



Desire is Not a Dirty Word

Writing Healthy Fanservice for Games

Michelle Clough

Freelance Writer/Editor



Fewer Tifas, or More Sephiroths? Male sexualization in games

Michelle Clough
Freelance





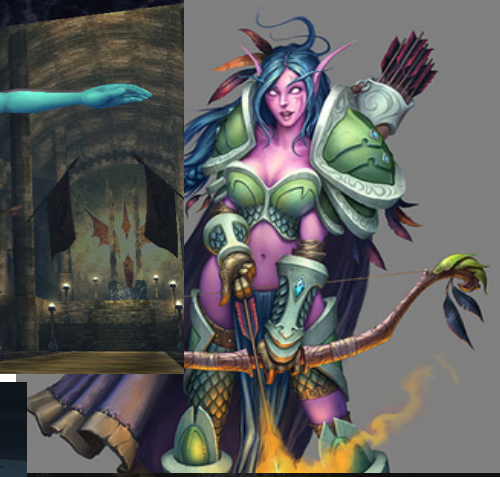
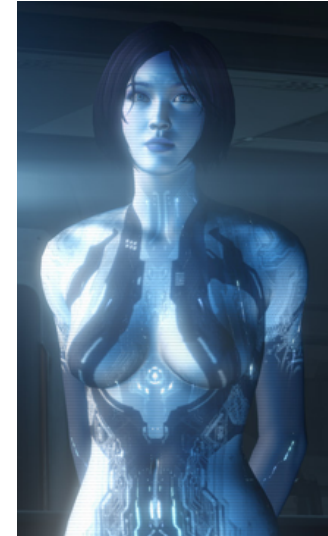
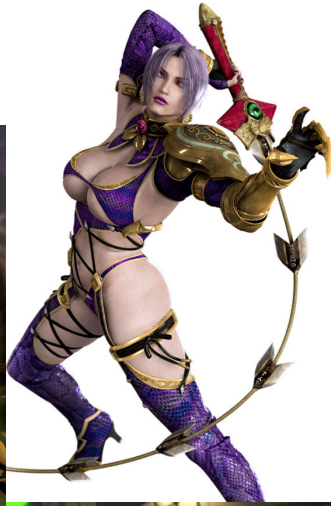
My opinion?





The fanservice/sexualization debate



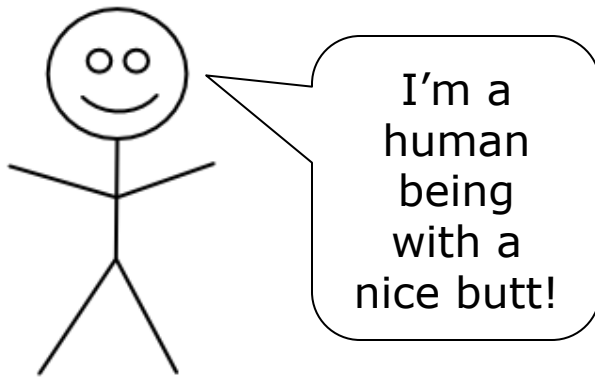




For the purpose of this talk...

Fanservice:

making a character
sexy...





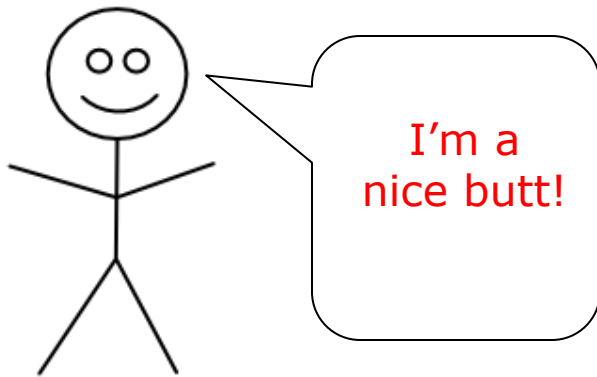
For the purpose of this talk...

Fanservice:

making a character
sexy...

Objectification:

...and nothing else.

















Insults

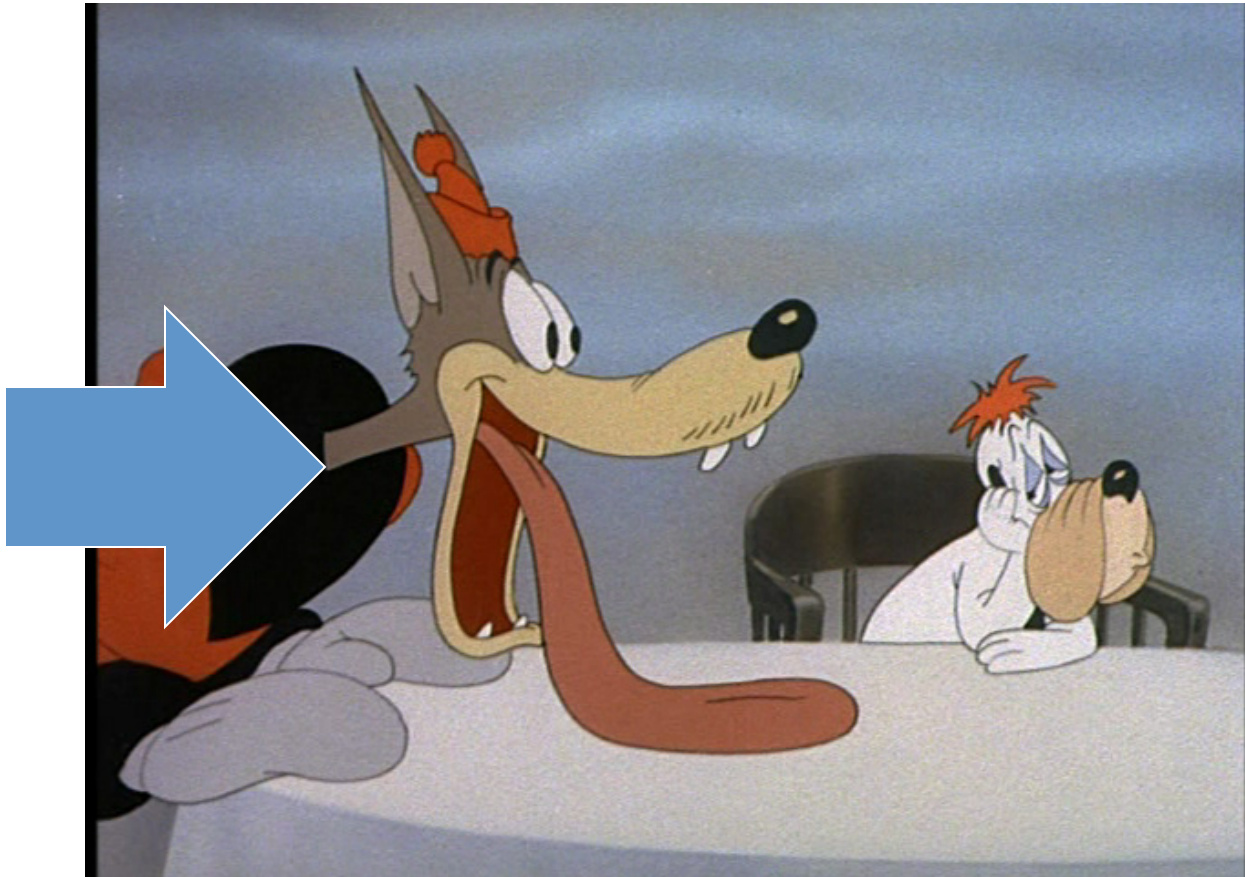
horny
fanboys
manbabies
immature
teenagers

