Art Is Resistance: A Topology for Alternate Reality Games

Introduction

Since their emergence during the internet-enabled era of the late nineties and early noughties, alternate reality games (ARGs) have taken their place as a lesser-known and perhaps lesser-studied form of interactive story. Structurally, ARGs are a transmedia scavenger hunt with a narrative which aims to create the illusion that what the audience experiences is real. As a result, ARGs are often compared, conflated or connected to other forms of media which use a similar mechanic such as folk tales, augmented reality, escape rooms and interactive theatre. While those media present a valuable area of study, one of the most enduring associations ARGs have is with viral marketing. ARGs are, however, an evolving medium; their function and purpose has changed over time - ARGs of today are very different to those of the early noughties, which are in turn very different to the 'proto-ARGs' of the nineties. Beginning with a discourse analysis and moving into case study analysis, this paper is intended to work towards a topology of ARGs - how and why they have been deployed and how their form and use has evolved. A thread running through this text will be the connections between two entities that I propose made significant contributions to the current state of ARGs: the company 42 Entertainment and musical project Nine Inch Nails. This paper will be comprised of four sections, each using a period in the history of ARGs as a platform to discuss specific points. In preparation for the case study analysis, the first two sections will address some of the groundwork: the first section discusses the origin point for ARG design and the second examines the current state of affairs both theoretically and practically. Ultimately, however, the focus of this study is in the third and fourth sections,

which explore case studies relating to the evolution of ARGs during the nineties and noughties.

Describing ARGs: Definitions, Components and Ong's Hat

Before any analysis can take place, we must establish a definition of ARGs - to specify what exactly we are discussing. Before delving into theoretical perspectives, let us begin with a simple semantic breakdown. The broadest possible definition of 'alternate reality' could refer to any fictional world (a world that is not our own), but in this sense the word 'alternate' refers to a parallel reality, adjacent to 'real' reality. While they share a word in their name, ARGs are not traditional games - though of course, a firm and agreed-upon definition of 'game' is hard to find (though we may presume that it refers to a level of interactivity inherent in ARGs).

Instead, we might turn to those with specialist expertise. One of the most important and extensive attempts to define ARGs comes from David Szulborski, a developer-turned-scholar who worked on early ARGs of the commercial and independent variety. His positioning between the two spheres makes his perspective particularly valuable. Principally, he explains, ARGs use:

> "tools and methods that are already integrated parts of the player's everyday life. The pieces or components of alternate reality games are websites, e-mail messages, videos, Internet blogs, phone calls, and even real world interactions" (Szulborski, 2005, p.23)

Szulborski's description corroborates the more poetic proclamation of Sean Stewart (a veteran developer involved in key case studies examined later in this paper): ARGs are "how the digital age wants to tell stories" (Stewart, n.d.). While that statement does make some

sense, the truth is that ARGs often depend on analogue technology: the players themselves. Though the technology they interact with is often digital (as Szulborski pointed out), one might say that the distinguishing feature of ARGs is that they take place, at least partially, in a non-digital space.

In a sense, they are inversions of virtual reality texts - the colonisation of reality by virtual or imagined universes. Therefore, we might look to VR theory for some assistance. Though the technology has advanced substantially since then, an early approach was to define VR in terms of telepresence. Doing so "shifts the locus of VR from a particular hardware package to the perceptions of an individual [and] specifies the unit of analysis of VR - the individual - since VR consists of an individual experience of presence." (Steuer et al., 1992, p.9-10). A player does not step into the world of an ARG as they would into a videogame or immersive VR experience. Instead, they remain located in their world, which is then invaded by fictional elements.

To uncover clues to a mystery in a videogame, one might explore a virtual town, but in an ARG they would be required to explore their own town - or perhaps a location hundreds of miles away. Therefore, ARGs are often dependent on collaborative play - for example, if a player one country discovered a clue which could not be found in another, they could disseminate that information to other players internationally, utilizing the internet as a communication and organisational tool (O'Hara, Grian & Williams, 2008). Like modern marketing, ARGs make use of the virality of information - and the success of ARGs is often measured in the number of participants (Kim, Allen & Lee, 2008). Players can be classified by their varying levels of contribution to the progression of the narrative and are arguably indispensable to its structure (Dena, 2008).

