

JOURNAL + INDUSTRY.
CAMOOTS.

GAMERGATE.

4 CHAN. FORUM
ATTACK
↓
TOOL FOR HATRED.

Reddit Deleted Navy
Accused of Censorship.

THE DRINK TANK

#GAMERGATE

ISSUE 390

CHRIS GARCIA COMPLAINS
DOCUMENTATION



1 #GAMERGATE

What this issue is meant to do is simple; we're going to say something. We're not trying to be objective, because fuck objectivity in the face of harassment and threats towards talented, amazing people who only want to live the dream in games as developers, critics, and players. I, Christopher J Garcia, am saying this right now: Fuck #gamergate.

#gamergate has harassed several significant members of the gaming community. Women creators, commentators, and gamers. If they didn't do it themselves, they let it happen, didn't shout down those that did it under their hashtag. Nothing, not journalistic integrity or whatever you're claiming #gamergate is fighting, is worth what these people have been put through.

This issue is dedicated to those who gamers have had their lives disrupted by #gamergate. You're the ones who are gonna change the industry, not the assholes behind a hashtag.

Comments - journeyplanet@gmail.com



HASHTAG GAMERGATE BY ESTHER MACCALLUM- STEWART

Please can you explain what #gamergate is.

#gamergate has a number of origins, and its definitely not a cohesive movement but to make it simple, here are the main three catalysts.

Firstly, over the last few years, there has been increasing unease with the identity of the 'gamer' as a single, definable person or type. Everyone has probably seen some of the statistics which show that women are increasingly becoming part of gaming (and have been for several years) or maybe been involved in a conversation about what a 'hardcore' videogame is, and what a 'casual' game is. The general consensus however is that gaming is changing and becoming more inclusive. This has also lead to people becoming more critical of certain things in games, most notably the representation of women and the treatment of women in the gaming industry. Neither of them are great – although things are changing – and many gaming companies are trying very hard to include women in both their companies and their games in more positive ways. Actually this makes good business sense; if you can appeal to a [broader demographic](#), you'll sell more copies of your title. So for example it's pretty common to see this sort of statistic at the moment, and of course companies want to capitalise on this:

Gender of Game Players: 52% Male 48% female

Women age 18 or older represent a significantly greater portion of the game-playing population (36%) than boys age 18 or younger (17%)

This seems fairly innocuous and rather obvious. We live in a time where it's generally accepted that being inclusive is a good thing, and that we should work towards encouraging people to feel that they can express their gender, sexuality, race, ability etc... without being persecuted for it. However, a small amount of very vocal gamers have really

taken offence to this. They see this move for inclusion by games developers in a very different way; namely that it will change the face of gaming into something that they don't recognise, and that it will exclude them. It goes without saying that these are predominantly cis white males living in Western society, although not exclusively. This group (again, it's very loosely formed indeed), have repeatedly mobilised against threats to what they see as the *status quo* in gaming, and they have done this in an aggressive manner that is in parts afforded to them by the anonymity of social identity on the web. It's worth pointing out here that their view is not shared by the majority of the gaming media, developers, academics, or indeed by other gamers.

The second event began when a man called Eron Gjoni published what was essentially a kiss-and-tell story about his former girlfriend, a games developer called Zoe Quinn. Around 16 August 2014 he published his story across several forums and websites, most of whom just deleted it; however some groups picked up the story. In it, he alleged that Quinn had slept with a number of people whilst still dating him, including a journalist for gaming news site *Kotaku*, who had subsequently written a positive review of her game *Depression Quest*. This last allegation turned out not to be true; a review was never written.

The third catalyst is a woman called Anita Sarkeesian, who in 2012 started a Kickstarter to make a series of videos about the representation of women in games. Called *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, it aimed to analyse the representation of women's roles in games through a series of YouTube videos. The project immediately got a lot of attention – from people who thought this was a great idea and got behind the project by giving it funding – and from pockets of gamers furious that a woman should dare to challenge the norms of gaming stereotypes. As a result, the Kickstarter got a lot of money, but Sarkeesian was repeatedly threatened and harassed online; in particular through YouTube comments on her videos, through Twitter, and on various internet forums. One lovely soul made a game called 'Beat Up Anita Sarkeesian', her Wikipedia was defaced with pornographic images, and she receives regular death, assault and rape threats. However, Sarkeesian has continued to speak out, and release her videos. On 25 August 2014 she released a video under the riveting titles of '[Women as Background Decoration Part 2 – Tropes vs Women in Video Games](#)'.

As a result of this a lot of things happened roughly all at once:

- Militant/misogynist gamers on websites *Reddit* and *4Chan* (which is known for rabble rousing and has had problems with misogyny before) erupted. They hit out at two major targets: feminists and women working in the games industry or producing work relating to it, and journalists accused of either supporting them or of being 'corrupt'.
- Both Zoe Quinn and Anita Sarkeesian were 'doxxed' (which means all of their personal details were leaked online). Anita Sarkeesian

received threats so severe that she had to leave her home, and Zoe Quinn was also threatened in a similar manner. Explicit photographs of Quinn were posted online without her consent. Ultimately she also had to leave her home because of specific threats made to her and her family, and hasn't been able to return

Aug 18 19.06.45 <ayyylmao> so what is the endgame here

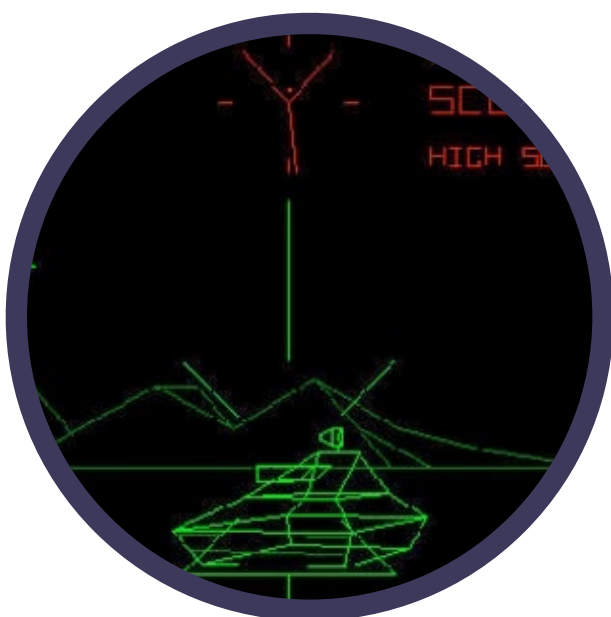
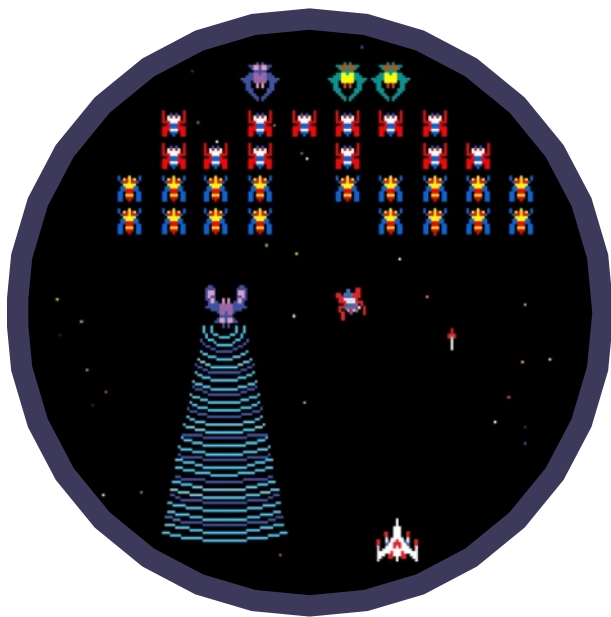
Aug 18 19.07.00 <Cyberserker> Endgame is destroying Kotaku, Boggs, and Quinn

From #burgersandfries IRC chat

- *Reddit* responded by moderating and deleting all chats, that contained hate speech, harassment or other issues, eventually simply banning the topic. *4Chan* followed, although slightly more slowly. Many hate-speech gamers migrated to Twitter, to their own websites and to another forum called *8Chan*.
- A number of journalists, very sympathetic to the treatment that Sarkeesian and Quinn were receiving, wrote articles about the identity of the gamer in contemporary gaming, asking how such awful things could be allowed to happen and condemning the people who were perpetrating these acts. These became known as the 'gamers are dead' articles. Two of the most well circulated include Leigh Alexander's article, in which she stated that '[gamers are over](#)', and Dan Goldman's '[The End of Gaming](#)'.

From here things spiralled out of control as the hate groups used the 'gamers are dead' articles as proof that there was a feminist conspiracy to destroy the gamer and all (he) stood for.

These gamers mobilised extremely quickly simply by making a lot of noise on forums, on the comment sections of each article criticising the treatment Quinn or Sarkeesian, and on sites like *Twitter* and *8Chan* (which is essentially a site that formed after comments were removed from *4Chan*, and exists pretty much entirely to discuss and support #gamergate). At this point they weren't particularly organised, but they were extremely vociferous. They also managed to drag a lot of other people with them. Gamers angry at the perceived lack of journalistic integrity they thought had been unearthed, gamers angry that they were apparently being condemned for speaking out, and underlying this, groups of deeply misogynist people happy to rabble rouse and make things worse all suddenly found something to shout about. Many people were genuinely upset and angry at issues which they had seen bubbling under in gaming; the integrity of journalism in gaming has undergone several high profile incidents over the past couple of years and, like most other forms of writing, exists in every form from fannish blogs to highly technical industry journals. There are issues, certainly, but they don't fit very easily under the same hood, despite what was being claimed.



Gamers are also used to being proactive in games themselves – they often help developers beta-test and change games in their final stages, or offer useful criticism when games are released, all of which leads to a sense that they are important agents in the development of games (and as a result, gaming culture), and that their voices should therefore matter when they speak out. Incidents like fans demanding (and receiving) a new narrative end to *Mass Effect 3* also lead them to believe that aggressive vocalisation of their concerns will result directly in change.

Throughout this, and the emergence of some genuinely interesting debates in the state of gaming culture at present, the relative anonymity of the web meant that many people were still able to continue threatening and harassing anyone who they felt opposed them. It is highly noticeable that all of the people targeted for the more extreme forms of harassment have been women or people who have identified themselves as feminists. This has included repeated death and rape threats against Sarkeesian, Quinn and others, terrorist threats to various conventions and gaming events hosting these speakers and a general undertone of abuse and harassing behaviour towards those who speak out for diversity or against the outrage of these gamers.

Surreally, it was Adam Baldwin who used the #gamergate hashtag during an early iteration of the debate, and in doing so gave these groups a collective focus and a name. In a series of tweets condemning the integrity of games journalists, he managed to endorse the movement by giving it a both name and celebrity backing. By now, many other 'names' in the gaming world were also taking sides, most notably Phil Fish (anti-gamergate), and web-caster TotalBiscuit (pro-gamergate), and the level of writing, articles and press attention towards the movement was rising.

