

The Presence of Female Designers in French Video Game Industry, 1985–1993

Games and Culture
2020, Vol. 15(6) 670–684
© The Author(s) 2019
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/1555412019841954
journals.sagepub.com/home/gac



Filip Jankowski¹ 

Abstract

Increasingly, more people do notice that female designers wrote their first games in the 1970s and 1980s. However, there was another country where women did also design games decades before the #GamerGate movement. This article examines the selected works of three French designers: Clotilde Marion, Chine Lanzmann, and Muriel Tramis. The analysis of those games took into account the self-representation of those designers—and women in general—within the game content. The conducted research has proven that within their games, Marion, Lanzmann, and Tramis included their everyday experiences as women. Using such techniques as simulated point of view and authorial signature, those women indicated their own role in the development and showed how females in general face male oppression against them. This means that the United States is not the only country with a long tradition of female game developers. Thus, video game history remains an undiscovered research field.

Keywords

french video games, feminine games, female designers, video games, postcolonial games

¹ Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

Corresponding Author:

Filip Jankowski, Wólności 4/3, 13200 Działdowo, Poland.
Email: filip.jankowski@doctoral.uj.edu.pl

Slavery. Liberation. Male abuse. Female revenge. Reading these key words, perhaps we may be reminded of the latest achievements in U.S. progressive video games, from the cathartic *Depression Quest* (Quinn, 2013) to educational *Mission U.S.: Flight to Freedom* (Thirteen/WNET, 2012). Yet hardly anyone remembers these topics can be found in the 1980s in some of the earliest video games, all of which came from France.

In recent years, game studies scholars have been trying to challenge the dominant narrations on video game history. Although the “great narrations” focus on the achievements of U.S. and Japanese male individuals (Donovan, 2010; Kent, 2001; Kushner, 2003), recently, game scholars have attempted to color in the white stains left by these highly selective compilations. Garda (2016) urges applying the rules of the cinematic New Historicism viewpoint to video games, concentrating on developers who are traditionally neglected—ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as women. Several attempts have been made by—among others—Melanie Swalwell in her research on “home coding” in New Zealand (Swalwell, 2008), Jaroslav Švelch in his study on underground computing in communist Czechoslovakia (Švelch, 2013), and—what becomes the most important in the current article—by researchers documenting the forgotten activity of U.S. female designers in the 1970s and 1980s (Dovey & Kennedy, 2006; Nooney, 2013). Although Carol Shaw, Dona Bailey, and Roberta Williams are more recognized as female game authors (Murray, 2018, p. 215), similar women activities in 20th-century European countries remain undiscovered, except for studies on the Polish collective Internet game *Antykoncepcja* (Nacher, 2016).

The present article aims to fill another gap in the research on female-made video games, this time focusing on France, where female video game designers debuted as early as the 1980s. During this research, I examine five examples of video games created by Frenchwomen: *Même les pommes de terre ont des yeux* (1985) by Clotilde Marion, *La femme qui ne supportait pas les ordinateurs* (1986) by Chine Lanzmann, and *Méwilo* (1987), *Fascination* (1991), and *Lost in Time* (1993) by Muriel Tramis. The first two games have only been mentioned by a French journalist—Nathalie Meistermann—in her study of female presence in video games (Meistermann, 1988) and have been cited by Alain Le Diberder and Frédéric Le Diberder (1993, p. 164) in their book about the growing video game market. Save for these small mentions, both designers have escaped the attention of game historians. Muriel Tramis, recently awarded with the National Order of the Legion of Honour, has been slightly more known as a designer than Lanzmann and Marion. Because Tramis’ career encompasses a plethora of works, three of her adventure games were selected for the current case study. *Méwilo* is a debut of Tramis, and *Fascination*, along with *Lost in Time*, features the same female protagonist, Doralice. Compared with the games of Marion and Lanzmann, Tramis’ selected works have enjoyed considerable popularity in France at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s (Deconchat, 1988; Jovanovic, 1991; Roux, 1993), but the first one was never released in Anglo-Saxon countries, and the last two faced sharp criticism outside France for their “inefficient” design

(Cobbett, 2011; Kalata, 2017; Lee, 1992). Nonetheless, being 30-year-old “playable artifacts” (Leino, 2012) and because of their subversive potential, the cited examples deserve more attention.

The method of research adapted in the current article, which is based on playtests of the following games, focuses on female self-representation within the examined video games. Hence, this method provides answers to the following questions:

1. How was the everyday female experience adapted into French female-made games?
2. How did French female designers internalize their presence within their games (through points of view, authorial signatures, and so on)?
3. How have those designers approached the issue of being marginalized in a male-dominated society?