One of most cited examples of an early alternate reality game is Joseph Matheny's *Ong's Hat* - sometimes called a 'proto' ARG. Presenting the history of ARGs, even as a short section in an essay, presents an academic challenge - as the nature of ARGs makes a publication date hard to pin down. This also complicates matters when trying to analyse ARGs because the content is often taken offline after the ARG is complete and not preserved publicly (Hansen et al., 2013). In the case of *Ong's Hat*, only the publication date of *The Incunabula Papers: Ong's Hat And Other Gateways to New Dimensions* (Matheny, 1999) - a compilation of the some of the written materials - is certain. In the aforementioned book, Matheny presents a collection of fictional papers he first posted to a private internet community (*The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link*) during the eighties. In effect, the ARG began almost a decade previously - seeded far before the documents were discovered and examined by the players. Matheny discussed his approach to the design:

> "Everybody would come at it from a different angle. It was not a zero-sum game. The whole thing was set up to be an infinite play, so different people would get different things out of its persistence." (as quoted in McMahon, 2013).

Although attempts have been made to create 'permanent' ARGs as *The Black Watchmen* (Alice & Smith, 2015) claims to be - or seasonal games like *Zombies, Run!* (Six To Start, 2012). Also of note is what might be called a static ARG, *notpron* (Münnich, 2004). But these examples begin to stray from conventional design. More commonly, ARGs are played within a preset (that is, that it ends on a certain real-world date) or limited timeframe (that is, that it ends on a certain event in the narrative). Additionally, players may need to complete individual time-sensitive objectives within the overall timespan.

Based on the qualities explored so far, the following proposal is a purposefully broad model for the constituent parts of an ARG. This model will frame the observations made in

the latter half of this essay: an ARG requires four key features, which can only work in concert - take one out and the text is no longer an ARG. Like all media, the most basic requirement is a world to exist in - and observers to witness it. ARGs need a **real world** in which players live so that the second element can intrude it: a **fictional world** or layer wherein information is hidden. The effect of this intrusion is that the lines between fiction and reality become blurred: the edge of the magic circle is unclear and the separation is unbreakable (as would be the case in a video game where a player can simply quit via a menu). This phenomenon could conceivably be called a **bridge** (Westwood, 2017). At the site (or sight) of this blurring, players notice and communicate with other players about the anomaly and investigate through collaborative means. The final component is **time**: after the two worlds have met, the experience follows; players explore the fictional world through their own until all (or most) information has been mined. This model excludes aesthetic and design components, such as the obfuscation of game mechanics (commonly referred to as 'This Is Not A Game'), physical items and actors/interactive theatre elements.

Situating ARGs: Status, Study, Practice and Discourse

Though the purpose of this paper is not to recount the full history of ARGs, a brief overview of past theory and practice will likely be helpful in our overall goal. Firstly, it must be said that ARGs are not a dead medium. At the time of writing, numerous ARGs are in progress - notably *The Black Watchmen*, *The Wilson Wolfe Affair* (Simulacra Games, 2017), *Cicada 3301* (creator/creators unknown, active since 2012). These examples typify the current generation of ARGs: they are independent affairs, organised by small teams without financial investment or ulterior motive. Critically, modern ARGs exhibit evolutionary changes - for example, *The Black Watchmen* involved a computer program digitally distributed through the

Steam platform; and *The Wilson Wolfe Affair* used Kickstarter as a marketing and funding tool.

Study of alternate reality games is limited, but not nonexistent. On the internet, academic/professional holdouts are rare - the International Game Developers Association (IGDA)-associated group Alternate Reality Game Special Interest Group (ARG SIG) maintained the site *ARGology* between 2008 and 2010. But since *ARGology* became defunct, games are more likely to be tracked, played and discussed by members of amateur online communities such as *ARGNet* (www.argn.com) and */r/ARG* (www.reddit.com/r/ARG). These small, specialist communities are regularly updated by fans pointing others to trailheads, discussing and playing ARGs. This is not to say there is no academic dialogue regarding ARGs - of course, there is substantial body of work by a myriad of authors over the past two decades. However, ARGs appear to have drifted into a separate sphere, grouped together with other "pervasive games [including] the massively collaborative problem-solving games [...], the location-based mobile games [...], the games augmenting the reality with ludic content [...] and the games staged with a combination of virtual and physical elements" (Montola, 2005, p.1). Additionally, many studies focus on practical applications of ARG mechanics to 'serious' or educational applications (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled & Nacke, 2011; Connolly, Stansfield & Hainey, 2011; Johnston, Massey & Marker-Hoffman, 2012). Research into these areas is promising, but implementation presents some challenges for institutions looking to capitalise on ARGs. For example, Whitton et. al (2008) suggest that universities looking to utilize ARG-like mechanics in their induction process may struggle to fulfill several requirements of ARG design: creative skills, strong narrative and achieving critical mass of players. Ultimately, the cost-effectiveness of practical ARGs is questionable.

