

# Multimodality and Communication in Interactive Film: An Analysis of the Video Game Beyond Two Souls

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Multimodality and Communication in Interactive Film: An Analysis  
of the Video Game *Beyond Two Souls*

Master's Thesis

Thesis Advisor: Marina Grubišić, PhD

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Multimodalnost i komunikacija u interaktivnom filmu: analiza  
videoigre *Beyond Two Souls*

Diplomski rad

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## **Abstract**

By analyzing the video game *Beyond Two Souls* (2013), the thesis illustrates in which ways interactive film video games utilize multimodality to convey meaning and facilitate communication between the game and its players. First, a theoretical framework is established with the purpose of defining the terminology and choosing the most appropriate approach in order to reinforce the analysis claims. The analysis examines the linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural modes occurring in the target video game. Moreover, the thesis argues that video games are a valid target for (multimodal) critical discourse analysis and attempts such an analysis on the target video game on the example of gender. The results show that the target video game communicates in a multimodal and interactive way by employing all of the mentioned modes to various degrees. Moreover, they show that the modes complement each other. As a result, it is possible to attempt a multimodal critical discourse analysis; however the interpretations should be taken with a grain of salt as some instances could be purely coincidental. Finally, the thesis opens possibilities for further research either on the target video game or on video games in general.

**Key words:** multimodality, communication, interactive film, videogames, critical discourse analysis

## Sažetak

Analizom videoigre *Beyond Two Souls* (2013), rad prikazuje načine kojima žanr interaktivnog filma koristi multimodalnost kako bi prenio značenje i pospješio komunikaciju između igre i njezinih igrača. Na početku je uspostavljen teorijski okvir sa svrhom definiranja terminologije i odabira najprikladnijeg pristupa kako bi se potkrijepile tvrdnje analize. U analizi su sagledani jezični, vizualni, auditivni, prostorni i gestikulativni modusi koji se pojavljuju u igri. Nadalje, rad tvrdi da su videoigre pogodne za (multimodalnu) kritičku analizu diskursa i pokušava primijeniti isto u odabranoj videoigri na primjeru roda. Rezultati pokazuju da odabrana videoigra komunicira na multimodalan i interaktivni način koristeći sve navedene moduse u različitoj mjeri. Uz to, rezultati pokazuju da se modusi međusobno nadopunjuju. Shodno tome, moguće je pokušati provesti multimodalnu kritičku analizu diskursa. Međutim, kod interpretacije valja biti oprezan jer je moguće da su neki primjeri slučajnost. Naposljetku, rad nudi mogućnosti za daljnja istraživanja, bilo navedene igre ili videoigara općenito.

**Ključne riječi:** multimodalnost, komunikacija, interaktivni film, videoigre, kritička analiza diskursa

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# 1. Introduction

With the advent of technology and digitalization, new forms of communication and (re)presentation have risen. Subsequently, the media which enabled such information transmission has faced unprecedented processes of transformation and adaption which are still in motion. New media, such as film, TV, music videos, video games and apps to name a few, has introduced new means of conveying information, each having their own methods of communication and distinct ways of shaping and maintaining discourse. (Rowsell, 2013)

Video games have undergone extensive changes over the past few decades. Since their emergence in the 70s, they have been often neglected by the academia. It was not until their simplistic looks and mechanics shifted to more complex storytelling and character portrayals that more attention was given to them. Nowadays, video games comprise massive online interfaces with enormous numbers of users and feature productions even bigger than blockbusters. At first glance, one would think that such changes were mostly due to technological advancements; however, another key factor that should be considered here is the overall change in the perception towards video games as more complex forms of media. (Darley, 2000)

The goal of the thesis is to explore ways in which multimodality is used within an interactive film video game to establish communication between the video game and the player. In other words, how different modes are present within the game and, in turn, how the game implements these modes to convey meaning to the player. In addition, it will explore how multimodality affects video games as a form of discourse by attempting a multimodal critical discourse analysis.

For this reason, a theoretical framework will be established which will serve as a basis for the game analysis. In the theoretical framework, basic concepts and terminology of multimodality and its connection to communication will be defined as well as research approaches within the field. Afterwards, the terminology will be applied on the example of video games to provide an overview how multimodality expresses itself in the target medium. Furthermore, an overview of video games discourse will be presented to highlight its features as some are prevalent in the target game. In addition, a brief overview of the genre and the game itself will be presented, including a summary of the game to provide more clarity when referencing specific chapters and characters of the game in the analysis. The main part of the

thesis is a thorough analysis of the game regarding the ways of conveying meaning and establishing communication with the player by using different modes and how these modes affect discourse by providing a critical analysis on the example of gender. Finally, results of the analysis will be discussed and further research possibilities will be mentioned.

The research will be conducted on the interactive film video game *Beyond Two Souls* (2013). The game was chosen due to its mechanics, only two playable characters which are physically connected, themes, representations, approximate duration and personal experience, as other games had either too many characters, were much shorter or even longer and/or featured darker themes. It is important to note that due to the great variety of options a player can make, each playthrough of the game might have different paths and endings, thus making it nigh impossible to cover all of the possibilities and details. The analysis is based on the personal experience of the game and gameplay videos available on YouTube.



## **2. Theoretical Framework**

As both multimodality and communication are broad concepts, this part of the thesis aims to highlight their main points, definitions and terminology as well as the connections between these two concepts. Furthermore, it describes the main approaches of multimodal research to see whether the thesis can be situated in a specific approach of research. This is done in order to apply the theory on the example of video games and to identify how it affects critical discourse analysis of video games. Finally, the framework serves to reinforce the points and claims of the thesis game analysis.

### **2.1. Multimodality and Communication**

Multimodality is an interdisciplinary approach which deals with multiple ways of meaning making through the use of modes. The term was first introduced in the mid-1990s and research has been done in different fields and (sub)disciplines ever since. However, due to the interdisciplinary nature and broad application of multimodality, multiple definitions and theories exist, thus making it more difficult to illustrate the term. Nevertheless, a common feature of multimodality can be recognized: all meaning making involves the production of multimodal wholes which are made up of lesser meaning making units – semiotic resources and modes. (Jewitt et al., 2016)

Semiotic resources are socially made and are constantly changing according to the social requirements of a community. This constant social and historical shaping of sets of semiotic resources results into modes. Therefore, modes can be treated as units of expression and representation within a community. (Kress, 2010) Modes have varying potentials and limitations for meaning making called modal affordances which affect the types of meaning making a mode can be used for, its difficulty and the ways in which other modes can be used for similar meaning making. Needless to say, affordances are also socially motivated as they portray the social purposes that a mode has been used for in a specific context, thus their application and scope differ between communities. (Jewitt et al., 2016) For example, the mode of gesture in one culture could have a completely different meaning in another culture (nodding and shaking one's head) or could be more prominent than other modes (cultures that rely more on gesture rather than speech). (Kress, 2010)

Modes produce and carry meaning on their own, but this meaning is conveyed in isolation and without context, limiting the scope of meaning. It is when modes are combined

into multimodal wholes that they convey broader and more contextualized meaning. In addition, the meaning conveyed by separate modes can change completely when these isolated parts are combined with other modes to portray a new, larger scope of meaning. (Jewitt et al., 2016) This would suggest that there are different relations present between meanings and modes as well as some sort of movement. For example, in an illustrated storybook both image and text can be observed on their own and convey their own meaning. However, when combined, these two modes can complement each other, further enhancing the conveyed meaning. This is called intermodality. On the other hand, some modes convey meaning only when they are coupled together which is called intramodality. This is the case in music when combining different chords, rhythm, pitch and melody. Finally, meaning can reach across more modes, which is known as transmodality. An example would be movies in which sound and image are generally interdependent. (Rowse, 2013) Modes and their meanings can be manipulated with and adapted as well. The shift from one mode to another, e.g. remaking something written into a diagram, is called transduction, whereas doing changes within the same mode, e.g. using a different style for the same characters in a comic book or a video game, is called transformation. (Jewitt et al., 2016)

Examples of modes vary due to different theories, preferences, fields of application or socio-cultural circumstances. Multimodal wholes consist of various modes. (Jewitt et al., 2016) According to the New London Group (1996), a multimodal whole is comprised of five modes: linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial. As a result, describing something as multimodal would mean that it utilizes the above mentioned five modes, albeit to various degree and scope, to produce and convey meaning. On that account, a text can be a multimodal whole by complementing its most prominent mode, the linguistic mode, with other modes, such as the visual (images) and audio (music) mode as well as the spatial (placement and arrangement) and the gestural (movement) mode, but perhaps to a lesser degree. For the sake of the thesis, this categorization will be used.

Meaning making is tightly connected to communication. What sets communication apart from generic meaning making is the involvement of two social actors – one expressing meaning and another interpreting that meaning. (Jewitt et al., 2016) There are many models of communication illustrating this; however, the Shannon-Weaver model, developed in 1949, can be considered the initial model serving as the basis for all other models. It consists of five elements: the information source, the transmitter, the channel, the receiver and the destination. The information source is the place where information is stored which is then encoded via the

transmitter. Subsequently, the transmitter chooses the channel through which the message will be transmitted to the receiver where it will be decoded in order to finally reach its destination. However, due to its linearity, this model is more akin to mechanical communication and does not portray actual human communication, hence other models have been developed over the years. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a massive increase in communication technologies which changed the ways how communication was administered and perceived. A digitizing process occurred within communication paving the way for non-linear and many-to-many types of communication which are incorporated under the term of interactivity. (Cobley, 2008)

Interactivity is a relatively new concept in communication. It is mostly associated with the communication between a medium such as the Internet or video games and a human user of the mentioned medium. Since the concept is new and still developing, various definitions exist. Nevertheless, four main features that are common across publications on interactivity can be identified – *directionality* (two-way communication), *selectivity* (the scope of choices available to the user), *responsiveness* (the extent and speed of the response to user input) and *awareness* (actions and reactions based on context and meaning, regarding both system and user). (Neumann, 2008) The concept of interactivity and interactive communication is the one that is most appropriate for the video game-player communication the thesis focuses on and will thus be applied.

Finally, since all meaning making results in multimodal wholes, communication is in itself multimodal. According to Kress (2010):

“Communication has happened when a participant’s attention has focused on some aspect of the communication; she or he has taken that to be a message and has framed aspects of that message as a prompt for her or himself. That prompt has been interpreted, becoming a new inward sign, and in turn leading, potentially, to further communicated action. [...] communication [...] is multimodal: a gaze, a touch, a spoken comment, a gesture, a change in position, all might act as a prompt.” (pp. 32-33)

In other words, when communicating, a person will use a certain prompt to convey their message and assign a mode. In turn, the interlocutor will interpret the prompt, and with it, the mode and follow in similar fashion or shift to another mode based on socio-pragmatic circumstances. Language is here only one of the tools for conveying meaning, specifically belonging to the linguistic mode. On that account, to analyze communication does not mean

to just interpret what is spoken or written but all of the resources that are included within the process of conveying a message. (Jewitt et al., 2016)

As this applies to all types of communication, it would suggest that the game-player communication is multimodal as well and that various modes are present within video games and viable for analysis. However, before jumping straight to the implementation on video games, an overview of multimodal research should be given. There are three main approaches to multimodal research: systemic functional linguistics (SFL), social semiotics and conversation analysis.