Dismissal

titillation
base
lust
shallow
smut
puerile

Crude terms

boobs
tits ass
f***toy
wank fodder





Insults

heavily
manboys
manbabies
immature
teenagers

titillation

base

shallow

smut

puerile

Crude

boobs

tits ass

f***toy

weak food



Desire





The dance of *eros*





The D.E.S.I.R.E. Model

- Six step system
 - To write hot characters
 - To write them well
 - To turn some people on
 - To avoid turning others off





Collaborating with team

- Working with artists

This guy should be *seductive*.

I'm thinking smoldering gaze and low-riding jeans.



...hot.



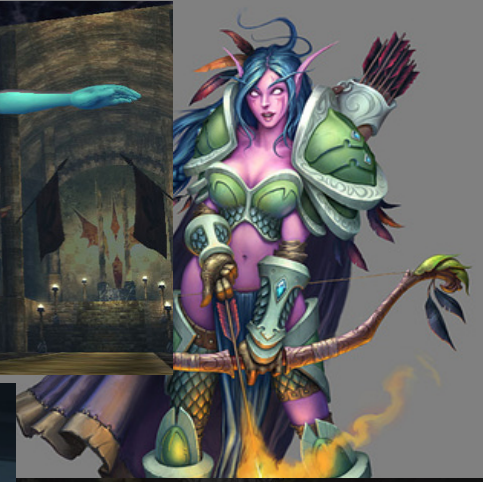
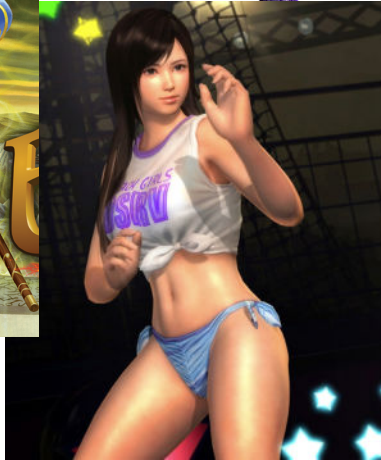
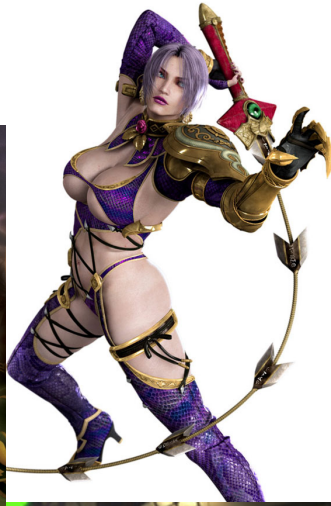
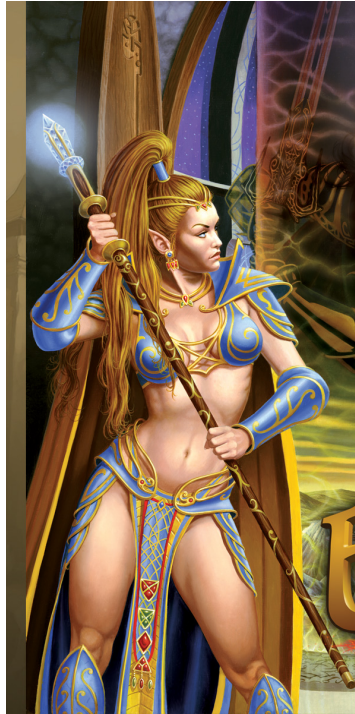
Let's get started





DESIRE: D is for Diversity





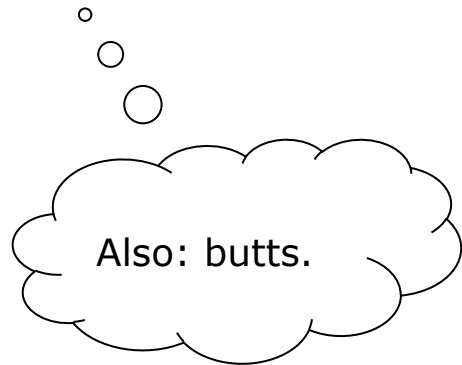
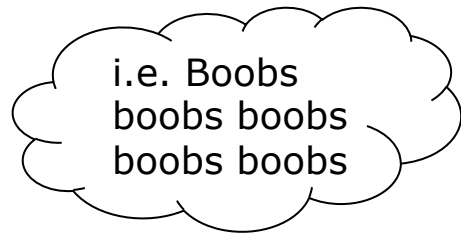


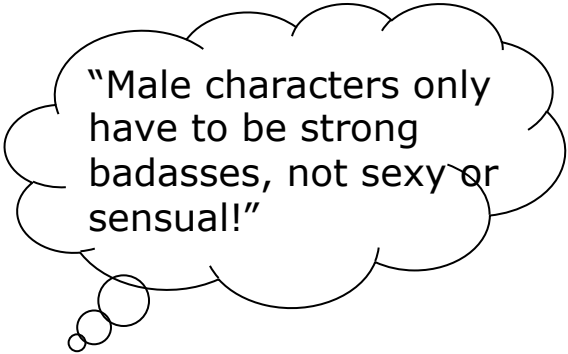
“Okay, no fanservice, we swear...”





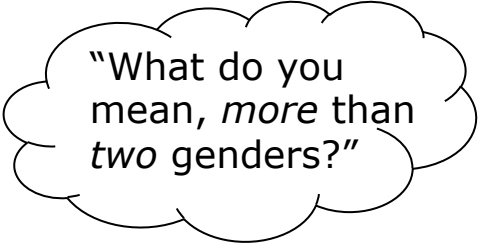
Woman = Hot





"Male characters only have to be strong badasses, not sexy or sensual!"

