character this vulnerable?

religious setting), we both were terrible at social interactions, and through young childhood to proto-

adulthood we were both members of places with male-dominated leadership.

In the six hours I played *Beyond: Two Souls* yesterday, I never once questioned the lack of women role-models in the game.

Because of my own life experiences (religion, media, etc), while I was playing as Jodie, I didn't find it strange that the only other women she encounters during the game are 1.) Incompetent 2.) Mean Girls 3.) Terrible Mothers.

I didn't question once while I was playing why I/Jodie never encountered a competent woman while I/Jodie was growing up in a secret government facility. I didn't question why Cole (the black assistant scientist) seemed so inferior to the white scientist Nathan Dawkins. I never questioned why the entity attached to me/Jodie was always referred to by a male name (what if it had been Adenia instead of Aiden?).

None of those things were important to I/Jodie, only our survival was.



Cole

The eventual scene that pulled me out of this deep association of protection/identification I shared with Jodie was when we encountered a few Navajo. The hints of "white people save brown people" narrative was too strong for me to ignore. The bond between Jodie and I snapped, and I was able to view my unquestioning participation in this patriarchal model with the appropriate disgust.

While this game is egregiously sexist for more reasons than mentioned, what really struck me was the insidious way it can turn a strong-feminist person such as myself, into a willing participant of a patriarchal system. The deep level of identification I experience towards Jodie forced me to leave behind my critical self, the part of me I cherish above all others, because that part of me didn't yet exist during my adolescence or proto-adulthood; the parts of Jodie's life I most identified with.



Motorcyle = rebel. Just like me?

The game played on my internalized patriarchal beliefs experienced through those phases of my life, rehabilitating me (briefly) into the patriarchal order present in both *Beyond: Two Souls* and our society. While this isn't the first time I've turned off the critical part of my brain in order to enjoy some type of media (it's hard to be turned on *all* the time), this was the first time I felt like I wasn't the one who flipped the "off" switch.

Overall the playthrough brought home a lesson I thought I had already learned: **it's impossible to purge all of your internalized patriarchy**. Once you've been assimilated, you'll always maintain you ties to the ~~Berg~~ patriarchy. Fortunately (depending on how you look at it) until patriarchy is no more, there will always be egregious enough examples of sexism/racism/homophobia to keep you on your activist toes.

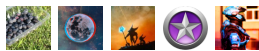
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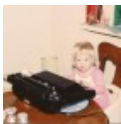
4 thoughts on "Beyond: Two Souls – A Lesson on Internalized Patriarchy"



CHRIS "KODOKU" DETRICK says:
April 25, 2014 at 3:16 pm

But the question remains: how creepy is David Cage's sexism? On a scale of 1 to CHIK'N CHASA

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K8MONSTR says:
April 25, 2014 at 4:59 pm

Hmmm. I see your CHIK'N CHASA and I raise you Dead or Alive Extreme Volleyball

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CHRIS "KODOKU" DETRICK says:
April 26, 2014 at 2:18 am

And once again I have confused Peter Molyneux with David Cage. I have no idea why I do this, but they are just the same person in my head.

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