SFL was developed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s and claims that language is a social semiotic system used to fulfill four main social functions: to construct our experience of the world, to make logical connections in that world, to enact social relations and to organize the message. The aim of SFL is to develop a systemic functional grammar which would explain the meaning making potential of language and which would be used to understand actual language use. The application of this theory on multimodality is known as the systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis which deals with the functions of different semiotic resources and systems of meaning in order to analyze multimodal combinations of semiotic choices over space and time and the meanings which arise from them. The targets of SFL are texts in both print and digital format, videos, three dimensional objects and sites etc. (Jewitt et al., 2016)

Social semiotics is an approach building on critical linguistics, semiotics, social theory and SFL which was developed by Gunther Kress and Bob Hodge in the early 1980s. The approach is based on the notion of the motivated sign and its aim is to recognize the agency of social actors and social/power relations between them. It does so by analyzing processes of meaning making and how they are (re)shaped by individuals and societies. Moreover, social semiotics focuses on the connection between modes (and their affordances) and the social needs they are used for, the agency of the sign maker and the context of meaning making. The targets of the approach are the same as in SFL with the addition of social interactions. (Jewitt et al., 2016)

Last but not least is the conversation analysis, developed in the early 1960s by Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson, which deals with social interaction. In the beginning the focus was on observing conversations, as the name suggests; however, influenced by interactionism and ethnomethodology, it expanded its field of research to include a broader range of semiotic

resources used in interaction in order to explore multimodal interaction. The aim of conversation analysis is to recognize how people organize themselves in and through interaction. The focus is on sequentiality and the coordination of action - action unfolds in time and order, one after another, with each action being in relation to the preceding or following action. The targets of the approach are natural social encounters and multimodal interactions. (Jewitt et al., 2016)

Apart from the three main approaches, a multitude of sub-fields have branched out by combining features and methods of the main three such as: geo-semiotics, multimodal (inter)action analysis, multimodal ethnography, multimodal corpus analysis and multimodal reception analysis. (Jewitt et al., 2016) Despite this multitude of approaches and sub-fields, choosing a specific theory to conduct a multimodal research is quite troublesome. Namely, because of its interdisciplinary nature, multimodality does not have a fixed and consistent terminology. Moreover, it lacks dialogue between its approaches, thus a lot of them have many similarities making it difficult to tell them apart. Finally, many approaches are predominately based on theory, lacking any forms of real application and with it self-reflection and critical attention, consequently expanding independently without testing their assumptions and theories in practice. (Machin et al., 2016) All three of the main approaches offer elements which could be implemented in the thesis such as the use of semiotic resources and modes, how they are motivated and how the game-player/player-player conversation unfolds taking into account various modes. For that reason, and to avoid any confusion, the thesis will not follow a specific theoretical approach.

## **2.2. Multimodality and Communication in Video Games**

According to the definitions of multimodality and its interrelationship with communication, it is clear that video games engage in a multimodal type of communication. As mentioned, this is achieved through the use of modes where each mode uses a plethora of resources in the meaning making process. This segment will try to identify how the five modes are used within video games and which resources they implement in order to apply the same during the thesis game analysis.

One of the primary resources video games use to convey meaning is, of course, language, belonging to the linguistic mode. The main method of using language is through dialogue which can be ludic, diegetic or even a combination of both. Ludic dialogue refers to the ways a game communicates with a player in terms of the activity of playing, addressing

them as a player, and it is done via the game interface. The notorious “victory” and “game over” at the end of the game are a typical example of ludic dialogue. Its main functions is to provide feedback regarding the player’s input and activity as well as to explain the rules of the game through tutorials, commands, objectives, comments and hints. Diegetic dialogue, on the other hand, has an immersive function by trying to place the player inside its virtual world and to provide an authentic experience. It provides additional information and context regarding the plot which may or may not be of importance, but rather a mere cosmetic feature. Nowadays, video games tend to combine both types of dialogue in order to explain the rules without “breaking character” and the immersive experience. When it comes to the format of language use, video games were, in the beginning, heavily text oriented, but due to further development and the inclusion of voice actors, they are predominately utilizing spoken language now. The reason for this is, yet again, to boost immersion and to shift the focus from on-screen text to on-screen action. (Domsch, 2017)

However, the utilization, amount and purpose of both written and spoken language vary mostly due to the genre and the mechanics of a particular game. (Jones, 2008) For example, role-playing games (RPGs) are dialogue heavy, featuring humongous scripts, where oftentimes the dialogue is vital for understanding the game’s plot, and combining both ludic and diegetic dialogue for maximum immersion. On the other hand, arcade games use almost no language, only implementing ludic dialogue for explaining the game objectives and/or comments regarding the player’s success or failure. The type of language is also genre related due to genres requiring genre-specific skills and language. (Swales, 1990) As a result, lexical items common, for instance, in strategy games such as various types of resources (wood, food, stone, metal) buildings (palace, barracks, granary), units (villagers, soldiers, cavalry) and technologies are not commonly found in fighting games where the language mostly focuses on the context of the match with lexical items such as fight, draw, win, game over or moves such as punch, kick and throw.

As an audio-visual medium, video games rely heavily on both the visual and the audio mode which are, perhaps, the dominant modes video games employ. The visuals are the first thing that grabs a player’s attention. Within the visual mode various resources are used such as pictures, maps, diagrams, frames, scenes, colors, lightning etc. However, such a multitude of resources all over the screen would cause chaos and confusion, thus anchors and vectors are used. Anchors refer to objects that are used in the visual mode to guide the viewer’s gaze by fixating it on set points. (Rowse, 2013) In video games, anchors are expressed by

focusing on objects in a scene or frame, marking them as important or interactive, or by other means of making them stand out by implementing actions or accentuating their features. On the other hand, vectors are cues directing the order in which to view an image. Moreover, their role can be considered akin to action verbs in a language as they depict the connections between the portrayed visual objects (actor-process-goal/subject-verb-object). (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) This is expressed by the placement of objects in video games and their directionality towards other objects which can illustrate the hierarchy between them. Different player perspectives used in video games are another example of vector use and can make certain game actions more or less emotionally involving. Last but not least, visual concepts are used to convey the main gist of what is being shown. They can be figurative, expressed by symbolic and metaphoric means, or literal interpretations. (Rowse, 2013)

Sound is the main resource of the audio mode. By using sound, video games can indicate various emotions and states, such as tension, fear, danger, love etc. Specific characteristics of a sound invoke specific feelings and attitudes. For instance, sharp sounds cannot be linked to a feeling of relief and softer sounds to a feeling of urgency. Moreover, the use of sound can foreshadow actions which are about to happen or to end, or follow specific actions and movements as they take place. It can be used to connect different scenes and sequences of events. Characters, places and settings can even have specific sounds and music themes assigned to them which can be heard whenever the focus is on them, be it explicit or only implied. (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016) According to Van Leeuwen (1999), there are six main domains of sound: sound perspective, sound time and rhythm, the interaction of voices, melody, voice quality and timbre and modality. In the field of modality, sound can have a naturalistic, abstract or sensory modality each serving different purposes. In terms of naturalistic modality, the aim is to reproduce real sounds which enhance authenticity in video games. Abstract modality implements various sounds which in combination portray the underlying essence of the target they represent, e.g., trumpets and drums for a representing a triumphant victory. Sensory modality emphasizes a particular sound and reduces any other accompanying sound to invoke strong emotions and feelings to affect the player. (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016) Racing games, for instance, heavily include naturalistic sounds of a car engine and racing cars, emphasized to the point that any other sound falls into the background, enhancing immersion with the feeling of actually being inside the vehicle. (Rowse, 2013)

Regarding the spatial mode, video games feature virtual worlds which the player explores and navigates through. Space within video games is tightly connected to the overall game design, mechanics and objectives. In most games, space has boundaries which work in sync with player progression. For instance, as the player completes levels, new places unlock for them to explore either as a reward or as a way of scaling the game's difficulty and player's skills and capabilities. However, some boundaries are totally locked and banned from the player. This acts as a sort of framing of the virtual world the game portrays to its players and the scope of possible interactions they can achieve within this world. (Rowse, 2013) In the past few years, video games started implementing open-world spaces, which, at first glance, seem to depart from the idea of having fixed boundaries, yet this open-world acts primarily to provide freedom to players to shape their own path within the game's fixed space, rather than to follow a linear path. (Domsch, 2017) Another feature of the spatial mode in video games is spatial immersion which is achieved by the order and arrangement of objects within the overall game or a particular place as well as the style, color palette and other cosmetic features and details used for creating game landscapes. (Rowse, 2013)

Finally, the gestural mode in video games is primarily utilized through the resource of movement which can be related to player, character and camera movement. Player movement is connected to interactivity – a game's cue might require input from the player in the manner of pressing a button, clicking the mouse or moving the controller in a certain direction which will in turn result into further game output. Interrelated to this is character movement as in many cases the player controls their own character, thus their actions will result into specific moves their character will perform on screen or interactions they will have with the game itself. (Domsch, 2017) Camera movement has a different function. Being closely related to space, it highlights the player's surroundings, objectives and targets. By focusing on certain objects it will frame them and draw the player's attention towards them. Moreover, it can set the tone of a place, scene or level and thus implicitly provide the player with more information or additional context. (Rowse, 2013) A great example of a predominately gestural video game is Wii Sports which utilizes motion sensing to increase interactivity, immersion and authenticity.

This is a brief analysis of the five modes as an extended analysis of one mode could cover the whole scope of the thesis. In addition, the modes were analyzed in isolation here, however the ways they complement each other are easy to determine. The linguistic mode can be paired up with the visual mode as written language and with the audio mode as spoken



language. It can be also paired with the gestural mode by assigning specific movement to words and language and the spatial mode by taking into account word placement. As mentioned, the visual and the audio mode commonly work in sync and both visuals and sound can be assigned to specific places and movements. Space is tightly linked to the visual mode and movement is generally expressed within a space.

### **2.3. Video Games and Critical Discourse Analysis**

According to Gee (2015): “discourse analysis studies how things are said and written and how they could have been said or written differently and what difference it makes that they were said or written the way they were.” Due to the interactive communication that video games engage in, they should be able to participate in the processes of discourse making. However, there has been a constant argument between two different views when it comes to the structure and meaning video games convey known as the “game (ludologists) vs. story (narratologists) debate.” According to ludologists, the only function of video games is entertainment and nothing else, thus they carry no complex underlying meaning. On the other hand, narratologists consider that video games can be observed as any other form of text. According to them, not only do video games carry cultural value but they might also offer insight into topics regarding the socio-economic and political situation and structure of societies. (Jones, 2008)

Gee (2015) claims that video games can be observed in terms of discourse analysis because they have their own syntax and semantics as well as situated meanings determined by context and social and cultural knowledge. This is expressed by the game mechanics which determine the possibilities and limitations for sequencing and realizing meaning to the player which then assign conceptual labels affected by the player’s knowledge of the world and their socio-cultural backgrounds as well as by their knowledge of the game, the overall genre and communities. Moreover, the multimodal nature of video games shifts the predominately language-focused discourse analysis into multimodal critical discourse analysis encompassing all the modes which contribute to the process of meaning making. As a result, multimodal critical discourse analysis can provide a broader array of examples and, thus, a more precise analysis of the conveyed discourse and the choices implemented to shape that discourse. (Machin, 2013)

The process of shaping discourse to fit one’s needs can be referred to as recontextualization. This is done by the addition, deletion, substitution or evaluation of

different semiotic resources, such as social actors, events, activities, places, times, values and goals, in order to manipulate the meaning that is going to be conveyed to fit a certain narrative. (Machin, 2013) For instance, social actors can be allocated different roles such as the agent (actor) and patient (goal) regarding a given action. They can be referred to specifically or generically, as individuals or as groups, associated or differentiated, anonymized or clearly determined (specified), personalized or impersonalized, nominated by stating their name, categorized either under the function or the identity they share with others and even overdetermined by being involved in more than one social practice. Each of the mentioned techniques will affect the shaping of discourse, its transmission and interpretation, and result different outcomes. (Van Leeuwen, 1996) Van Dijk (1996) claims that these methods of inclusion and exclusion are motivated by dominance, power, control and access in order to impose the dominant group's attitudes, values, norms and ideologies. Some of the notions affected by this are language, culture, race, gender, minorities, politics, education and economic issues which, in turn, affect the way how different modes convey meaning.