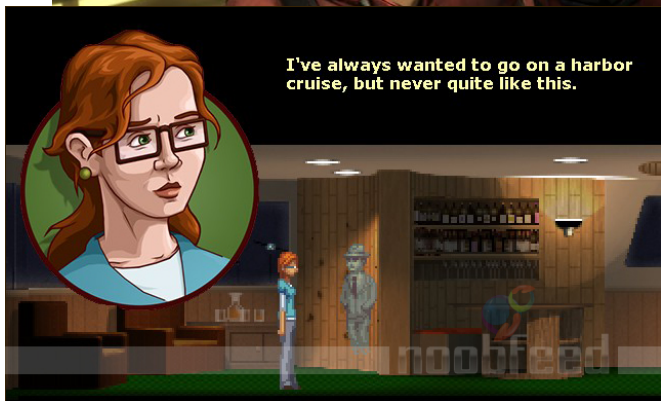
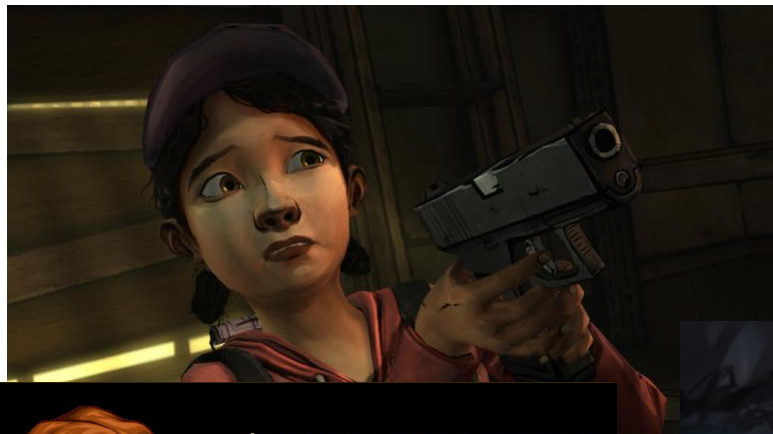
Hot = Woman



"What do you mean, *more than two* genders?"

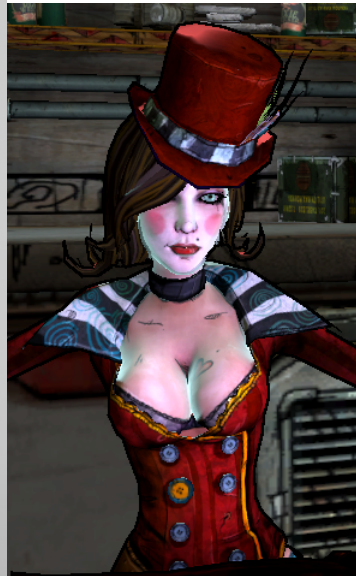


1. Diversify female characters





1. Diversify female characters





2. Make sexy male characters





3. Diversify “attractive”



From BioWare forums via unknown tumblr



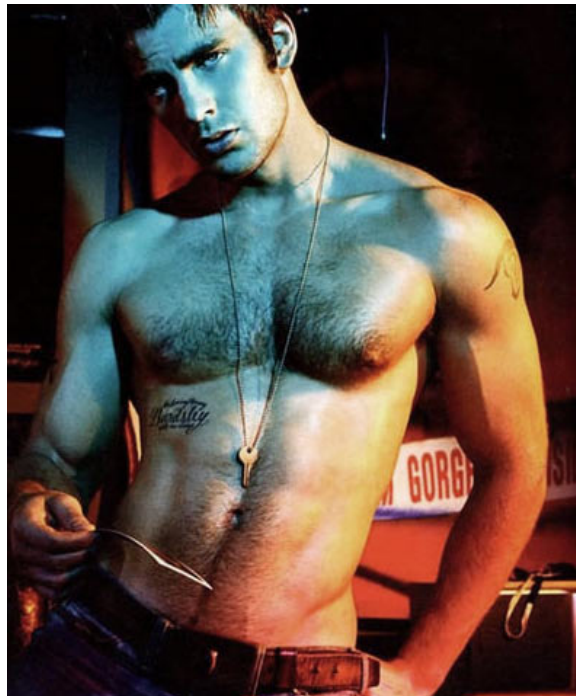
Rules of attractiveness





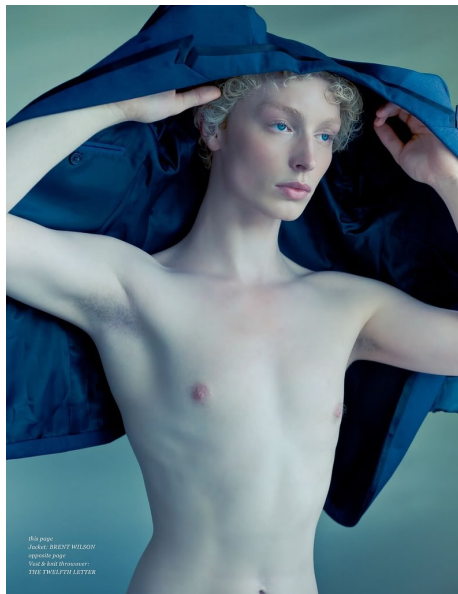


These people are sexy





These people are sexy





These people are sexy





These people are sexy





Show as desirable:

- People who subvert gender





Show as desirable:

- People who subvert gender
- Different body types





Show as desirable:

- People who subvert gender
- Different body types
- People with disabilities





Show as desirable:

- People who subvert gender
- Different body types
- People with disabilities
- People of color OUTSIDE stereotypes







Redefining fanservice

NOW: Conventionally hot bodies



Redefining fanservice

NOW: ~~Conventionally hot bodies~~

GOAL: Human beings presented as hot
(sometimes)



