

They managed to make lesbians unattractive”: anti-woke activism in *No Alphabets* mod in *Baldur’s Gate 3*

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INTRODUCTION

The present article proposes to explore anti-woke player practices that go in open opposition to the tendency of including LGBTQ+ representation in video games, and their implications for both player cultures and video games as a medium. We propose to analyse the user discourse around *Baldur’s Gate 3’s No Alphabets* mod (orinEsque 2023), within the material infrastructures of modding platforms, right-wing extremism, AI usage, and censorship.

STATE OF THE ART

Mainstream video games titles in the last years have started introducing openly queer characters and romanceable options (Utsch 2017; Maletska 2024). The recent role-playing game (RPG) *Baldur’s Gate 3* (Larian Studios 2023) (*BG3*) has quickly received critical acclaim for the inclusion of queer representation both in design and narrative features (Ho 2025). In fact, *BG3* allows players the possibility of romancing all characters irrespective of gender, a great degree of customisation options to create androgynous looking characters and to modify their secondary sex characteristic, the possibility of choosing one’s gender identity, the presence of canonically gay, bisexual, pansexual and gender diverse characters (Meenen 2024; Tomlinson 2024; Ho 2025). It also features prominent LGBTQIA+ creators involved in the production (Meenen 2024). This amount of queer representation appears even more groundbreaking as the video game is based both mechanically and narratively on *Dungeons and Dragons*, a table-top RPG franchise initially developed exclusively with cisgender, heterosexual male audiences in mind (Garcia 2017).

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The introduction of queer affirming features, however, has not been met by unanimous player consensus. Some players, in fact, perceive such inclusion as forced and have voiced their open disagreement also through the creation and use of mods that reduce the amount of gender and race diversity in the game (Stürenburg 2024).

This phenomenon is in line with discourses on the emergence of right-wing and “anti-woke” debates within gaming spaces (Massanari 2024). This is true particularly for fantasy worlds inspired by medieval European heritage, as shown by Bjørkelo (2020) who documents how white nationalist activists resonated with rebellion against multiculturalism in the video game *Skyrim: The Elder Scrolls* (Bethesda Game Studios 2011). The use of mods has been also reported to express white supremacist ideas (Salvati 2019). Conversely, the use of anti-woke mods against queer representations is seldom reported (Stürenburg 2024), whereas modding has been documented as a queer affirming practice (Lauteria 2012; Welch 2018).

We are interested in observing how such tensions are explored by anti-woke mods in *BG3* modders, and how this further contextualises player practices and the tensions arising from queer representations. The maximum length of full papers for DIGRA 2025 is 7,000 words plus bibliographic references. The suggested length for an extended abstract is 500–800 words, with a maximum of 1,000 words excluding references.

CASE STUDIES

We focus on the following case studies:

- *No Alphabets 6.2.0.0* mod pack, published by orinEsque (2023). This mod proposes to ensure “that the gender, sexuality and politics of world NPCs match medieval status quo” (orinEsque 2023). In particular, it employs AI powered voice changers, changes lines of dialogues, and changes queer NPCs gender identity and sexual orientation to follow heterocisnormative ideals. The mod also changes character creation defining gendered voices, and removes the choice of non-binary options for player characters. The mod also suggests employing the following mods.
- *Realms Restored 2.0* published by ModdersHQ (2025). This mod has changed 1500 NPCs to be “represented with lore-friendly, subrace and gender-specific designs” (ModdersHQ 2025). It changes color complexion, the presence of vitiligo, eye colors and styles, creates unique heads, and removes gender ambiguity from both PCs and NPCs.
- *Even Better Romance 0.2.0*, published by ModdersHQ (2025). This mod restricts romancing to heterosexuality, altering dialogues, and preventing you from engaging in same-sex relationships. Interestingly, they have also added the possibility to disable romancing entirely and introduced the possibility of romancing exclusively within your race, body type, class, and to avoid polyamorous relationships.

The paratextual elements surrounding the publication of the mods are heavily reliant on openly homo-transphobic discourse, that act on the marginalisation of the so called ‘alphabet people’, carried on both by the modders and the players/users.

Because of this, all the considered mods have been removed by the portal Nexus (Front_Battle9713 2024), sparking debate among users on the right to choose which mods to play, and on platforms' censorship.

METHODS

To investigate all the above, we perform a textual and discourse analysis (Bjørkelo 2020) on forums and subreddits, focusing on players seeking to use such mods, players cautioning other players against the use of mods, and the collective player effort in signalling potentially woke content to be removed or changed. We also trace topics emerging from such discussions and situate the No Alphabets mod and its sisters within the broader theme of representation of diversity in games.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

From a preliminary analysis, such mods are contested sites for users, with some praising the authors for their work, and some others defining the mods as utterly homophobic and racist. This becomes particularly apparent in the debate around the cancellation of the mods from Nexus. Moreover, the *No Alphabets* mod has relevant conceptual implications for discourses around technology, in the contradiction of striving towards an imagined purity of the medieval status quo while openly acknowledging the use of AI in its creation. Last, we believe these mods attest almost an inversion in fan-based content creation: instead of promoting queer readings in worlds without queerness, canonically queer content is erased from the otherwise more inclusive original work.

Taken together, these observations suggest that anti-woke modding might play a crucial role in the contested ideological boundaries within gaming cultures and offers a revealing lens into how players negotiate identity, activism, and technological developments.

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