When it comes to video games, they are prone to processes of stereotyping and “othering.” As today's dominant worldview is the Western one, all other societies and cultures are liable to be portrayed as the other. A commonly used tool to achieve this is language. Certain registers and varieties of English are used to portray types of characters, groups or whole races and nations. A notable occurrence in video games is that it favors the standard varieties, especially General American English, which is the one most used by main characters, while other varieties, dialects and accents of English as well as other languages are used to stereotype specific groups, to put them in binary oppositions or are involved in processes of backgrounding, suppression and even complete erasure. (Ensslin, 2011) Similar processes are noticeable with notions of gender, race and minorities which are either underrepresented or associated specific socio-cultural roles or characteristics. For example, female characters are often either supporting characters or are portrayed as a submissive “damsel in distress” type of character. (Mou & Peng, 2008) On the other hand, whenever female characters are in the role of the main character they are hypersexualized and given traditional masculine traits.<sup>1</sup> (Atkins, 2003) Nevertheless, recent development in video games is tackling the above mentioned issues and, due to the bigger variety of their players in terms of gender, race and minorities, tends to be more including. In the case of gender, not only are

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<sup>1</sup> This is known as the “Lara phenomenon” (named by Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider*) in which female characters are portrayed as strong, dominant figures with abnormal body proportions and revealing clothing to fit the demands of a straight male adolescent audience.

there more female characters in main roles, but they are also depicted as independent and strong women without being heavily sexualized. (Consalvo, 2021)

This concludes the theoretical framework which will be used as a helpful tool to determine multimodal communication across the five modes (linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, gestural) in the video game *Beyond Two Souls* (2013) as well as the implications of multimodal critical discourse analysis. However, before the analysis, a brief overview of the specific genre (the interactive film) and of the game itself will be given.

### **3. Interactive Film Video Games**

Interactive film or interactive drama is a specific video game genre merging elements of film with video games. It features an extensive script and is heavily focused on the plot and its characters, frequently animating or filming real actors. As the name suggests, it is basically a film-format video game where, besides the core story, different storylines can occur based on the player's choices and actions, thus making it interactive. (Dodge, 2022)

Historically, the genre had its ups and downs, being completely abandoned at one point and rising from the ashes afterwards. The first interactive film video game is considered to be *Dragon's Lair*, an arcade game released in 1983, while the first interactive film video games on the computer were released in the early to mid 1990s. The new and core element implemented in such games was the use of the full-motion video technique (FMV) which utilizes pre-recorded video sequences displayed in the order determined by the game and eventually, by the player, hence the interactivity. The genre sparked a lot of interest both visually and through its specific gameplay, however it was short-lived as it soon got overshadowed by other genres and criticized for the low resolution, poor acting, restrictive gameplay and sparse story branching of its games, especially with the release of highly dynamic first person shooters with much better graphics and 3D visuals. (Lessard, 2009)

The rebirth of the genre occurred with the release of *Fahrenheit: Indigo Prophecy* in 2005. Developed by Quantic Dream, the game took the genre to another level by introducing two more features. First, it enabled the player to independently explore the environment in order to find objects or people to interact with as they would trigger a multitude of choices that the player can pursue. The second feature were the action sequences via quick time events (QTE) providing a more dynamic gameplay by either rewarding players with better outcomes if they were successful or granting more immersion as it enables the player to

perform everyday activities such as cooking, dancing, cleaning, running etc. Finally, it improved all of the features the genre was criticized for by using a virtual movie studio which enhanced the game graphics and made the whole “filming” process more flexible, accurate and cheaper, consequently enabling more complex sequences, story branching and attention to detail. (Lessard, 2009)

These would become the main mechanics of the genre and the formula which would be further enhanced during the following years which was apparent with the release of *Heavy Rain* in 2010. The game was revolutionary in showcasing the potential that the genre can have when it comes to player immersion. By expanding all of the mentioned mechanics it provided a feeling similar to watching movies, yet it changes the voyeuristic experience into a completely immersive one as even the slightest choice that the player makes can matter as the story unfolds. (Miller, 2010) Moreover, it implemented motion capture when animating actors which became another trademark of the genre, especially in recent years. The technique made it possible to capture a live actor’s performance and translate it into a digital one, thus providing a more authentic feel. (Menache, 2011) With *Heavy Rain*, Quantic Dream established themselves as one of the main developers of the genre and popularized it even more. However, other developers, such as Telltale Games, Supermassive Games and Don’t Nod Entertainment started producing interactive film video games of their own, with each developer adding distinct features and tweaks.

### **3.1. *Beyond Two Souls* (2013)**

*Beyond Two Souls*, developed by Quantic Dream and published in 2013 by Sony Computer Entertainment, is a psychological action thriller which tells the story of Jodie Holmes and a mysterious entity called Aiden, linked to her since birth. The narrator of the story is Jodie herself and follows either a non-linear path, also referred to as cinematic order, or a more linear path, depending on the player’s choice when starting the game. Like other interactive film video games, *Beyond Two Souls* features an interactive narrative which is manifested through the choices the player can make during the dialogue, their interactions with objects and their actions which can affect the current chapter or later chapters, thus affecting the overall story and resulting different game endings. Although this might bring about a semblance of absolute freedom while playing the game, endless possibilities and multiple branching storylines, the story itself still remains mostly linear while the effects some of the choices have and the differences that might occur are rather minute and more of a

“cosmetic” feature. The story consists of 24 chapters together with a prologue and an epilogue chapter. During the game, the player regularly switches between Jodie and Aiden, depending on the chapter and the given objectives. The game is played through the 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective when playing as Jodie, and 1<sup>st</sup> person perspective when playing as Aiden. The game can be played cooperatively, where each player assumes the role of one character, either Jodie or Aiden. The game features 3D graphics and motion capture acting by Elliot Page and Willem Dafoe among others. It was originally released for PlayStation3 and later released for PlayStation4 (2015) and PC (2019) as well as being available on the Steam service.<sup>2</sup> Apart from English, supported languages (voice-over and subtitles) are: French, German, Italian, Russian, Polish, Japanese, Spanish and Portuguese as well as the Mexican and Brazilian varieties of the last two; whereas only subtitles are supported in Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Korean, Traditional Chinese, Greek, Czech, Croatian, Hungarian and Turkish.<sup>3</sup> For the sake of clarity, a short summary of the game is provided in a chronological order:

From an early age, Jodie has been accompanied by an imaginary friend called Aiden and has demonstrated unusual psychic powers much to the dismay of her parents who, prompted by the weird occurrences and mishaps at their house, take Jodie to a research facility (later revealed as the DPA<sup>4</sup>) run by Dr. Nathan Dawkins. There it is revealed that Aiden is more than an imaginary friend and that he is a real being (later referred to as an entity<sup>5</sup>) possessing unusual powers and linked to Jodie via an invisible cord, protecting her from harm. Jodie’s parents decide to leave her in the facility under the care of Nathan and his assistant Cole where she and Aiden are studied and experimented on. At one point, Nathan’s daughter and wife die in a car accident. In order to comfort him, Jodie channels their spirits so that they can communicate with him and say their last goodbye. Jodie spends all of her childhood and teenage years in the facility. Each attempt to go out and socialize with her peers (teenage party, going out to a club) ends with an accident. All this time, the facility has been working on a condenser which can open a rift to the so-called Infraworld but due to a malfunction, the entities break free and cause havoc in the facility. Nathan asks Jodie to shut down the condenser as Aiden is the only one who can fight the entities. After the incident, the

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<sup>2</sup> Steam is a video game digital distribution service where people can buy and play video games, discuss them by joining the Community or even create their own games via the Workshop

<sup>3</sup> *Beyond Two Souls*. Quantic Dream. <https://www.quanticroam.com/en/beyond-two-souls>

<sup>4</sup> Department of Paranormal Activities, working for the US military and the CIA (in game)

<sup>5</sup> paranormal creatures from another dimension (known as the Infraworld) possessing exceptional powers and extremely aggressive towards living beings

CIA sends Ryan to recruit Jodie as a special agent. In the CIA, Jodie, now a young adult, undergoes a special military training in order to prepare her for future missions and grows more attached to Ryan. However, Jodie leaves the CIA in a fit of rage once she finds out that she has been used by Ryan as a mere pawn to assassinate a legally elected president in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country. Hunted by the CIA, she stumbles upon a group of homeless people and later takes refuge in a Navajo family, helping both of these groups and learning more about herself in the process, a pivotal moment being the flashbacks of an unknown woman giving birth to her. In order to find out more about her, Jodie seeks out Cole who tells her that the woman is Norah Gray and that she now resides in a DPA-run psychiatric facility. When they find Norah, it is revealed that she is Jodie's biological mother induced to a coma after giving birth to her while Jodie was given to foster parents until her powers started to manifest. Leaving the facility, Jodie gets captured by the CIA and is asked to perform one final mission for them in exchange for her freedom, namely to destroy the condenser of a foreign country that has also discovered the Infraworld. Jodie accepts the offer and, in a team with Ryan, destroys the condenser. However, the CIA do not keep their promise and, afraid of Jodie's powers, induce her into a coma. Meanwhile, Nathan realizes that some souls of the dead dwell in the Infraworld as well. In a desperate attempt to merge the two worlds to be reunited with his daughter and wife, he shuts down the humongous condenser created for the US military, releasing countless of entities. Saved by Ryan and Cole, Jodie has to destroy another condenser yet again and, in the process, finds out that Aiden is in fact her twin brother who strangled on the umbilical cord during birth and died. By destroying the condenser, Aiden disappears as well and Jodie has to make a choice between dying and joining her brother or to continue living without him.

#### **4. Multimodality and Communication in *Beyond Two Souls* (2013)**

The multimodal communication in the video game *Beyond Two Souls* (2013) will be examined in terms of the linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural mode and their reciprocal complementation by applying the theory and terminology from the framework. In addition, a multimodal analysis of the game's discourse will be attempted on the example of the notion of gender. Even though the game features various other points of interest regarding critical discourse analysis, only one is chosen due to the scope of the paper. To reinforce the analysis, examples from the game will be provided.

It is important to note that there are two forms of communication present in the game due to its mechanics: game-player (single player) and player-player (cooperative mode) communication. The focus here is on the former as the latter requires a different approach of research involving real subjects and their experience of the game which could not be conducted due to the available resources, limitations and the overall scope of the paper. However, some aspects of player-player communication will be mentioned to provide some food for thought and further research ideas.

#### **4.1. Game-Player Communication**

The predominant form of communication is the one occurring between the game and its player. Its main role is to provide information, instructions and help (both ludic and diegetic) to the player who then decides whether and how they will use this output. By doing what is required, the player provides input and implicitly communicates with the game. Finally, the game corresponds to the player's input by providing new information and sequences of events, thus "rewarding" the player with progression.

