

Fig. 1. Lara Croft exposes all for her fans. Frame grab from *Tomb Raider*.

# Mobile Identities, Digital Stars, and Post-Cinematic Selves

by Mary Flanagan

Molly Haskell noted that “The closer women come to claiming their rights and achieving independence in real life, the more loudly and stridently films tell us it’s a man’s world.”<sup>1</sup> Women’s relationship to technology is perhaps the most threatening relationship the West has known. Unlike issues of property ownership, the right to vote, wage discrepancies, and other calculable inequities, the use of technology by women is dangerous because it not only allows for immediate access to information but because it is also immeasurable. What an ironic image, then, to have the emerging personalities of the new millenium—female digital stars—created by the technology that “real” women are denied.

Lara Croft, the 3-D star of the action game series *Tomb Raider*, has become the most popular computer game character ever. Created by Core Design in England, Lara’s game series *Tomb Raider* (I, II, III, IV), distributed by Eidos Interactive, has helped create a new star system in the arena of electronic gaming. Since premiering in 1996, her games have sold over six million copies—some of the best-selling video game titles in history. In the game, players control Lara Croft, a female Indiana Jones-style swashbuckling archaeologist on a global quest to whisk away artifacts from “exotic” locales in epic, colonialist CD ROM adventures. She is the best-known computer generated character in the world and her creation has brought into existence a virtual star system. As the millennial icon, she has been featured on the cover of over eighty magazines with

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Fig. 2. Tough, sexy, and well read Lara Croft is the ideal for much of fan discourse and fan fiction sites. Frame grab from *Tomb Raider*.

characters such as Bill Gates and America Online CEO Steve Case, and touted as one of the fifty “cyber elite.” Lara is more than a character; she is a celebrity. “She’s developed a persona,” says Keith Boesky of game publisher Eidos Interactive. “She’s the first digital character that’s really treated like a person.”<sup>2</sup> Lara Croft might be compared to a person, but she is much more onscreen. Lara wields

amazing physical prowess and multiple firearms. She is capable of any physical activity demanded by the game’s incredible situations: backflipping out of buildings, swimming underwater, punching tigers, round-housing monks, and even biting foes (blood/gore included)—while barely clad in scanty, skin-tight “explorer” clothing. In addition to her superhuman traits, Lara is precise, rides in great vehicles, and, unless there is user error, never needs a second take.

Inevitably, the comparison has to be made between this new star system and film history’s account of stars and star discourse. A review of this material will help us understand how and why the cinematic star as a culturally produced body has evolved into a digital star system in which signifiers, identities, and bodies themselves are called into question. More than the indulgence of looking in at these stars within filmic worlds, we now embrace the very real pleasure of controlling these desired bodies: Lara is at the apex of a system in which looking manifests into doing, into action. The digital star is the location on which fantasies of desire and control are projected; they embody the fears, desires, and excess of our culture in the form of obnoxiously sexualized female stars. The subject, object, audience, director, viewer, participant, creator, and user tangle and double over; these roles blur into a new phenomenon that refuses to take on a shape.

Lara is clearly our first digital star,<sup>3</sup> and the role of information and technology in the construction of the digital star cannot be ignored. Rob Milthorp has pointed out that the lure of the video game fantasy is “that of a vicarious es-

capist experience that also responds to men's technological passion."<sup>4</sup> Beyond the attraction of technology, however, this essay suggests that it is through the excess of information and sexuality, the absence of the "authentic," and the development of an intricate subject/object relationship that these fantasies have organized into a truly new form of star system "personified" through Lara Croft. Using Lara Croft and other digitally-rendered female images—Kyoko Date, Kiss Dolls, and Ultravixen—as examples, this essay seeks to expose and complicate new manifestations of the coded subject/object positions examined by feminist scholars of popular media for the last twenty years. I will show that "cults of personality" could only develop from the electronic entertainment industry when virtual personalities embodied a marketable, consumable, idealized, and entirely "man-made" female form. It is through the recognition, representation, and redefinition of this body and the understanding of the shaping of the subject within the digital star system that our position as users and our technologically produced, multiple subjectivities can be understood.