#gamergate now 'united' as a collective force on Twitter at this point and started to call for an investigation into the integrity of journalism in videogaming cultures. The less salubrious members continued to use this as a smokescreen to continue the harassment and abuse of anyone who stood against them. However, the perpetrators of the movement lacked one major thing – authority. By this point, literally thousands of gamers, developers, journalists and academics had taken a stand against the more extreme aspects of #gamergate and were calling out the much deeper misogyny that underscored the movement. Faced with this opposition, #gamergate started to mobilise into a group that was trying to either call for, or bring down the perceived injustices and problems in gaming, often through aggressive and combative means. Although most of the anti-gamergate movement

recognised that the debate was nuanced and complex, despite its viciousness, #gamergate itself regarded itself to be at WAR.

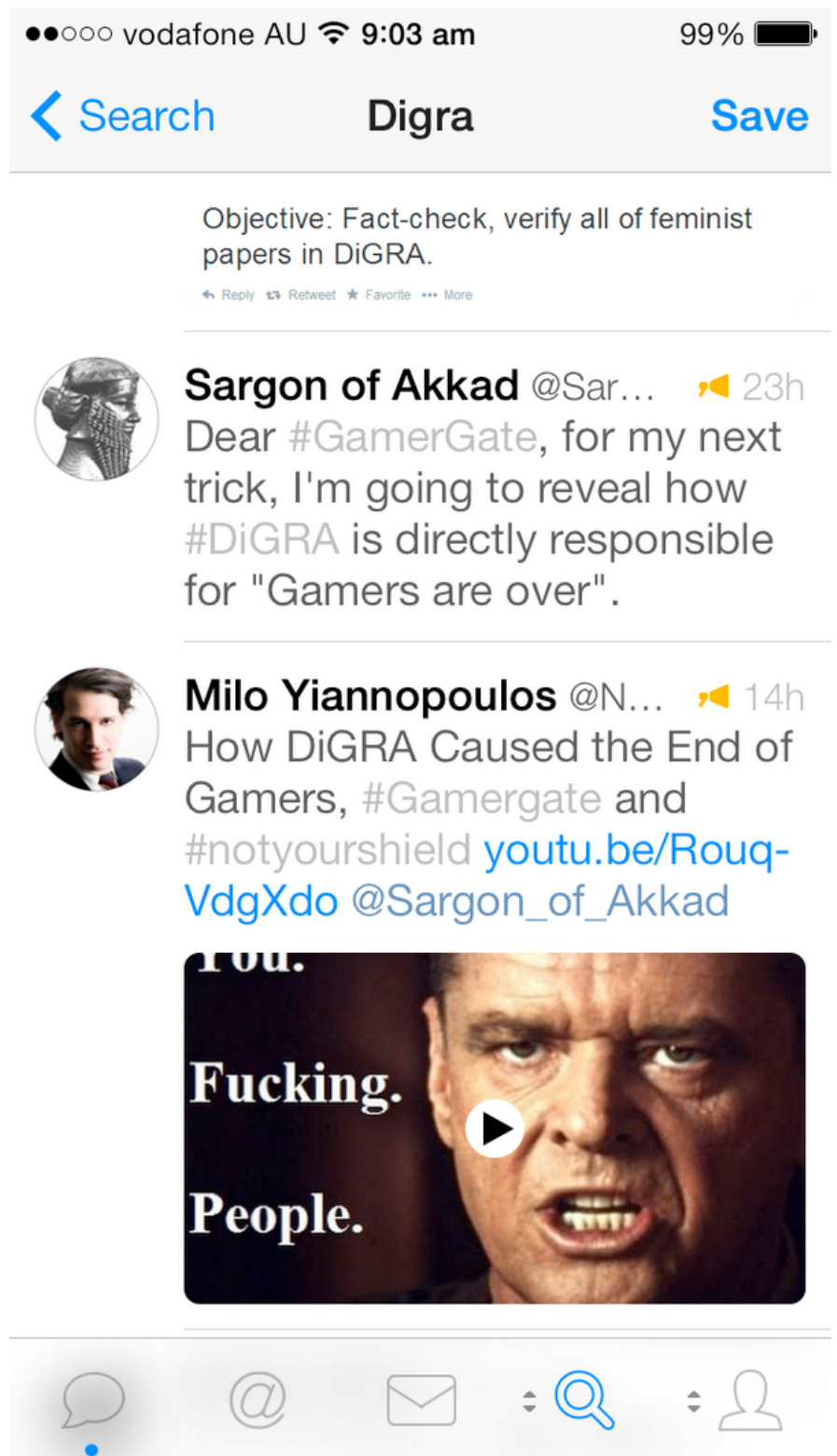
Here, we also start to see the rhetoric of gaming itself starting to have a negative effect. The gamergaters were now 'attacking' an 'enemy' who they were going to 'fight' and 'beat'. Quite simply, #gamergate was playing at being itself, often with no recognition of this. Anita Sarkeesian and Zoe Quinn became feminist 'bosses' that needed to be 'destroyed', rather than people with their own views and ideas. Repeated bomb threats at the places and events that Quinn and Sarkeesian have appeared or spoken at point to the idea of blowing up each 'level'. Quite simply, these groups deliberately used the discourse and attitudes of playing a game to distance themselves from the very real consequences of their actions. 'Othering' an enemy like this is a core strategy of propaganda. This language is also indicative of the lack of authority that these groups have; they self-identify as a band of noble warriors at war with an evil corporation, rather than feeling that they can engage in a peer-to-peer debate about the nature of journalism. Similarly, feminists become an omnipotent and evil 'they' with a shadowy agenda to control the ways in which games change...for the worst.

#OperationDiggingDiGRA was set up to investigate 'the feminist agenda' in DiGRA. DiGRA's archives are open source.

Gamergaters started to 'investigate' the groups that they felt were pushing a feminist or corrupt agenda, starting with Quinn and Sarkeesian, but drawing in anyone who had outwardly supported them or posted articles criticising #gamergate itself. Unsurprisingly, they found many links between gaming writers, developers and companies. Rather like any large group, networking between people has established a large, complex web of interpersonal relationships. The gaming industry is also still relatively small, so these links are deeply embedded, and extensive. #gamergate saw this as further evidence of corruption and collusion. Again, the movement was rife with paranoia that something was going on and being hidden from the average gamer; in particular, that feminists and indie developers were forcing their agendas into games where they were neither wanted or needed.

[The only guide to Gamergate that you will ever need to read](#) discusses some of the developments after this, and also examines what this means for gaming in the future.

What is the connection between #gamergate and DiGRA?



Gamergaters linking videos about DiGRA's involvement in 'The End of Gamers'

Disclosure – I am an active member of DiGRA UK, and have also written about this particular aspect of #Gamergate [here](#).

DiGRA (the Digital Games Research Association) is a loose collective of games scholars who meet annually at an international conference where they give papers, sit on panels and workshops, and network with other likeminded people. There are also local events organised by individual chapters around the world that are more varied in tone – DiGRA UK is for example organising a joint conference and games jam next year. This organisation is similar to many other academic organisations around the world in that it is a means for academics to keep in touch and discuss contemporary

issues in games via its newsgroup and share information between scholars interested in studying Game Studies as an academic discipline. There are a number of different ways of assessing papers submitted to DiGRA – this is because different academic institutions around the world demand slightly different criteria – amongst which are peer review, blind submission and poster sessions. DiGRA make all conference proceedings, including papers, available on a free database. The database contains over 700 papers. As I've said before, members of DiGRA do not all agree with each other consensus and the organisation contains people from many different social, cultural and political perspectives. DiGRA is known for having a friendly, welcoming atmosphere however, and I think it's fair to say that as gamers ourselves, we are all quite playful. You'd be just as likely to find people playing a game of Munchkin after the conference ends, as it is to see people debating the importance of simulation in games. Several of us are also involved in conventions elsewhere, and the more informal atmosphere of these is also starting to have a positive effect.

In September 2014, DiGRA was targeted by #gamergate. Several paste bins and YouTube videos identifying the group as an academic organisation rife with feminism and potential corruption quickly spiralled into a new witchhunt by gamers. Gamergaters determined to identify and discredit all of the feminists within the organisation, and 'expose' their agendas within games (again, if this sounds deeply paranoid, it's because it is). Twitter and various forums mobilised in order to 'fact check' all DiGRA papers for evidence of feminism, and then to report their authors as frauds. DiGRA was accused of cronyism, wanting to discredit peer review (after a discussion at DiGRA 2014 in which the peer review system was discussed), and for having connections with DARPA. The last is fairly easily explained – several academics associated with DiGRA have applied for, and received funding from DARPA in order to investigate various aspects of games. In the UK, a similar organisation might be the Wellcome Trust or the AHRC. Part of sustaining a career in academia involves applying for bids of this nature on a semi-regular basis. Similarly, many academics are encouraged to attend conferences within their field of interest as part of their academic lives. However, again this was seen as 'evidence' that DiGRA was somehow out to destroy gaming.

The attacks on DiGRA aren't really anything special in the grand scheme of #gamergate; they are simply another manifestation of the fear and hatred of women in the gaming industry. At its core, #gamergate is a hate group with a deep rooted fear of women and those who support them. It's rather like football hooliganism – the people who start fights and throw bottles at football matches aren't fans – in fact real football fans (who are the majority), find their actions absolutely horrifying. To most of us, even the idea that these people find feminism so threatening seems practically primeval, especially when gaming has taken so many positive steps recently (but of

course, this is what has prompted such fear). The reaction from DiGRA scholars was similarly baffled; in fact many expressed their disappointment in not being cited as 'feminist' rather than 'academic'.

Where does responsibility for #gamergate lie?

What we should be worrying about however, is not who has been 'named and shamed' – although those people certainly deserve our support – but how long this has been able to roll, and the extent to which it has been allowed to go. The rise of #gamergate points to a really worrying trend in online communication whereby it's easy to harass, threaten and intimidate people online. Twitter, for example, will not shut down an account unless threats are directly targeted against a named person, so it's possible to print huge amounts of aggressive hate speech as long as a target is left indirect. It's also very easy to make a sockpuppet account, send threats from it, and then immediately delete it, at which point the tweets 'disappear' unless they have been otherwise recorded (this happened to me). Blocking a Twitter account simply stops someone from appearing on your feed; however that person can still simply type your identity into the search engine and read all your tweets again. Again, this is because companies want as many users as possible, so it's in their interests to keep people active, rather than simply shutting them down (there are also other issues about what constitutes offensive behaviour online, but this is a whole other kettle of fish). It's difficult to provide set solutions here though – at what point do we start to curtail the alleged utopian free expression of the internet, and how do we do this, on an international scale, after so many years of relatively free expression? None of these are questions that can be answered simply.

