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Equal Opportunity Fanservice

Creating Attractive Characters Of & For All Genders

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#GDC22



MEET THE CREW



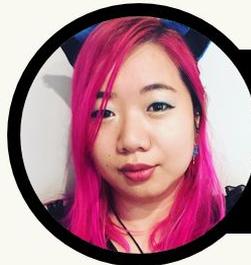
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WHAT *IS* FANSERVICE

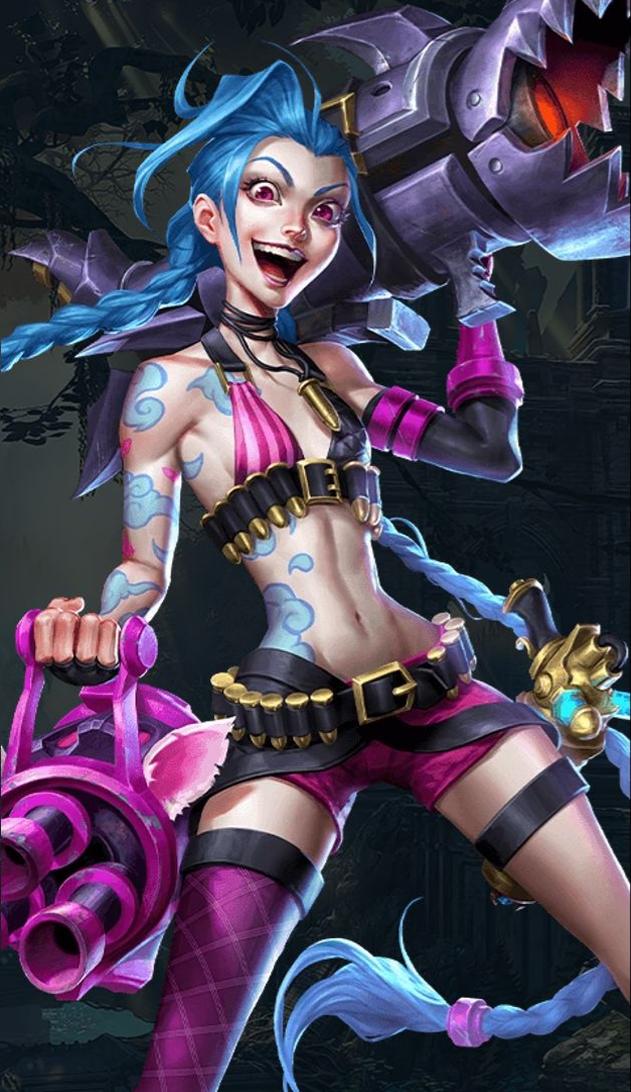
- **Fan service** (ファンサービス, *fan sābisu*), [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#) is material in a work of fiction that is intentionally added to please the audience, [\[3\]](#) often sexual in nature, such as nudity.
- We also talk about "fanservice" when we give the players what they wish they could see in the game, but that's the definition we will be referring to here.



HOW WE GOT HERE

(the history of fanservice)

- All throughout the '90s and well until the late 2000s the playing field for fanservice in games was mostly composed of women in scanty clothes.
- It was fanservice made and marketed for a **cis heterosexual male gaze**.



HOW WE GOT HERE

(the history of fanservice)

- But even within such a limited range of design to choose from, most of us grew up with characters that appealed to us.
- Whether we found them attractive or stimulating, these characters helped us get invested into the game! We imagined ourselves as them... or perhaps *with* them! And the designers took notice of this.



POWER FANTASY VS OBJECTIFICATION

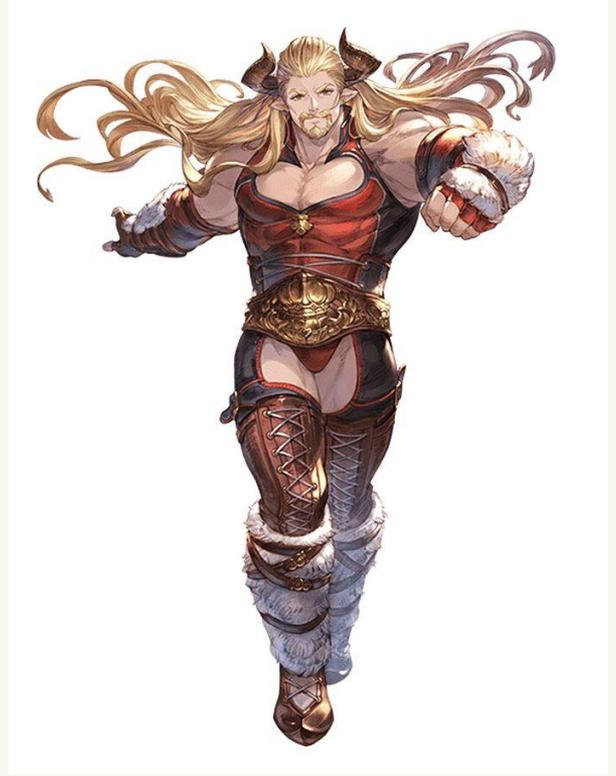
- One thing you may have noticed over the years is that there HAVE been many a scantily clothed barbarian cishet male protagonist flexing their muscles for all to see! Warriors with muscles rippling under tight shirts! How is that NOT fanservice?
- The intent, and the way to manifest it, makes all the difference.