##### **4.1.1. Linguistic mode**

In the domain of the linguistic mode, the game conveys language mostly in spoken form while additionally attaching its written form via subtitles. Spoken language is heavily based on dialogue. It is mostly diegetic due to the focus being on the narrative. Any form of ludic dialogue, such as explaining the game mechanics, is done in combination with diegetic dialogue. A genre-specific feature occurs as well in the form of interactive dialogue where the player is given sets of multiple choices requiring them to choose one of them.

The game communicates with its player by providing additional information and instructions to the player through the characters' utterances. This is mostly present with Jodie as she is the main character. For instance, when the player is struggling with finding a target object or moving on to the next chapter, Jodie might provide a hint or more possibilities of what the player could try and do. She is not explicitly addressing the player when doing this, but rather self-reflecting, which is a way of combining ludic dialogue with diegetic as a means of not breaking character and immersion. For example, in "The Dinner" chapter, Jodie has to decide if she is going to either cook or order food for her dinner-date with Ryan, providing the player with additional information:

“I gotta find something I can make in one hour...with what’s ever left in the fridge...Asian beef...I mean that looks good...And it’s not too complicated! Curried chicken with oven-baked vegetables...It will take some time in the oven – but it seems doable! Pizza delivery. I mean, it’s not exactly gourmet, but no preparation, no mess. I mean, it could be an option...”

However, one should have in mind that her “hints” might not be the only option at a given time but perhaps the most obvious actions to do or something she would prefer to do. For instance, when Jodie is preparing for the dinner-date with Ryan at her place, she is talking to herself, but at the same time providing instructions to the player: “Okay. It’s 7 o’clock. I’ve an hour to make dinner, tidy up and make myself look good.” In this case, the player can actually listen to her instructions or totally ignore her and thus produce different outcomes.

Another way how the game communicates with the player is when Jodie talks to Aiden. This is again done by combining both ludic and diegetic dialogue. Jodie regularly gives implicature to Aiden regarding the situation they find themselves in, thus providing additional information and context (“We’re in the middle of nowhere. I’m dying of thirst and everything’s FUCKED...”). Moreover, she gives direct speech acts to Aiden or instructions. For example, in “The Embassy” chapter, where Jodie needs Aiden’s help to uncover secret intel, by talking to him Jodie actually gives speech acts to the player:

“Aiden? Aiden, are you ready? There’s a large painting in one of the rooms upstairs. Behind it there is a safe. The documents we are looking for are inside. But there are guards and cameras so you have to be careful, you got it?”

Nevertheless, her instructions are not always final nor are they completely unambiguous as Aiden (the player) can choose in which way he will complete the given objective, ranging from pacifistic approaches to more violent ones. As a result, the player can make choices opposite to Jodie’s character, which is apparent as she will sometimes either express gratitude and encourage them or reprimand them (Figure 1). Moreover, by giving some sort of freedom to the player when assuming control of Aiden, the game represents the entity as an independent being with his own thoughts, reasoning and motivation, not as a mere tool for Jodie or the CIA to use however they please.



This is akin to traditional, real-life communication. In theory, communication requires an interpretation. It does not classify the exact type of that interpretation. The interpretation will certainly be based on the prompt and will, in turn, use either the same prompt or another one based on the circumstances. According to Kress (2010), “refusal to engage” can be also considered a social act and, thus a part of communication. Therefore, whenever the player decides not to listen to Jodie and to do the opposite still counts as a form of communication. However, the difference in real life communication is a much broader array of socio-cultural conventions, such as politeness, which would affect these choices in real life to a greater extent.

In some instances side characters provide instructions as well, especially if Jodie is grouped with them in a chapter or when Aiden has to do something on his own. Deictic responses, such as “Now where? Over there! This way!”, are common when the game is trying to provide directions to the player. It is important to note that Aiden cannot speak, at least not by using verbal human language, thus he communicates by using specific sounds or his powers to interact with objects which will be covered in the audio and gestural mode respectively. However, Aiden has portrayed the ability to comprehend human language which is clear due to his reactions and interactions, especially with Jodie. To illustrate this, the following conversation between Aiden and Jodie in “The Dinner” chapter is given:

“Jodie: Now I get why you blasted my computer...You didn’t want me to see  
Ryan...”

Aiden: muffled sounds

Jodie: It’s NOT your call, Aiden. I can do what I want!

Aiden: muffled sounds

Jodie: Fuck this! Fuck this...We’re not gonna start this again...I’m not  
YOURS, Aiden. I can have a relationship with WHOEVER I want. This  
is my life, do you fucking hear me? This is MY life!

Aiden: muffled sounds

Jodie: You know what? I happen to think Ryan is great. I mean, he’s charming,  
he’s intelligent, he’s funny, and I...think I’m falling for him...

Aiden goes silent.”

This example also illustrates the use of written language, i.e. the subtitles provided for the conversation. It is visible that capital letters are used to emphasize certain words which were also emphasized in spoken form. Interestingly, the game depicted that Aiden has the ability to use written human language as well as to make different signs. For example, again in “The Dinner” chapter, Aiden scribes the message “you don’t need him, you have me” on the steamed up mirror in the bathroom (Figure 2).

The most apparent combination of ludic and diegetic dialogue is through the in-game tutorial, designed to help players to get acquainted with the game mechanics. It is present during the first few chapters and explains the basic game functions such as movement and camera control. Another tutorial is given for controlling Aiden and his telekinetic powers as they are his main use. Some skills and movements, especially those related to Aiden (force shields, healing, possessing etc.) or occurring during more action-packed scenes (QTE, slow motion), might appear later in the game and might be specific for certain chapters. Whenever these appear for the first time in the game, instructions are provided as well. They are provided either via text as orders (look around, move, hold) or by visuals. This communication is made in an organic way adapting to the chapter's gist and setting as well as to not disrupt the progression of the story. For example, most of the basic controls are explained during "The Experiment" chapter which is the second chapter both in the non-linear and the chronological order. The first objective is to get Jodie to the experiment room. Her route from her own room towards the target is used to introduce movement controls (when passing through the hall) and camera control (when reaching crossroads or listening to NPCs<sup>6</sup> conversations). Once she reaches the target room, Nathan explains her what they are about to do, again providing information and context to the player, and instructs her to use Aiden. Basically, the experiment itself is used as a tutorial for Aiden's abilities. In addition, the chapter "Welcome to the CIA" provides a tutorial for many of the later action-oriented and stealth missions, by incorporating it with Jodie's training sessions in the CIA.

Concerning the dialogue choices, there are never less than 2 or more than 4 choices given to the player at a time. The choices are displayed via text coupled with a controller button (square, triangle, circle and X) next to the character (Figure 3). Only one dialogue choice can be selected, although they sometimes carry over to the next set of choices. Nevertheless, the player is limited to one choice per set, hence their picks will be probably based on their preferences, attitudes and personal opinion regarding various characters, actions and events. Moreover, in some instances, not making a choice is also considered a choice and might lead to different outcomes. At some other occasions, the game might make a choice on its own if the player is taking too long. This is connected to the temporal boundaries of the game, as well as to its interactivity, requiring momentary input in order to progress the story.

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<sup>6</sup> Non-playable character in a video game

The dialogue choices generally consist of one word; however, sometimes, albeit rarely, they occur as phrases or collocations (slap face, spend the night, say nothing, fake parents, chicken curry, far away, fresh air). This is perhaps done to illustrate the action that is to occur (slap face) or the aim that is strived for (spend the night), specify the target so that it can be clearly differentiated (fake parents-parents), provide additional information (chicken curry) and context (far away) and emphasis (fresh air).

Regarding the parts of speech, they are mostly nouns, verbs and adjectives. Nouns are used for providing additional information and context. In many cases they result in Jodie inquiring about a target object, person or event, e.g. baby/Jimmy/Walter/attackers/camp. Their other use is for identifying specific objects when belonging to a group as is the case with spices (salt/pepper/ginger) or music (country/pop/rock). Verbs can be divided into two categories: those resulting in a physical action/reaction (shrug, get up, hug, kiss, leave) or those resulting into further dialogue by influencing the tone and shaping the direction of it (persist, lie, evade, discuss, insult, accept, refuse, blame). Adjectives are mostly used to express Jodie's feelings and emotions (determined, hungry, angry, sympathetic, sincere, tired) or to describe objects (cool/elegant/sexy for the clothes she is choosing for her date with Ryan; incriminating/simple/sincere/amusing for the message she is going to write on a wooden board). Adverbs are not given, although they are connected to adjectives, as Jodie will proceed to behave or say/do something in that fashion (aggressive-aggressively, indifferent-indifferently, cynical-cynically). Last but not least, there are also interrogatives (Why? Where?) as well as yes/no responses. Options for pronouns are not given. Nouns are used instead as well as proper nouns when possible (identified person). For instance, in the case of the above mentioned example baby/Jimmy/Walter/attackers/camp by having pronouns as options, such as he (Jimmy, Walter), it (baby) or they (attackers), the game would not successfully convey its message to the player and would cause confusion and possible misunderstandings. The player would not know if "he" is referring to either Jimmy or Walter or even Stan (another male character present at that moment), if "it" is referring to the baby or the attack that occurred and if "they" is referring to the homeless group or the attackers.

One set of choices can consist of same or mixed parts of speech. Sets of same parts of speech are straightforward as the player has to make a choice belonging to the same mode. In other words, they have to choose among a set of nouns one for which they want additional information and context (CIA/Cole/Norah), among verbs one action/reaction they want to pursue (discuss/repulse/slap (face)) and among adjectives one emotion they want to express

(distant, aggressive, cold, curt). On the other hand, sets of mixed parts of speech are more interesting as the player has to choose between different modes. For example, in the “Separation” chapter when Jodie is told to pack her things and join the CIA, the following options appear: upset/why?/experiments/incredulous, thus the player has to choose between expressing emotions, asking for reasons why she has to go or for additional information regarding experiments. As for the choices itself, they are either complete opposites (yes/no, lie/truth, reject/kiss, sociable/reserved), similar choices with one being in opposition (reject/refuse/accept, no/shrug/yes, lie/evade/truth, sympathetic/sarcastic/ironic), all similar choices (cold/curt/aggressive/distant, bitter/angry) or completely different choices (cynical/irony/indifferent, beg/angry/determined).

#### **4.1.2. Visual mode**

Visual features in general provide the background on which the scene or the whole chapter is going to take place, hence providing additional information and broadening its context. For instance, flickering lights, flames, shadows, damaged objects, blood stains and wounded/dead people are used to illustrate the scope of destruction and the danger of released entities in “The Condenser” chapter. In addition, the game alerts the player to constantly be on their guard. Visual features also provide additional embellishment such as the landscape, fauna, flora, clothing and ornaments of the Natives in the “Navajo” chapter or the various toys, colors and decorations in Jodie’s room (Figure 4).

The game also uses visual cues to highlight which objects can be interacted with. This is similar to the anchors used in the visual mode. Different techniques are used when playing with Jodie and with Aiden. As Jodie, white dots appear besides objects when the player walks nearby signaling that they can be interacted with (Figure 5) Another method is by displaying a controller button (in most cases X) that the player has to either press or hold to interact with an object. In the tutorial parts of the game the whole controller is displayed with the required buttons and their movements highlighted in red color (Figure 6), thus combining both visual and spatial modes as well as the gestural by requiring player input in form of movement. Besides cues, the already mentioned dialogue choices will appear when playing with Jodie.