A cursory glance at Google Trends data shows that, at least as a search term, ARGs have declined in popularity since the noughties. Due to its growth (Google Trends, 2017a), it could be speculated that the broader term 'transmedia narrative' has replaced the need for more specific terminology, but there is an undeniable history to the genre of ARGs.

Fig. 1: Google Trends data for 'alternate reality game' (Source: Google Trends (www.google.com/trends), 2017b)

However, the decline in searches does not necessarily condemn the medium and ARGs almost certainly predate Google. The high traffic during 2004-2008 can be explained by the existence of a small number of high-profile ARGs: *The Beast* (Warner Bros./Microsoft, 2001), *I Love Bees* (Microsoft/Bungie, 2004) and *Year Zero* (42 Entertainment, 2007). The former two were promotional ARGs for existing intellectual properties: Spielberg's *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001) and *Halo 2* (2004).

As with how individuals, through working at particular institutions, can come to represent that school of thought, a group of practitioners emerged as representatives for ARGs. Perhaps aptly, these alumni mostly stem from a single corporate entity: 42 Entertainment. Still operating, 42 Entertainment was formed by Jordan Weisman, along with other designers that worked on *The Beast* and *I Love Bees*. Most of its staff have moved onto smaller commercial projects, but their legacy has persisted - ARGs have struggled to shake their association with viral marketing. Despite their cost effectiveness (Hon, 2005), commercial involvement in ARGs collapsed, despite claims by executives that ARGs were to lay the groundwork for future franchises (Bonin, 2001). Perhaps ARGs were more valuable

as a milestone - a "sign that the entertainment industry [had] finally begun capitalizing on the ubiquity of the Internet." (Sieberg, 2001, n.p.).

Folk ARGs: *Broken* and *The Blair Witch Project*

Debuting in 1989 with the release of *Pretty Hate Machine*, Nine Inch Nails (NIN) is principally a post-industrial rock project led by Trent Reznor. During the nineties, NIN became synonymous with a counter-cultural "assault on decency" (Gilmore, 1997, p.1) and a move towards a darker, 'edgier' style of contemporary rock music later capitalised on by Reznor's protege, Marilyn Manson (Wright, 2000). Suffice to say, fans of the band were not mainstream music fans - so those that engaged with its output had a niche, special interest. Reznor built a lasting reputation for his musical project during the nineties: "one of the central reasons why this has happened is that Reznor has transformed his fans from being passive consumers of recordings and concerts into prosumers." (Cullen, 2008, p.254). While other moments in Reznor's career impacted this reputation, one of the earliest examples was his involvement in the film *Broken* (Christopherson, 1993). More importantly, *Broken* also represents an early example of Reznor's flirtation with blurring reality and fiction. The film was ostensibly a music-video-cum-snuff-film and as a result was not widely distributed due to its depiction of graphic and sexual violence. While the production remained within the confines of legality, it featured real torture of a performance artist, Bob Flanagan.

Fig. 2: A scene from *Broken* (Source: Christopherson, 1993)

Between censorship of the film by TV networks and a personal desire to avoid capitalising on shock value (Gilmore, 1997), Reznor chose not to release the film officially and instead personally leaked VHS copies to close friends as part of a canary trap (Reznor, 2004). Bootlegs circulated for more than a decade before the film was unofficially released on torrent sites by Reznor in 2006. In the intervening years, however, the film became a piece of cult media. Rob Sheridan, NIN's art director, spoke of the evanescent nature of the film, which he encountered as a fan, years before working with Reznor:

> "Kids today can't possibly appreciate the feeling of tracking down a rare video artifact, because everything now is a mere Google search away … [Broken] was never meant for searchable, on-demand access, never meant for the soft-hearted masses who put no effort into seeking it out." (as quoted in Grierson, 2017)

Broken is not an alternate reality game; it was not intended to be an interactive experience and was instead transformed post-release into the object of a scavenger hunt - a mechanical similarity it shares with ARGs, including and especially *Ong's Hat*. In a sense, the response to *Broken* is a microcosm of the mechanics involved in an ARG - namely, the way that the audience first approaches the text. Through it, we might gain some insight into how an ARG

functions. By requiring a level of audience interaction prior to viewing (that is, for the viewer to find a copy), *Broken* illustrates the difference between passive and active audience. The realistic, violent nature of the film, association with the Tate murders (as Reznor was at the time living in the house where the Manson Family killed Sharon Tate) and lack of availability meant that the film became known by reputation (a passive engagement) first, then the lack of immediate availability forced viewers to engage actively. It was not possible to encounter the film casually - it required investigation. A key difference is that *Broken* was released in an era that lacked the advanced speed of modern communication; true ARGs during the noughties benefited highly from the existence of the internet (Szulborski, 2005).

Ultimately, *Broken* is a film - or at least, a film with an unusual distribution method. Though its status as an urban legend makes it a valuable case study in relation to alternate reality fiction, it must be remembered that the video is comprised principally of music videos which saw official promotional release in the following years. Though conceived of as a narrative of its own, the film was meant to be a framing device for the songs:

> "What if we built a framework around these songs, what if we took an approach where it really was scary, instead of a cop out horror movie nod to the camera. What if it felt real?" - Trent Reznor (as quoted in Sword, 2014, n.p.)

The fact that a video - a linearly structured text which does not change upon repeated viewing - speaks to the transformative powers of ARGs. Rather than a passive experience, the film in fact *requires* an active viewership (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). In narrative theory, *Broken* can be understood as the kernel (the important part), surrounded by the satellites (the details of its release) (Chatman, 1978). More specifically, it can be thought of as an orphaned kernel (Dena, 2008) - lacking direct connections to hypertextual elements.

While there are other films which contributed more substantially to the growth of the phenomenon - namely such films as *Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato, 1979)*, Ginî piggu 2: Chiniku no hana* (Hino, 1985) - *Broken* participated in the creation of a genre modern audiences are familiar with: 'found footage' (Baron, 2013). *Broken* had a similar effect on potential audiences to the film that popularised found footage later that decade. *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick & Sánchez, 1999) used the same conceit - that the footage was documentary evidence of events that occurred in the real world. However, the creators of the feature film intentionally misled the public, ultimately, as a marketing ploy (Klein, 1999), setting a precedent for the years to come.

Artistic ARGs: *Year Zero* and Ludonarrative Alignment

In 2007 Nine Inch Nails, now well-established, released *Year Zero*. Naturally, upon the release of a CD full of music, the music press took *Year Zero* at face value; to most, the release was just that - music. But the involvement of 42 Entertainment (ARG veterans Jordan Weisman, Sean Stewart worked alongside Reznor and Rob Sheridan) in the project made it something else. *Year Zero*, Reznor claimed, was more than the music:

> "The term 'marketing' sure is a frustrating one for me at the moment. What you are now starting to experience is 'year zero.' It's not some kind of gimmick to get you to buy a record - it is the art form" (as quoted in Perrin, 2007, p.1)

Rolling Stone perhaps typified the public response, accurately describing *Year Zero* as "a concept album about an American police state, fifteen years in the future" (Sheffield, 2007, n.p.) but failed to make mention of the album-external content. Other publications made a note of the peculiar lead-up to the album release, describing "a sprawling hypertext scavenger

hunt aimed squarely at obsessives" (Dombal, 2007, n.p.). But for NIN's prosumers, the game began months earlier with a string of letters highlighted on a piece of merchandise spelling out the phrase 'I am trying to believe', which in turn led to a string of mysterious websites.
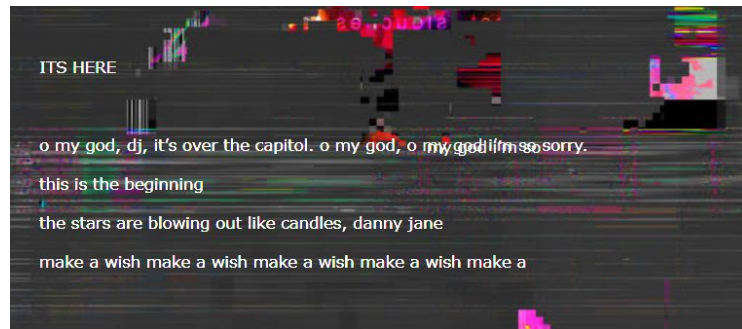