Diversity Examples

- Dragon Age: Inquisition





Diversity Examples

- Dragon Age: Inquisition
- Borderlands 2





DESIRE: E for Energy





A _____ in the eye



A twinkle



A kind warmth



A cruel gleam



Dynamic animating energy





Dynamic animating energy





Dynamic animating energy





Driving emotions in narrative



Anger = driving force for stabbing people



Determination = driving force for climbing/crawling



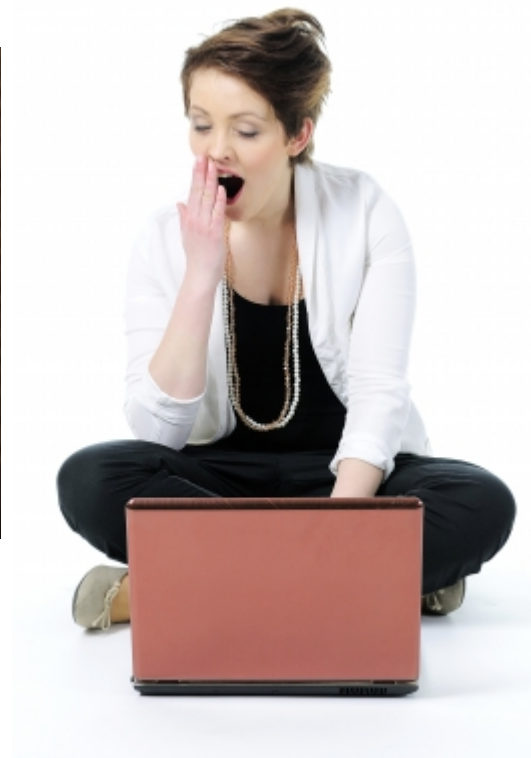
Be still, my beating heart...

I AM ANGRY
MAN
SHOOTING
ANGRY
BULLETS AT
PEOPLE I'M
ANGRY AT!





What traits are attractive?



Images courtesy of Imaginajistic and
marcom @ freedigitalphotos.com



What traits are attractive?

Writing the Romance-able NPC: ICING on the Content Cake

Heidi McDonald
Game Designer, Schell Games LLC



GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE ONLINE
AUGUST 9-11, 2012
OCTOBER 9-11, 2012
EXPO OFFICE: OCTOBER 9-11
2012



Just a few examples:



"Funny"



"Empathetic"



"Enthusiastic"



"Strong"

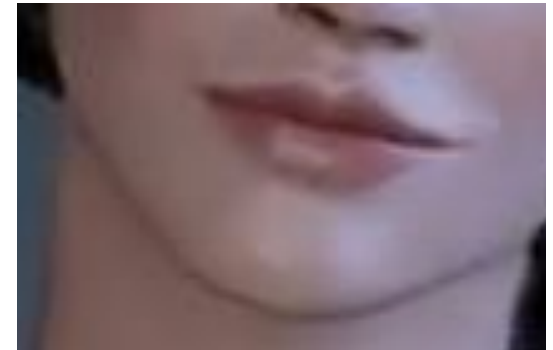


"Tortured"



Non-verbal

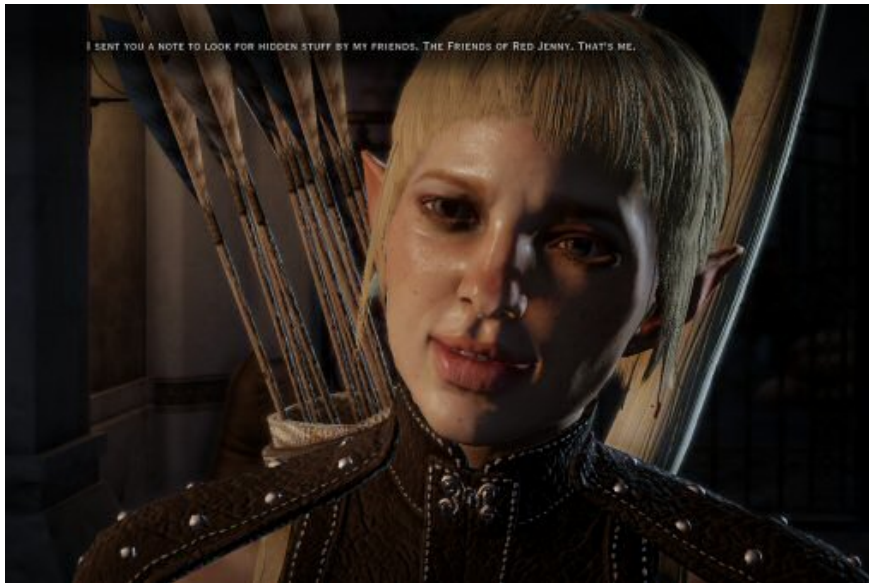
- Eye contact and gaze
- Voice – texture, timbre
- Mouth
- Body language





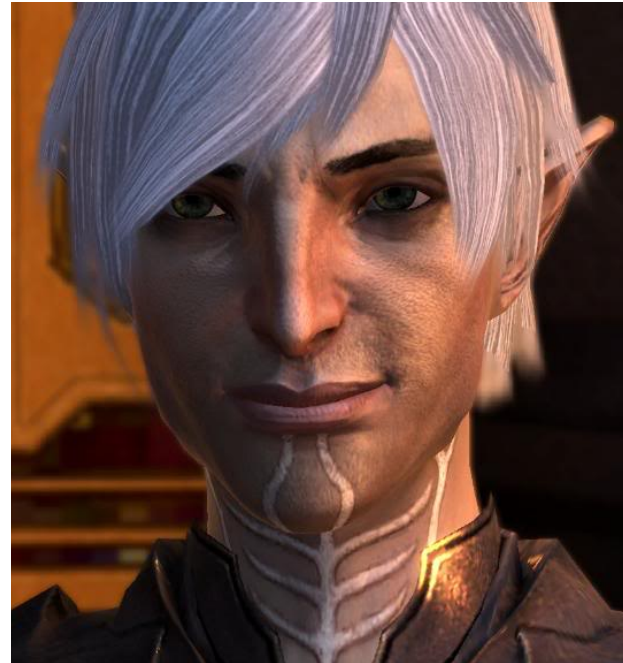
Energy Examples

- Dragon Age and Mass Effect





The Many Faces of Fenris...