On the other hand, whenever the player switches to Aiden, the complete interface of the game changes. The screen becomes dim, the coloring becomes bland apart from the blue colored link between Aiden and Jodie and colored cues appear signaling different skills that Aiden can use when the player interacts with an object. For example, blue dots are the default

cues which make use of Aiden's telekinesis (Figure 7). In addition light blue flames can appear which are used for Aiden's memory transmitting skill, while a green color indicates Aiden's healing abilities. Moreover, characters that Aiden can interact with will have a colored aura around them, possibly indicating Aiden's stance towards them. A light blue color will indicate a neutral stance, i.e. characters that Aiden won't hurt, whereas orange and red will mark hostile targets that Aiden can possess and strangle respectively (Figure 8).

The two different perspectives the game is played through have a significant role in interpreting meaning. As Jodie, the player is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective, being able to completely see her as well as her surroundings. However, the method which is commonly used with Jodie is known as the over-the-shoulder perspective (Figure 9). (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) The 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective is generally evoking a feeling of the invisible spectator within the player, thus giving him a sense of supremacy. However, by implementing the over-the-shoulder perspective, the player gets one step closer to a complete 1<sup>st</sup> person perspective making them identify more with Jodie but still not emotionally investing as a full 1<sup>st</sup> person perceptive. Aiden, on the other hand, is played in the 1<sup>st</sup> person perspective, probably due to him being an entity, thus to make his physical appearance even more mysterious as well as to humanize his actions, again not to make him look as a tool that Jodie uses whenever she wants to.

Another way of employing visuals is through cut-scenes. A lot of chapters begin and end with a cut-scene, thus providing an introduction and a conclusion of the chapter. This introduces the overall setting of the chapter and contributes to the theatrics and more dynamic storytelling of the game. Introductive cut-scenes are especially helpful for players as they provide a bigger picture of their surroundings, oftentimes using the bird perspective. This comes in handy as the game is played through the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (Jodie) and 1<sup>st</sup> person (Aiden) perspective, thus some of the objects, cues and characters might be more difficult to find, especially in chapters with bigger areas. Most importantly, the player gets the idea what the chapter might be about.

The use of vectors can be noticed during cut-scenes. Not only do they introduce the chapter and the surroundings to the player, but they also provide context in terms of directionality. This can help interpret the relationship between different characters and objects as actors-processes-goals. For instance, in the "Navajo" chapter, after Jodie's unsuccessful tries at hitch-hiking, she will sit on a rock and contemplate her next actions. Prompted by

Aiden, she will suddenly turn around which is followed by the following frame (Figure 10). From Jodie's role and position in the frame it is easy to assign her the actor role, while her head, turned around, determines the directionality, pointing at the ranch in the distance as the goal. That way, the game implies that Jodie (actor) has to get (process) to the ranch in the distance to ask for help or seek shelter (goal) in order to advance through the chapter.

#### **4.1.3. Audio mode**

Sound is the dominant resource used in the audio mode. In the game, it is mostly in the form of background music or as various sound effects. The music, coupled with the scene and dialogue enriches, the overall setting and affects the players' emotions and attitudes regarding the characters, their choices or the whole event that is taking place. There are four main types of music which can be noticed throughout the game, each affecting the player differently: tense, ominous, sorrowful and generic music.

Tense music is mostly used during action sequences, hit-and-run scenes and QTEs. With such use of music the game "tells" the player to prepare for more intense events which require quick reflexes and button mashing. For example, in the "Hunted" chapter, as soon as the police officers recognize Jodie in the train and she starts running away, the music will become more dynamic, marking the beginning of the action sequence and warning the player to focus on the QTEs, controller movement and button mashing.

Similarly, the role of ominous music is that of a warning, alarming the player of possible upcoming events and jump scares, thus raising their guard. Ergo, it is often paired with tense music, slowly building up and paving the way until reaching a climax and shifting to faster-pace music. This is often the case if the player chooses to use Aiden in a violent manner. For instance, during "The Party" chapter, the player can choose to exact revenge on the teenagers that bullied Jodie by using Aiden's telekinesis to push or throw various objects. The music during the sequence starts off with an ominous note and gets more intense over time. This is concurrent with the possibilities offered to the player, starting with options to scare the teenagers and later on to even physically harm them, as if the game itself is encouraging the player to go on a rampage as the music reaches its climax.

Moreover, the use of ominous music during dialogue or specific characters also conveys a message of mistrust towards these characters and highlights their hidden motives as well as foreshadowing upcoming catastrophes. Such subliminal information might prove

handy for players when they have to make their choices. For example, in the last chapter right before Jodie enters Nathan's office, Cole warns her: "Whatever Nathan says...be careful." Just as he finishes the sentence, ominous music starts to play foreshadowing Nathan's madness as he later wreaks havoc by deactivating the containment field and releasing the entities.

As for sorrowful music, it is used during dramatic and emotional scenes such as various farewell scenes and death scenes. It is comprised of piano and strings arrangements coupled with variations of the game's main theme. For instance, it can be heard throughout the short "Alone" chapter in which Jodie's foster parents say their last goodbye to her. Interestingly, it reaches its climax when the mother is talking to Jodie, whereas it suddenly ends when the father urges her to leave, implying that the lack of music conveys meaning as well.

Generic and more peaceful music can also be heard, especially during Jodie's childhood or while doing mundane tasks such as helping the Navajo at their ranch. Generic music is probably used to counteract other music types by providing some moments of peace and letting the player know that they can relax and take their time exploring and fulfilling objectives.

Overall, the way that music is used in the game can be associated to abstract modality as the combinations of instruments, pitch, rhythm and melodies are assigned to fit the essence of target characters, events, places and actions which in turn provoke specific feelings among players. Such is the case with the official main theme of the game, known as "Jodie's Suite." Variations of the theme can be heard throughout the game, especially during pivotal moments, perhaps expressing to the player that they are of great significance to Jodie - being left at the research facility, packing her things to join the CIA, meeting her biological mother for the first and last time etc. An interesting example is when Jodie's foster parents say their last goodbye to her. The soundtrack starts off slow and faint during the father's turn but gets more clear during the mother's turn reaching its climax and ending as the father says that it is time to leave. It starts again when Nathan comforts Jodie, in a way telling her that he is her new family now. Through this use of music, the game affects and shapes the player's perception and feelings towards specific objects such as Jodie's foster parents in this case.

On the other hand, sound effects are used to broaden the context and provide additional cosmetic tweaks to the chapters. Onomatopoeic sounds, such as the chirping of the birds, neighing of the horses and the bleating of sheep, and the addition of Native American instruments can all be heard at the Navajo ranch. On the contrary, indistinct shouts, screams, gunfire and explosions can be heard in the civil war torn country. These sounds can be categorized as naturalistic modality where the aim is to use as authentic sounds as possible for increased player immersion. Sound effects also employ sensory modality which is certainly the case in “The Dinner” chapter when Jodie is preparing dinner for Ryan. Cutting the ingredients with a knife, peeling an onion, grinding spices, the sizzling of the oil are all emphasized to better convey the action of cooking.

Last but not least, there is a specific set of sound effects used for Aiden. Whenever the player switches to Aiden or if he is present during a cut-scene, muffled sounds and whispers can be heard. Moreover, whenever the player uses Aiden’s powers, a sound akin to sparks can be heard. The reason for this is probably to provide some sort of “voice” to Aiden due to the fact that he is unable to use oral human language. Aiden’s speech has different layers and qualities as throughout the game other characters can partially understand him by the type, tone and intensity of the sounds he makes. This is the case for the player as well as they can get a better understanding of Aiden’s mood through exposure and experience as the game progresses. For instance, during the rape attempt on Jodie, Aiden releases a monstrous growl, whereas when passing a containment field which traps him, the sounds he makes are akin to screams or shouts expressing that he is in pain.

#### **4.1.4. Spatial mode**

*Beyond Two Souls* does not feature a space which is gradually extending when the player completes levels and obtains new skills. The game, instead, consists of chapters where each can be perceived as a framed space whose boundaries disappear once a chapter is complete. Subsequently, once the player moves to the next chapter the boundaries of the previous one reappear and stay permanently. It could be argued, however, that due to the choices affecting some of the outcomes of later chapters these boundaries are not completely locked.

All of the 24 chapters in the game feature spaces with fixed boundaries, albeit of different sizes. Most of them are linear requiring the player to get from point A to point B. Others appear more “open” giving the player some freedom to explore different parts of a



space. Boundaries are present within time as well. Some chapters have specific durations and time limits, making the exploration of the complete space impossible. New spaces are generally introduced during cut-scenes mentioned in the visual mode.

Furthermore, whenever an area within the chapter cannot be accessed or is off-limits, Jodie or some other character would mention it or Jodie would simply turn around. Similarly, if there is a time limit present or if the player is taking too long to progress, a side character or Jodie might tell them to hurry up or something in a similar fashion. For instance, in “The Experiment” chapter, Cole will instruct Jodie to go to Nathan for the experiment. Before leaving Jodie’s room, the player can freely roam around and interact with the objects inside it. However, Cole would hasten them if they are taking too long (“I know you’re tired, Jodie, but we really have to go...”) or warn them if they are going in the wrong direction (“That’s not the way Jodie...”).

Regarding the arrangement of objects in a given space, similar methods as in the visual mode are used. In general, object of importance or which can be interacted with are put in the front and are emphasized in terms of appearance, color, type or function in order to make them stand out, whereas object serving the purpose of embellishment are put into the background and are generally parts of wholes or a group of objects. These arrangements are culturally affected as well. The game is presumably taking place in the USA which means that the space is perceived from a Western point of view. As a result, ordinary spaces, such as the neighborhood Jodie grew up in, the foster parents’ house or a hospital can seem different in terms of space arrangements to people from other cultural backgrounds. For instance, in his analysis of different player experiences, Toh (2019) discovered that one player had difficulties to find the garage in Jodie’s house due to the different layout houses have in Singapore.

The perception of space within the game changes completely when playing as Aiden. His ability to levitate and pass through walls breaks some of the boundaries, enabling him to reach areas which were omitted to Jodie. However, boundaries still remain as some walls and structures are impenetrable even to him, whereas in some other cases Jodie would comment that she is in pain when Aiden is too far away (another instance of ludic communication).

#### **4.1.5. Gestural mode**

As an interactive film video game, a major part of the game is its interactivity expressed in the interactions the player can have with different objects. This form of

interactivity is achieved via movement which belongs to the gestural mode. When playing as Jodie, most interactions consist of picking up objects, looking at them or actively using them. On the other hand, Aiden's interactions are based on his skills but predominately feature pushing and lifting objects due to his telekinetic powers. The controls for interacting with objects vary either by moving the analog stick, pressing or holding the required button.

The way in which some object can be interacted with leads to another form of interactivity – button mashing. Objects which require certain skills or activities have a button mashing sequence. These are used for: playing the guitar, cooking, uncorking a bottle of wine, cleaning, climbing, running, swimming, dancing, drawing, ranch activities and even for solving exams or delivering a baby. The reason behind this is probably for player immersion as well as to provide some sort of challenge as they require more focus. Button mashing is especially common during the action sequences in the game where they are coupled with quick-time events (QTE). These require the player to either press the correct button which appears on the screen or to move their controller in the opposite direction of incoming hits. The game signals the need for moving the controller by slowing down the action sequence in a Matrix like fashion giving the player a short amount of time to calculate the right direction.

Another form of movement occurs with the dialogue options which appear next to Jodie. Most of the times they are clearly visible and move at a very slow pace making them look as if they are floating on the screen; however, they can become blurry, shaky and move at a faster pace (Figure 11). Not only is this the game's way of conveying the message that Jodie is stressed or afraid, but it also increases player immersion by affecting their choice making in more intense moments.