### Seeing Stars

In his essay "The Emergence of the Star System in America," Richard deCordova distinguishes phases in the development of the classical Hollywood star system. His concepts are useful when comparing the "cults of personality" that developed almost a century before the digital star system. Starting with discourse on legitimate stage acting and comparing it with "performing," (as opposed to acting) for the camera, he describes the differences between a "picture personality" and the "star." There was a marked difference between personalities and stars in the way they related to discourse and products. Popular film magazines included quizzes about the players' names and listed their filmographies; however, actor-centered dialogue was always second to the discourse on the films themselves. DeCordova notes, "The picture personality was to be the principal site of product individuation"<sup>5</sup> and by 1907, the star system had evolved, making the name of the star more important than the films in which they starred. Thus, a decade into the Twentieth Century, pressure increased for extra-filmic information beyond that of the professional

existence of the performer—interest grew about his or her private lives. The interest in the private lives of screen performers—and the excess of biographical information sold about a performer's personal life—created the star system, and with it a commodification of an actor's biographical data. This focus on an individual actor's life and family may have helped to legitimize the cinema and its practices—as deCordova notes “The private lives of the stars emerged as a new site of knowledge and truth”<sup>6</sup> and, of course, commodity.

The star system evolved as an important component in the development of the information age by blurring distinctions between the personal and the private. Technology-bound, technologically determined, both digital stars and cinema stars were birthed in an environment of spectacle. If we think about technology not as a purely mechanical tool but as a systematic apparatus of production which includes extra-media dialogues (such as fan discourse, advertising, company/studio press releases, and other cultural phenomena) we see a certain kind of technological determinism both media share. The star system produced the personality as commodity to be consumed by audiences—a product to be desired, and ultimately, acquired.

Like the arcades of electronic gaming, early cinema was exhibited in predominantly male spaces, but exhibition practices are not the only shared elements between the star systems. The first stars in both films and computer games are females: the marketable names of Florence Lawrence (the first popular screen player at Biograph Studios) and Lara Croft have drawn large audiences. But from the picture personality “Biograph Girl” (Lawrence) to the star “IMP Girl” (Lawrence's name at her next studio) to the “Bit Girl”<sup>7</sup> the representation of biographical excess and overt sexuality changed dramatically. While the “innocent” early film stars gradually evolved into more sexual and objectified stars, Lara Croft and clone characters are immediately coded as sexual objects upon arrival.

### Star Sex

Scott Bukatman points out that contemporary culture “eroticizes the techno-

logical;”<sup>8</sup> and thus in addition to her appearance, Lara Croft is by virtue of her existence bound to erotic codes and interpretation through the means of her production. A look at the first cinematic sex symbol, Theda Bara, gives historical insight into the design of the sex object screen star. Fox Studios director Frank Powell cast her as a vampire in the film version of *A Fool There Was* (1915). She became Fox’s biggest star, appearing in as many as ten feature films per year (Pringle 1996). Theda Bara’s success as a sex symbol stems from her construction as a persona without a fixed personal history. A key factor in her design as a sex symbol was the mystification of her true, “authentic” identity. Though she was almost thirty and obviously had a personal history of her own, Fox studios created a fictional personal history for her with each film role she played. At hundreds of press conferences, Theda Bara acted out these roles, dressing in veils, furs and silks, petting snakes or eating exotic fruits. The media played along with the spectacle and printed as fact obviously jumbled biographies. According to one report, Theda Bara was born under Egypt’s pyramids, the daughter of a French actress and an Italian artist.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Lara Croft’s past is also recreated, multiplied, and retold. Her lack of a true history is masked by the excess of life stories created by multiple agencies—Eidos’ marketing department, gaming magazines, and countless fan fiction sites. Like Theda Bara, Lara’s excessive biographies are filled with impossible fictions.<sup>10</sup> Yet while Theda’s histories were concocted to create a media stir for the studio, Lara’s past continues to be filled in by fans across the world. Internet sites such as *Lara’s Scrapbook* (footnote) and *Lara’s Oasis* fill in details continually. This act of viewer/user/participant generation of these histories is significant as they multiply Lara’s “reality” into many fictions which represent multiple realities. While each fan community may have its own version of her story, no one story is considered more or less true than any other. This works in part because of the immensity of the interested group: six or seven million fans can create “regional” narratives of the hero in what ends up being localized oral, written, and pictorial histories—legends.