Background

First, we need to introduce the reader to the context preceding female presence in French video games. Before 1982, when the first French arcade game *Le Bagnard* was published, the French video game industry did not exist. The arcade market in France was influenced primarily by the American company Atari, while the main rivals on the console market were other foreign enterprises, Philips and Mattel (Blanchet, 2016, p. 179; Wolf, 2016, p. 593). However, when the crash of the video game industry in 1982 struck both types of gaming platforms, paradoxically, there was a rapid growth in computer sales in France. The following year, the first local producers of video games, such as Loriciciels, Ére Informatique, and Infogrames appeared on the scene (Jankowski, 2017, p. 165). The year 1982 was also important because a gaming magazine, *Tilt*, debuted and with each passing year became more prestigious and inherent to the image of the industry.

Contrary to arcade machines and consoles, the computer industry in France made progress mainly because of the administrative actions enforced by President François Mitterrand. In 1982, the French government nationalized the CII-Honeywell-Bull company to start producing French computers under the label of Thomson and sell them to administrations, banks (also bought by the government), and educational institutions. Of course, most of the personal computers sold in France still came from English-speaking countries. Yet the government’s actions made programming skills preferential for French citizens in their everyday lives. Microcomputers were in fashion because they were suited for both work and entertainment, and when players were programming their own games, the “work” and “play” modes of computer use could easily interact with each other.

However, although male players-turned-designers could easily use computers in their work and personal lives, females were discouraged from participating in the new-born French game culture (Le Douarin, 2004). One of the factors that contributed to this state was the objectification of women in the gaming press. The

numerous covers adorning *Tilt* magazine portrayed sexualized females, such as in no. 44 (siren with bare breasts), no. 56 (a half-naked woman lying on the beach), or no. 90 (a naked woman posing to the viewer). In *Joystick Hebdo* (no. 28), one of the French weekly magazines sold in the 1980s, the background for unleavened wisecracks constituted a nasty caricature devoid of subtlety: A naked woman falls from high onto the phallic hat of an amused owner.

However, the symbolic violence committed against women permeated through French video games themselves. For example, in *Le Mystère de Kikekankoi* (Benes & Berchiatti, 1984), the player finds a naked woman tied to a pole, waiting for rescue, and willing to copulate after every session won, which bears some resemblance to the American pornographic game *Custer's Revenge* (Mystique, 1982). The closing screen of *Orphée* (Benes & Berchiatti, 1985) shows a half-naked nurse ready to “cure” the player character waking up from a coma. The ending of *Forteresse* (Spada & Perrotin, 1986) also shows a woman in her lingerie who says to the player, “I’ve been waiting for you so long.” *La Java du privé* (Cazenave & Desportes, 1986), in turn, delivers a stereotypical portrayal of a prostitute who needs to be slapped, so that the player would obtain an item necessary to complete the game. *Les Passagers du vent* (Bonnell, 1986), an adaptation of François Bourgeon’s comic books, contained scenes of attempted rape, which aroused some controversy among feminist organizations in the United Kingdom (Meistermann, 1988, p. 98).

All cited examples contain a common factor: their creators—and recipients as well—were males, portraying women either as “damsels in distress” or the objects of sexual violence. This way of presenting women could not escape the attention of female journalist Nathalie Meistermann. She noted in her essay “Moi Jane, toi micro,” which was published in *Tilt*, that her female interviewees were reluctant to play games or programme them. Meistermann explained that this was disinclination not only because of the lack of time or programming skills but, above all, because of the toxic male gaming community. The journalist also criticized French gaming magazines and retailers for advertising games with the aforementioned pictures of naked women (Meistermann, 1988, pp. 95–97).

Meistermann tried to find notable exceptions in France: Games advertised not just for males but also suitable for females and, most importantly, designed by females. In France, she indicated Froggy Software, an avant-garde software house founded by Jean-Louis Le Breton in 1984. Le Breton, a former partaker of the May 1968 strikes, came to be the most progressive designer in terms of his attitude toward women. His first game at Froggy Software, *Paranoïak* (1984), reversed the object/subject gender hierarchy. The player assumed the role of a mentally ill and depressed male who had to overcome his illnesses. For one of the illnesses, shame, a specific remedy was prescribed: undressing before the player’s girlfriend. Although *Paranoïak* had a first-person perspective, the player’s avatar moved beyond the virtual camera and exposed his buttocks to the avatar’s girlfriend. Thus, the player functioned as a male object in front of his amused girlfriend.