POWER FANTASY VS OBJECTIFICATION

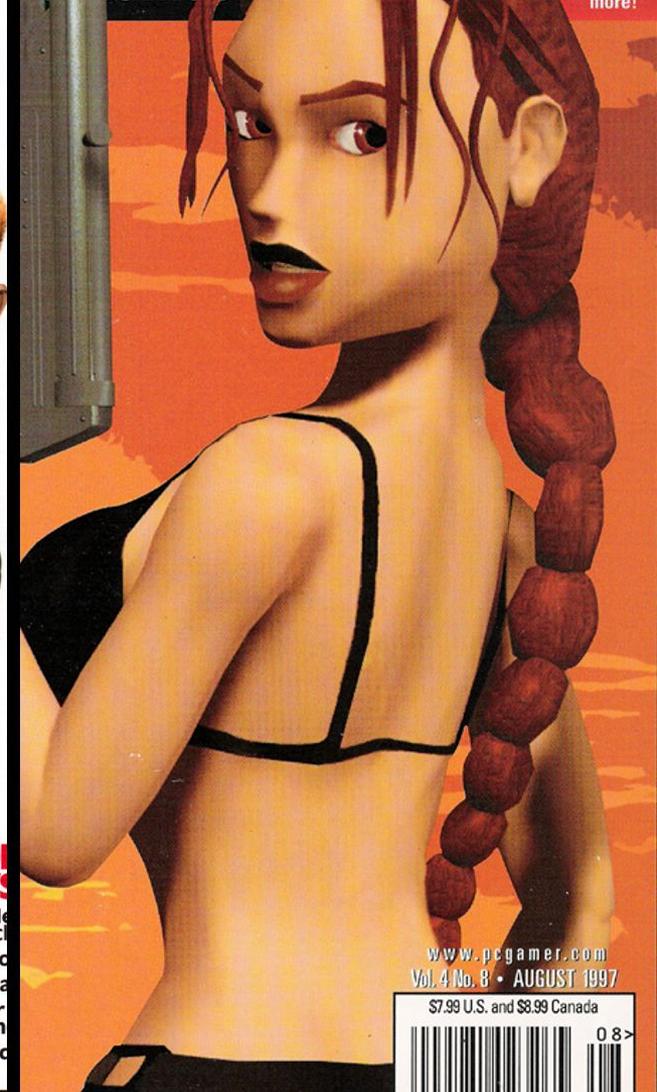
- We're not, in general, meant to lust over these characters' extremely chiseled bodies - they're there to project an image of extreme physical prowess that the player can insert themselves into.
- They're powerful. In control. Their body is part of the Power Fantasy for the players.

GUESS WHICH PECS WERE DRAWN FOR A CISHET GAZE



POWER FANTASY VS OBJECTIFICATION

- Objectification, on the other hand, makes it so the narrative and visuals call attention to the sexual features of the character in question, in a way that draws the player away from their narrative importance.
- The character becomes a helpless image of admiration, the object of the player's affection and desire.



**HANDS-ON
REVIEWS**

- Tomb Raider
Chronicle
- Banjo-Toad
Grandia
- MechWarrior
Vengeance
- Skies of Arcadia

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LEVELLING THE PLAYFIELD

- Objectification isn't inherently bad. However, it's necessary to keep in mind **who** has been historically objectified.
- Fanservice can be empowering and/or exciting for the player in ways the designers may not have foreseen! It can help them learn more about themselves (trust us — it has!)



LEVELLING THE PLAYFIELD

- When you give your players options to customize their characters as they want, avoiding bigoted mechanics such as the **gay tax*** you're empowering your marginalized players through making their characters more attractive!
More like themselves!