Lara and Theda are alike in that they both embody excess and spectacle and exist in a duality between the text (the films, games) and in sub-texts and extra-texts. Their personal histories are coded as “exotic,” vague, and undecipherable. Their bodies with their assorted histories are fractured into multiple

fictions to act as shells for a viewer's desire. In his study of male fantasy and the image of woman, Klaus Theweleit writes

The fictive body of woman has become an imaginary arena for the fantasies of deterritorializations, while actual male-female relationships have continued to serve... as focal points for the implementation of massive reterritorializations. Exotic women, and women of the ruling class, have provided the raw material for those fictions.<sup>11</sup>

Stars of the cinema share qualities with computer-generated stars; not static or fixed in time and space, they inhabit screen worlds. A star system draws upon the separation between the image and the body, the public and private, the historical, biographical persona and the location of many fictional biographies, between the scripted and the "real," to create a culture of consumption around the "persona." The representation of Lara Croft's body is essential to understand the issues of (dis)embodiment of computer personalities and the particular place of gender in these embodiment relationships. Lara's body is an interesting culmination of numerous western ideals. Box art, press releases, and fans describe her as "icy" and "sexy." She shoots, climbs, and runs with mechanical precision; controlling her body is like driving a fine machine. In addition, Lara Croft has an over-idealized female physique. She is a self-less body created from 540 polygons.<sup>12</sup> With beyond-Barbie statistics (pushing Lara as a pin-up icon, Eidos has claimed her measurements are 88-24-84),<sup>13</sup> Lara is an over-idealized construction of EuroAmerican standards of beauty.<sup>14</sup> Modeled with brown hair and eyes and a deep skin tone, Lara could be one of the few non-white characters within Euro-American-dominated games. However, Lara is perceived most often by her fans as Caucasian.<sup>15</sup> Creator company Eidos provides only a rough sketch of Lara's life, and as a result there should be few elements which remain stable about her biography. But even within the reinterpretations of Lara's history, she is consistently read by fans to come from a position of economic privilege: well-bred, educated, and feminine even as she guns down attackers. She is the idealized privileged white female image of Theweleit's writing.

Lara is young and beautiful—and she will always be. Lara will not know physical age. She will, however, be subject to the outdating of her technology.

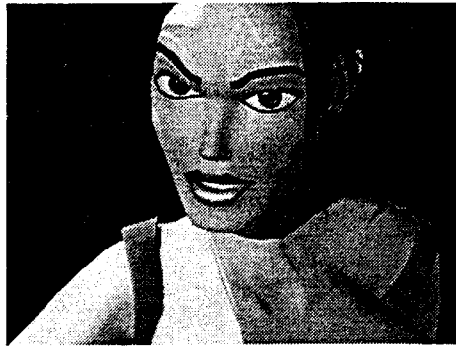


Fig. 3. Almost-human Lara Croft, perceived by her fans as white. Frame grab from *Tomb Raider*.

Any digital star's repertoire will consist of a set of obsolete file formats on aged media storage devices. As the body coordinates and texture maps are refined through the years—remapped, refracted, holographed into the technology of the time—her previous incarnations will grow more and more obsolete. However, she will stay eternally young; reborn, more perfect than before, with each techno-

logical advance. The experience of a digital star, then, is one of continued present. The technology of the present is the only way to maintain the star. Lara represents a circumstance described by Gilles Deleuze as the process of “becoming.” She exists not as an identity but as a site of becoming—winning or losing the game, adventuring, controlling, pleasuring, moving, fighting. In his essay “What is Becoming?” Deleuze describes a state of event-centered being that is fundamental way of seeing interactive experiences.<sup>16</sup> The characters, landscape, and entire world of *Tomb Raider* are a continuous, data-driven event. “The artificial is always a copy of a copy,”<sup>17</sup> data looping and changing in a viral manner. Lara, as a pure data loop, makes discourse about the concept of the authentic, the “instance,” impossible. Thus, the absence of a physical body means the absence of history, the lack of a “real” biography; the data is the entirety of the star. Her female identity further complicates this intersection. Judith Butler argues that the very position of “woman” is a construction within this constant flux as well: “Woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end.”<sup>18</sup>

