

While I tried to conceive of ways a user could customize their ghost, I admit that I really hate the idea. In a way, I think it undermines the central idea that the player ghost is already “complete” and technically ready to move on. Even without rewards or external incentives, they choose to prolong their time in the purgatory space. They just want to meet the next stage of life (or death) with their best friend. I may throw a small bone with the occasional thank you note from appreciative ghosts, but I don’t like the idea of any additional motivators other than care, love, and curiosity.

Besides, as we discussed in class, character customization sometimes limits the extent to which players learn to adopt alternative perspectives. Take *Stray*, for example. It’s a wonderful game that makes the player truly *feel* like a cat. Still, it’s significant that the player understands that they’re playing as a specific cat and not as themselves embodied in a general representation of a cat. The lack of autonomy actually helps the player more effectively stretch into this role and encourages them to engage beyond human social structures and hierarchies. With *Stray*’s specific cat protagonist, players learn to understand an uncommon perspective that may not necessarily feel natural. However, in learning to adopt the role, the player gains skills in perspective that help them hopefully transcend the recreation of oppressive social systems in games.

Phillips speaks repeatedly of that phenomenon, where video games, in their endless technological potential, find creative and horrific ways to inject racism, sexism, and eugenics into digital spaces, often with little fanfare or acknowledgment. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that *Thomas Was Alone* used its female characters to demonstrate how social hierarchies can appear even within digitally abstracted places. In many ways, I think the female characters draw upon existing female stereotypes both in media and outside. Many consider women to have little inherent worth beyond what they can contribute to a group or family unit. Lo and behold, a big blue box can only find self-worth when she discovers an ability that could be useful for the group. A different woman is paranoid, and another woman is narratively framed as pretentious for pursuing knowledge. These characters demonstrate how social systems impact the digital world and how social dynamics are actively recreated within these spaces.

Phillips endeared me with the idea of cyberfeminism. I think the idea goes very well in hand with intersectionality. Identity crosses borders, and we cannot pretend otherwise. Rather, we need to acknowledge that to dismantle these systems and their ill effects, we need to work both on the physical and digital spaces and optimize both for the well-being and safety of all persons.