Camera movement is yet another implementation of the gestural mode and a way how the game communicates with the player. By focusing on certain objects or characters the game puts more emphasis on them, informing the player to move towards them and interact with them or to avoid them, depending on the situation. Furthermore, it contributes to the player immersion by following Jodie's, or rather, the player's movement. Action sequences are coupled with more dynamic camera movement increasing the overall tension of the scene. When playing as Aiden, the camera shifts from Jodie's standard viewpoint to Aiden's more "flexible" viewpoint as it allows different camera angles and follows his levitation.

As stated in the linguistic mode, Aiden communicates through movement as well by interacting and moving specific objects in a space. For example, during the last chapter when Jodie is being locked, Aiden has to look for Ryan and Cole in order to free Jodie. This is achieved through Aiden's telekinetic powers. While in the room with Ryan and Cole, Aiden has to push, lift and throw objects to notify his presence which will prompt Ryan to further instruct the player. Afterwards, the player has to interact with the given objects in the space in an indicating manner by pointing out a path which will lead them to Jodie.

Finally, due to the implementation of motion capture for animating actors, the game tries to portray authentic human movement for the required context. As a result, Jodie will generally walk in a casual fashion in most chapters, however, she will run in more action-packed chapters (e. g. when being chased), crawl during stealth operations and limp when she is hurt. In addition, she will change her posture depending on the gravity of the situation. For instance, when Jodie tries to shut down the first condenser overrun with hostile entities, she passes through a cold room. Upon entering, she crosses her arms to warm herself and walks in a slow and careful manner trying not to alarm any entities or not to slip on the icy floor. The same applies to the characters' facial expressions throughout the game to emulate a certain feeling such as smiling when happy or frowning when angry. Body language is used during the dialogue options as well. This is especially the case during dialogue options for confirmation or negation (yes/no options) when Jodie is a child where she would either nod or shake her head/shrug her shoulders respectively.

#### **4.2. Player-Player Communication**

*Beyond Two Souls* (2013) has a cooperative option, albeit not in a typical split-screen way. Only one character can be controlled at a time which in turn means that only one player actually plays the game until the other player is given permission to switch. By changing the interface, the game communicates with the players, signaling which character is in the spotlight. The player taking control of Jodie is in charge when it comes to dialogue choices and character interactions, whereas Aiden is used when Jodie requires his skills. Most chapters start with Jodie, thus Jodie players will have to decide when to give control to Aiden players; however once control is given to Aiden, that player can freely do what they wish until they resign control back to Jodie. Jodie has the burden of actively leading conversations by making choices through the dialogue, thus the player has to calculate the way in which they are going to act and the decisions they are going to make. On the contrary, as Aiden cannot be

seen or hurt and has the ability to levitate and pass through solid objects such as walls, the player has a sense of security and power and might act harsher, unlike the player controlling Jodie.

This game mechanic facilitates communication between the two players as they will have to work together in order to progress through the game. The game will sometimes provide hints if Aiden is needed, mostly if there are obstacles present; however, not all chapters require his assistance. Moreover, their playstyle or choice making may differ, but only one player has to make a final choice at a given moment. If they are conflicted, they will have to come to an agreement or just leave the other player to decide on their own. As a result, two different approaches to the story might take place. For example, one player might try to resolve events peacefully and try to save other characters, whereas the other might play more violently and let other characters die on purpose.

## **5. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis on the Example of Gender**

With the main character being female, the game offers significant content in terms of gender. Moreover, as the game portrays her life from childhood to adulthood, it is possible to observe how her experience with gender changed over the years and how it affected her throughout her life.

During Jodie's childhood, more traditional feminine traits can be noticed conveyed through visual modes. For example her wardrobe consists of brightly colored clothes, especially pink, and playful motifs such as flowers, hearts, clouds etc. The same can be noticed in her room, both at the research facility and her foster parents' house. In both instances her room is predominately pink, full with stuffed animals, dolls, a dollhouse and brightly colored books. These are probably fairytales and bedtime stories, as there is a close-up of one book which Jodie has to find in Nathan's office later in the game. The book has a pink cover, the title "Fairy Tale" and an illustration of a castle and knight which might imply typical stories of a knight saving a princess (Figure 12). Such stories might have a deeper and more personal meaning to Jodie as well due to her being isolated during most of her childhood, not being allowed to venture to the outside world to play with other kids. Perhaps they seemed like an escape generating the idea that someday her own knight might save her from the castle (research facility) she is locked in.

Moreover, in the “My Imaginary Friend” chapter, the player has the option to let Jodie play with Barbie-like dolls – a typical blond-haired one in a pink dress called Fairy Blossom and a light brown-haired one in a light blue dress (Figure 13). The dolls are having a tea party at one doll’s house and got there via a big pink royal carriage. The use of language is interesting in this case as Jodie refers to the carriage as a car and says that she (the doll) chose it herself implying that she has either a particular sense of style or has royal privileges and the liberty to afford such a carriage. In addition, as they arrive to the house, she says that she got it from her husband as a birthday present, implying that her husband has lots of money and buys her expensive gifts. Finally, when asked about her handsome husband by the other doll, she answers that he is working at the moment, implying that he has to work to bring in money and buy her expensive stuff while she is probably unemployed and having tea parties and gossiping with the girls.

Interestingly, Cole, Nathan’s research assistant, calls Jodie “princess” throughout the game, even saying that the headpiece device that analyzes her brain functions is “just like a crown” and that she is “a little princess now” (Figure 14). He keeps doing that even when she is older; however, Jodie seems to be unbothered by it. The same cannot be said with other male characters, as she has shown increased animosity towards male characters when they are being condescending towards her based on her gender. This animosity might stem from her relationship with her foster father who never showed any signs of kindness towards her. Again in the “My Imaginary Friend” chapter, the father, who is working on the computer, says the following when Jodie gets to his room: “Why are you looking at me like that? Don’t you have something better to do?” Both the audio and the gestural mode play an important part here as the father uses an angry and condescending tone coupled with a serious and frowned face whereas Jodie’s response is conveyed through her body language as she humbly left the room without saying anything.

“The party” chapter is the first instance of Jodie, now in her early teens, interacting with her peers after being placed in the research facility. Jodie clearly does not want to attend the party but is encouraged by Nathan implying that it was his idea all along. Furthermore, she expresses much dislike towards the dress she is made to wear, which is totally opposite to child Jodie who portrayed a tendency towards traditionally more feminine aspects. The whole party is from the get-go a doomed scenario bound to turn into a catastrophe having similarities to many movie tropes. Teenagers are home-alone, there is under-age drinking and weed present. Jodie is represented as the shy, nerdy, unattractive girl who just does not “click” with

the rest of the group, marking her as an outcast. This is conveyed through character utterances, tone and their stance towards Jodie when they meet and interact with her. It is also conveyed through the progression of the chapter as whichever choices the player makes will result into Jodie being chastised. Consequently, this makes the player fail constantly as they try to unsuccessfully help Jodie, making them more empathetic towards her thus provoking them to later seek revenge on the teens.

The derogatory terms that the teens use for Jodie, such as “slut” and “witch”, are heavily motivated by gender. Namely, during the chapter, a boy approaches Jodie and flirts with her. Many tropes are visible in his presentation – good-looking, surfer, in a band, gives compliments to Jodie and shows genuine interest, seems “not like the others” and to top it all, is from London and has a British accent. The player has the option to be reserved and reject him or to try and socialize which can even end with a romantic dance coupled with, probably, Jodie’s first kiss. However, whichever choices the player makes will result into Matt calling her out in front of the group: “She’s been following me around like a puppy all evening...Begging for it...” This implies his dominant stance as a male towards Jodie’s passive stance as a female. Moreover, it implies that she has no voice in this. By rejecting him or ultimately kissing him, either way she marked herself as a “slut” due to the fact that she is female and was asking for it, whereas men are generally not reprimanded in such fashion even if they behave that way or insinuate the whole act. Similarly, the teens call her a witch, coupled with the utterance “burn the witch”, due to Aiden’s powers. The phenomenon of witch-hunting and its underlying gender issues is a topic on its own but, interestingly enough, one would not hear the male equivalent of the term used in such connotations such as “burn the wizard” or “kill the sorcerer.”

The final point of interest is in the gifts the birthday girl receives. For instance, another girl at the party gifts her sexy pink underwear, whereas Jodie a very rare 50-year-old book of poetry by Edgar Allan Poe, again chosen by Nathan. As expected, the birthday girl is delighted about the first present while clearly disappointed about Jodie’s “old book.” This can imply the girl’s general interests. Due to puberty and developing sexuality, it is understandable why the girl is not caring that much about literature and perhaps education in general in these years and why she is so excited about the thong she received, being her first ever. However, the issue lies in her utterance: “My future lover wants to thank you for making his life more...interesting...” coupled with the other girls claiming that this will “improve her chances of finding a decent boyfriend.” This could imply that the girls’ perception, probably

formed by the dominant view, is that they are viewed as only having a sexual function in the eyes of men.

Depending on the party outcome, i.e. leaving or seeking revenge, Jodie can have a radical change in style, kind of detaching herself from the cute, pink and feminine stereotypes and embracing a goth-emo-punk, rebellious side. Consequently, her wardrobe changes into more dark colors, especially black and purple. She starts wearing heavy and expressive make-up (Figure 15). In both versions of Jodie, changes occur in her room as well where she got rid of the toys and dolls and embellished her room with darker colors, artistic photographs, skulls and statement wallpapers (Figure 16). A reason for that could be her constant struggle to fit in, yet always being bullied, rejected or taken advantage of in the end. This is emphasized by Nathan's mollicoddling and protective attitude towards her. Even the title of the game's chapter – "Like Other Girls" symbolizes her yearning to be like other girls of her age and can, during its climax and depending on the player's choices, end with an attempt of rape.

Namely, Jodie goes to the Red House, a roadside bar, where apparently a high school party is taking place. However, once she arrives, it is clear that none of her "friends" are there and that the only guests are older men. Leading up to the rape is a pool playing scene which implements space and movement to convey a sense of anxiety and danger as two older men join the game and constantly move around Jodie till one starts physically touching her. Whichever way the player chooses to reject the man will result in both of the men to attempt to rape her by throwing her on the pool table. What is unsettling here is the way the game conveys the whole atmosphere. The bartender, another older man, realizes right away that Jodie is underage, yet leaves her in the bar and turns a blind eye on the rape attempt. Moreover, the utterance spoken by the man who starts harassing Jodie physically is "Come on, baby. You know you want too..." yet again implying the same as in the party, that Jodie as a woman does not have a voice and that it is only logical for a woman to be willing to have sex with a man. In the end, by using Aiden the player can either scare the men or kill them all, including the bartender. The reason for this might be that the game portrays him as being equally guilty as the rapists. The rape attempt leaves a badly scar on Jodie, making her unable to engage in any sort of sexual activities, despite the player having the option to do so. After this event and nearing her young adult years, Jodie retains the darker colors and changes to a more bland style, donning hoodies and jeans. On more instances she expresses discomfort when wearing dresses and puts them on only if demanded by a specific situation (CIA mission, date night). She is also rarely seen with heavy make-up on.

