

# Bridging Boundaries Between Game Studies and Feminist Theory

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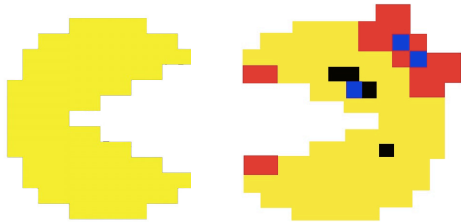
# Bridging Boundaries Between Game Studies and Feminist Theory

**Objective:** reaffirm the importance of feminist theories for game studies, even those that were not developed during the digital era or in regards to new technologies



# **The Second Sex**

# Ms. Male (Sarkeesian, 2013)



M. & Ms. Pacman (Namco)



Sonic & Amy Rose (Sega)



Dixi & Diddy Kong (Nintendo)



Toad & Toadette (Nintendo)

# Smurfette (Pollitt, 1991)



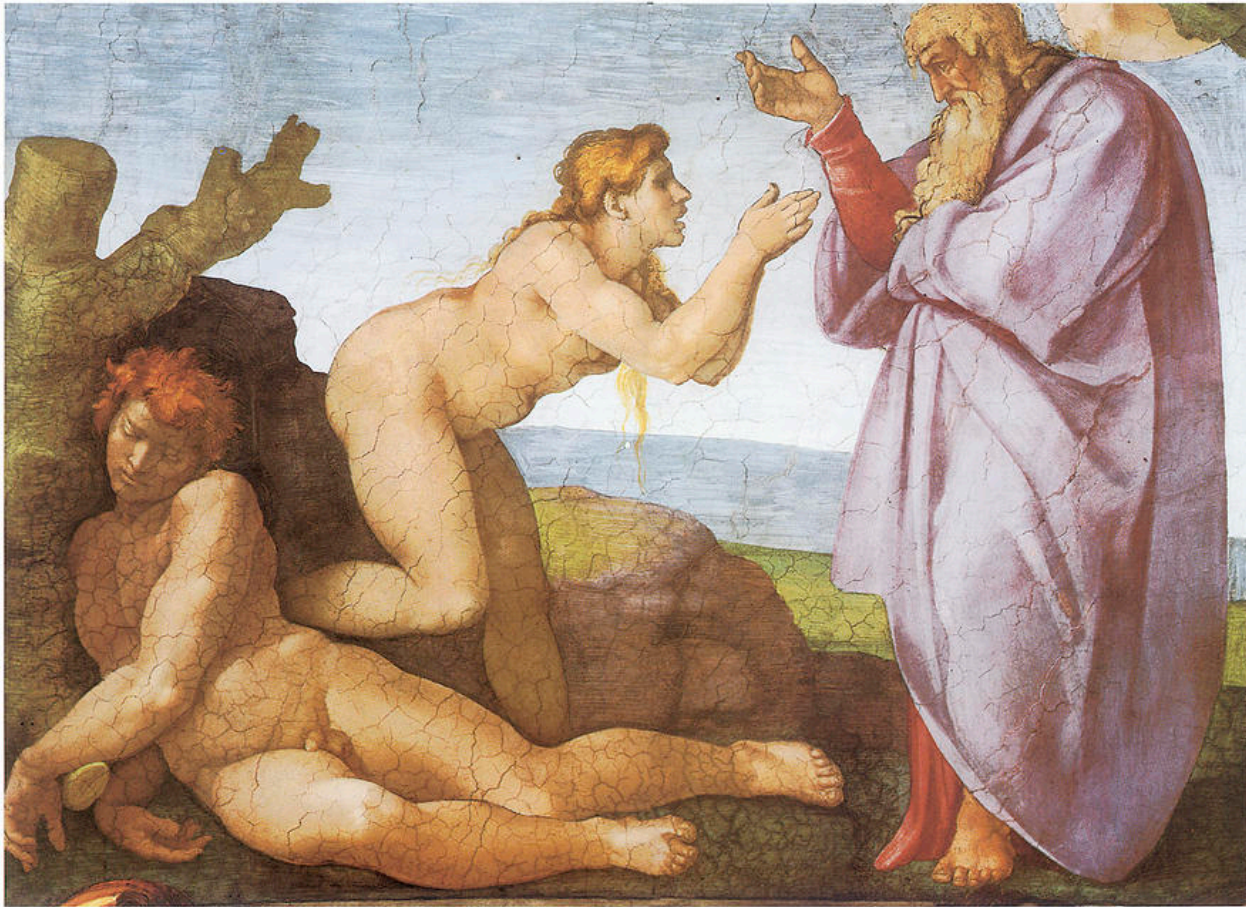
Wendy O Koopa (Nintendo)

# The Second Sex

“[Woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.” (De Beauvoir, 1993 [1949]: xliv)



# The Second Sex



Creation of Eve (Buonarroti, 1508-1512)

# The Second Sex



“It is not the Other who, defining itself as Other, defines the One; the Other is posited as Other by the One positing itself as One” (2011 [1949]: 7).