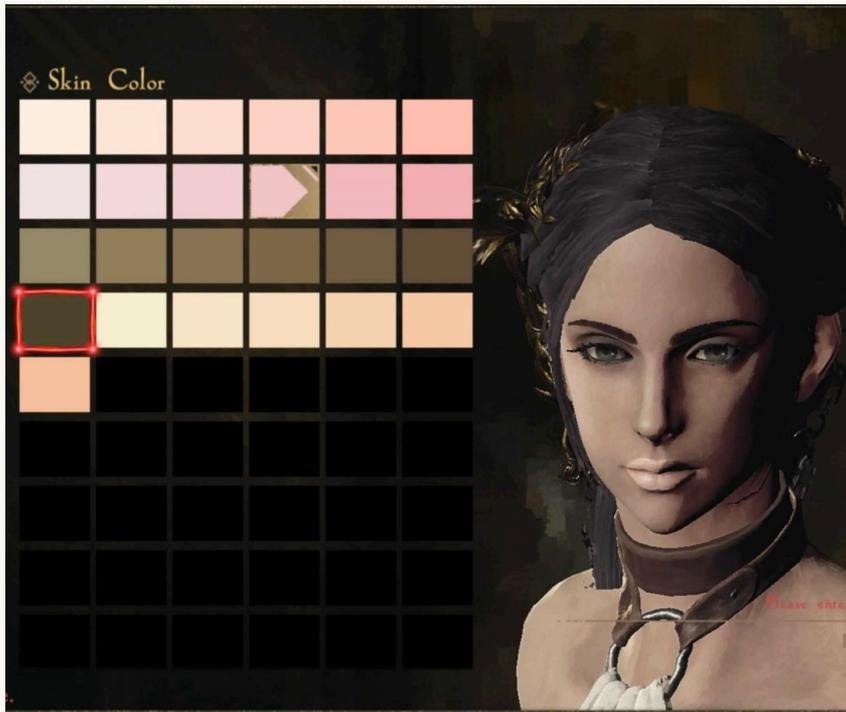
***Gay Tax** refers to having to pay extra for gender nonconformity or gay options, etc. in-game



THE PROBLEM WHEN EUROCENTRIC BEAUTY STANDARD IS THE ONLY CHOICE

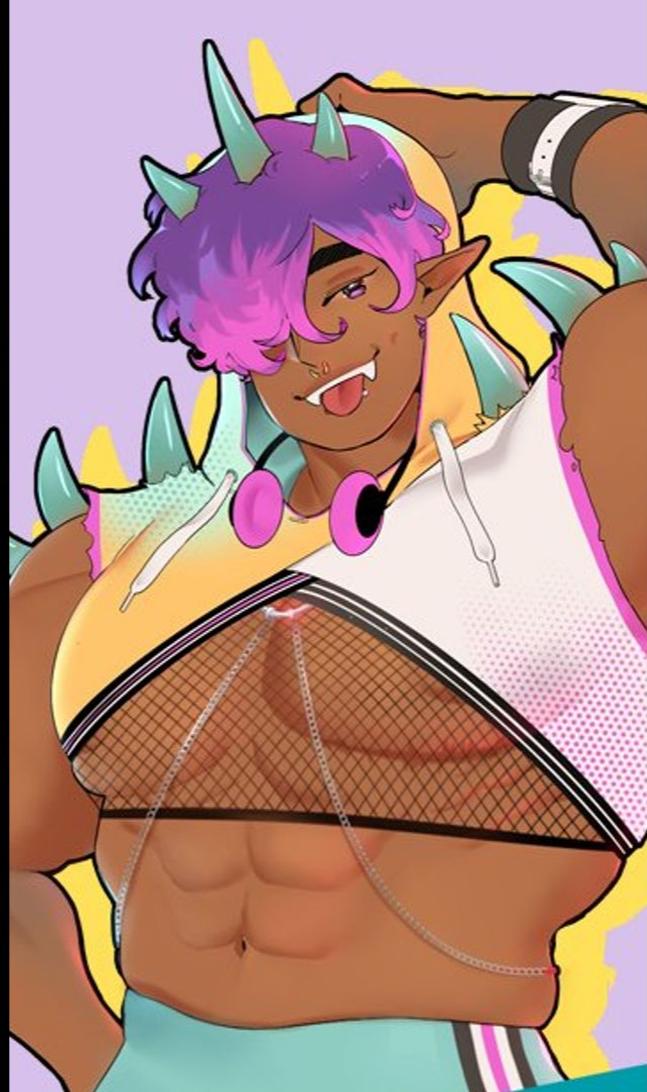
- It is not uncommon for POC who play games to feel inadequate about their appearance because the media has taught them looking European is the only way to be beautiful.
- In many East Asian countries, there are billion dollar industries to help people look white, many procedures are quite risky.
- Character creators often lack the same amount of customization options for people with darker skin tones.
- By embracing the diversity of fanservice, you are also helping People of Color to love themselves for who they are.