Fig. 3: A screenshot from the final *Year Zero* website. (Source: yearzero.netninja.com, 2017)

The tendrils of the ARG were impossible to miss, however: the disc itself provided clues through a thermal ink that, when warmed by the heat of a CD player, changed colour to reveal a string of numbers. Additionally, on the back of the CD release was a warning from the fictional 'United States Bureau of Morality' with a phone-number. Callers to that number were told by an automated system voice that by doing so, they and their family were implicitly pleading guilty to the consumption of anti-American media and had been flagged as potential militants. Even those that did not follow the ARG were made complicit.
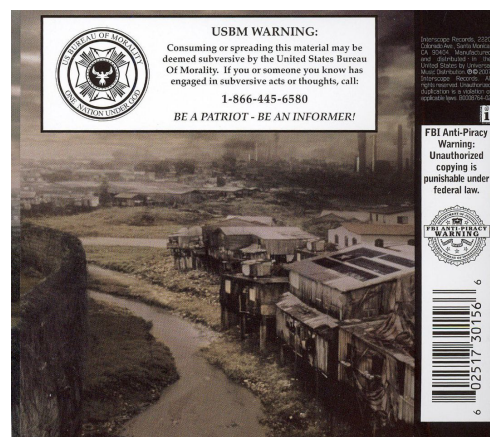

Fig. 4: The back cover of the *Year Zero* album
component. (Source: allmusic.com, 2017)

As mentioned previously, the structure of an ARG requires the real world to be invaded by fictional elements. *Year Zero* uses this structure as the backbone of its story. The narrative eventually explains the reason for its existence: the information accessed by players was sent back in time by a subversive group of scientists as part of an experiment with quantum computing, just prior to an apocalyptic event. Given the familiarity of the data (as websites, audio, images, etc), players were made to feel as if the future of their world was that of *Year Zero* (Sanneh, 2007). Thematically, the project explored the post-9/11 climate Bush fear/anxieties, tapping into the social anxieties of its 2007 audience (Wright, 2016). At one point, fans were viscerally pulled into the world of *Year Zero* when a NIN concert was ostensibly raided by a S.W.A.T. team.

The most significant feature of *Year Zero,* however, is that it was organised without help from Reznor's record label (Rose, 2007). This fundamental step was one of the key aspects of the ARG that set it apart from 42 Entertainment's previous work. Unlike *The Beast*, *I Love Bees* or other promotional ARGs made since the turn of the century, *Year Zero* marked a turn back towards the creator-focused origins of *Ong's Hat*. With the decline of ARGs as a popular phenomenon, the format found itself in a similar position to other interactive fiction formats - serving only a niche, independent audience, unsupported by big business.

Conclusions

From the case studies presented and explored in this essay, we can see that the application of consumer-facing ARGs has evolved over time, especially in the years following the initial 'boom'. In their earliest form, ARGs resembled carefully crafted folk tales - as was the case with *Ong's Hat* - they were cryptic, seemingly real mysteries. With the increased

connectivity of the internet at the disposal of more and more everyday people, these narratives gained a deeper level of interactivity. Naturally, this attracted the interest of early transmedia creators, writers, designers, scholars and, ultimately, commercial interests.

During the early 2000s, ARGs became a novel and effective strategy used to promote a variety of media. Most commonly, this was film - likely due to the cult success of early reality-blurring examples such as *Broken* and *The Blair Witch Project*. The latter provided a more attractive model for businesses because it was structured as a marketing campaign. Businesses could use audience participation to sustain interest in their products. Eventually, these narratives became far more successful after the injection of finance by companies such as Warner Brothers, Microsoft, Sony and others. Texts such as *The Beast* and *I Love Bees* generated enormous traffic. Ultimately, however, the ARGs themselves were overshadowed by the products they were meant to promote - respectively (to the aforementioned ARGs) *A.I: Artificial Intelligence* and *Halo 2*.