# The Second Sex



The male/female relationship is “asymmetrical”: the man describes the woman as the opposite of him, but never the other way around (De Beauvoir, 1976 [1949]: 242).

# The Second Sex

The woman's body, desires and sexuality have always been conceived as the negative, the opposite, the reverse side of the man's paradigmatic body, desires and sexuality (De Beauvoir, 1976 [1949]: 14).



# The Second Sex

The society insisted that the woman keeps wearing dresses, skirts, corsets, heels and so on, to preserve the differences that make her the absolute “Other” (De Beauvoir, 1976 [1949]: 312).



# The Second Sex

Because the woman always been defined by the man, she needs him to exist and cannot afford to break this vital relationship (De Beauvoir, 1976 [1949]: 21).



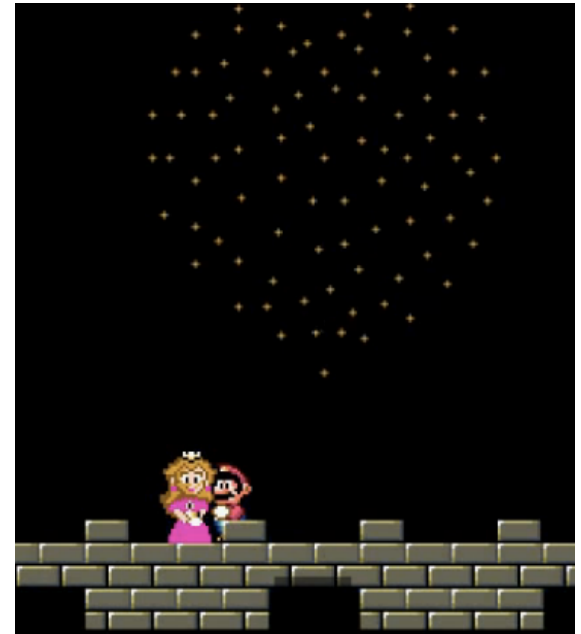
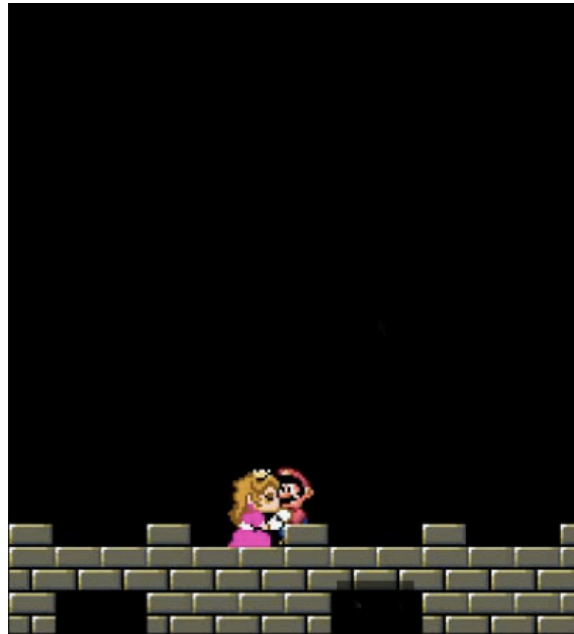
# The Second Sex



Women should refuse the myth of femininity and to assert their subjectivity, instead of letting themselves passively shaped and modeled by men (De Beauvoir, [1976] 1949: 289, 406).