### Set Prototypes

What we see on the screen of a digital star—the body, the gender, the matrix of social and cultural ties—is as much as we get. Or is it? Postmodernism brought us the disintegration of the subject, the fragmented receptor con-

stantly in flux. The boundaries between humans and machines are becoming irretrievably blurred. So too have the boundaries between the subject and object, the voyeur and the object of the gaze, the user/participant and the avatar representation of that user in a virtual world. The blurring of boundaries that has come to fruition in *Lara Croft* can be traced through three important evolutionary stages.

### Kyoko Date

To begin looking at existing examples of prototypical digital stars and understanding the apparatus, the technological means that have pre-shaped us as subjects, we can examine one of the first internationally known virtual beings, the Japanese character Kyoko Date. Of all prototypical digital personas, Kyoko may be the best known. Called the “Daughter of technology” by some fans,<sup>19</sup> Kyoko Date, or “DK-96” (DK for “Digital Kids”) was the first virtual idol. Created by the Japanese entertainment company Hori Productions, Inc, Date is a 3-D model consisting of over 40,000 polygons; it is easy to mistake printouts of Date for photographs of human subjects. The production of Date was enormous: ten designers at Hori Pro alone worked on her facial features.<sup>20</sup> Kyoko is physically attractive; but she is solely touted for her sex appeal. According to CNN/fn’s news reporter John Lewis, Kyoko “has just that desired mix of purity and lost innocence, she has the cute pout down pat, and she’s fashionably slender in all the right places.”<sup>21</sup> Kyoko Date was not based on an existing media personality, nor was she created in order to further the media career of a human star. And while Kyoko Date did not erupt from a computer game, toy, television program, or movie, she quickly became an influential media figure



Fig. 4. Kyoko Date. Frame grab from <<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Flats/2135/birthday.jpg>>.

through commercials, music videos, and pop songs. HoriPro chose to make its star as “real” as possible using an abundance of “normal” human references. Kyoko Date “grew up” in the suburbs; the “girl-next-door” image behind the media blitz was constructed to make her as human as possible. She is represented as a typical sixteen-year-old entertainer and lives with her parents just outside of Tokyo. Kyoko is said to have one sister, a year younger than herself, and works at her parents’ family-run restaurant in Tokyo.

It is important to note that the fame for Kyoko Date was not perennial. Kyoko was the prototype for the digital star system, but her meticulously detailed personalized history created more of a “self” than a digital personality can have. Fans have dropped some of her websites and others are no longer maintained. She was just too well-defined to sustain interest.

#### Kiss Dolls

A big hit in Japan since the early nineteen-nineties and a swelling American phenomenon, KISS games are electronic drag-and-drop paper doll computer games that one plays on the computer. KISS dolls are an interactive strip show with the goal of exposing and eroticizing images of anime characters and barely pubescent girls. Available in the underground software scene,<sup>22</sup> the cre-

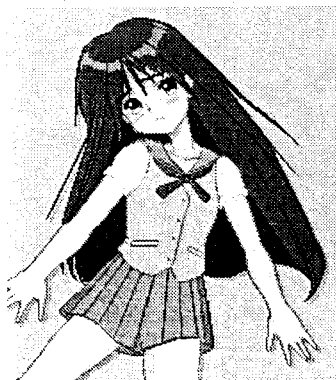


Fig. 5. Kiss Doll Sailor Mars waits patiently for users' clicks.

ation, production, and distribution of KISS are performed by fanatics, technicians and programmers—not corporate pornographic agencies. Newer KISS dolls, dubbed “FKISS,” can incorporate limited animation and sound; this movement most often manifests as blinking eyes, animated clothing, giggling sounds, or animated sex toys. The interaction—the user has power over the doll and is able to click and drag items off or onto the body of the doll—compels the user to play. The significance of the animated paper dolls lies in the type of control offered to users and the