During the time that Jodie was in the CIA, other women were rarely shown. The only exception is a female agent during Jodie's mission in the "Embassy" chapter who took the intel that Jodie has gathered. Both her and Jodie's function during the mission is alike, wearing elegant dresses and counting on their looks and innocent attire to successfully charm the "enemy" and infiltrate the embassy. Interestingly, most of the women present in the embassy were probably from the West due to their appearance and clothing and were in the company of men, perhaps representatives and agents of other countries. Moreover, during Jodie's training at the CIA, she has a more masculine look with shaved hair and military clothing (Figure 17). The whole CIA was predominately male, especially when it comes to higher positions. Jodie even refers to them in the final chapter as "big boys and their new toys" implying that everything was just a game for them of attaining power and asserting dominance. Her femininity was further diminished by being referred to only as agent Holmes. However, this could have its advantages as she was on equal terms with any other male agent present there. In the last chapter, when Jodie is finally done with the CIA, she mentions that "someone's always decided for me, it's time I make my own choices" expressing how she was being subdued her whole life either from the CIA or Nathan.

Another gender related mechanism that the game includes is the liberty it gives to players when choosing Jodie's love interest. Specifically interesting is her relationship with Ryan, the CIA agent that recruited her. Their relationship had its ups and downs with moments where Jodie portrays animosity towards him to her being extremely fond of him. Through the use of modes and perspectives, the player can notice that Ryan's feelings in the beginning are not genuine and that he is using Jodie due to Aiden's skills for most part. The feelings she developed for Ryan reach a climax in "The Dinner" chapter as seen in the already mentioned dialogue between Jodie and Aiden:

"Jodie: Now I get why you blasted my computer...You didn't want me to see Ryan..."

Aiden: muffled sounds

Jodie: It's NOT your call, Aiden. I can do what I want!

Aiden: muffled sounds

Jodie: Fuck this! Fuck this...We're not gonna start this again...I'm not YOURS, Aiden. I can have a relationship with WHOEVER I want. This is my life, do you fucking hear me? This is MY life!

Aiden: muffled sounds

Jodie: You know what? I happen to think Ryan is great. I mean, he's charming, he's intelligent, he's funny, and I...think I'm falling for him...

Aiden goes silent."



Another interesting point here is the way that Jodie embraces her freedom in choosing what she wants in her life portrayed by her word choice and their emphasis (“I’m not YOURS Aiden...This is MY life”). Even though this a representation of her breaking form the influence of a male character (Aiden), it is ironic as she falls under the influence of another male character who, arguably, disappointed and hurt her the most. Jodie’s perception of Ryan at that point could be clouded by the idea of the knight saving the princess that she was seen reading in her childhood. It is after Ryan’s confession of using her that Jodie decides to alienate herself from male affection until she meets Jay in the “Navajo” chapter. Jay is another viable love interest the games presents to the player, yet, unlike Ryan, it is not forced at any given time, giving the player (Jodie) complete independence in pursuing it. When compared, Ryan represents the “straight white male”, drunk with power and striving for influence and status by using others, while Jay represents a member of the “other”, content with his simple lifestyle, turned towards nature and deeply spiritual. However, as Ryan joins Jodie in the last mission and tries to make up for his mistakes, it is up to the player to judge if he is able to redeem himself by either causing him to suffer, rejecting him again or ultimately accepting him as a love interest. The game offers the player the option not to pursue a specific love interest by staying with the homeless group that Jodie met or by choosing to die in the last chapter by joining Aiden in the Beyond. The ending can be interpreted as highly symbolic in terms of gender because Jodie finally realizes her own potential and freedom, discarding the fairy tales of knights and princesses, realizing that Aiden has been her knight all along.

Besides rape, other themes that have been mentioned in the game are pregnancy, motherhood and domestic violence. In the “Homeless” chapter, while Jodie is seeking refuge with a group of homeless people, she is the only one allowed to stay in the room with Tuesday and assist her while she is giving birth. The reason for this is probably due to Jodie being a fellow woman, thus sharing biological features, and being assured that she will not view her in a sexual or vulgar manner. The birth is of course simplified, mostly due to the game mechanics as well as not to directly portray the uterus. The reason why Tuesday is with the homeless group is due to the domestic violence she was facing from her ex-boyfriend and due to the fear that she was in for her baby. Other mother figures were portrayed as caring but passive, subdued characters. That way, a general perception and roles of women are conveyed in the game, perhaps drawing on views from the real world. Another aim could be to raise the player’s sympathy towards these characters. For example, Norah, Jodie’s biological mother, had telekinetic skills on her own and alike Jodie was used by researchers and the CIA. After

giving birth to Jodie, they induced her into a permanent coma and the player has the choice to either let her live or to end her suffering, giving her the connotations of a tragic hero. Jodie's foster mother, being caring and empathetic of Jodie is portrayed as a polar opposite to her husband who is strict and cold. Moreover, on more occasions does the mother protect Jodie but is always castigated by her husband. The game emphasizes these differences even further when offering the player the option to choke the father once they leave Jodie on her own, whereas such options are not possible for the mother. Nathan's deceased wife and daughter are subdued by him when he kept their spirits with the help of a device as they were begging him to let them go and have peace, portraying a male character having ultimate control over their destinies. Shimasani, the elderly Navajo woman, is subdued by her people's past when they summoned the violent entity Yé'itsoh to fend off the Americans, being mute ever since, she finally speaks when Jodie presents the talismans that are needed to perform the ritual. Regardless of the player's choices, she dies after performing the ritual finally finding peace. This tendency of subdued female characters that finally get their moment of freedom and emancipation through suffering is not that uncommon in other representations of women from a traditionally male perspective. From the female characters of Greek tragedies to the "final girl" in contemporary horror movies, all of them go through intense moments of suffering (some even dying in the process) to amuse the male public.

Last but not least, there is the issue with Aiden's gender. As an entity, he should not have an assigned gender. However, from the beginning of the game Jodie describes him as an imaginary friend and refers to him as being male and using he/him/his pronouns. Still, it is unclear how Jodie could know that Aiden is male as he has no visual representations until the very end of the game where his identity is also revealed. Moreover, the name Aiden is traditionally used as a male name. Both the name and the pronouns affect the player's perception of Aiden as being male whereas without them the player would probably perceive him as an entity which presumably does not have a gender. In addition, by using a name, Aiden is given an identity in the sea of other entities which appear in the game, leading the player to interpret that there is something more to him.

## **6. Discussion and Further Research**

The analysis shows that all of the five modes are present in the video game and, although occurring at various degrees and for various purposes, all contribute in one way or another to meaning making and promoting communication. The rich and broad utilization of

modes might be due to the game mechanics and to portray the semblance of complete interactivity through immersion and authenticity. In other words, due to the fundamentals of the target genre and each genre requiring genre-specific mechanics that will characterize them as the target genre, a parallel can be drawn to modes, thus making the modes genre-specific as well. Strategy or racing games, for instance, would probably use modes differently or have one mode which is clearly the predominant one, whereas interactive film video games need a greater engagement of all modes as the main idea lies in bolstering interactivity to emulate real life

Even though the analysis covered mode by mode in isolation, it is clear that on various occasions they complement each other and work as a whole. For example, Aiden's way of communicating is completely multimodal, involving his form of "language" conveyed through sound or even gesture occurring in relation to other objects in a space and having some visual evidence. QTEs are yet another multimodal example. The game conveys the QTE scene through highly-dynamic visuals coupled with appropriate sound and dynamic camera movement. In addition, it shows the player the required buttons which they have to press and responds with further progression based on the player's input (success/failure), matching it with adequate sound, image, movement, space or language. Cut-scenes in general are especially multimodal. The whole premise of interactive film video games is that they frequently employ cut-scenes to emulate the feeling of the game being perceived as a film and granting the player the liberty to occasionally make choices and affect how the game/film will proceed.

The use of more modes at a time is of course self-explanatory. Their main function is to convey meaning for the player to interpret and by implementing more modes the message gets transmitted with additional context and thus more precisely. The beginning of the "Navajo" chapter can be taken as an example. The message is predominately conveyed through visuals and space. The scorching sun in its zenith, a sweaty Jodie walking along the desert highway, a mile marker besides the road with the state flag of Arizona, cacti and other desert flora, a few trucks passing by, all convey the following: Jodie is alone in a barren place somewhere in Arizona and it's extremely hot. The audio adds more immersion by adding birds of prey sounds and a desolate wind effect, further enhancing the desert aesthetic and the feeling of being utterly lost. Jodie's body language conveys even more context, telling the player that she is exhausted and probably dehydrated. Finally, using spoken language, Jodie confirms all of the implied interpretations conveyed through other modes: she is exhausted,

dying of thirst and lost while her tone towards Aiden and word choice indicate that she is frustrated by the whole situation and trying not to panic.

Regarding discourse, specifically on the example of gender, it is clear that the game illustrates many of the stereotypes when it comes to female representation, roles and their perception based on the dominant male viewpoint. Methods of association and generalization can be noticed which are combined through a multimodal portrayal. Linguistic choices, especially those uttered by male characters, are made in way to diminish Jodie's voice and basically her whole identity by associating given terms ("slut") or characteristics ("lustful" and "asking for it") to the whole gender and group of people. This is coupled with body language, use of camera movement and space/visuals to present Jodie as a passive object during these interactions. Moreover, general visual representations via color, style, shapes and specific objects are used to identify femininity and feminine traits. Finally, the game associates the sound of the piano and strings heard in Jodie's suite with her experiences and feelings.

Jodie is portrayed as a tragic female hero throughout the game with her voice suppressed due to being female, especially during her childhood and teenage years. Her only identification is through Aiden, the entity that is linked to her, which, aside of her being seen as a sexual object, is the only other distinct trait that makes her interesting in the eyes of men (the CIA, Nathan). The irony here is that Aiden's gender is male. As an entity, Aiden's gender was not required to be stated until the end of the game when it is revealed that he is her deceased twin brother. However, the game introduces Aiden's gender right off the bat, in the first chapters of the game. As a result, the dynamics between Jodie and Aiden can sometimes be summed up as Aiden (male) saving Jodie (female) from danger similar to a "damsel in distress" type of scenario.

The choice of gender could be deliberate here as the opposite would have completely different connotations and might not be as emotionally impactful, especially regarding the derogatory terms and power relations stated above. Another answer might be to please the still predominant male audience within gamers. On that note, traces of the "Lara Phenomenon" can be noticed when Jodie joins the CIA. Namely, by discarding her feminine traits and accepting traditional masculine traits, Jodie gradually shifts into an action hero, finally able to protect herself on some occasions without Aiden's interventions. However, the phenomenon is not completely manifested due to the lack of hypersexualization. Still, it is when Jodie parts

from her femininity that she becomes a more viable option for the player. “The Mission” chapter acts as a climax and turning point where Jodie finally breaks away from the CIA, symbolically representing her moment of emancipation and where a combination of both feminine and masculine traits can be observed later on.

Finally, Jodie’s portrayal also depends on the player and their choices. As it was already mentioned, the dialogue oftentimes consists of opposite choices, thus allowing the player to behave more vocal and aggressive or more subdued and obedient when playing as Jodie. Again, it is ironic that, whichever choices the player makes in these instances, important outcomes will stay the same. No matter how aggressive Jodie behaves or how vocal she is, she will still be admitted at the research facility, bullied at the party, harassed in the bar, forced to join the CIA etc. It is important to note that all of the game interpretations in the thesis have to be taken with a grain of salt and that some of the instances might not be as deliberate as others. The reason for this lies in multimodality itself due to its interdisciplinarity, semiotic resources which are socio-culturally marked, and the fine line between a mode being a mere cosmetic feature or having some deeper underlying meaning.

