

‘Fuck Game Studies’

Mahli-Ann Rakkomkaew Butt

University of Sydney
Sydney, Australia
mahli-ann.butt@sydney.edu.au

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ABSTRACT

‘A complaint: when we transform what we do not cope with into a protest at what we are supposed to cope with. Not coping: it can feel like a failure; you can feel like a failure. It can feel like you have lost the handle. Maybe we need to fly off the handle. And maybe not coping is an action. And maybe not coping is how we create a collective. That collective might be fragile but it is also feminist and furious.’

—Sarah Ahmed, 2018.

Situated in affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth 2010), this paper takes game studies itself as its subject of inquiry, including the survey reported by the DiGRA Diversity Working Group (Butt et al. 2018), and sheds light on its findings by putting forth the importance of anger as a timely pedagogical tool for transforming game studies. The paper converses with the question posted by DIGRA Australia ‘What’s Next?’, reflecting on the current state of the discipline, and concluding that there is a necessity for profanities. In the trend of two other thematically differing papers that also hold similarly affective responses, ‘Fuck Nuance’ (Healy 2017) and ‘Fuck Neoliberalism’ (Springer 2016), this paper presents and unpacks the provocation of ‘Fuck Game Studies’. ‘Fuck Game Studies’—not to ‘forget game studies’ (cf. Springer 2016, p.285) but passion for its transformation. Anger is to be unhappy about the state of affairs—a call for change.

Affect theory looks at the relationship powers ‘in-between’; the power to affect and be affected (Gregg & Seigworth 2010). Emotions, such as anger, are a potent expression of affect that has been captured and named. This paper uses the framework of affect theory to inspect a ‘rage against the discipline’ of game studies. In her evolving feminist thesis of ‘complaint as diversity work’, Sara Ahmed names ‘the moment you realise what you cannot do, that something has broken, a bond to an institution, or a belief that you can make an institution more accommodating’ as a ‘realisation snap’ (2018). For instance, when ‘coping’ with harassment is synonymous with the upkeep of academic ‘professionalism’, there is a snap in seeing the demands made by institutions as a silencing mechanism for the continued perpetration of harassment. There is a need to carve space for outward discontentment—even rage—when faced with structured which enforce practices of ‘coping’.

As a call for concern: in late 2018, it was announced that Steve Bannon was invited to speak as a keynote at the ‘Advances in Computer Entertainment Technology’ conference

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(ACE2018). Bannon served as former White House Chief Strategist to Donald Trump and as the editor of the far-right magazine Breitbart in 2014, leading the whip of the harassment campaign against women in games known as #gamergate (Pettit 2018; Matsakis 2018). How has an academic game studies conference invited someone whose policies are supported by white nationalists (Kaczynski & Massie 2016)? Gamergate remains to be ‘vicarious trauma’ (Ahmed 2018) for many in games and game studies. Gamergate remains to be an aggravated wound in which feminist research has been made a necessity for game studies (Humphrey 2017). Gamergate remains to be a wound, yet feminist research is primarily conducted by those who have been impacted by trauma and vicarious trauma.

This paper will raise the discussion of alienation in the field of game studies, with recognition of the precarity of academia and the heightened precarity of those who are further marginalised, and turns anger into a productive, transformative endeavor and political movement. The paper explores diversity initiatives and diversity work in game studies, such as reflecting on the published report of DiGRA’s Diversity Working Group survey, and the suggested best practices which require us to stay angry enough, long enough, to be implemented.

BIO

Mahli-Ann is a doctoral candidate at the University of Sydney. She is the diversity officer for DiGRA and the editor-in-chief of *Press Start Journal*.

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