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# The Vampire Foucault: Erotic Horror RPGs as Technologies of the Self

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## Foucault's *Technologies of the Self* (1988)

- Michel Foucault (1926-1984): French Sociologist & Philosopher
- Career: “What I have studied are the three traditional problems: (1) What are the relations we have to truth through scientific knowledge, to those ‘truth games’ which are so important in civilization and in which we are both subject and object? (2) What are the relationships we have to others through those strange strategies and power relationships? And (3) what are the relationships between **truth**, **power**, and **self**?” (pg. 15)
- Four Types of Technologies: 1) Production (Material), 2) Signs (Symbols), 3) Power (Conduct), 4) Self (Identity)
- Technologies of the Self: “**practices** whereby individuals, by their own means or with the help of others, acted on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being in order to **transform** themselves to attain a certain **state of perfection or happiness**” (Foucault 1988, 15, 18).
- Examples: Socratic Method, Stoic *Askēsis*, Catholic Confession, Psychoanalysis, BDSM, etc.





# RPGs as Technologies of the Self

- Practices: An RPG is a social ritual where a Game Master and Players routinely meet to construct and participate in a shared imagined world.
- Transformation (Bowman and Lieberoth 2018):
  - Alibi: The objective distance between a Player and their Character.
  - Immersion: The subjective experience by a Player of their Character's perspective.
  - Bleed: When emotions, thoughts, relationships, and states cross between in-game and out-game.
- States of Perfection:
  - Possessing Force (Turkington 2006): Player surrenders to the character.
  - Character Realization (Bowman & Schrier 2018): Experience a character as distinct from the self.
  - Archetypal Renactment (Beltrán 2012): Player surrenders to a mythic or religious role.
  - Emancipatory Bleed (Kemper 2020): Player frees themselves from oppressive internalized norms.





## *Vampire: The Masquerade* as a Technology of the Self

- Technologies of Signs: The tools which “permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification” (Foucault 1988, 18).
  - Ideal vs. Taboo Self (Bowman 2010)
  - Erotic Role-Play as Sexual Discourse (Brown 2015)
  - Jungian Shadow Work (Bowman 2012 & Beltrán 2012)
  - Horror Play as Healing (Kim 2022)
- Technologies of Power: The tools which “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject” (Foucault 1988, 18).
  - Wyrding the Self (Kemper 2020)
  - Moral Panics (Laycock 2015)

