

Metagaming

Why is it fun to play dress up?



Soren Ashcroft

- Renowned wizard
- Savior of the world
- Taxidermy enthusiast
- Nudist



How are these different?



Starcraft II: Wings of Liberty, 2010



Starcraft II: Wings of Liberty, 2010



Metagaming

Meta-gaming is any strategy, action, or method used in a game which transcends a prescribed rule set, uses external factors to affect the game, or goes beyond the supposed limits or environment set by the game.

- Wikipedia

Pros of Metagaming

- Can be enjoyable
- Can create interesting out of game content

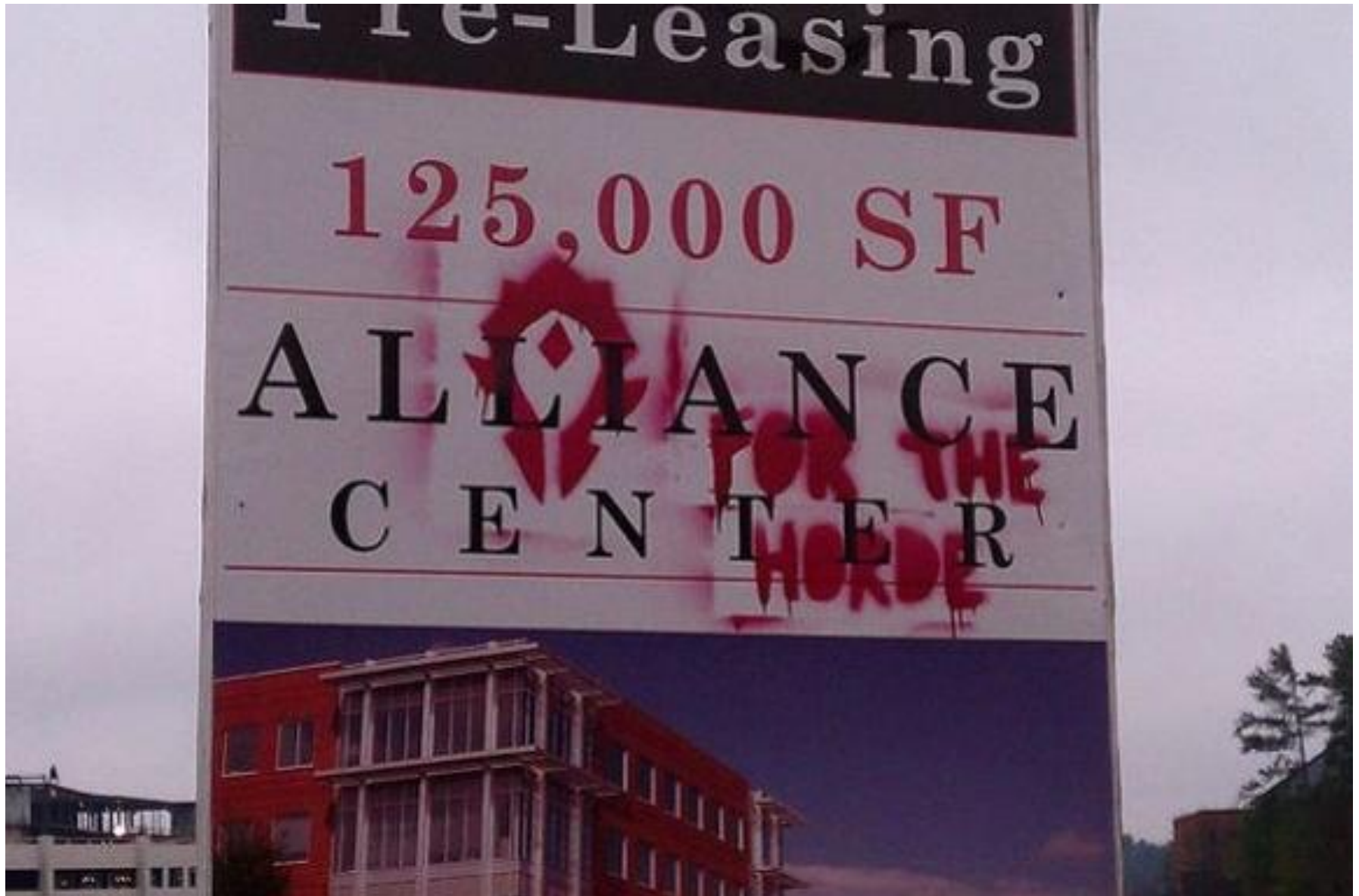
God Mode in *Doom*



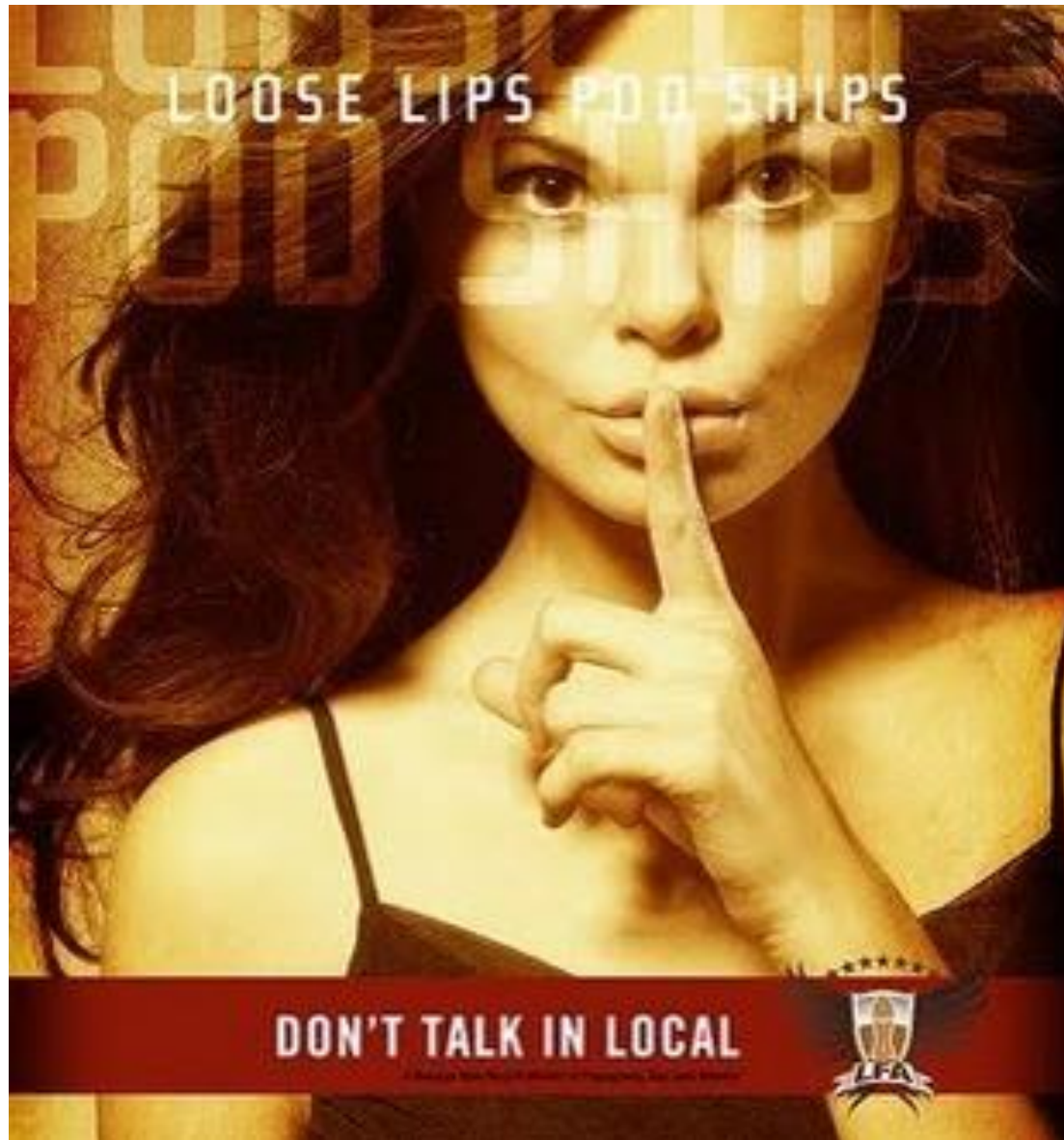
Warhammer Miniatures



World of Warcraft Out of Game Content



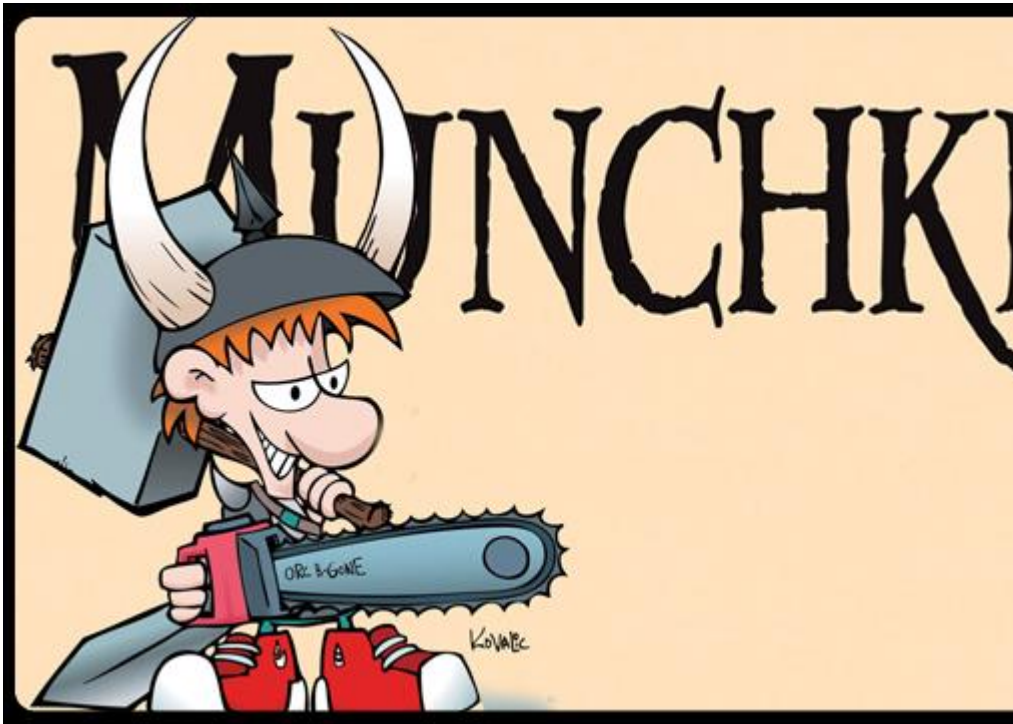
EVE Online Out of Game Content



Cons of Metagaming

- Overpowering and cheating
- Breaks the willful suspension of disbelief

Cheating in *Munchkin*



Breaking W.S.D. in *Fallout: New Vegas*



Challenge

To balance immersion and agency.

Immersion is the feeling that your point of view has shifted to be inside the game world.

- Brad Talton Jr.

Agency is the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of your decisions.