**Women as currency of exchange**

# The Damsel in distress (Sarkeesian, 2013)



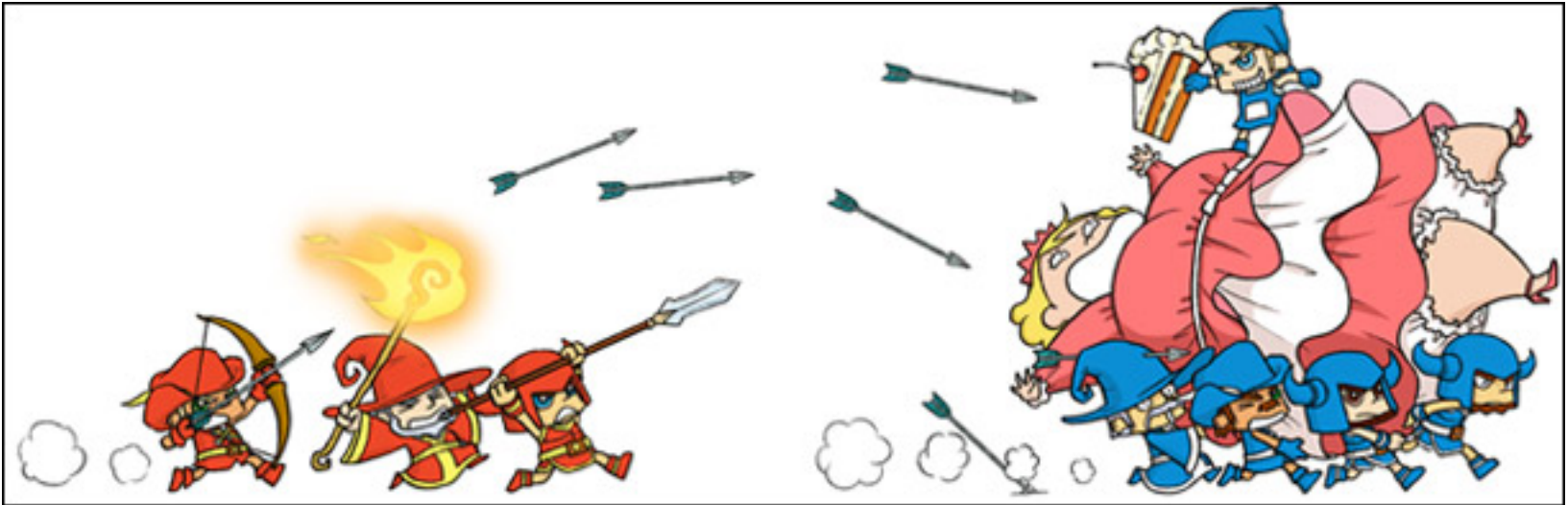
Super Mario World (Nintendo, 1990)

# The Damsel in distress



Super Mario Galaxy 2 (Nintendo, 2010)

# The Damsel in distress



Fat Princess (Sony, 2009)

# The Damsel in distress



Castle Crashers (Microsoft/Sony, 2008)

# The Damsel in distress



Castle Crashers (Microsoft/Sony, 2008)

# Woman as currency of exchange



Patriarchal societies are based on a system of exchange where men play the role of traders and women, the role of merchandises, commodities, currencies of exchange (Irigaray, 1977: 167-185).

# Woman as currency of exchange



Within this system of exchange, women are dispossessed of their own bodies, deprived of their specific value and reduced to objects of transaction (Irigaray, 1977: 176-177).

# Woman as currency of exchange



Virginal women have an exchange value and prostitutes, a use value that can be exchanged (1977: 181).

# Woman as currency of exchange



Pimping Mission (GTA, 2004)

# Woman as currency of exchange



Pimping Mission (GTA, 2004)

# Woman as currency of exchange



Pimping Mission (GTA, 2004)

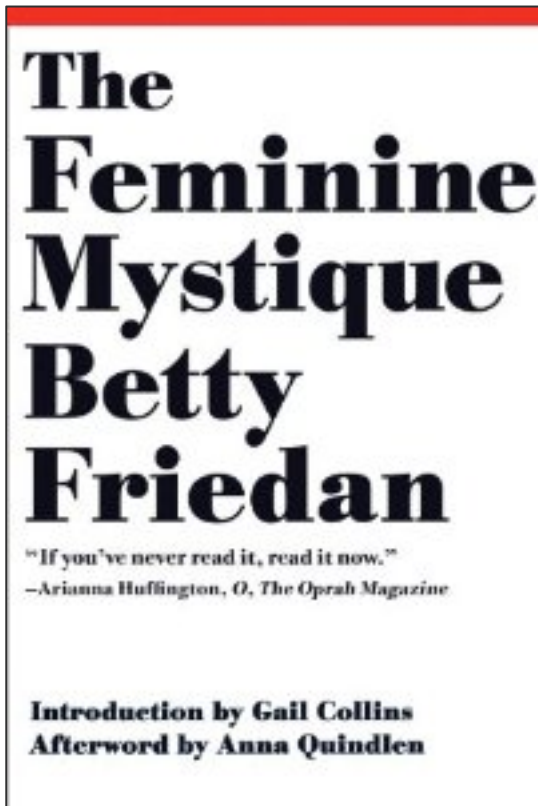
# Woman as currency of exchange



“What if these ‘commodities’ refused to go to ‘market’? What if they maintained ‘another’ kind of commerce, among themselves?” (1985 [1977]: 193)