For female players, *Paranoïak* was not the only reason to buy Froggy Software's video games. During an interview with Le Breton, Meistermann learned that females comprised about 40% of the company's customer base (Meistermann, 1988, p. 98). Although Froggy Software's publications included such misogynist titles as the aforementioned *La Java du privé*, it was Froggy Software that helped two women publish their own games. Chine Lanzmann wrote the script for *La femme qui ne supportait pas les ordinateurs*, and Clotilde Marion designed *Même les pommes de terre ont des yeux*; both games were coprogrammed by Le Breton himself. Lanzmann and Marion never made their second games and remained completely unknown as female designers. Their French language games never found a market outside of France, though these games reveal themselves to be very thought provoking.

La femme qui ne supportait pas les ordinateurs

La femme qui ne supportait pas les ordinateurs (*The Woman Who Hated Computers*) was created in 1986. Its designer, Chine Lanzmann, is the niece of documentary filmmaker Claude Lanzmann. Like her uncle, Chine Lanzmann tried to demonstrate how oppressed a minority can be within a specific society. Whereas Claude Lanzmann was obsessed with the annihilation of Jews during World War II, his niece explored the annihilation of female presence in male-dominated virtual space.

The game itself refers to Internet stalking within Minitel, a French online service during the 1980s. Among its various features, Minitel allowed users to communicate in discussion groups. In the mid-1980s, French feminists tried to unveil the liberating potential of up-to-date technology. Between 1984 and 1987, they managed a female-oriented magazine—*Ellel*—the objective of which was to make feminist ideas in cyberspace more popular (Rokeghem, 1984). However, research that Leroux and Pépin (1986) commissioned showed that the French cyberculture rapidly had become a male-dominated realm with a hostile attitude toward female players.

La femme aimed to deconstruct the aggressive techniques that males utilized in online discussion groups. After launching the game, the player confronts the aesthetics of Internet chat during that time. A monochromatic screen with a parser below invites the player to "tell me the name of your charming personality." When the player enters his or her name, an unknown person poses the question of whether he or she is a woman. If the player types "no," the interlocutor flees in panic. To complete the game, the player must answer that he or she is a woman; then, the interlocutor tries to interrogate the player, asking whether she is blond, married, or intelligent. In this situation, feelings of discomfort grow. Finally, the other person introduces himself as Ordine (*ordinateur* is French for "computer"), a machine that tries to seduce the player and dominate her.

The game's second stage opens with a break-in by a computer hacker named Comby who shuts Ordine down. At first, Comby seems to be a lifesaver, but during a discussion with him, it becomes clear that he is another stalker. Observing the player

character from the window of another building, Comby boasts about his love conquests in private discussions with other internautes: “They say I am here to flirt. I hate this term. I prefer ‘seduction.’” The uncomfortable predicament of being seduced becomes rougher when Ordine takes revenge on Comby and murders him remotely with an electric shock. After that, Ordine frames the player for the murder. Depending on the next choices, the player can discover one of the six endings, each of which is unfavorable for her. For example, in three scenarios, an assassin can kill her, the computer can electrocute her, or even if Ordine is accused of the murder, a police officer replaces this computer with a new one.

Regardless of the ending, the player finally becomes detached from the first-person perspective (the chat screen) and confronts a screen depicting her character being electrocuted from a distance. Hence, both the game’s voyeuristic computer “camera” and immersive aspects are deconstructed. The player realizes that this bond with the female virtual avatar—as well as the chat itself—was only simulated. At the same time, *La femme* suggests that women, with their identities revealed, cannot easily survive in the male-dominated Internet realm. This rhetorical approach that Lanzmann demonstrated was met with outrage, as a *Tilt* review illustrates:

The novel begins well, with humour. The computer displays the colour from the beginning: It asks about your appearance and about a possible competitor. For a good understanding, it is better to be alone in front of the keyboard. Chine’s style is extracted. Even too much. Writing an oral language is one of the most challenging exercises ever. It is not the “ah, ah, ah” on three lines and suspension and exclamation points that enrich the mess. Not to mention some gross spelling mistakes, the weakness of the parser, which ignores the circumflex accent, and the programmer’s carelessness in forgetting here and there the blanks between two words. Details, but they end up irritating. The display also admits a weakness. The text appears line by line, and the set skips at each new line. The eyes quickly ask for mercy. (Desmedt, 1986)

For a journal whose regular reviews contained shortened descriptions of content and ending phrases such as “good adventure game,” this review by Patrice Desmedt seems strangely emotional. The accusation against the author is hard to understand, especially because she kept true to the conversation style that was characteristic of online chats. The attack, which the reviewer aimed at Lanzmann, easily can be explained with cognitive dissonance. If Desmedt had accepted the designer’s argumentation, he also would have needed to admit that cyberculture (which includes digital games) is of a sexist nature. Instead, *La femme* and its author fell into oblivion.