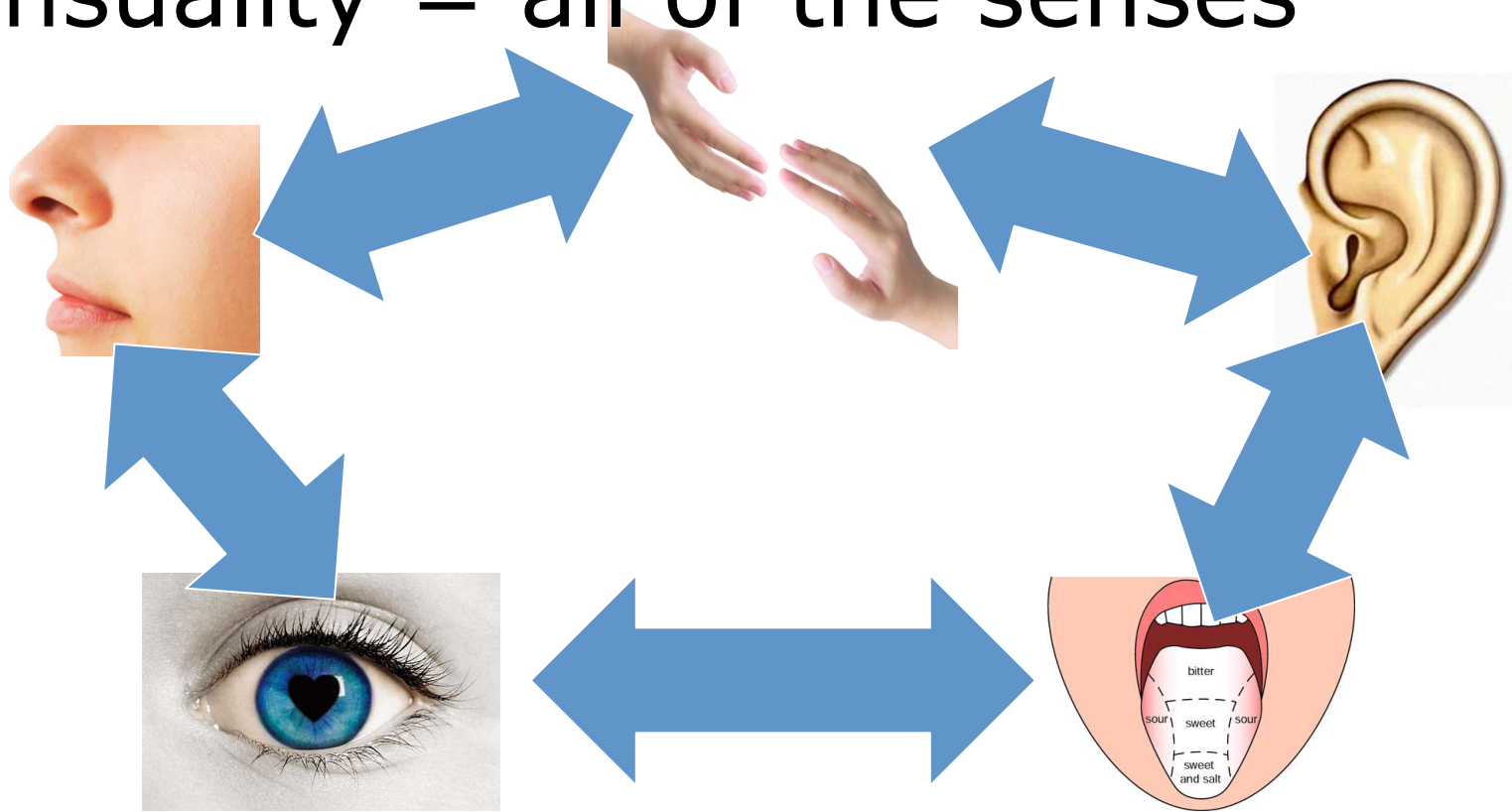


DE**S**IRE: S is for Sensuality



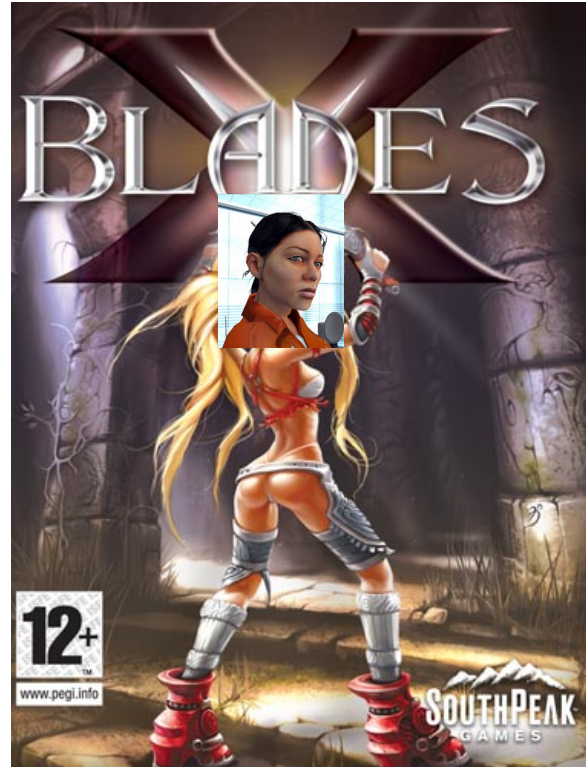


Sensuality = all of the senses





Sexuality pasted on yey?





Visual – not just for artists!





Body language



Power / Aggression



Softness / Invitation



Choice of clothing





Choice of clothing



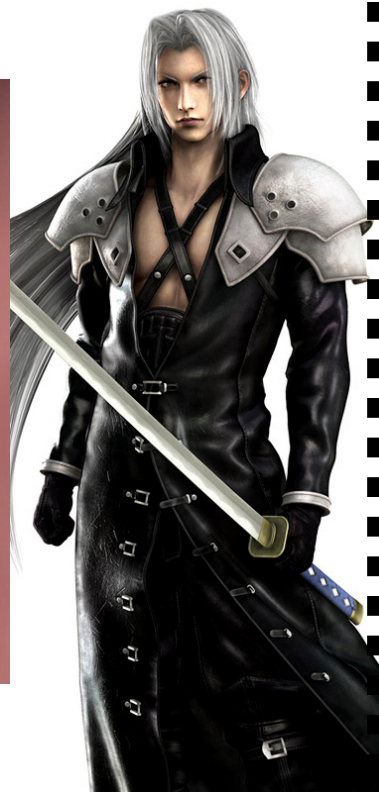
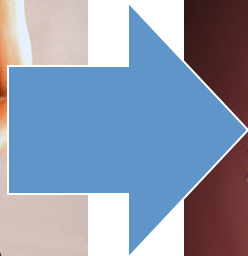


Choice of clothing





Choice of clothing





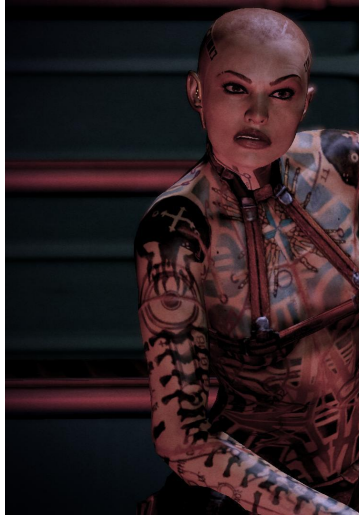
Skin and skimpy clothes







What kind of tension?