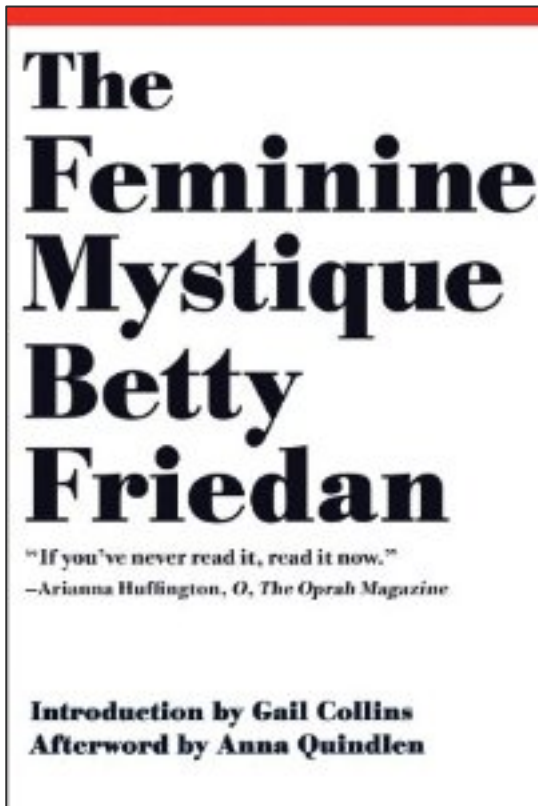
# **The Feminine Mystique**

# The Feminine Mystique



False conception that women are naturally fulfilled as housewives and mothers (Friedan, 1963).

# The Feminine Mystique



“The feminine mystique is so powerful that women grow up no longer knowing that they have the desires and capacities the mystique forbids” (Friedan, 1963: 66).

# Natural-born happy housemakers



Super Mario 64 (Nintendo, 1996)

# Natural-born happy housemakers



Super Mario Galaxy 2 (Nintendo, 2010)

# Natural-born happy housemakers



Roll in Tatsunoko vs Capcom (Capcom, 2008)

# Natural-born happy housemakers



Roll in Tatsunoko vs Capcom (Capcom, 2008)

# **The Serial Girl**

# The serial girls



« The serial girls are like twins whose movements are perfectly coordinated, who move in sync beside each other, who can only be differentiated from one another by a detail in their clothing, shoes, hair and skin color or by slightly distinct curves... Girls as machines, girls as images, girls as spectacles, girls as merchandises, girls as ornaments... they are the illusion of perfection » (Free translation, Delvaux, 2014 : 10-11).

# The serial girls



# The serial girls



# The serial girls



# The serial girls



Crazy Horse dancers

# The serial girls



Lara Croft (Tomb Raider, 1996)



Blood Elf (WoW, 2003)



Vanille (Final Fantasy XIII, 2009)

# The serial girls



G4 Booth Babes (©Pinguino K, 2009)

# The serial girls



E3 Booth Babes (2012)

# The serial girls



G4 Booth Babs (©Beerboxerboy, 2011)

# Fragmented bodies



# Fragmented bodies



# SoulCalibur V

# Assembly workers



# The serial girls as decorations

[illegible]

# The serial girls



Playstation ad (Sony, 2012)

# The serial girls



Dead Island: Riptide (Techland, 2013)

# The serial girls



In this “hyperreal”  
(Baudrillard, 1981), the  
serial girls images tend to  
replace the real woman  
(Delvaux, 2014 : 134).

# The serial girls as political figures



Femen

# The serial girls as political figures



Pussy Riot

# The serial girls as political figures

Which one are mere  
decoration and which one can  
serve as a means for  
resistance and rebellion?

# Conclusion

Game studies and feminist studies can mutually benefit from the establishment of more bridges between the two disciplines.

A lot of work still needs to be done in this domain regarding gender identities and gender equality.

# Contacts

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