animations embedded in the files. The user not only controls the female image and visual identity through clothing and hair, but the user can actually act upon this body—shave it, make it wet, and ultimately rape it with objects found in the scene. One animated doll, Sailor Mars, features a young anime-style female figure, about nine-years old, wearing a Japanese school uniform: white top and a grey skirt. When the player clicks on the doll's skirt, the skirt bunches up to expose the girl's underwear, as though the hand of an adult has reached under the skirt to expose her. Similarly, when the player clicks on the girl's shirt, the shirt pops open but stays on the body. Clicking on the underwear results in the underwear bunching down to expose the girl's genitalia. Meanwhile, the drawing stays expressionless, the cartoon child returning the gaze of the player, her eyes, wide and shiny, blinking passively. Through clicking repeatedly on the figure, a player can gain access to the body through this scrunching and unbuttoning. The choice to leave the clothes astrew on the body, skirt hiked up instead of neatly removed, is a design choice to grant users the opportunity to molest the young female image. Thus while Kiss dolls offer virtual, "manipulate-able" striptease shows for the users, this particular doll confronts, albeit passively, the manipulation of the female image directly.

It is critical that many authors of the animated dolls choose to focus their animation on the blinking eyes in contrast to animating more sexually coded areas of the body. The doll eyes that look out directly at the user and blink as though alive and aware result in the digital character's passive recognition of her victimization. These digital paper dolls, who consciously watch while they are manipulated for the user's pleasure, reflect our possession and control over the female image. Unlike other kinds of pornography, the dolls arrive to the user as innocents and it is through interactivity that they are inscribed as erotic. As Zimmerman and Gorfinkel point out, they constitute "a curious double sexuality; at once garishly innocent adolescents and hyper-sexualized porn objects, a complicity of awkward pubescence and demure seduction."<sup>23</sup> Kiss dolls seem to arrive to us as innocents but leave as sexualized objects of desire produced by the actions of the user. Kiss dolls, as anonymous shells upon which users can play out fantasy of control and desire, are "safe" precisely because of their lack of authenticity. Users do not, however, manipulate

the girls' bodies (except for the few dolls accompanied by sex toys); rather, users can decide the level of exposure (indecent or otherwise). Kiss dolls incorporate a level of control that is defined by exposure of the body rather than the direct manipulation of the it. As anonymous electronic strip shows, they exist in between worlds and experiences as "trading cards of desire." Their lack of history, their spoiled innocence that is completely at the service of the user for the pleasure of the user alone, and their capacity to fulfill the fantasy of the visible by maneuvering the image within interactive technology leads to the fulfillment of user desire.

### Ultravixen

Ariel, aka Ultravixen, is the "hypersexy superheroine of the 21st century" in the "world's first Internet Anime Sex Game."<sup>24</sup> Created by Pixis Interactive, purple-haired hero Ariel is billed the "super-hot sci-fi sex star." The story on the Pixis web site begins with her torture and rape at the hands of a professor. Her powers emerge as the result of the rape. Ariel becomes the Ultravixen, the bearer of the "super climax": an orgasm capable of warping time and space. Her sexual "weapon" is the means of defeating an evil OverLord from the future, who uses a time network to acquire girls and enslave them in his maniacal sex machines. The role of the user is to play her "lover" and serve as the operator of these sexual torture devices. Players manipulate the "sex machines" to arouse Ultravixen to the point of orgasm so that she may in turn destroy the machine, and with it, the Overlord.

While the narrative makes the Overlord into a diabolical character because of his rape of women and dominance



Fig. 6. Free from her sex machines for the moment, Ultravixen teases us to play her game.

over the girls using sex machines, the game is designed so that players must duplicate his actions to save the world. The interaction in *Ultravixen* is a complex set of objectifications: the user controls elements in the game (implementations of torture) which in turn gives the user power over the sex object, Ariel. Yet as players we are absolved of any moral guilt as the narrative clearly tells us that Ariel wants to be tortured. She appears in a machine, and the user is told that Ariel desires "pleasure." *Ultravixen* represents the point at which the gaze is given the power of manipulation, a place where the gaze MUST manifest into sexual control and abuse in order to play and finish the game. Consequently, torture is legitimized and sanctioned by positing the relationship between user, machine, and victim as a consensual act. This "rape and rescue" fantasy is used to justify the subjugation of the disenfranchised female body. In one level of the game, Ariel travels to Nazi Germany and is subjected to torture and mutilation resembling the "experimentation" upon Jewish women while imprisoned in Death Camps. She is even crucified to a swastika. This analogy is more than disturbing. Though the portrayal in *Ultravixen* is abusive and negative, the user does not directly control Ariel—control is mediated through the sex machine. In this light, even though Lara Croft exists in a game which does not submit her to torture, she is submissive to the direct control of the user.<sup>25</sup>