Touch



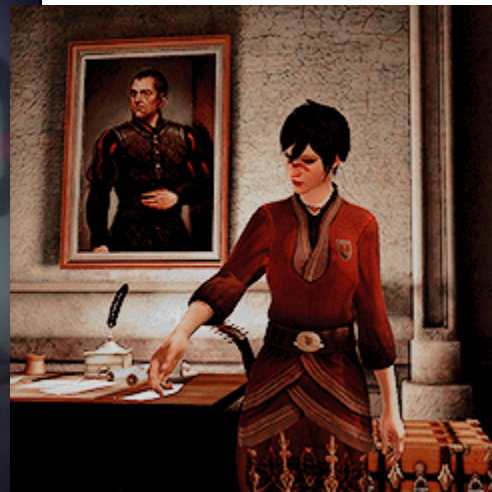


Sexual touch





Characters touching self



From itsjaneshepard
on Tumblr



Touch difficult in games





Touch difficult in games

And then he
traces her
lips with his
fingertips...



...and then I
spend the
next *100
hours* trying
to render
that.

...I hate you.



404 scene not found



Aural





Voices

- How the voice shifts
- Non-verbal noises
- Diction, word choice, speaking patterns etc
- Also, music and SFX



Courtesy of stockimages @ freedigitalphotos.net



Taste and smell

- Present via:
 - Dialogue





Taste and smell

- Present via:
 - Dialogue
 - Environmental





Taste and smell

- Present via:
 - Dialogue
 - Environmental
 - Physical response





Sensuality Example



- Witcher 2 sex scene
 - Visual – sexual imagery, color
 - Aural – music, sighs, narration about elven lovers
 - Touch – kissing, caressing, intimate touches
 - Scent – steam, roses
 - Taste – certain... implied sex acts

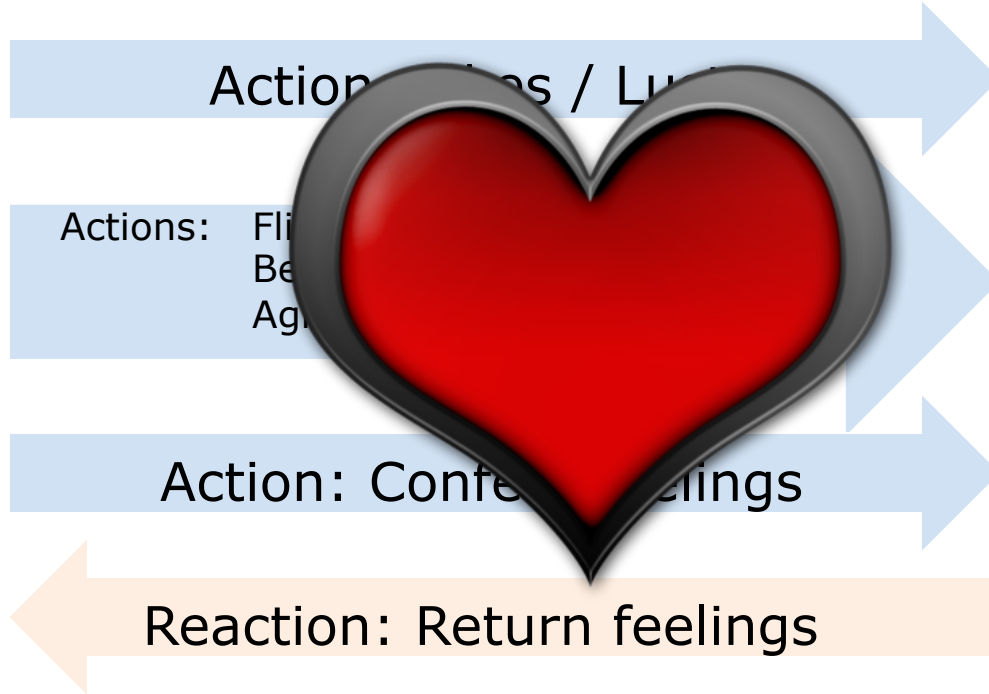


DESIRE: I is for Initiative





The “Kindness Coin” Mechanic





The “Kindness Coin” Mechanic



Action: Likes / Lusts

Actions: Flirt Compliment
Be nice Give gifts
Agree Spend quality time

Action: Confess feelings

Reaction: Return feelings





Agency is sexy





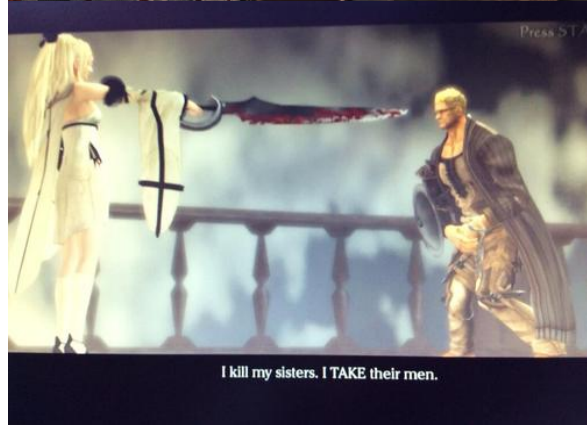
Player? What player?





Sexual Agency in PCs

- Have agency by design
- Not always all-powerful
- Okay to be “passive” or “desired” vs. active pursuer





Sexual Agency in NPCs



- Should act vs. react
- Enthusiasm and honesty
- Acting for themselves, not the “invisible audience”





Sexual agency != YES PLZ DO ME





Bad Example: God of War III





The Bayonetta Problem





404 complicated and difficult topic
not found



Subtle Sexual Agency

- Up-front propositions
- Smouldering eye contact
- Touching
- Kissing
- Body language
- Honest verbal communication
- Facial expression
- Etc etc – list goes on and on



MAKE SURE TO INVOLVE MUTUAL CONSENT!