Même les pommes de terre ont des yeux

Clotilde Marion, the author of *Même les pommes de terre ont des yeux* (*Even Potatoes Have Eyes*), shared her thoughts on male dominance more indirectly. As she states in a *Tilt* interview:

What concerns the intrigue, I would like to absolutely avoid falling into the eternal cliché of blond “damsels in distress” to find an actual setting. I thought of South American dictatorships. (Marion, 1986)

Indeed, *Même les pommes* came to light at a time of rapid changes. Since the late 1970s, when general strikes in Peru forced the military government to bend the knees to organized labor, several military juntas in South America, which were established as a result of earlier coups, were crumbling (Smith, 2005, pp. 60–62). In 1982, the military cabinet in Argentina collapsed, disgraced by its defeat during the Argentine–British war for the Falkland Islands. In 1984, a democratic election was held in Uruguay, and in 1985, a nonmilitary government came to power in Brazil. Therefore, *Même les pommes*’ central objective is to overthrow a military dictatorship in a fictional South American country. With a specific amount of money, the player must take control of the army, remove the dictator from power, and gain public support for a presidential election.

At first, one can assume that this overtly political game features no women. Even though the player character’s identity remains unknown and leaves room for interpretation, almost no female characters appear in the game. However, as Marion said, she developed the idea for the game while peeling potatoes (Marion, 1986). This seemingly insignificant statement by the designer makes sense in the context of gender representation. In *Même les pommes*, the independent characters are divided into two major groups: junta troops and poor revolutionaries. In each of these groups, the men dominate. The only female character in the game lives in a house with her baby. Moreover, she is only one of several characters in the house who pleads for food, understood here as the titular potatoes. Although the male characters occupy positions of power, the woman in Marion’s game remains in a private, domestic context.

Moreover, *Même les pommes* also poses the question of whether the political is more important than the private. The player can achieve a noble goal—overthrowing a junta—but only while using the same undemocratic methods that the junta used. During the game, the player can gain public support in three ways: feeding the crowds, making speeches, and using her army to force the ruling general to step down.

The speeches are particularly hard hitting. Having arrested the general, the player can obtain the former ruler’s speeches of radically different ideological origins. The liberal one, “J’accuse!” (“I Accuse!”), is the title of Emile Zola’s speech against the nationalist and anti-Semitic battue directed at Albert Dreyfus. Conversely, the game includes the conservative “Je vous ai compris” (“I understand you”) speech from Charles de Gaulle, who assumed full power after France’s presidential election in 1958 after rapid constitutional changes that left-wing politicians viewed as a *coup d’état* (Mitterrand, 1964). In addition, another speech includes the populist phrase “Les patates sont cuites,” which paraphrases the French colloquial expression “Les carottes sont cuites” (“It’s all up”) and connotes an inevitable failure. Indeed, an

eventual success—conducting democratic elections—is illusory because the player enforces democratic changes through a *coup*.

Méwilo

Female marginalization returns as a theme in various titles by Muriel Tramis. She programmed her debut game, *Méwilo*, with assistance from Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau. Born in the French region of Martinique, Tramis attempted to visualize the history of her ancestors, who were stigmatized during centuries of slavery on the island. The game's background was derived from an anecdote that emerged during the Martinican slave revolt in 1831, as follows:

Plantation masters saved their gold in the worst way. They got their most faithful slave to dig a hole and then killed and buried him with the gold in order that the ghost of the unfortunate slave would keep the curious away from the treasure. (cf. Donovan, 2010, p. 127)

The history of slavery in Martinique is an important context, even though the main gameplay of *Méwilo* relies simply on exploring the island's former prefecture, Saint-Pierre, in 1902. The player, impersonating a parapsychologist who observes the world from a first-person perspective, investigates various characters who are somehow linked to past events. One of them, a White lawyer named Valentin de Ronan, introduces himself as a descendant of a slave plantation owner named Arnaud de Ronan. During his speech, Valentin sees a Black female washer through the window and comments on her appearance: "What a beauty!" However, this laudatory comment comes from a sexual predator. Later, the player meets the washer—who introduces herself as Séraphine—at the city harbor. Séraphine turns the player's attention toward what she considers Valentin's dark side:

I cannot wash the white man's dirty clothes even once. Afterwards, I have to explain it to him, and Mister [Valentin] will touch me again! As soon as he sees a coloured one in front of his white eyes, he begins to make fun of her . . . So, when he advances his hands, you know what I do? I cry: "Long live Professor Saint-Just!" There, he remains seized like a blind manicomou.