A method to extend the multimodal discourse analysis of the game is to take into account player motivation and their experience of the game. A similar approach was done by Toh (2019) who proposed a ludonarrative model as a theoretical framework combining both gameplay and narrative and based on aspects of multimodality, social semiotics and game studies. This is coupled with empirical data of different players gathered by observation and qualitative interviews in order to ascertain how the player’s experience in a game shapes their understanding of the game’s components, e.g. the game mechanics or the modes used to convey meaning, their playstyle and the choices they make to progress through the game and its story. In other words, how game design and video game interaction affect the player’s journey from the beginning to the end of the game.

Specifically, in *Beyond Two Souls* (2013) players could be interviewed and asked the following: how did they perceive interactivity within the game, how did the change of characters and perspectives affect their playstyle, how did they base their choices during dialogue, how clear/ambiguous were the sets of choices given to them, how much context did those choices provide, how much were their actions affected by the use of other modes, e.g. sound, movement, visuals, how much context could they fathom through the use of other

modes, how much did they relate to Jodie or perhaps to other characters, how would they rate their moral compass and several more.

Through the interviews, players analyze their playthrough of the game and the meaning making which occurs in the manner of self-reflection by drawing on their experience and their knowledge of the world. This could, as a result, eventually lead to a moment of “enlightenment” that could be further extended by comparing it with other video games they have played, consequently providing even more examples and research possibilities. Another interesting approach could be to interview players of different gaming backgrounds and experience as well as non-gamers. Interviewing students of Linguistics offers another interesting approach as they have a theoretical background which would certainly come in handy for the analysis. The interviews could also provide a tool for critical discourse analysis on the example of games and their multimodal communication.

Apart, from the notion of gender which was focused on in the thesis, the discourse in *Beyond Two Souls* (2013) can be analyzed from multiple other perspectives which could not be included due to the scope of the paper. However, some examples are provided as food for thought. The homeless group Jodie stumbles upon and spends some time with represents socio-economic issues leading up to the state of homelessness, such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, unemployment, loss due to terminal illness, as well as their ways of living and coping in such state, e.g. begging for money, scavenging for food, taking shelter in abandoned buildings etc. Political issues are present as well with the CIA’s involvement into the affairs of other countries and the perceptions of the Middle and Far East. These are of course from a Western point of view, which is portrayed as the dominant view due to the examples of stereotyping and “othering” involved with racial and culture representation (Asian, Native American, Middle Eastern).

Language is yet another notion that deserves further research. The presence of different registers, American dialects of English and accents of ESL speakers (“Asian” accent), as well as the presence of other languages (Arabic, Navajo), provides a diverse pool of research options. In addition, the body language caused by techniques of motion sensing can be observed as well as specific and cultural language use (army discourse, politics, Navajo). As a result, the language and its uses in the game, coupled with the game mechanics (dialogue choices) and interactivity, can be further used to develop language acquisition, multimodal literacy and generally enactive learning. (Rowsell, 2013; Zagalo, 2019)

Last but not least, the mentioned player-player communication can be analyzed in more detail through observing and recording the players and their interactions. Taking player-player communication into account could provide further data for the multimodal communication the game implements and see how it affects the players in shaping the communication between them. This would change the two-way model of communication (player input-game output) into a triangular model featuring different interpretations of the messages the game conveys as well as player negotiation.

## 7. Conclusion

Even though multimodality is a relatively recent field of study with various theories and without a fixed terminology, the thesis tried to briefly explain the main concepts in order to understand the overall gist of multimodality. Moreover, it illustrated the connection between multimodality and communication and determined that communication is by default multimodal as messages can be conveyed via different modes. As for modes, the thesis settled upon the New London Group's proposal of five modes which make up a multimodal whole: the linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural mode. What it could not decide, however, was on which multimodal research approach to base it on, due to the interdisciplinarity of the field and to avoid any confusion or possible errors. With the overview across the five modes, the thesis confirmed that all of them are present in video games. Moreover, it illustrated the ways in which modes are used and how they contribute to foster the communication between video games and their players. It also confirmed that a video game can be the target of critical discourse analysis and, more so, of multimodal critical discourse analysis.

By analyzing the video game *Beyond Two Souls* (2013), the thesis illustrated how modes are specifically used in the genre of interactive film video games. It portrayed right away that the different modes work by complementing each other, thus achieving their full potential of meaning making and conveying. In addition, the thesis pointed out that due to the genre, all of the modes are extensively used, depending on the message the game tries to convey, the amount of context the game wants to provide the player with and whether it wants to affect the player's interpretations with it. Furthermore, by attempting a multimodal critical discourse analysis on the example of gender, the thesis illustrated the capability of video games creating discourse as well as how an interactive multimodal communication and its use of different modes can convey that discourse and affect player interpretation of the given discourse.

Finally, the thesis revealed the overall potential that video games, and especially a specific form of video games, can have in terms of multimodal critical discourse analysis by proving that they are a valid form of “text.” Moreover, it pointed out other research questions as well as a multitude of possibilities for application in other fields besides linguistics such as communication science, information science, game design, gender studies, cultural studies, educational studies, psychology, language acquisition and many more. Last but not least, even though video games have been getting more spotlight in the past few years, they are still either avoided or not taken seriously enough in the academia, thus another aim of the thesis is to eventually popularize the field. However, the reader will be the judge of that, in hopes that it will pique their interest and motivate them to delve more into scientific research of video games.



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## 9. List of Figures

Figure 1



Figure 2

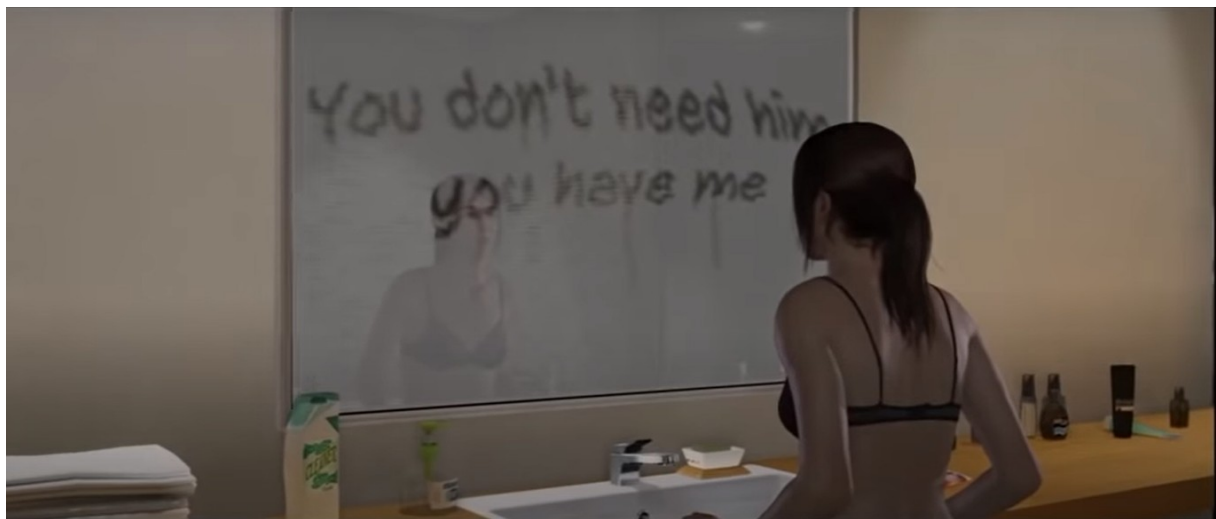


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

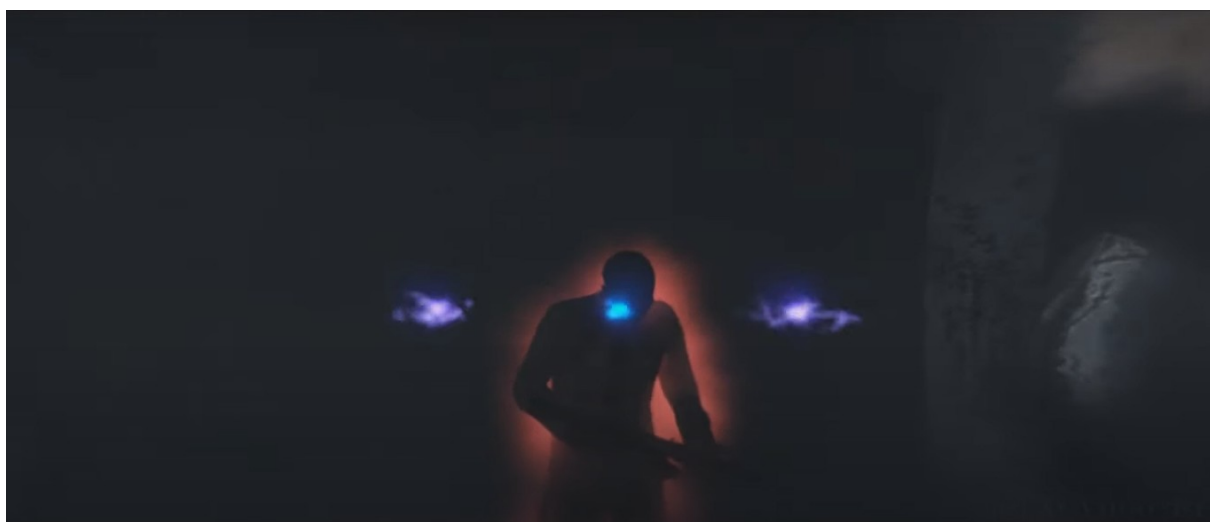


Figure 9

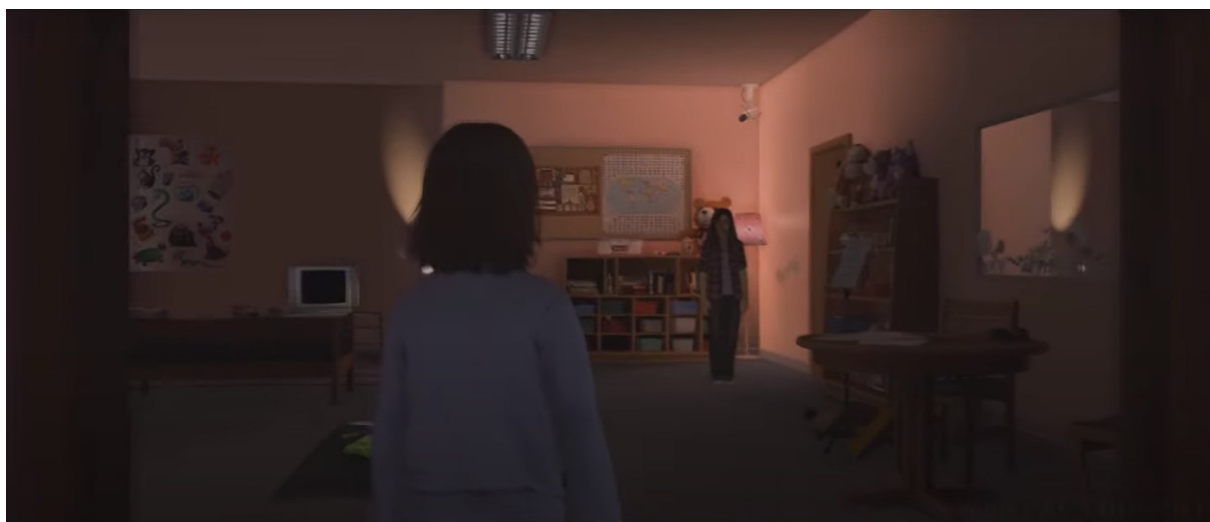




Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12





Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