These three examples show varying degrees the marketing of the digitally-rendered female image's overt sexuality. Each one bears marks of the evolution towards the digital star system. On the surface, *Kyoko Date* seems to be a digital star: she is a three dimensional artificial character created to sell media work. While her name differentiates and sells products, she is created with a grounded, stable history—not created from excess but rather from "satisfactory" spheres of knowledge. She becomes too "realistic" and historically situated to be the site we play out fantasies. *Kiss Dolls* are crude examples of the enactment of anonymous control fantasies. An individual doll's identity is not as important as the power to manipulate the doll, and thus product differentiation relies more on the features of a particular doll set versus the character depicted therein. *Ultravixen* has little identity and exists for the player's pleasure alone, but the only way we relate to her is through manipulation many times removed from the game world. These digital prototypes help form the

conditions necessary for a star system to develop but are not digital stars unto themselves. The economic, racial, and gender hierarchies embedded in these electronic games “allegorize” the social relationships in our time much like cinema,<sup>26</sup> creating a-historical digital female imagery for the fulfillment of fantasy. Each of these examples offers us a few of the elements which contributed to the construction of the digital star system, yet they do not each bear enough elements to fully launch it.

### Objects Subjects

The games above feature prototypical digital stars. A central reason that they could not offer true stardom to their characters is that they did not offer complex subject positioning for players. The ability to feel as though one is shifting viewpoints while manipulating character one identifies with in a variety of ways offers tremendous possibilities for theories about subject/object relationships. The space between experiencing first hand (inside) a virtual character, to controlling the avatar as a separate object is like Deleuze’s phantasm: the movement by which the ego opens itself up to surfaces and “liberates” the halted differences contained (such as point of view);<sup>27</sup> the phantasm covers the distance between psychic systems with ease, going from consciousness to the unconscious and vice versa—from the inner to the outer and conversely.”<sup>28</sup>

More than an inner and outer dichotomy, we can identify five points of action/identification/subject positioning within a three-dimensional gaming environment like *Tomb Raider*. First, through the keyboard, players make Lara act. Second, she acts—sometimes on her own accord, through pre-scripted animation, and sometimes as an extension to our influence. Third, as players we act with her or next to her as a friend or companion. Fourth, we act through her/within her in the first person. In other words, we become Lara. Finally, we react to her. For example, players respond to her positions in the game, whether in fear or with mirth. Never before has there been a figure in any media that has become such a unique axis of complex identification with the audience. We move from the first person position—sitting in front of the monitor using the keyboard—to the third person simultaneity of being inside the

game worlds with our characters. We are again in first person controlling the gaming experience through the characters—we can actually become them and see the world through their eyes; then with a keystroke, we can move to the third person omniscient perspective in order to control the character like a puppet. Through this network of positions, the boundaries between subject and object, the delineation between various points of view, and the notion of self and other are inextricably intertwined.

Though players physically interact in *Tomb Raider* through keyboard keys, Lara is the means by which the user is extended into the virtual environment. Users have control over her body, true; but users identify with her body in a variety of ways. Of Lara Croft, Herz notes, “In *Tomb Raider*, Lara Croft is the protagonist, the hero. When a boy plays the game, Lara is not the object, as she would have been in older games: she is the game. The boy who plays the game plays it as a woman.”<sup>29</sup> Herz, while showing the potential of the technol-