Here, Valentin treats Séraphine as both Black and female fetish. Homi Bhabha notes that fetishism is a "vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity . . . and the anxiety associated with lack and difference" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 74). In this case, Séraphine, as a Black female turned into an object, suffers both from different skin color (blackness) and symbolic castration (femaleness). However, *Méwilo* distances itself from the pure "White man/Black woman" dichotomy. For example, among the investigated people, the player can find a White mistress taking care of the garden belonging to Arnaud de Ronan's descendants. Her ancestors

survived the Black slave revolt in Saint-Pierre and managed not to be lynched. The mistress condemns the slave rebellions not only because she is racist but also because of her personal experiences. Hence, *Méwilo* sublimates the racial and cultural divisions that exert an enormous impact on the present, everyday life in Martinique.

Just as the antagonism between Black and White becomes subtle in *Méwilo*, such are the boundaries between the “virtual” and “real.” On the one hand, the game reconstructs historical locations in Saint-Pierre, such as the Rue de Victor Hugo, the local Notre Dame Cathedral, and the panorama of the city, each based on authentic postcards (Oli, 2015). On the other hand, the illusion of taking part in an immersive game experience becomes questioned when the player enters a shop in the Rue de Victor Hugo. Based on the appearance, the player can recognize the shop owner as the digitized version of Muriel Tramis herself. Moreover, when the player clicks on a cage with a bird inside, the programme displays the address of Coktel Vision, the game’s publisher.

Fascination

Having designed *Méwilo* and another game about slavery in Martinique—*Freedom* (1988)—Tramis turned toward the production of erotic games that were published under the label of Tomahawk. She authored three games of eroticism: *Emmanuelle* (1989), *Geisha* (1990), and *Fascination* (1991). They all received mixed reviews in France and were panned by Anglo-Saxon critics. For example, Christian Roux writes in the positive review of *Fascination* that the game drives a male player into a “disturbing identification crisis with a heroine whose role he has to take over” (Roux, 1991). On the other hand, in a retrospective review of the same game by Richard Cobbett, one can read that *Fascination* features “the stupidest ending of any game in history” (Cobbett, 2011).

In *Fascination*, the player impersonates a female, dark-skinned French stewardess Doralice. During her stay in Miami, Doralice is entangled in multilevel intrigue around a sexual potency medicine that turns men into sexual beasts. In practice, *Fascination* plays better than it says: The very description of the action is reminiscent of a mediocre pornographic film. However, there is a method in this madness.

Participating in a complex criminal intrigue, the player has to take a female point of view—not only by directing the female hero Doralice but also by observing the game through her eyes. Of course, Doralice figures not only as a subject but also as an object of the gaze. In the first location, while ordering her to take a shower, the player can observe the heroine bathing nude. However, to paraphrase Diane Carr, although Doralice’s “physicality and gender invite objectification, yet she operates as a perpetrating and penetrative subject within the narrative” (Carr, 2002, p. 175). Admittedly, someone could answer that *Fascination* abounds in other erotic representations (posters, paintings) with women exposed to the male gaze. It is impossible not to agree with this opinion. It should be stressed, though, that in *Fascination*, the culturally dominant male sex answers for these pornographic performances. Before we warrant this assumption, it is worth noting that Doralice resists male domination.

Fascination's protagonist reflects the interwar cinematic model of the *femme fatale*, a woman who threatens male existence. Doralice's ability to undermine the masculine rule reveals itself with all its strength. She not only frees Lou Dale, another woman trapped by Kenneth Miller—a psychopathic consumer of potency drug—but also successfully traps him. When having sex with Miller (during which she takes a dominant “cowgirl” position), Doralice puts him to sleep using chloroform. Nor can she be overwhelmed by the Doctor, a mad scientist trying to spread the drug and thus cause a wave of aggression against women.

The last playable scene of *Fascination* takes place in prison. Having left this prison, the heroine—as well as the player—learns that she participated in a “life-size murder party.” Cobbett's common sense tells us to reject this ending as an exceptionally bizarre preview of Fincher's *The Game* (1997). However, the American director's film, which also features a murder party organized to humiliate a self-confident businessman, also showed a macabre development of the action that is contradicted by the following birthday party. What distinguishes *Fascination* from *The Game* is a sharp criticism of the capitalist power structure, which the United States represents by no accident.