Without it, “sexy” turns into “creep and ick”



Initiative Example

- Sith Jaesa Wilsaam, ST:TOR
 - Former Jedi, apprentice to Sith PC
 - Exploring/satisfying own appetites
 - Male PC– attracted to him due to history/tastes, propositions him accordingly





Initiative Example

- Sith Jaesa Wilsaam, ST:TOR
 - Former Jedi, apprentice to Sith PC
 - Exploring/satisfying own appetites
 - Male PC– attracted to him due to history/ tastes, propositions him accordingly
 - No relationship with male PC – seeks out other lovers, discusses her desires in relation to Sith code



Gifset from nameislooney on Tumblr



DESIRE: R is for Relationships





Romantic relationships



- Highlight character sexuality/appeal
- Depict intimacy and erotic scenes
- Allow some player agency



Other relationships

- Friendship





Other relationships

- Friendship
- Rivalry
- Enmity

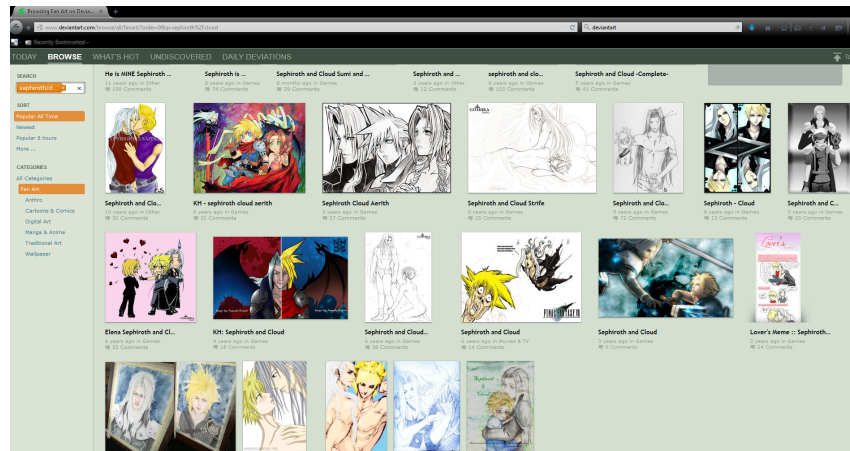
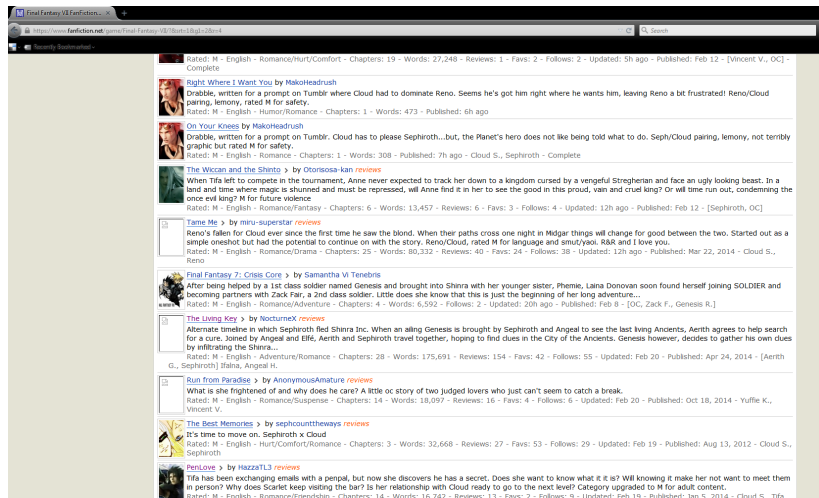




Fuel for sexual exploration



deviantART





Relationship Example

- Dragon Age series
 - NPCs have strong ties to PC *and* each other
 - Banter system offers relationship development





DESIRE: E is for Eyes on Character





Panning over body





Contrast of sex vs non-sex



Gifs from anidewitt on Tumblr



Camera: “Oh yeah,
check this out!”

Gif from lakelurks on Tumblr



Camera: “Aah!
Stay ten feet back!”



A Tale of Two Butts



Indirect gaze



VS.



Direct gaze



Indirect camera gaze





Indirect camera gaze

- Camera acts as character proxy
- Scene and character specific context
- Subjective character opinion
- “Shows” vs “tells”





Direct camera gaze





Direct camera gaze

- Camera acts as audience proxy
- No character context
- “Objective” statement of fact
- “Tells” vs “shows”
- Assumes audience agrees





Ingame camera



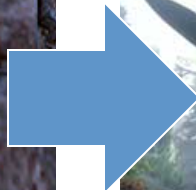
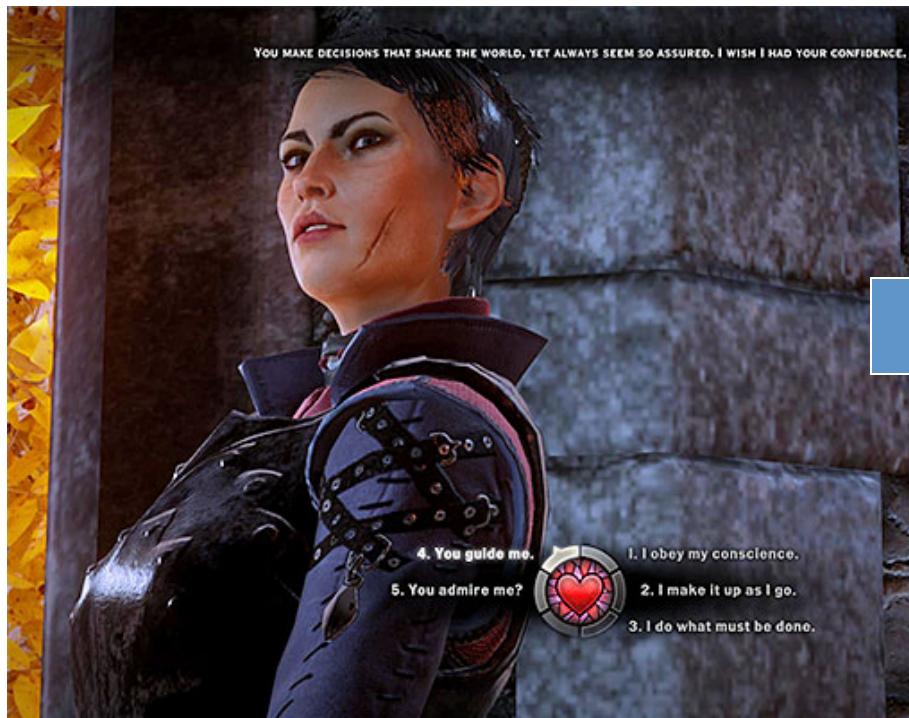


Thanks, internet...