Year Zero represented an exception to this trend - though the *Year Zero* ARG surrounded a music album, it was inseparable - a part of the artistic intent of the album rather than an addition to it. Just as important was the design of *Year Zero* - as players were ludonarratively aligned with the player characters of the fiction. But since the turn of the decade, ARGs have become more niche and harder - at least financially - to produce in the same way they were in the noughties. The withdrawal of companies means that complex narratives are less common, but more creatively free. It seems that since their heyday, ARGs have remained in pursuit of what one contemporary practitioner spoke of:

> "...serious consideration - especially from independent developers - as a way to grow and distribute unique intellectual property. In the increasingly crowded gaming market, anything that makes a game stand out is essential, and alternate reality games can fulfill that goal in myriad ways." (Hon, 2005)

Perhaps through reexamining previous practice and implementing more progressive and expansive design, the ARG may rise again. Or perhaps it never went away.

Bibliography

Allmusic.com (2017) *Nine Inch Nails - Year Zero*. AllMusic. Available at:
https://www.allmusic.com/album/year-zero-mw0000746951 (Accessed 15 December 2017).

Baron, J. (2013) *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. New York, NY, USA: Routledge.

Bonin, L. (2001) *EW.com answers your burning questions about 'A.I.',* Entertainment Weekly. Available at:
http://www.ew.com/article/2001/07/10/ewcom-answers-your-burning-questions-about-ai/ (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Chatman, S. B. (1978) *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film.* Ithaca, NY, USA: Cornell University Press.

Connolly, T. M., Stansfield, M. and Hainey, T. (2011) *'An alternate reality game for language learning: ARGuing for multilingual motivation'*, Computers & Education. Pergamon, 57(1), pp. 1389–1415.

Cullen, J. (2008) *'Catalyzing Innovation and Knowledge Sharing: Librarian 2.0'*, Business Information Review, 25(4), pp. 253–258.

Dena, C. (2008) *'Emerging Participatory Culture Practices: Player-Created Tiers in Alternate Reality Games'*, Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies. Sage Publications UK: London, England, 14(1), pp. 41–57.

Deterding, S. et al. (2011) *'From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining "Gamification"'*, in MindTrek '11. Tampere, Finland: ACM, p. 7.

Dombal, R. (2007) *Nine Inch Nails: Year Zero Album Review,* Pitchfork. Available at:
https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/10125-year-zero/ (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Gilmore, M. (1997) *'Rolling Stone interviews Trent Reznor on David Lynch, The Downward Spiral, Hootie and the Blowfish'*, Rolling Stone, March. Available at:
http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/trent-reznor-death-to-hootie-19970306 (Accessed 15 December 2017).

Grierson, T. (2017) *Nine Inch Nails' 'Broken' Movie: Story Behind Infamous Viral VHS 'Snuff Film'*, Revolver. Available at:
https://www.revolvermag.com/culture/nine-inch-nails-broken-movie-story-behind-infamous-viral-vhs-snuff-film (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Google Trends - Transmedia storytelling (2017) Google Trends. Available at:
https://trends.google.co.uk/trends/explore?date=all&q=%2Fm%2F02qnxr8
(Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Google Trends - Alternate Reality Game (2017) Google Trends. Available at:
https://trends.google.co.uk/trends/explore?date=all&q=alternate reality game
(Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Hansen, D. et al. (2013) *'Designing Reusable Alternate Reality Games'*, in CHI 2013:
Changing Perspectives. Paris, France: ACM, p. 10.

Hon, A. (2005) *The Rise of ARGs*, Gamasutra. Available at:
https://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/130713/the_rise_of_args.php (Accessed: 15
December 2017).

Johnston, J. D., Massey, A. P. and Marker-Hoffman, R. L. (2012) *'Using an Alternate Reality
Game to Increase Physical Activity and Decrease Obesity Risk of College Students'*,
Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology, 6(4).

Kim, J. Y., Allen, J. P. and Lee, E. (2008) '*Alternate Reality Gaming'*, Communications Of
The ACM, 51(2), p. 7.

Lowery, S. and DeFleur, M. L. (1995) *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media
Effects*. 3rd edn. New York, NY, USA: Longman Publishers USA.