African American feminist bell hooks (1984) notes that capitalism in her home country makes it easier to exercise symbolic power over women. However, capital, according to hooks, also causes an ideological stratification between privileged White feminists (representing the establishment) and much less well-off Black women. In addition to the nightclub bartender Sharon, the Black Doralice is the only dark-skinned female character in the game; in the case of both sexes, the White characters prevail. It becomes evident that the White establishment does set the rules of the murder party, of which the protagonist has become a part. It is also this establishment that places pornographic images of women in the game space, even in the newspaper *Miami Tribune*. Doralice, leaving the area of the murder party, symbolically abandons the status that de Beauvoir (1956) describes as “wallowing in immanence” (p. 572). However, the sexual freedom obtained by Doralice does not mean that the structures of power are compromised. As Michel Foucault puts it: “In order for there to be a power relationship, at least a certain dose of freedom . . . is always needed on both sides. If power relations exist in every social space, it is because freedom is everywhere” (Foucault, 1984). The protagonist of *Fascination*, although managing to preserve her life in a macabre murder party, is incapable of undermining the fundamental rules governing its world. Her fight against sexual repression “represented nothing more, but nothing less . . . than a tactical shift and reversal in the great deployment of sexuality” (Foucault, 1985, p. 131).

Lost in Time

The negative response to Tramis' erotic games discouraged Tramis from subverting computer pornography. Instead, she turned to educational games, making use of

increasingly popular full-motion video techniques. However, the critique of White male domination in the public discourse was still present in another game created by Tramis that also featured Doralice as a player character. *Lost in Time*, whose graphics are composed of handwritten backgrounds with recordings of “live” characters superimposed on them, synthesizes *Méwilo*’s postcolonialism and *Fascination*’s antimasculinist content.

The game once more puts the player in the role of Doralice who now leads a peaceful life on an unnamed land. The breakthrough moment occurs when she finds a shipwreck from the 19th century. Then, she becomes stunned and enslaved by a White slave trafficker named Jarlath. Doralice awakens in the past, next to a slave from the Yoruba tribe who later proves to be her ancestor. The player needs to liberate the slave, return him to his family, and prevent Jarlath—an envoy from the past—from killing Yoruba, thus from making it so that Doralice will never be born. The whole sequence of events reconstructed by the player resembles several other games dedicated to time travel. However, what differs in *Lost in Time* is the deconstruction of male symbolic dominance.

Having liberated herself and Yoruba, Doralice finds herself on the island of St. Cristóbal. There, she meets someone who can be easily called a collaborator. Makandal (interestingly, played by Tramis’ husband René-Guy), a Black slave trader, contributes to enforcing colonialism on the island, even if he betrays his blackness in this way. Here, collaboration is shown as a transracial alliance against women. A passage drilled in a mountain that Makandal enters contains an inscription on which Doralice comments: “This inscription asks all women to go away. Is Makandal afraid of women?” The character of Makandal shows the complexity of “Black/White” dialectics. This reminds the player that dark-skinned women confronted “sexual exploitation [both] from inside and outside of their families and . . . by white as well as black males” (Hine, 1989, p. 914). Black women during the times of slavery faced universal violence on the part of males, regardless of color.

However, this does not at all justify the main perpetrators of violence: the White masters. During the end sequence, the player confronts Jarlath, who hates women just as Makandal did. The only way to defeat Jarlath is to give him an orchid, the smell of which makes him sneeze and fall into an abyss. The scene itself looks campy, but it is not without reason that Tramis chose the orchid as a crucial subject driving the plot forward. Endersby (2016) notes that orchids in Western countries have been culturally associated with seductive, predatory women (p. 162). Yet ancient Greek philosopher Theophrastus “recorded the apparently contradictory claim that orchids both promoted erections and caused impotence” (Endersby, 2016, p. 18). Therefore, one can easily note that Tramis’ *Lost in Time* plays again with the cultural trope of *femmes fatales*. The orchid that Jarlath receives questions his manliness and his position of power, condemning him to death.

Conclusion

The research above shows that the 1980s marked the debuts of female video game authors not only in the United States but also in France. Moreover, at the time, male domination in the French video game industry was under fire, just as it is currently in the United States. Referring to the questions asked in the beginning, we should note the following:

1. French female designers included their everyday experience (Marion's peeling potatoes, Tramis' tribute to the ancestors) to criticize male oppression against women.
2. They used techniques such as simulated point of view (Lanzmann's *La femme*) and authorial signature (Tramis featuring in *Méwilo*) to make the player more empathic to their experiences.
3. They showed that women are generally excluded from public space (*Même les pommes*, *Lost in Time*) and that they fall victim to verbal (*La femme*) and physical aggression (*Méwilo*, *Fascination*).