Finally, I'm going to leave this section by relating some more personal experience. Since #gamergate started, many women, indie developers and feminists have felt afraid of tweeting or really putting their heads above water. Gamergaters have tried to discredit the harassment that has happened as false flagging or simply faked. This is not the case. The threats and abuse to people, especially women, are real. I've put out some tweets, and I've written a couple of anonymous position pieces since this started. I'm a long, long way away from the main targets in this debate. So far I've been told to go and kill myself, that I'm a whore, that I'm an uptight Feminazi virgin and that I should repeatedly fuck off and die. I've been named as an 'enemy' in YouTube videos and marked as an SJW Feminist on 'hit lists'. A long running tweet about the 'danger signs' of academic feminists specifically identified me through the colour of my hair and my tattoos (which also meant someone had gone through my photo archives) and this rapidly became a long conversation about how unfuckable and disgusting that made me. I've turned down an inter-

view with the BBC about this because it puts me at risk; maybe that makes me a coward, but right now I'd prefer to be safe. Because it's fairly easy to find my place of work online, I've had to notify my manager and other members of staff about what's going on and put a file together of all the offensive material collated about it. There's a lot. I'm nothing in this debate; not even close to the main players. I'm simply a feminist scholar who likes playing and writing about videogames.

#gamergate is the ugly side of gaming; the side that people have been trying to avoid for years and something that it's impossible to be neutral within. Elsewhere, my research allows me to write largely positive (and yes, feminist) writing about fans and representation in gaming. I've also looked at deviant play in the past, although mainly in small groups and certainly with no inkling that #gamergate would become such a huge, vicious monster. I'm glad that most people find it so alarming, and also so contrary to the way that the rest of popular culture seems to be developing, but at the same time I've found it deeply depressing, sometimes frightening, and generally incredibly disappointing. The worst thing is that now, people are starting to ask, are gamers really like this?





2

PRIDE FLAGS AND TEA BAGGING BY JAMES BACON

It's been a busy August and September for me, and a busy year, having been involved with Loncon 3.

One of the fun elements of that convention was doing things with other people, including working with Esther and her team who made the Games Tent work so well. I do not consider myself to be a role player; I do not frequently role play games any more, I did in Dublin, and have gone to some Zombie Live Action events, but I look at games, especially ones about the First and Second World War, wish I had more



**“Some youtubers take pitty on indie games, or cover indie games they like for free. But you better believe they have a “going rate,” that they typically charge... usually depending on who/ what
Anonymous (Tues 02 Sep 2014 20:59:26 No.261347312**

time and move on. So I don't categorise myself as a role player and I was about to say I am neither a gamer either.

In the last few weeks, I have become acutely aware of gamergate, first as I was curious and was enjoying some social time in a bar with some experts, and then as I realised it had started to impact people I know and like. This is not the gaming I know, nor have time for. The idea of somehow walking away from the screen of a game to then go and pour hatred and vitriol upon a person is rotten beyond imagination and threats of violence, or making one fearful, criminal.

In my work place it is anyhow.

Computer gaming upon reflection, is something I have done for a long time, since Dad got the family Commodore 64 in the early eighties. *Raid over Moscow*, *Bruce Lee*, *Commando*, *Blue Max*, *Train*, *The Escape to Normandy*, *Ace* and joystick destroyers, like *Daley Thompson Decathlon*.

Shouting at the screen, or at my brother as we played a game on a split screen was not uncommon, nor ribbing or slagging achievements or failing to complete them. It was nothing serious, we had much worse arguments and physical fights in later years over other things.

Then it was a Nintendo device, the NES, for Trevor my brother as the eighties progressed and we all played on, and then the Super NES. I really enjoyed *Area 88* on this machine. Mick O'Connor who I met through his workplace, a second hand comic book shop on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Dublin called *Phantasia* became a good friend, and he had his Amiga, and we played *Lotus* and *Jaguar Racing*, and then moved onto *Dune 2* and *Doom* and it was fun. Lots of fun. *Dune 2* was amazing.

Mick was a continual presence in my life from about the age of 15, and as we became friends, he would invite me around to his house, hours could be wasted round at his place. When it was the two of us, it would be encouragement and help, when there was a crowd, there would be mild banter, but the excitement and good spirit permeated the household. Fantastic times.

This made the advent of gaming a sociable activity, as Mick would sometimes organise a party or gathering and some of us would play games, and it was very relaxed and pleasant. There would be

some upset when you lost, and some celebration for a winner, but it was always about playing and enjoying. There were games clubs and things, and then computers were being linked together to play *Doom*.

I played for some time at an Octocon, in the early 90's on a LAN and it was great fun. I had my own PC from about 1997 onwards and then there was a Playstation. *Command and Conquer* was a favourite, and linking up two TVs and two Playstations to play was terrific. Here where you knew people less, there was not as much interaction, but it existed.

At some stage I ended up playing *Call of Duty 2*, because of Stef, a great friend, who did things like that, making him an amazingly awesome friend. And when I started playing online, with Stef and others; crikey, I was captured by it all and loved it. I could play that game online for hours at a time, and if they were playing, as in Stef and other UK based pals, such as Elvis and Matt, it was intense, and we were part of the 'Brain-wrong' or 'notRights' clans as teams are known on CoD, it was savage. Well, in the shouting at the screen and killing nazi's sort of fun way.

Call of Duty has been present for some time now, nine years to be exact, and although I lost interest in some versions such as *CoD 4 Modern Warfare* depending on where I was.

I moved into Stef's in west London, in 2011 and *CoD Modern Warfare* was a game that was present in the house, along with many others, and I played. Then *Black Ops II* from the release date, as I did with *Call of Duty Ghosts*. Both of these games had a near future element that I really enjoyed, but it was the online games that really captured me.

Shooting other people, dying, respawning, capturing flags, it could go on for hours and hours, unpredictable, unique each time, turn it on, make some coffee and play, until the coffee is cold. Too much fun.

“this shit is doomed to fail as long as there are actual fucking lunatics on our side who are gonna drag our name through the mud and make our message meaningless.”

Anonymous Tue 02 Set 2014 21:03:35 No.261347854 on 4Chan

Then Stef bought me *Battlefield 3* and *Battlefield 4* and that was the shit. It's like *Call of Duty*, but with Tanks, and Helicopters and short-range ballistic missiles. This week, when things got a bit hectic, I immersed myself in playing, it's fun, and in a way incredibly science fictional playing a game over the magic web with people in their sitting rooms or skivvies.

Now, there is oddness. One can receive and send messages on *Call of Duty*, in various ways over the years, and I have a few, mostly insults, and I don't check often, so its like, when did this message arrive and what's the context? But the abuse is sorta weird. Like just single words, and mostly about one's sexuality. It's a hollow and pointless thing, I do not engage.

There are symbols. So you can etch your initials into the rear sight of your gun in *COD*, so when people see you as the last kill of the game, you see them. A nice idea, but I dislike the ones that are AH for Adolf Hitler. On *Battlefield* you can have flags and logos and all sorts, actually you can do that on and yesterday I was playing and saw that a player, who was rather good, as they killed me a few times, had the Pride flag as their personal logo, while later I was playing on a game that had a motto, 'Don't get angry, get teabagging'; again, a strangeness that has entered into gaming, that in a sense has always been present but I only noticed with some reflection, and also because I have become accustomed to it as a part of the game. When I think about it, it is not going to be easy to explain to my nephew, people will be nasty -ignore it. Actually that is it in a way.

On *Battlefield*, when you get killed, you can see the person who killed you for a few moments, as you wait to respawn and yesterday I died hundreds of times and it occurred about twice; a player ran over once my character was dead, stood over the avatar, did a couple of crouches and ran off. To be honest, the age-old indication, a couple of jumps, indicating jumping for joy, is much more common. This is considered Tea Bagging, the sexual act where one places ones testicles in and out of another person's mouth. Obviously it's a pretty poor representation.

I was surprised when it came up that this would be a breach of the Geneva Convention. Mostly as I am pretty sure that no matter how depraved soldiers are in real life, that crouching up and down, fully dressed, over a dead body is not high on the list of breaches nor on their list of things to do. Filling down bullets as you are trucked to police a civil rights parade, now that is more serious, and as I sit watching an avatar crouch and stand, my attitude is it has no connection with reality.

Of course, I enjoy such articles, because I have an appreciation for military history and also have an interest in gaming. If one were more paranoid, it could create a concern that this criticism is an attempt to curb violence in games, draw attention to something that should change,

"Despite the fact that Gamergate 'isn't about' feminists or ... social justice warriors in general, all these figures and subjects have a weird, pesky habit of continuing to pop up wherever gamergaters assemble."

Jesse Singal

or prohibited, and that, if a person is rather unsure of things, could create a level of fear that their game will be denied to them. Pointless fear of course.

Of course, if you want you can hear other people talk while they are playing, and I do not mind that, usually it's cursing and people trying to play as a team. It can be directed usually at individuals and I have no idea sometimes what people are saying and I know at one stage myself and Stef may have engaged with some French players in a mix of 'ALLO 'ALLO French and Irish. I find it a bit hilarious to be honest.

Now when Stef, whose home I live in, along with friends Jebbo, Matt and Ian all play in the House, it is an incredible thing, 4 TVs all set up, they are a formidable team. I have left to go to work, and returned to find them in the exact same spots, with Pizza boxes and hard looks. Players will follow them, and on one occasion a couple of kids played with them for hours; they were kids as you can hear them, and mom in the background. I made much mockery of the fact that they were grooming these kids, although in that humour there may be a much deeper concern about what does go on, online.

And in all this, I know that there are girls who play the games, but I am pretty sure I have never heard them or identified them. Now *Call of Duty* allows one to choose your race and gender, but that is no indication of anything, as back when *Baldur's Gate* was played by pals in Dublin and Mick would always choose a female avatar, you could choose, and his wife Phil who had a second machine in the house might play male avatars.

I love these war games – they are great fun, I have not found myself desiring to go to war and die for a foolish political cause, nor taking on extreme views about gun ownership, or hating girls. I like girls actually.