THERE ARE SCALES OF "BEAUTY" ACCESSIBILITY



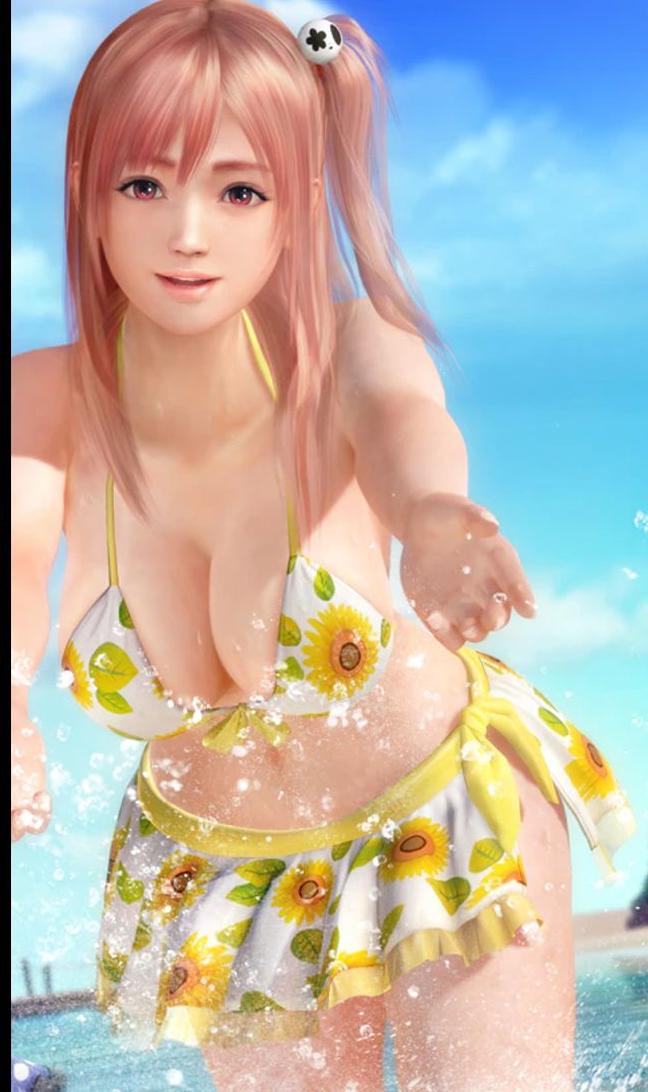
FANSERVICE AS A SELLING POINT

- Fanservice is an effective way to generate discussion among the player base (more gameplay layers and diverse player choices)
- Conversation around fanservice will last longer than the initial launch period, thus helping ensure success in the long run
- Fanservice, especially when targeted towards a niche audience, can encourage people to try out games that are not within their preferred genre.



FANSERVICE AS A SELLING POINT

- This means that not only you can use fanservice in monetization design but it also makes the game more playable, thus creating other revenue streams (merch, DLC, sequel, etc)
- You can be fanservice-y AND queer AND successful (from Indie to Triple-A)
- Examples include: Hades, Apex, Final Fantasy 7 Remake, Kingdom Death, Arcade Spirits, Dream Daddy, Dragon Age, Monster Prom, etc.



HOW TO DO FANSERVICE BETTER

- Awareness in the visual design of your character and the way you present it.
- Make a choice in what audience are you creating the fanservice for.
- Is it an incentive? Is it a reward? Is it both to scaling degrees? Make that decision and then lean into it.
- Fanservice does not exist in a vacuum.



EMBRACE THE NICHE

- Embrace the **accidental sexiness** (The Dads, The Muscular Women, The Whatever It IS)
- Internet has taught us **everyone can be attractive to someone**. Just because your characters aren't considered attractive by mainstream media, it doesn't mean you won't find an audience and benefit from including fanservice.
- Queer audiences are more likely to eagerly embrace fanservice catered to them as games haven't offered enough to them. Let them enjoy their representation & headcanons!



DESIGNING ATTRACTIVE CHARACTERS

- What aspects of your characters do you want to be appealing?
- Variety among these is important to reaching wider audiences, but it's important to stay true to what you like as well!
- Make sure the charm points in their personality and backstory manifest through their design! Don't shy away, commit to it!
(Vampire -> Blood in fangs)

Q&A



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