Thus, we can see that women's relationships with video games were already strong in the 1980s, regardless of country. We hope that the archaeology of games will find more valuable but underrated exhibits, which will strengthen the presence of discriminated groups in the production of electronic entertainment.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Justyna Janik and Magdalena Bednorz for giving me some good advice regarding the shape of this article: Jaroslav Švelch, PhD, for valuable feedback during the Central and Eastern European Games Conference 2018 in Prague; finally, an anonymous proofreader from the Scribendi online service for helpful remarks.


Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Filip Jankowski  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5178-2549>

References

- Benes, L., & Berchiatti, D. (1984). *Le Mystère de Kikekankoi* [The Mystery of Kikekankoi] [Amstrad CPC]. France: Loriciels.
- Benes, L., & Berchiatti, D. (1985). *Orphée* [Amstrad CPC]. France: Loriciels.

- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Blanchet, A. (2016). France. In M. J. P. Wolf (Ed.), *Video games around the world* (pp. 175–192). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bonnell, B. (1986). *Les Passagers du vent* [Amstrad CPC]. France: Infogrames.
- Carr, D. (2002). Playing with Lara. In G. King & T. Krzywinska (Eds.), *Screenplay: Cinema/ videogames/interfaces* (pp. 171–180). New York, NY: Wallflower Press.
- Cazenave, T., & Desportes, L. (1986). *La Java du privé* [Apple II]. France: Froggy Software.
- Cobbett, R. (2011). *Saturday crapshoot: Fascination*. Retrieved from <https://www.pcgamer.com/saturday-crapshoot-fascination/>
- de Beauvoir, S. (1956). *The second sex* (H. M. Parshley, Trans.). London, England: Jonathan Cape.
- Deconchat, J. (1988). Méwilo. *Science & Vie Micro*, 46, 131.
- Desmedt, P. (1986). La femme qui ne supportait pas les ordinateurs [The Woman Who Hated Computers]. *Tilt*, 31, 128–129.
- Donovan, T. (2010). *Replay: The history of video games*. Lewes, England: Yellow Ant.
- Dovey, J., & Kennedy, H. (2006). *Game cultures: Computer games as new media. Issues in cultural and media studies*. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0703/2006284272-b.html>
- Endersby, J. (2016). *Orchid: A cultural history*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Fincher, D. (Director). (1997). *The game*. Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures.
- Foucault, M. (1984). L'Éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté. *Concordia. Revista Internacional De Filosofia*, 6, 99–116. Retrieved from <http://libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault212.html>
- Foucault, M. (1985). *The history of sexuality* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Garda, M. (2016). Nowa historia gier wideo? *EKRANy*, 2, 106–109.
- Hine, D. C. (1989). Rape and the inner lives of black women in the middle west. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14, 912–920. doi:10.1086/494552.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Jankowski, F. (2017). Political and social issues in French digital games, 1982–1993. *TransMissions*, 2, 162–176. Retrieved from <http://transmissions.edu.pl/political-and-social-issues-in-french-digital-games-1982-1993/>
- Jovanovic, J.-L. (1991). Fascination. *Tilt*, 96, 118–120.
- Kalata, K. (2017). *Lost in Time*. Retrieved from <http://www.hardcoregaming101.net/lost-in-time/>
- Kent, S. L. (2001). *The ultimate history of video games*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Kushner, D. (2003). *Masters of doom: How two guys created an empire and transformed pop culture*. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks.
- Lanzmann, C., & Le Breton, J.-L. (1986). *La femme qui ne supportait pas les ordinateurs [Apple II]*. France: Froggy Software. Retrieved from <https://ifdb.tads.org/viewgame?id=brxdd0j3xu8mmgmc>
- Le Breton, J.-L. (1984). *Paranoïak [Apple II]*. France: Froggy Software. Retrieved from <https://ifdb.tads.org/viewgame?id=gpp01p9xx22zv2v>