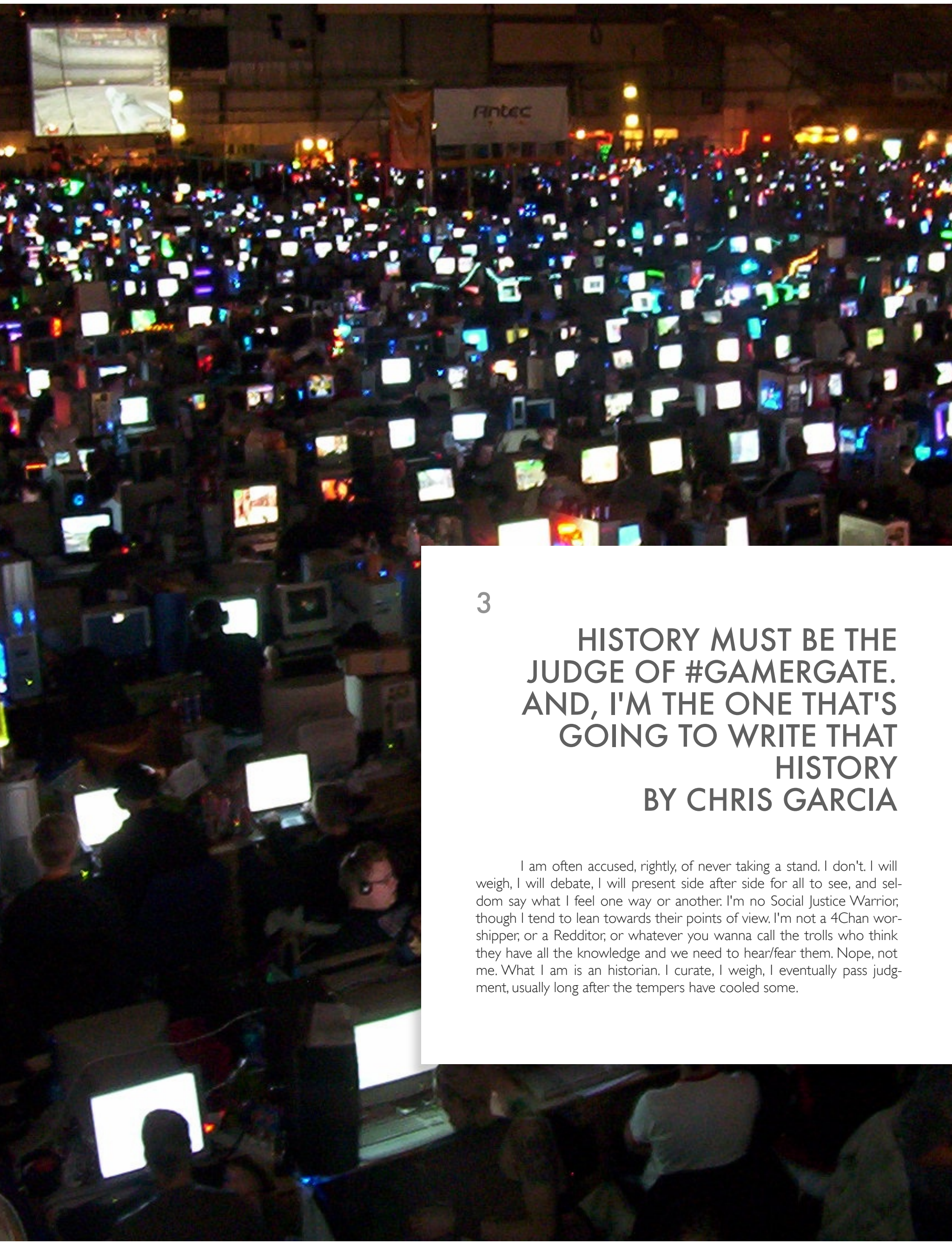
But there is a line. Right now, no one is stopping me from playing any game I want, or prohibiting me from enjoying playing with pals and I am not expecting or worried about that being changed. I doubt that *Call of Duty* is going to stop being fun, it may get more realistic, or more science fictional, but it sells. Yet there is something terribly worrying about the way players are behaving. Going from banter or mild friendly abuse amongst friends, to general abuse to stepping past a line and abusing people in the real world.

I do not feel any impact from an odd message sent to me on the chat system. Yet I want women to develop, design, play and indeed feel free to study gaming. I like articles and especially like ones that are going to make me think, and I have no need for such journalists or writers to state their position, just cause they are women, I want them to enjoy the freedoms I enjoy, without trepidation let alone fear.

I am a gamer and targeting anyone for abuse, threats, doing anything in the real world that causes any upset, fear, or threatening of violence is plain wrong. It's hurtful and games are about having fun, and passing time in a harmless way.

My address is not being tweeted, or rape threats being received, nor am I receiving continual messages of hatred.

That is bad, and anyone doing this needs to be stopped. And punished. That is not gaming.



3

HISTORY MUST BE THE JUDGE OF #GAMERGATE. AND, I'M THE ONE THAT'S GOING TO WRITE THAT HISTORY BY CHRIS GARCIA

I am often accused, rightly, of never taking a stand. I don't. I will weigh, I will debate, I will present side after side for all to see, and seldom say what I feel one way or another. I'm no Social Justice Warrior, though I tend to lean towards their points of view. I'm not a 4Chan worshipper, or a Redditor, or whatever you wanna call the trolls who think they have all the knowledge and we need to hear/fear them. Nope, not me. What I am is an historian. I curate, I weigh, I eventually pass judgment, usually long after the tempers have cooled some.

“The "Allegations" were debunked within three days. It wasn't even an allegation made in the gross post full of private information. The threads supposedly set up to discuss it quickly turned into disgusting slut-shaming at the very least, sites through which lies and slander were propagated pretty often, and homes for the organisation of directed attacks at worst.”

Anonymous
Tue 02 Sep 2-14
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No. 261347446

Currently, I'm working on a project for WorldCon where I am going to take a single object for every year there has been a WorldCon and use it to represent that year in Fandom. For 1964, my gut tells me I should use something related to The Breendoggle. For those few of you who have no idea what that is, there are excellent resources online about it, but here's the capsule – Walter Breen was a fan, he was accused of inappropriate sexual contacts with minors (oh, let's just say it: he was a paedophile) and the Pacificon committee banned him from the convention. Now, I really want to display a copy of *The Loyal Opposition*, a zine created to denounce the Pacificon committee barring him from the convention. So, as I'm compiling what I'll be using in this exhibit, I have to consider several things.

One – was it a significantly powerful event within the community?

Undoubtedly yes. A massive amount of fandom was either directly involved, or indirectly affected by the fallout of this fannish war.

Two – are the people who participated notable for anything within the field outside of the event?

Yes. Breen was maybe not a huge figure, but among those involved in one way or another were Bjo Trimble, Bill Donaho, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ron Ellik, Don Ford and various other Big Name Fans. Those names would indicate that it was an important event.

Three – did the event have long-lasting effects?

Yes, especially as it can be seen as the first time the idea of “Cons as Safe Place” was used. The fact that several notable fans left fandom makes it even more important.

Four – Were there other events of equal importance at the time that received less coverage?

Looking back through zines of that era, I'd say not.

Five – is there a clear understanding of what actually happened?

This one is always the hardest, and it appeared that we now have a very good understanding of the events that took place, their impact on the community, and at least something of a preliminary timeline.

Six – are there materials available to create a display?

In this case, there are copies of *The Loyal Opposition* and other items as well. There were tons of zines that covered it, and a few notable letters, including an Apology from Donaho in the form of a letter to Alva Rogers. These things will make my choice easier.

So, those answers would indicate that the event is of significant importance, and that its selection, while perhaps not the most joyous, would be appropriate for inclusion in the exhibit as being the most important signifier for the year in question.

Using that rubrick, what can we say now about how #gamergate might be seen in the future?

Let's go to the Mind Map for #gamergate!

One – was it a significantly powerful event within the community?

Undoubtedly yes. The fact is that this is Gaming Fandom's biggest, widest-ranging controversy, and one of the few that has transcended the community and gotten mainstream press. It's been covered not only by the usual suspects (Kotaku, Gamasutra, various others) and took over significant portions of 4Chan and Redditt and Twitter, and Facebook, and on and on and on. From the BBC to ABC to NPR to The New York Times, it's been covered all over the place, and some of the names that would be unknown outside of gaming if it weren't for the coverage. This is not the first time that gaming has had a light shown on some of its darker corners, but it certainly is the brightest light it's ever encountered.

Two – are the people who participated notable for anything within the field outside of the event?

Some absolutely; other it's too soon to tell. Zoe Quinn will be an important figure if she goes on to create more games of the quality of *Depression Quest* or if *Rebelljam* takes off. If *The Fine Young Capitalists'* projects pan out, if *Afterlife Empire* is a hit, or they bring several new names into game development with future projects, that'll be important. Will Brianna create more cool games (and *Revolution 60* is pretty cool!) and serve as an inspiration to other potential game developers? Will 4Chan continue to be dick out of one side of their mouths, while supporting worthy causes out of the other? Will one of the faceless Anons make themselves known for doing something truly disgusting? This one is the hardest to judge.

Three – did the event have long-lasting effects?

Again, difficult to do in the moment (hence the saying "History starts with the tenth anniversary") but if Zoe, or Anita Sarkeesian, or Brianna, or a general drop in the number of woman's game projects, or if there's a massive rise in the number, or if 4chan sees itself the target of better regulation, or if there's better anti-bullying/Cyber-assault legislation that comes of it, or if there's a massive in change in how Game Journalism is undertaken, then that'll answer that question. The biggest thing is how those who are involved go forward.

Or don't.

That's one of the most devastating effects of events like this. Those that are taken out after having to deal with something like this. There's a long line of people who have left gaming, fandom, art, you name it, as an side-effect of feuds and dust-ups. If there's a danger from #gamergate, it's the lingering effect of the loss of those who are driven out of the arena by not wanting to put up with this crap.

Four – Were there other events of equal importance at the time that received less coverage?

While there are a lot of controversies these days, this one really takes the cake, and it's gone across into many different arenas. This one is 100% certain to pass this test, even if that test were to be given today.

Five – is there a clear understanding of what actually happened?

And here's the problem with trying to do history in the moment. We have accounts, and there are conflicting reports, and as time goes on, we'll get a clearer view of people's real actions and motivations. The dream of any Historian is the 'deathbed confession', when someone comes clean, tells you what really happened, usually to their own detriment. If we get one of those, then this'll be so much easier. The problem is, often these never come; some of us want to have our memory untainted, after all. As time goes on, we'll get more and more evidence and a better timeline will emerge. That will allow us to make a coherent message out of the events.

Six – are there materials available to create a display?

This is an interesting question. The logs captured by Zoe Quinn and various others are one kind of material that you can point to. Of course, there's the actual games created and referenced by those involved. There aren't a lot of physical objects, but I can certainly see a series of interactives, like an installation screen where a series of the time-stamped posts with the size of the posts displayed shown in relationship to the number of eyes that saw it.