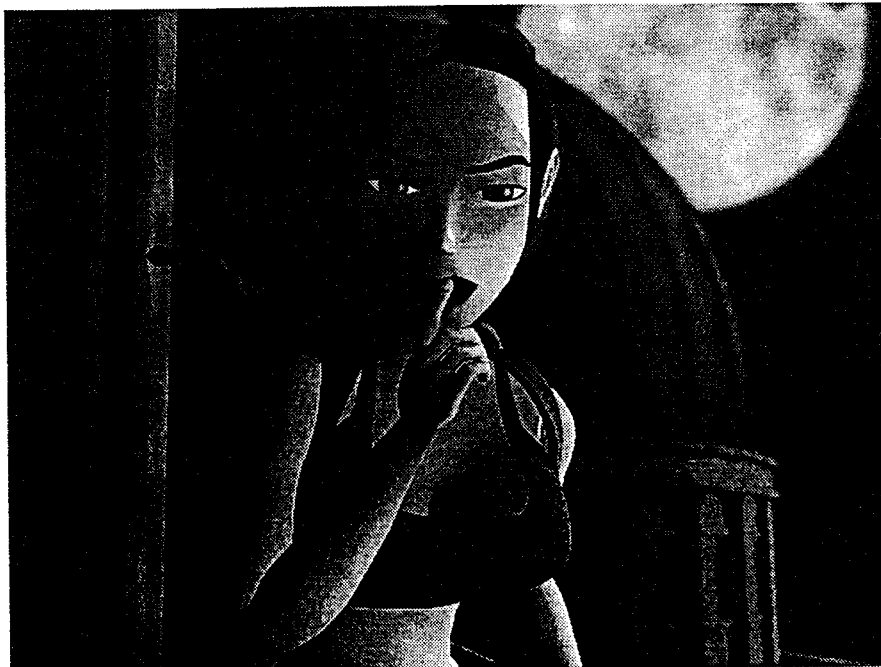


Fig. 7. Lara's past is our secret to possess and re-create. Frame grab from *Tomb Raider*.

ogy to experience truly "virtual realities," shows the confusion at hand about subjectivity in electronic games. Herz's words confuse the manipulation of a female object with the becoming the very object manipulated. But the situation is even more complex, because there are women and girls who do enjoy playing the game. Interviewing a young woman "newbie," Mark Snider includes "At first I was teasing (my dad) about playing *Tomb Raider* because there was a half-naked woman in it," but when she began to play the game, she became a fan. "You don't just feel like you're playing the game, you're going adventuring with Lara Croft."<sup>30</sup> So while Lara is an object to manipulate, she is also a friend or partner. Different players relate to this simultaneity in different ways. The subject/object relationships exemplified by the interactive Lara Croft experience do represent a new model for discovering female or alternative subjectivity, but this model has not been used with feminist content. Through the player/character relationship exemplified by *Tomb Raider*, we may someday be able to have multiple experiences of reality and identify sites at which we can adequately be addressed as subjects. The development of the sheer numbers of points of view may create an alternate subject position that could address the largely excluded female audience. These alternate spaces, exemplified within the postmodern subject position offered in *Tomb Raider*, exposes fissures in which alternate subject positions, or new combinations of subjective positions, will gain footing and representation. Thus (perhaps even more so for female players), the multiplication of the subject position offers an opportunity at which new ways gaming (and more) could develop. True digital stars, that is, stars without need of their own physical body, did not exist until our culture was ready to rethink the body in the context of technology, and until the technology could present this body in a pleasing, hyperrealist aesthetic. It also took a female digital character in a female body to spark these conventions. These female bodies are not bound by physical, biological traits of race and gender, but rather are bodies which are entirely technologically and culturally determined.<sup>31</sup> The digital star system arose, like cinema's star system, through the development of an intricate subject/object, through an excess of information and sexuality, and alongside the absence of the "authentic," but it is an evolving and changing phenomenon. The current narratives offered on the gaming market, however, work against these possibilities by offering hyper-sexual or victim characters. Even though they sug-

gest that multiple points of view can be destabilizing, right now they remake stereotypical female sex objects. This is popular media's chance for opposition or total dissolution of conventional ideas of the self through the destabilization of the subject, to create selves in the relationship between the user and the narrative through gameplay and interactivity design in electronic media. The incorporation of movement, agency, and multiplicity within virtual worlds have tremendous possibilities for repositioning the subject and opening up narratives to non-stereotyped female roles and helping users find their favorite spot among a spectrum of viewpoints and subject positions.

#### Notes

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