- Le Diberder, A., & Le Diberder, F. (1993). *Qui a peur des jeux vidéo?* Paris, France: La Découverte.
- Le Douarin, L. (2004). Hommes, femmes et micro-ordinateur: une idéologie des compétences. *Rezeaux*, 123, 149–174. Retrieved from https://www.cairn.info/load_pdf.php?ID_ARTICLE=RES_123_0149&download=1
- Lee, P. (1992). Fascination. *Amiga Action*, 36, 30.
- Leino, O. T. (2012). Death loop as a feature. *Game Studies*, 12. Retrieved from http://gamestudies.org/1202/articles/death_loop_as_a_feature
- Leroux, Y., & Pépin, M. (1986). Jeu sur micro-ordinateur et différences liées au sexe [Computer Games and Sex-Related Differences]. *Revue Des Sciences De L'éducation*, 12, 173–196.
- Marion, C. (1986). Le créateur du mois: Clotilde Marion. *Tilt*, 28, 8.
- Meistermann, N. (1988). Moi Jane, toi micro. *Tilt*, 56, 94–100.
- Mitterrand, F. (1964). *Le Coup d'État permanent*. Paris, France: Plon.
- Murray, S. (2018). Video games and playable media. *Feminist Media Histories*, 4, 214–219. doi:10.1525/fmh.2018.4.2.214
- Mystique. (1982). *Custer's revenge* [Atari 2600]. USA: Mystique.
- Nacher, A. (2016). Gry wideo wchodzą w dorosłość: w stronę lokalnej genealogii dyskusji wokół gier artystycznych [Video games are entering adulthood: into the local genealogy of discussions around artistic games]. *Kultura Współczesna*, 2, 46–56.
- Nooney, L. (2013). A pedestal, a table, a love letter: Archaeologies of gender in videogame history. *Game Studies*, 13. Retrieved from <http://gamestudies.org/1302/articles/nooney>
- Oli. (2015). *Soluce rétrocompatible: Méwilo (Atari ST, Amiga, Amstrad)*. Retrieved from <https://jeux.dokokade.net/2015/02/12/soluce-retrocompatible-mewilo-atari-st-amiga-amstrad/>
- Quinn, Z. (2013). *Depression quest* [Online]. USA: The Quinnsspiracy.
- Rokeghem, S. van. (1984). Télématique: quand les femmes s'en mêlent. *Les Cahiers Du GRIF*, 29, 145–146.
- Roux, C. (1991). Fascination. *Génération 4*, 38, 130.
- Roux, C. (1993). Lost in Time. *Génération 4*, 56, 46–47.
- Smith, P. H. (2005). *Democracy in Latin America: Political change in comparative perspective*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Spada, F., & Perrotin, C. (1986). *Forteresse* [Amstrad CPC]. France: Loricels.
- Švelch, J. (2013). Say it with a computer game: Hobby computer culture and the non-entertainment uses of homebrew games in the 1980s Czechoslovakia. *Game Studies*, 13. Retrieved from <http://gamestudies.org/1302/articles/svelch>
- Swalwell, M. (2008). 1980s home coding: The art of amateur programming. In S. Brennan & S. Ballard (Eds.), *Aotearoa digital arts reader* (pp. 193–201). Auckland, NZ: Aotearoa Digital Arts—Clouds.
- Thirteen/WNET. (2012). *Mission U.S.: Flight to freedom* [PC]. USA: PBS Learning Media.
- Tramis, M., & Chamoiseau, P. (1987). *Méwilo* [Amiga]. France: Coktel Vision. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/Mewilo_1988_Coktel_Vision_DE

- Tramis, M., & Chamoiseau, P. (1988). *Freedom* [DOS]. France: Coktel Vision. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/freedom-dos>
- Tramis, M., & Lamarque, P. (1989). *Emmanuelle* [DOS]. France: Coktel Vision. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/msdos_Emmanuelle_1989
- Tramis, M., & Lamarque, P. (1990). *Geisha* [DOS]. France: Coktel Vision. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/msdos_Geisha_1990
- Tramis, M., & Lamarque, P. (1991). *Fascination* [DOS]. France: Coktel Vision. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/msdos_Fascination_1991
- Tramis, M., & Lamarque, P. (1993). *Lost in Time* [DOS]. France: Coktel Vision. Retrieved from https://www.abandonware-france.org/ltf_abandon/ltf_jeu.php?id=828&fic=liens
- Wolf, M. J. P. (2016). United States. In M. J. P. Wolf (Ed.), *Video games around the world* (pp. 591–608). Cambridge: MIT Press.

Author Biography

Filip Jankowski is a PhD candidate in the Institute of Audiovisual Arts at the Jagiellonian University. Jankowski obtained the MA in the field of film and media studies in 2018. Jankowski's principal research interests lie exploring the video game history, particularly French game design.