OK, it's too soon. We still need to work through a lot of this out, to deal with the consequences of actions, see how the actual events effect those involved. How will this change things, that's the ultimate question. Looking at it like the Breendoggle (and yes, I know that both are so different in action, as well as time and place), you can see that the names involved within the world they inhabit are of very different levels. Breen was a Big Name Fan, widely known across fandom, while the average gamer didn't know of most of the figures involved before #gamergate. Many, of not most, still don't. I guess the better comparison would be between Science Fiction Readers of the time and those who were familiar with the Breendoggle, which would certainly be a smaller fraction, and likely about the same percentage as all gamers familiar with #gamergate.

Now, here's the rub – over the years I've been told that talking about Walter Breen and the events of 1963/64 are not positive, and thus, should be ignored. If I do so, they say, what I'm actually doing is muck-racking. There are those who say that we already understand the events well enough and don't need to talk about it 50 years later. That may be a fair point, but isn't that what history is for? There are others who DEMAND that a stand be taken, that the events of the past be used to trumpet the causes of today and make points in connection with the present. For me, while I understand that line of thought, I don't believe that's what we should do for it too closely ties an event's interpretation with the present. History should be written for all-time, not just the moment. It's impossible to be completely out of the moment, even the means you use to express those thoughts are of the Moment, but an attempt should be made to give the view of a 'Moment in Time', a view from higher where the tendrils up to the present day can be telling the story.

Will that be possible with #gamergate? I'll let you know in 2024.





4

WHY I BLOGGED ABOUT BRIANNA WU AND GAMERGATE BY MIKE GLYER

I write a news blog about sf fandom, *File 770*, where I don't ordinarily follow what happens in gaming fandom. I do keep an eye on Vox Day's blog, however, where gaming is a regular topic. That's how I happened to hear about GamerGate shortly after it began, albeit it from a supportive and misogynistic point of view. I never expected to be writing about it myself.

The regular participants on Day's blog have nicknamed themselves the *Dread Illk*, and day by day the Illk endorsed the targeting of Zoe Quinn, an independent developer, for criticism and abuse, and scoffed when feminist media critic Anita Sar-

keesian was forced to cancel a talk scheduled at Utah State University after the university received a terror threat from someone claiming they would commit “the deadliest school shooting in American history” if she gave her lecture. Even without reading the actual GamerGate traffic I continually saw justification for and mockery of women’s fear and pain.

Then on October 10 I was shocked to see social media and a mainstream news outlet reporting that game developer Brianna Wu left home after alerting police that she received a death threat that included her home address. Suddenly one of the people in the crosshairs of Gamergate’s biggest sociopaths was someone I knew, an artist who had created cover art for my fanzine in 2008 and 2009. At that moment there were many things she needed, one of them was something I could do: help her tell the truth.

As I worked on my own post, Brianna updated Twitter about the large number of appearances she was lining up with various media.

I was reminded of the end of the movie *Witness*, where a cop is in a fight to protect a woman and her young son from an armed criminal. While the cop briefly has to surrender, the boy is ringing a warning bell that can be heard at the nearby farms. He keeps ringing the bell and soon unarmed Amish farmers are coming through the fields. Now there are too many witnesses. The criminal realizes what the cop says is true: “You can’t shoot all of us,” and he surrenders in turn.

Probably an imperfect analogy with gamers, who think they can shoot everything (isn’t that the fantasy they’re buying?) Still, every time Brianna tweeted about a new appearance, I heard the bell. Many dozens of writers answered it.

Here’s what I posted. At James Bacon’s suggestion I reframed it with the introduction above as an article for *The Drink Tank*.

“Brianna Wu and her husband Frank temporarily fled their home on October 10 after She received threats of sexual assault and death via Twitter. The last tweet published their address, prompting her to call the police, who came to her home.

Wu is the head of development at Giant Spacekat, designer of the game *Revolution 60*. Wu believes she received the threats in response to her online activism on behalf of women in the tech industry. She told a *Boston.com* writer that she is “harassed on a daily basis,” often receiving rape threats and unwanted pornographic images, but that Friday night’s messages “crossed a line to the point [she] felt scared.””

Twitter has suspended the account used to issue the threats.

Brianna is well-known to readers of my fanzine *File 770* as the cover artist on two issues published in 2008 and 2009. I feel it’s a crime and an outrage that she is having to endure a terrible ordeal simply to work in her chosen field.

Brianna has been getting threatening messages for many months. Last July she opened her article for Polygon, “No skin thick enough: The daily harassment of women in the game industry,” with the grim statement:

I haven’t been out to my car at night by myself since January 2nd.

My name is Brianna Wu. I lead a development studio that makes games. Sometimes, I write about issues in the games industry that relate to the equality of women. My reward is that I regularly have men threatening to rape and commit acts of violence against me.

Abuse reached a crescendo last week as a byproduct of her comments on GamerGate, a universe of social media messages with the #GamerGate hashtag. It is self-styled by proponents as an online movement criticizing journalistic ethics in the games industry, but the tag is frequently seen on traffic from people interested in justifying a predominantly male gamer identity or, in the worst cases, raining threats and abuse on specific women working in the industry such as Anita Sarkeesian. (See *Gawker* for a basic introduction.)



**“Guys, I just want to repeat. I am more terrified of a gamergate mob going after me than I am this particular death threat.”
Brianna Wu**

As Wu told *Boston.com*: “I am a target. My entire agenda in the industry is to make it possible for more women to pursue a career in the field...and that simple goal scares the hell out of these people.”

Wu has been defending herself by making the threats as public as possible. She’s lined up podcast and cable news appearances. On October 13 she was on MSNBC’s *The Reid Report* with host Joy-Ann Reid, where she was preceded by Eric Johnson, a journalist for *Re/Code*. Johnson began by explaining that users of the GamerGate hashtag are calling for a reform of journalism ethics, then admitted “But it has originated as and continued to be about undermining women in the game community.”

Wu’s heightened media profile has also turned her into a magnet for further attacks by attention-seekers like Vox Day and actor Adam Baldwin.

Wu tweeted on October 14: “Actor @AdamBaldwin defamed my character, publicized a libelous video about me and sent an angry mob of 200k people after me.” They have exchanged several verbal salvos through Twitter. Baldwin is best remembered by fans as part of the TV series *Firefly* and its continuation film *Serenity*. He has done voice work in many games. And lately he’s appeared in TNT’s post-apocalyptic drama *The Last Ship*. On Twitter, he issues a steady stream of political opinions.

Wu’s situation has even spilled over into the Wikipedia. A Brianna Wu entry was created on October 13. Various people immediately attempted to make edits to spin the article to suit themselves, and someone now has recommended the entry for deletion.

Though he did not address Brianna Wu’s situation, Cory Doctorow had things to say about GamerGate during an L.A. Times interview about his new book, *In Real Life*.

**“You know TFYC?
That is how some
people got on our
SIDE. DO MORE
OF THAT.”
Anonymous on
4Chan’s support of
The Fine Young
Capitalists
Posted Tuesday 02
Sep 2014 21:03:28
(No.261347834)**

HC: “In Real Life” stars a young female gamer whose mother is worried about her getting too involved in a community that isn’t particularly kind to female gamers. What are your feelings on the current gamergate and how it reflects those gender dynamics in the gamer community?

CD: It’s disheartening. My wife is a retired “Quake” player who played on the English national team, was a games professional. And I, because of her, have moved through a milieu where I’m surrounded by incredible women gamers. That kind of steamy, grotesque writhing underbelly of gamer culture — the rape threats and the violence and the reflexive hatred of Anita Sarkeesian — is really disheartening. And it’s not unique to gaming. I think it is an epiphenomenon of a wider social inequality. Gamers reflect that. [Gaming] is one of those places where it’s OK to say women get a [bad] deal. But even in the rest of the world where you’re no longer supposed to say that, it’s still OK to act like it.

We still allow employers to get away with paying their women less than they pay their men. We still allow cops to get away with sexually discriminating against victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault. So long as they say, “I think it’s bad that women get discriminated against,” we let them actually practice discrimination. I have no apology and no excuse and no explanation for misogyny in culture, but if we were to make it socially acceptable to say, “You are a misogynist in gamer culture,” it would not be the end of our work. The important work is eliminating misogyny itself, not just the admission of misogyny.



5

ELLIE'S LAST LINE. FEMINISM AND LOVING GAMES BY ESTHER MACCALLUM-STEWART

This article relates to the previous one I wrote about #gamergate. However, instead of looking at the threats to games recently, it asks what relationship feminism has to games, and why this is important to gaming culture as a whole.

In order to address some of these issues, I'm going to look at some of the most common questions that I get asked about feminism and games. And, coincidentally, I'd like to thank James Bacon for managing to ask almost all of them within the space of about ten minutes...although initially this made for some slightly less coherent answers than here.

“The idea of the 'lone gamer' is really not true anymore. Up to 65 percent of gaming now is social, played either online or in the same room with people we know in real life.”
Jane McGonigal

What are the games that feminists could genuinely get behind and why?



Sunrise over Menethil Harbour (2007)

First of all, whilst there are issues with gaming, games culture and the gaming industry, and whilst feminists are amongst some of the people who have called these out, there is not a consensus here. There isn't a vast conspiracy of feminists all out to destroy gaming as it stands, and all feminists do not agree about the ways in which change should take place. Like all gamers, feminists come from a wide spectrum of social, political and cultural backgrounds, and feminism itself has many different facets and beliefs. Similarly, there are many people who don't identify as feminists who also believe that gaming needs to change, and are actively working towards ways of doing this. For people outside of gaming, this is perhaps the most perplexing aspect of #gamergate. Put simply, the fact that some gamers are afraid of feminists, and are acting to suppress them, makes gamers look like primitive idiots who somehow got lost before emancipation occurred in the early 20th Century. Despite this, we live in exciting times (in fact, I'm not the only person to argue that that this is why #gamergate started), and games are increasingly starting to cater to a more diverse audience. They have to, because the demographic of gamers is huge now. From Silver Surfers to toddlers, the gaming market has the potential to reach pretty much anyone with a smartphone – and it's important that we recognise the sheer universality of this.



FYI, these are really good Nerfs...

Are there boys and girls games?

Yes there are, but in some ways this is a rather frustrating question. I'll explain why in a moment. There are games that are predominantly played by male or female players, and there are also games designed specifically for girls, boys, men and women. Note I've split everyone up a little bit here. Games for children are not the same as games for adults (although rather like other media, adults may enjoy really good games for children), and there are companies that design games specifically for one gender or demographic. This reflects the huge diversity in the gaming audience, and, when you think about it, makes a lot of sense. Just like any other media, there are enough viewers or players that games can still be profitable if they are aimed at one group of people. So, there are developers making the equivalent of cartoons, and those making blockbuster movies, and every type of variation in between.