- Janet Murray

Design with Metagaming in Mind

Immersion

- Pressure and Goals
- Meta-Game Tools

Agency

- Material Affordances
- Formal Affordances

Pressure and Goals

Players feel pressure to achieve the goals of the game. They will make use of whatever tools you give them, so only give them tools which will create an enjoyable experience.

Dealing with Pressure

- Make all paths available
- Prevent multiple paths
- Make too many paths available
- Create agency apart from goals

All Paths Available in *Chrono Trigger*



Only One Path in *FTL: Faster than Light*



Too Many Paths in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*



Agency Outside Goals in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*



Affordances

An affordance is a quality of an object that invites a user to perform some action.

A knob affords twisting.

A chord affords pulling.





Affordances

Why is there so much sex in *Second Life*?



Designing Affordances

- Explicit interface
- Transparent interface
- Subtle cues

Explicit Interface in *The Secret of Monkey Island*



Transparent Interface in *Heavy Rain*



Subtle Cues in *LA Noire*



Agency as Affordances

Agency is a balance between material affordances and formal affordances.

- Michael Mateas

Material affordances are those things which the interface allows you to do.

Formal affordances are those things which you are motivated to do by the narrative.

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Metagame Design Challenge

Balance...

Immersion

- Pressure players feel to achieve the goals
- Meta-game tools available to achieve the goals

Agency

- What the game allows you to do
- What the game motivates you to do

Calling the Player Out in *Baldur's Gate II: Thone of Bhaal*



Self-Awareness in *Cards Against Humanity*



Surreptitiously checking Urban Dictionary during a game of Cards Against Humanity, because you have no idea what the card you just drew means.

Metagaming in Game in *Endless, Nameless*

Nameless Quest v2.0.12

by Nameless

Nameless Tavern (exits: NW)

You are standing in a large tavern with creaky wooden floors. Laughter and commotion surround your every move while light flickers from candles atop wooden tables. The bartender nods at you as he tends to his customers.

Type **ABOUT** to learn about Nameless Quest!

Type **VERBS** for a list of commands!