Matheny, J. (1999) *The Incunabula Papers: Ong's Hat and other Gateways to New
Dimensions*. 3rd edn. Project Gutenberg Self-Publishing Press.

McMahon, C. (2013) *'This Is Not A Game: Rise Of The ARG'*, GamesTM, May, pp. 88–93.

NetNinja (2017) *Y0 Resources.* NetNinja.com Available at: http://yearzero.netninja.com/
(Accessed: 15 December 2017)

O'Hara, K., Grian, H. and Williams, J. (2008) *'Participation, collaboration and
spectatorship in an alternate reality game',* in Proceedings of the 20th Australasian
Conference on Computer-Human Interaction Designing for Habitus and Habitat -
OZCHI '08. New York, New York, USA: ACM Press, p. 130.

Perrin, R. (2007) '*Crowdsourcing To Victory - Art Is Resistance'*, The Escapist Magazine,
September, p. 2. Available at:
http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/issues/issue_115/1956-
Art-is-Resistance (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Reznor, T. (2004) NIN.com Access. Available at:
https://web.archive.org/web/20070518160934/http://www.nin.com/access/5_07_04/in
dex.asp (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Sanneh, K. (2007) '*Flirting With Dystopia, Experimenting With Noise*', The New York Times, April, p. E1. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/17/arts/music/17nine.html?ref=music (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Sheffield, R. (2007) *Nine Inch Nails: Year Zero*, Rolling Stone. Available at: http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/year-zero-20070503 (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Sieberg, D. (2001) *Reality blurs, hype builds with Web 'A.I.' game*, CNN. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20081211095140/http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/coming.attractions/stories/aibuzz.html (Accessed: 15 December 2016).

Stewart, S. (no date) *The Beast (a.k.a. The A.I. Web Game)*, seanstewart.org. Available at: http://www.seanstewart.org/the-beast-2001-a-k-a-the-a-i-web-game/ (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Sword, H. (2014) *Trent Reznor On Coil and Nine Inch Nails, Plus Recoiled Review*, The Quietus. Available at: http://thequietus.com/articles/14600-trent-reznor-interview-coil-nine-inch-nails (Accessed: 15 December 2017).

Szulborski, D. (2005) *This is Not a Game: A Guide to Alternate Reality Gaming*. Seattle, WA, USA: Incunabula.

Westwood, A., 2017, *Pervasive Narratives: Bridging Reality And Fiction* [unpublished work].

Whitton, N. et al. (2008) '*Innovative Induction with Alternate Reality Games*', in Conolly, T. and Stansfield, M. (eds) Proceedings of the second European conference on game-based learning. Barcelona, Spain: Academic Publishing Limited, pp. 499–506.

Wright, K. (2016) '*Nine Inch Nails' Year Zero and the Biopolitics of Media Convergence*', in Flota, B. (ed.) The Politics of Post-9/11 Music: Sound, Trauma, and the Music Industry in the Time of Terror. New York, NY, USA: Routledge, p. 232.

Wright, R. (2000) '*'I'd Sell You Suicide': Pop Music and Moral Panic in the Age of Marilyn Manson*', Popular Music, 19(3), pp. 365–385.

Ludography

42 Entertainment (2007). *Year Zero.*

Alice & Smith (2015). *The Black Watchmen*.

Cicada 3301 Group (ca. 2012). *Cicada 3301*.

Bungie Studios (2004). *Halo 2*.

Microsoft/Bungie (2004). *I Love Bees.*

Münnich, D (2004). *Notpron.*

Simulacra Games (2017). *The Wilson Wolfe Affair.*

Six To Start (2012). *Zombies, Run!.*

Warner Bros./Microsoft (2001). *The Beast.*

Filmography

A.I. Artificial Intelligence, 2001. [Film] Directed by Steven Spielberg. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

The Blair Witch Project, 1999. [Film] Directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez. USA: Artisan Entertainment.

Broken, 1994. [Film] Directed by Peter Christopherson. USA.

Cannibal Holocaust, 1980. [Film] Directed by Ruggero Deodato. Italy: United Artists Europa.

Ginî piggu 2: Chiniku no hana, 1985. [Film] Directed by Hideshi Hino. Japan: Sai Enterprise.