However, the targeting of games to certain audiences often leads to a rather unpleasant differentiation, whereby the media will often identify 'hardcore' games as those played by males, and 'casual' games as those enjoyed by females. I'm using their language here and you can already see there are some problems – men 'play' games, whereas women 'enjoy' them. Similarly, 'hardcore' games suggest an intensive involvement, whereas 'casual' suggests something easy and light-hearted. There's a secondary assumption by some people that hardcore games are 'better' and more 'game-like' than their casual counterparts, and this leads to people being disenfranchised as 'gamers' and 'not gamers'. This isn't true; if you play a game, you're a gamer; even though you might not choose to be identified as one. Another important aspect here is that many people play a variety of games, and don't restrict themselves to one genre or type of games. I'm terrible at *CoD*, but I love *Saints Row* and *League of Legends*; both games that traditional categorisation would assign to predominantly male gamers.

Here's another reason why this 'hardcore' and 'casual' separation doesn't really work. I can easily play *Candy Crush* in a 'hardcore' way (setting my clock to make sure I make maximum use of the timer, swapping assets with other players, optimising my use of items), and *Call of Duty* in a 'casual' way (logging in on a Friday night to drink beers and hang out with friends in the way that James describes elsewhere in this edition; grinding the same maps for cosmetic upgrades or achievements). And whilst it's the 'hardcore' games that are often assumed to be the most lucrative, because they usually cost more in the first instance, it has been estimated that the Kim Kardashian game will make \$200 million this year.

Finally, the perception that women play some games and men play others isn't actually true anyway. Whilst *Call of Duty* is predominantly a male-orientated game, and *Candy Crush* is most often played by women, these are extreme examples on the far end of the gaming scale. If we look at games like *World of Warcraft*, *Skyrim*, *Awesomenauts*, *Assassin's Creed* or *Mario Kart*, we'll see a more realistic spread of playing demographic, which is about 45% female and 53% male, and 2% transgender.

From <http://archive.today/Ler4O#selection-9.18045-9.18559>

<cuteGamrgrll> The nudes will generate attention though, We need more eyes.

<SaladCream> Posting the nudes wouldn't be productive

<VidyaBro> saladcream is right

<Geno_> Yeah but we need to put her as the villain

<Geno_> not the victim

<cuteGamrgrll> doin' it indiscriminately might be a little reckless though.

<Geno_> Otherwise it won't work

<cuteGamrgrll> GET THIS HOT HEAD OUTTA HERE

What are Games Doing Wrong?



Feminist Frequency
@femfreq



Following

I usually don't share the really scary stuff. But it's important for folks to know how bad it gets [TRIGGER WARNING]

← Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More

#Gamergate was partially started when Anita Sarkeesian had to leave her home due to online harassment. This is not okay.

I'm a big supporter of Anita Sarkeesian's work (I Kickstarted her original video series and am proud to have done so), but for me, discussing what games are doing right is just as important as drawing attention to what is wrong. I could dwell on the mistakes that the games industry has made (and there are a lot!), but that's not really all that constructive when suggesting ways to make games more diverse and inclusive. Recently, we've see a real shift in the gaming industry, which is actively trying to change the ways that games represent gender, love, sex and sexuality in gaming. This ranges from small indie games that explore themes like BDSM relationships (for example, *Loved*), to huge AAA titles that are trying to represent women and other aspects of diversity in more depth. Overall, the games industry is thinking more clearly about how it can make things more inclusive, and why this might be a more useful way to approach gaming culture in general.

For me, it's useful to point out what's going well because it indicates our growing understanding of games and gamers, and our ability to cater for this diverse group of people in thoughtful, interesting ways. What follows is a short example from my own work, written from a feminist perspective.

“Those individuals didn't have the best journalistic practices but when you're the only game in town you inherently won't face the same level of scrutiny. I didn't watch the Five Guys video and take everything it said as gospel but I understand why it became as big as it did.”

Taro Yamada

Love in Games



Perhaps the most obvious way in which games have developed recently has happened is the current obsession with love, romance and, to a lesser extent, the portrayal of sex in games. This is a core part of my research and it's almost as complicated as describing love in real life. For me, love and sex are things that I find funny, exciting, heartbreaking, difficult, easy, passionate, experimental, arousing, complicated and ARGH! all at once. But that's just me, and it's not even a fraction of the things that actually happens to me when I fall in love or have sex (or both, or chose to do neither!). We all mean such different things when we say we 'love' someone or something. We also often confuse love (and so do games), with specific aspects of the physical or mental relationships that come with this, and we've got a further problem in that both love and sex are so personal and different, that getting them into games in a way that most people will relate to, is really hard.

So, creating an interesting romance or sexual relationship in games is something of a holy grail at the moment. How can it be effective without being sleazy, and how should we actually portray this? In many games, developers also need to insert what's called a ludic device (aka, a system of rules) that make love 'work' in a game. I can have a crush over Uthgerd and Sips' relationship in *Skyrim* (it's not even about me!!), but without a method to express this in the game, that's all it is; a silent crush that means absolutely nothing. In many games, therefore, we have to make love happen by doing something. Most often, because it's a game and it needs rules, this is by giving someone a present or talking to them at length, at which point they will start to like us more. Their love meter will go up, and eventually the avatar will have had enough cues from us that it will start to initiate programming that allows it to have a relationship with us. Well hellos, we might even get to fuck each other.

Okay, that sort of makes sense, games often takes this to extremes. So for example, the gift giving mechanism. Most people in real life like to be given gifts, but if a lover gave me twenty three fountain pens in a row, on the same day, because he knew that I liked them, I'd probably find this a bit odd. I'd also like to think that I'm not so shallow that

those pens were the only reason I liked that person, and that if a random stranger ran up to me and did the same thing, I wouldn't react in the same way (although I'd have loads of pens!!). However, games often have to do this, because the rules needed to represent a relationship have to be measured somehow, and also need to contain an element of play (and I don't mean fooling about play – also known as 'paedia', I mean play that requires rules in order to work – also known as 'ludus'). So, rules and the need to actually take part in a computer game get in the way of a realistic relationship.

By the way, I'm not actually lying about the pens relationship thing. Morrigan still won't go out with me because I kept the last quill I found in *Dragon Age* for myself. HA!



All she wanted was stationary...

A second issue is the love of the game itself. I 'love' *World of Warcraft*. Really love it. I love *WoW* enough that I've been playing it for ten years and own nearly 600 pets in-game. Some people might say, therefore, that I 'love' *WoW* a little bit too much; and they'd probably be right. But *WoW* has been a constant in my life and it's got me through some hard times; there's nothing better than downing Garrosh for the first time with twenty of your mates after a particularly jerkish boyfriend just dumped you on a rainy Friday night. In the face, Garrosh!!! (and that boyfriend too – he wasn't worth nearly as much as these epic shoulders I just picked up). We love games because of their association, and because they help us in other parts of our lives, and because they are just so damn good.

Games are clever like this, of course. They are sneaky and demanding lovers designed for us to want to keep coming back again and again. Just one more pet, just one more achievement before bed, just one more try in the Siege of Ogrimmar because it only takes thirty minutes and I really want that ring for my shaman...just one more because it's fun and I've had a shitty day and that guy never texted back.

As the media is constantly worrying for us, loving games too much is actually bad for us; it can lead to addiction and loss of health. But we have other relationships with games that aren't as well publicised. I've been hanging about with my *WoW* avatar – a night-elf druid – for nearly ten years (longer, it has to be said, than any of my real life relationships over this period). Narcissistically, perhaps, I love her with an abiding affection that is strong enough to have created a considerable persona around her; so she's the one that knows there are no double beds in Darnassus (yes because cybersex; thanks for asking), and has a small pet rock in her bags (given to her over seven years ago by a dwarf called Shortex), and who loves fishing, the sound of the rains in Zangarmarsh and her pet skeletal velociraptor, not me. A good game allows us to develop this type of re-

relationship without being asked. Elsewhere, I've written about this and called it 'quiet roleplay'; it's the act of creating stories that we tell to ourselves about the characters we love when no one is watching, and we do it because quietly, we love our avatars enough to want to make them into people.



Neveah Leafbinder: She's really very nice once you

All of these examples are ways in which developers get us to love games – to make them an integral part of our lives and also to enjoy them in new, often surprising ways. They are also an example of feminist analysis; I've not only applied a feminine perspective to the analysis of these games, but I also believe that this is a good thing and that developing such ideas in games is a good idea. I've used a discursive tone with a personal slant – this is a type of writing popularised by feminists 'inserting themselves into the text'. And I've done hours and hours of reading theory and other people's perspectives about this, usually from scholars who also identify themselves as feminists, but that's boring and I'm not about to talk about it here.

So why is this important? What's the big deal about all this love, and why do we need it in games. I'm now going to give a couple of different examples about games which do love, sex and relationships really well. This isn't an extensive list; and it's a personal one, but it should also show how games are starting to think about issues beyond jumping to the next platform or hitting each other with sticks (that's fine by the way; there's easily room for both in the gaming world), and also, interestingly, about how we can take love beyond simply jumping into each others' pants.

Mass Effect, The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim, Dragon Age.

These are the games that usually get cited as having positive representations of female and gay characters, as well as exploring romantic or sexual relationships in alternative ways. In these games, male and female characters are usually represented as existing in worlds in which sexual equality is a given. In addition, BioWare and Bethesda (the companies responsible for these games) both have sex positive approaches and have additionally created storyarcs in which the player can engage in same-sex romances. For example, in the *Mass Effect* series, the player can play Commander Shepherd as a male or

Romeo and Juliet

female avatar throughout the series, and in the Dragon Age games, the character of Alastair is particularly well-known as having a very strong romantic story-arc (although it all gets a bit jarring when he sweetly asks you back to his tent to have wild monkey-sex at the end – I always thought he was such a nice young man...). BioWare recently announced that the next Dragon Age game will have a ‘purely’ homosexual character in it (previously, the same sex relationships were with bisexual NPCs who could be romanced by both genders.), and in general, the characters are interesting and well developed. It’s possible to play as a bisexual dwarf female and not feel as if you are engaging in an alternative or tokenistic storyline, for example; rather that this is an acceptable part of the world of Fereldin and entirely in keeping with the world around you. This, it has to be said, is fairly unusual in the grand scheme of adventure games, and I recommend watching some of Anita Sarkeesian’s videos to see why.



Sausage Time!!!

Portal.

The two *Portal* games are amongst the greatest puzzle game ever made. Not only do they have an entirely understated female protagonist, but this is utterly irrelevant to the actual plot. We don’t get any of Chell’s backstory, instead, we occasionally see her in reflective surfaces as she tries to escape from the Aperture Science Facility. In addition, the villain GLaDOS is also female, and one of the most well-characterised baddies for some time. She’s great – you just love to hate her, and she has a fantastic script (this was a triumph, I’m making a note now; huge success!). Finally, the cake is a lie. The *Portal* games are important because, unlike *Tomb Raider*, the game was never advertised on the merits of Chell as a female protagonist. She’s simply in the game as the avatar that that player controls. Because she is ‘you’, the player develops a love-hate relationship that has nothing to do with her gender, and everything to do with how good you are at solving spacial dynamics puzzles involving a massive teleportation gun and a whole load of getting vapourised. Honourable mention also goes to the Companion Cube, an item which you must sacrifice in order to survive but end up loving dearly for no other reason than it’s the

only other object that you have to care about protecting during the course of the game. Overall, the Portal games are subtextually about loving the wrong things and people (GLaDOS, the Companion Cube), and the nature of affection, even though the more obvious narrative of the game is an adventure about escaping from a great big puzzle maze.