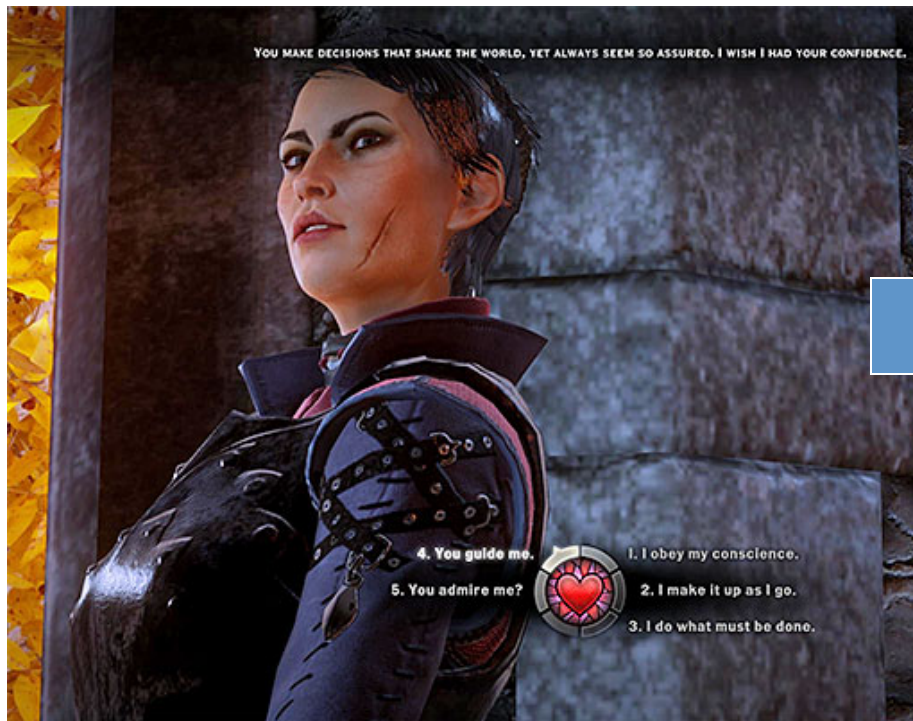


Combine camera with narrative





Combine camera with narrative





Combine camera with narrative

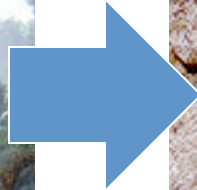
- Panning and dipping
- “Drifting gaze”
- Cleaner, less scruffy
- Attractive filters





Combine camera with narrative

Player





Eyes on Character Example

- Oh, right...







Homework and resources

- Games to play
 - BioWare games

The BioWare logo, featuring the word "BioWARE" in a stylized, blue, blocky font with a registered trademark symbol, set against a solid black rectangular background.



Homework and resources

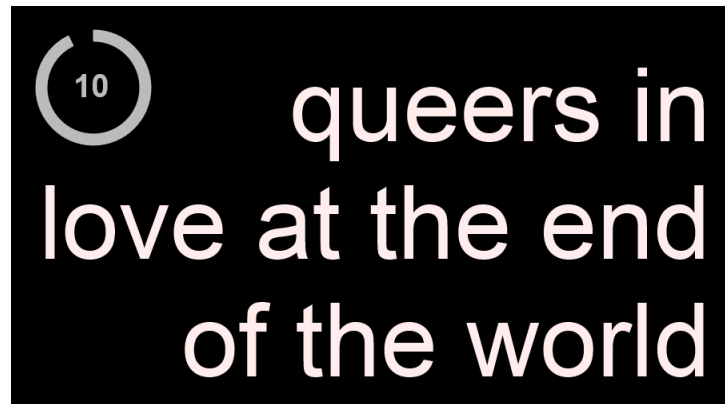
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Homework and resources

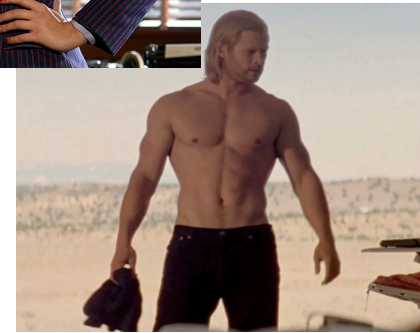
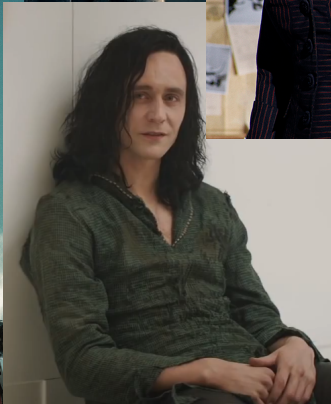
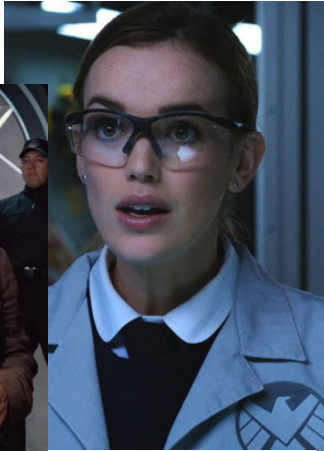
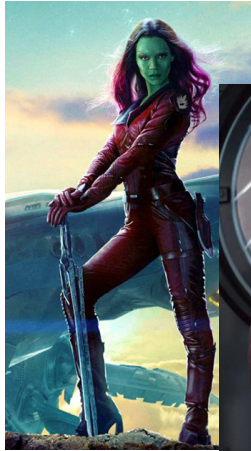
- Games to play
 - BioWare games
 - Dating sims
 - Indie/Twine/zinester games





Homework and resources

- Movies/TV
 - Marvel movie-verse



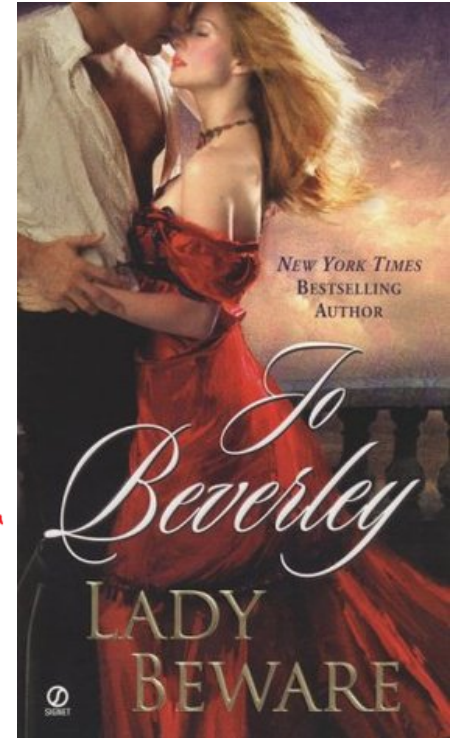


Homework and resources

- Romance novels / erotica



Femme
PRODUCTIONS™





Homework and resources

- Material from other cultures and time periods





Conclusion







DESIRE is not a Dirty Word



- **D**iversity – Create diverse cast
- **E**nergy – Show appealing traits/moods
- **S**ensuality – Indulge all five senses
- **I**nitiative – Give PCs/NPCs sexual agency
- **R**elationships – Write strong interactions
- **E**yes on Character – Use the camera

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