It's okay, Chell, we love you too...

The Last of Us.

The smash AAA hit of 2013 is interesting because it rethinks the idea of love in games. At its heart is the story of a bereaved man learning to be a father again, and a daughter who has never had a parent learning to become a young woman and daughter. Sound a bit overblown? It's not; the relationship plays out throughout the game as you fight off the undead, road-trip across America and work out the best way to survive. Although it's an action-adventure zombie game, *TLoU* has an incredibly moving narrative, and presents the relationship between Joel and Ellie in a nuanced manner. When the player has to become Ellie for a short time in the middle of the game, it draws out questions over who is protecting who, and asks hard questions about the nature of love and nurturing in games. This isn't a game about whether the lead protagonists will fuck at the end of the show; it's about two people learning to love again in a practically impossible situation. The key scene comes at the end, which I'm not going to spoil, but involves making a decision and then explaining it which is entirely based on protecting the other person from harm, from the truth, and maybe even from themselves, and eschews traditional zombie game/movie endings. *TLoU* balances this story with smart, effective gameplay and some genuinely tense moments. Also it has a joke in it about a gay wank mag that isn't homophobic and makes me laugh every time. Like all of the games I mention here, the player doesn't have to get that involved with the storyline if they don't want to, however it's so good that it creeps up on even the most hardened of 'I don't play for the storyarc' gamers.



Oh Gods Joel, what do you say next??!!!!

Orcs Must Die.

What? OMD is a feminist game? But how?!! Orcs Must Die is a tower defence game in which you, the Warmage, must slay a lot of orcs. A LOT of orcs. Thousands and thousands of the little shits. So many orcs that they will be piled so high against the walls that it's impossible to see over the top of them. The genius about OMD is that it messes about with the traditional stereotype of the Charles Atlas-like hero. The Warmage, is quite simply, an idiot. He's big, beefy, and utterly incompetent. But he also likes kittens ('they're just so cute, and fluffy!'), and he's a bit useless at anything other than setting traps. By giving him flaws, and making him 'nice but very, very dim', the Warmage gently satirises all the many other lunks and lumps of the gaming genre. He's over the top and endearing; unlike the iron-clad muscle guys of most games (and most games really, really don't do well on dimorphic representation right now – of men or women), he has a vulnerability that just makes people smile. Clean up on Aisle Four!



Fanart of The WarMage. D'awwww....

Depression Quest

an interactive (non)fiction about
living with depression



It's not really a cheerful game, so there are no cheerful screenshots...

Depression Quest.

Depression Quest is a game based on the 'choose your own adventure' style of gamebooks that were popular in the mid 1980s. In it, the player chooses a number of pathways and explores the idea of being a depressed person. The game is more about this journey, and the nature of depression, than it is about great gameplay or exciting challenges. It's also an interesting examination of what depression is, how it occurs, and how difficult it is to escape. I've played it twice now, and each time found it difficult (in terms of the issues it discusses), thought-provoking and moving. *Depression Quest* is one of many 'indie' titles that explores a theme or idea through a game, but it could also be considered an art piece. It's both story and self-help; I'd recommend it to anyone who suffers from depression in the same way that I might suggest that a sexual abuse survivor read Bryan Talbot's *The Tale of One Bad Rat*. Interestingly, whilst this sort of text is common elsewhere (comics, books, film etc.), it's still a relatively new type of exploration in the games world, and as such, has come under a lot of critique. It was Zoe Quinn's ex-boyfriend that acted as one of the triggers for #gamergate, but one of the claims that has been consistently levelled at Quinn is that her games aren't 'real' games. That's nonsense; it's just not the sort of 'game' that I would want to play repeatedly, or if I fancied a night in shooting zombies. Just because it's different from those sorts of games, however, doesn't mean it prevents them from existing or being enjoyed, any more than enjoying a film about the Transformers stops me from watching a biopic about Virginia Woolf in the same evening.

It's important, from a feminist perspective, to have games that break some of the earlier stereotypes of games. Here we have strong female protagonists, derpy but loveable males who break tradition and show weakness, people that we feel we can engage with, and games that challenge our understanding of social issues. They can all live together – there's room for everyone here. Finally, these games are also technically and ludically excellent; so I'm not just playing for the people, I'm playing for the sake of the game as well.

So lecture over. Let's get back to James' questions (and James, I used the possessive apostrophe correctly there, I hope you are taking notes *wink*)

Call of Duty Ghosts allows you to be all colours and sexes - is this a good thing?

Yes. At the moment male protagonists outnumber females about 20 – 1. It's nice to be able to choose a woman as an avatar, and the same is true of race or colour. It's also worth pointing out that in games like *World of Warcraft*, where players can be either male or female gender and often have multiple characters, over 80% of men choose to cross-gender at some point. There are various different reasons for this. In short here, the more diversity we have, the more people feel they can play because there's something for them, and the less stigma we have around issues like race, gender and sexuality.

Abuse amongst players while playing - is this a bad thing?

I don't know, you tell me whether being called a f****t for playing badly is a cool thing to do, or if the fact that r*pe is a common insult in games right now helps people feel welcome... It seems pretty clear cut to me. Abusing someone for their race, gender, sexuality or physical and mental abilities is wrong. We don't tolerate it in real life, so why should it be okay in games?

More seriously, there is an incredibly toxic environment in many games communities that, once again, isn't representative of most gamers. When I play on the X-Box, I don't let people hear my voice, because I don't want the 'usual' (and isn't it awful that I expect it as commonplace?) comments about getting back into the kitchen, or am I a 'real' girl, or just simply 'Bewbs pls' (sure, send me pictures of your hard-on and I'll get right back to you on that one...). I'm not alone here; a gay friend won't use Voice because he has camp mannerisms and doesn't want to be insulted as a result; none of the trans people that I know will use Voice because they don't want to be misgendered or attacked; some of the women I know do, but they put up with a lot of shit, and need fairly bulletproof skills to do so (and that's also a bit shit – why should I have to work be better than most people to be allowed into the club?). Using these insults, and excluding others because of what they sound like, perpetuates the illusion that the community is narrow and exclusive, and I also believe has partly led to the situation we have now where some people believe it's okay to threaten and harass people, also using these vicious, unpleasant terms.

In your opinion, do games lead to bad things?

No. This is an easy 'get out' – that playing games leads to violent or anti-social behaviour. These moral panics have followed every single type of media since the novel came out. My feeling on this is that games do encourage us to engage in addictive behaviour – they make us want to come back for 'one more level' or try at something – but at the same time it's important to remember both how diverse games are, and the huge amounts of positives that games have also brought us.

Should we be doing something better with games like Battlefield?

This is the big fear amongst some gamers at the moment, that feminists will somehow take the essence of some games away from players. Sure, I'd like more women and poc in these games, and I'd like people to stop calling each other offensive names when they play, but I absolutely don't think these games should be banned or changed in their essence. Games like Battlefield and CoD are incredibly popular, because they are great games. Changing small elements of the content to involve more people isn't going to wreck the gameplay. Again, there should be room for everyone, not just those with a sense of entitlement.

It's hard for me to understand why people are resisting these changes so much. Gaming is so much more exciting and interesting with experiments, complex stories, and retellings that 'mix things up a bit'. I don't want every game to be a crusade, but I do want change – more female protagonists, less exclusion of myself and my friends online, more choice of games to play. I don't want games to stop – I want them to evolve; and I genuinely think that actually, this is happening. Rather like Ellie and Joel in *The Last of Us*, it's not just saying 'I love you' that makes a game great; sometimes it's just saying 'Okay.'

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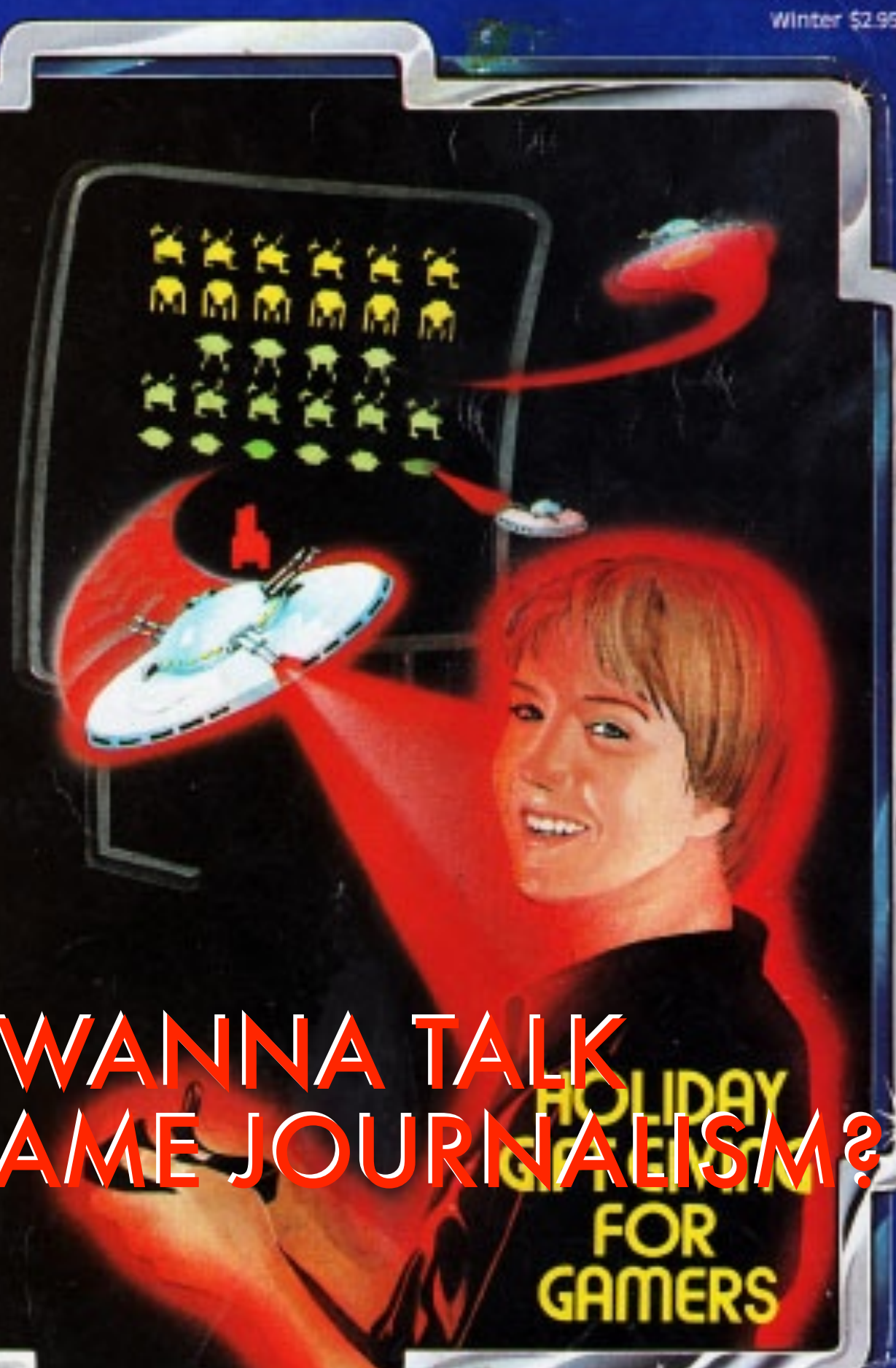
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6 TOUCHDOWN! YOU'RE THE COACH WITH ELECTRONIC FOOTBALL

SO, YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT GAME JOURNALISM?

HOLIDAY GIFT LIST FOR GAMERS



Reading the transcripts and screengrabs of various forums and IRC channels, I was blown away by the level of vitriol and delusion presented. There were the typical “This isn’t about feminism, it’s about Journalistic Ethics!” cries among the rape and murder threats towards Zoe Quinn and various other women in the industry. And among them was this post, written by Anonymous on Tuesday 02 Sep 2014 21:03:06 (Post No.261347782)

#GamerGate Mission statement

eliminate piss poor games “journalism” topics from race relations to sex/gender issues. Video-games are not real life and should not be treated as such.

Eliminate cronyism amongst game developers and journalist. Shit like paid reviews, promotions (mountain dewritos), and the promise of free games for positive press (or a 10/10 score) is dishonest and hurts gamers. Imagine being that kid who read all the fantastic press about superman 64 only to buy and realize the harsh reality.

Hold developers accountable for all types of dishonesty. Bullshots, pre-rendered trailers, running games on different hardware during preview, removing features from the final product and general bait and switch tactics.

Prevent censorship. If your game is fucking shit I will tell you and you will take that criticism like an adult instead of deleting it. Likewise, developers should be allowed to make the games they want without worry of censorship from outside forces. (SJWs)

stretch goal

stop corporate greed: yearly sequels with marginal changes, high price DCL for minimal content that should have been in the final product. Paid early access for broken messes of a game. Microtransactions. Paid online “services”

Have fun and enjoy videogames.

I am torn between taking apart these arguments one by one, or simply spitting venom all over the place. Instead, I want to talk about the history of Gaming Journalism, and of Gaming CUlture in general.

Video Game Journalism started in the 1970s.

Wait... let me go back a bit.

Video Games started in the 1950s. There were purpose-built gaming machines like NIMROD (which could be seen as the first “Gaming Console”) and there were programs written for early computers. Steve Russell wrote a game called SpaceWar for the PDP-1 in the early 1960s, and DEC embraced it, sent it along with the machine to installations as a testing program. If you could run Space-

Anonymous Tue 02 Sep 2014 20:47:42 (No. 261345556)

"Honestly think we are making a mistake by letting big right wingers take this up as an anti feminist cause and not an anti corruption cause.

this isn't about women and who they fuck, this is about collusion and inbreeding in games journalism and big right wing names like baldwin and kincannon and yiannopolos are going to damage the cause by making this a right/left feminist/muh soggynee debate.

They are taking control of the dialogue and we have to be extra vigilant in saying "NO THIS IS ABOUT GAMES JOURNALISM CORRUPTION" or the same shit is going to happen to us that happened to occupy."

War, your system was ready for prime time! A bunch of different games came out, text-based, early simple graphics games, even networked games. These all happened, pretty much within the realm of computer professionals, and a little within the education sector with systems like PLATO.

A few thousand people would have been exposed to video games by the early 1970s, when *PONG* debuted and the Arcade boomed into existence and started the ball rolling on what would become today's gaming culture. The first Gaming-based publications were things directed at retailers and arcade owners. Catalogs and professional association newsletters. These did not end up evolving into Video Game Journalism. These are still around today, in many forms.

At about the same time, we saw the rise of the Amateur Computer User newsletter. These would talk about technical details, typically hardware-based, but at the same time, they would feature reviews and instructions. Many of these were game-based, including things like how to use a microprocessor to create a game station, or just code for games. There were reviews of games and such as well. These were under the radar, and they were also the first stirrings of what would evolve into Gaming Fandom, though it was still well within the world of computers.

The 1980s come calling, and things really start changing. Computer magazines like *BYTE* and *Creative Computing* ran regular articles about gaming, as well as running game codes and other instructional stuff. Some general entertainment and electronics magazines started running video game columns. *Video*, a consumer electronics magazine, had a section written by Bill Kunkle, whose dear friends Arnie Katz and Joyce Worley Katz got together and started a magazine called *Electronic Games*. A wave of other gamer magazines hit at the same time – *Computer Gaming World* and *Atari Age* were big deals, as was *Electronic Fun with Computers & Games*. At the time of the 1983 Crash, there were a half-dozen gaming magazines; by 1988 there were almost twenty. A lot of them were not exactly huge hits, but all of them were a part of an ecosystem that supported them.

The big thing happened in 1988. Nintendo took the traditional idea of the House Organ, that is the newsletter that focuses on the company's products, and re-conceptualized it into the form of a video game

magazine. *Nintendo Power* and changed video game journalism entirely. It presented a very slick product, slicker than 90% of what was out there, and it provided news on what was the hottest system in the world at the time. Yeah, there were Japanese Gaming magazines that were glossier, and supposedly doing better actual journalism, but *Nintendo Power* was the BOSS as far as US Gaming magazines were concerned. This led to every other major gaming company getting into the magazine publishing game, and more than the way Atari did when they would put out their annual catalogs.

And there's the rub – *Nintendo Power*, as slanted as it was, was STILL journalism. It reported, and while with a singular view, it reported on what was going on with the most significant gaming company in the world at the time. We saw the rise of “Official” magazines, like *Official Xbox Magazine*, and *Official PlayStation magazine*, and these started to eat up a lot of sales. The release of a couple of other titles, notably *Electronic Gaming Monthly* (which was not related to *Electronic Games*) and what was Funco's *Game Informer*, which was a retailer's way of drumming up business. This led the reporting of the all but one of the most important Mags to be seriously questionable, as they were owned (controlled? Maybe...) by players with other interests. This isn't quite a conflict of interest, but the waters are muddy enough that a casual glance might not see the bottom.

The other side was the invention of User-generated 'journalism' in the later 1980s. There were fanzines dedicated to gaming in the 1980s, *Joystick Jolter* being the one that most often gets cited as being the first, but by 1990, there were many. In the early online world, we had USENET giving a space for gamers – alt.video-games, rec.games.video and various others. There were many, and I'm talking tens of thousands, of bulletin boards that dealt with games. Plus there were MUDs that were games that featured forums that often dealt with video games. SOME of this made it's way into the public eye. This was a very limited form, but there is no question that many of the people who first starting writing about games for USENET newsgroups and other more private forums ended up as major figures in games, and especially games journalism. When the World Wide Web came about, webzines, forums, and review sites all popped up. These can be seen as the most egalitarian of all the forms of game journalism, until you stop and think a minute. It is much easier to sway someone in New Jersey to like your product by reaching out and giving them swag and then boosting the signal if they liked your thing and quietly ignoring it if the review is negative. You can see this on Yelp! Today, as places that make offers to Yelpers tend to get higher ratings after they make the offer. This form of 'Citizen Journalism' is often trumpeted as what the internet was invented for, but if *Nintendo Power* problematic, so is anything that is player-centric other than word-of-mouth.

Now, is there cronyism in Gaming Journalism? Absolutely. Is there cronyism in all journalism? Absolutely. What's interesting in that Mission Statement is that it attacks a certain segment of criticism (the Social Justice Warrior, which I tend to think of as the Inclusion Crowd) and while it does make points that are particularly valid (paid reviews and the VaporDemo, for example), that's not what the

#gamergate crowd has been attacking. They've been attacking women, and games developed by women, then backtracking and saying "This is all about Journalistic Integrity".

The idea that this is all about journalistic integrity is far-fetched, but not absurd. Some of the folks who have been promoting the #gamergate hashtag really do believe that it is.

Then again, it obviously is more about gender issues.

If you look at the first statement - *eliminate piss poor games "journalism" topics from race relations to sex/gender issues. Videogames are not real life and should not be treated as such.* The problem with the entire #gamergate concept is in that statement. By mentioning Women's issues and race relations in the opening of their mission statement, THEY are making #gamergate all about race and gender. The argument that "Video Games Are Not Real Life" (hereby referred to as VGANRL, pronounced Vaginral) is perhaps the darkest. It means that nothing has any importance, it's all just a game. There's no reality, anything you do has no consequences; you can always re-start. You can literally say and do anything in the name of gaming and all it is is a game.

How dangerous is that thinking? How many people will be hurt because some idiot thinks that games should only be 'fun'? I am one of those people who believes games should be fun, and I also believe that there are many forms of fun. The danger in VGANRL is the application in the arena of discussing games, where anything goes, so long as you're talking about games. #gamergaters seem to believe that this covers threats and harassment.

Then again, Video Game Journalism is real life, you know. It's what a number of people do for a living. It's how a number of people interact with the world of gaming. This entire mess is the Real Life of many people, and #gamergate is distancing itself from the Sexism publicly, while putting out hatred semi-privately. The disgusting part is, if I read that manifesto with no context, I might agree with most of it. When you see what it grew out of, what it's being used as a cover for, it's terrible. There is a discussion that needs to be had about Gaming Journalism Reform, but that should have started with the Paid Reviews for the Xbox One, or one of the myriad other scandals that were discretely swept under the rug. Instead, it starts when it's convenient to be used as a tarp to cover misogynist attitudes and activities. The heat was building, no doubt, but it only became a fire when the Zoe Post happened, when a woman in gaming was brought to light in a way that was even tangential to the topic. It all exploded because there were feelings that were ready to ignite as soon as it served as a way to punish women. The ways that they are War-rooming, as is evidenced by the Chat logs, tells the story, and it's meaning - get the women out of gaming. Period.

The ultimate thing I can say about the way #gamergate is using the excuse of calling out Games Journalism to over itself is that it's not working, we see through it.

In other words, it's Not Your Shield.