

Social:

The Ethics of Pervasive Games

Mobile and Ubiquitous Games

ICS 163

Donald J. Patterson

Content adapted from:

Pervasive Games: Theory and Design

Experiences on the Boundary between Life and Play



Introduction

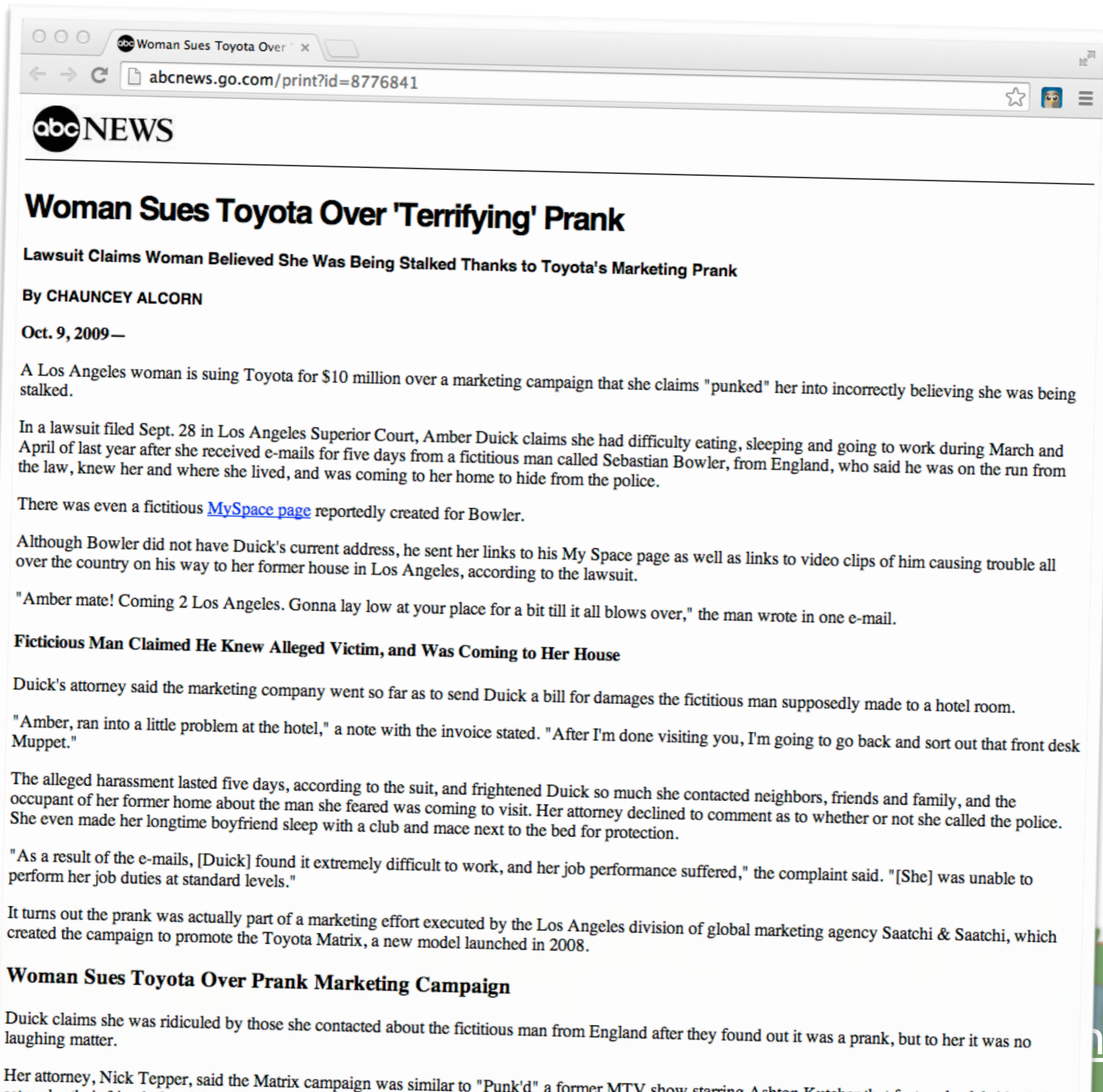
- Your Other You
 - 2009 Campaign by Toyota (Saatchi & Saatchi) to market the Matrix



Introduction: Your Other You

- YourOtherYou is a unique interactive experience enabling consumers to play extravagant pranks. Simply input a little info about a friend (phone, address, etc.) and we'll then use it, without their knowledge, to freak them out through a series of dynamically personalized phone calls, texts, emails and videos. First, one of five virtual lunatics will contact your friend. They will seem to know them intimately, and tell them that they are driving cross-country to visit. It all goes downhill from there. The Matrix integrates seamlessly into the experience and you can follow the progress of your prank in real-time online. Each piece of the campaign assures that the experience is as Google-proof as possible.

Introduction: Your Other You



The image is a screenshot of a web browser displaying an ABC News article. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'abcnews.go.com/print?id=8776841'. The ABC News logo is visible at the top left of the page. The article title is 'Woman Sues Toyota Over 'Terrifying' Prank'. Below the title is a subtitle: 'Lawsuit Claims Woman Believed She Was Being Stalked Thanks to Toyota's Marketing Prank'. The author is listed as 'By CHAUNCEY ALCORN' and the date is 'Oct. 9, 2009'. The article text describes a lawsuit filed by a woman named Amber Duick against Toyota, claiming she was stalked by a fictitious man named Sebastian Bowler. The text mentions that Duick's attorney said the marketing company went so far as to send her a bill for damages. The article also notes that the prank was part of a marketing effort for the Toyota Matrix. The bottom of the image shows a stylized city skyline graphic.

abc NEWS

Woman Sues Toyota Over 'Terrifying' Prank

Lawsuit Claims Woman Believed She Was Being Stalked Thanks to Toyota's Marketing Prank

By CHAUNCEY ALCORN

Oct. 9, 2009 —

A Los Angeles woman is suing Toyota for \$10 million over a marketing campaign that she claims "punked" her into incorrectly believing she was being stalked.

In a lawsuit filed Sept. 28 in Los Angeles Superior Court, Amber Duick claims she had difficulty eating, sleeping and going to work during March and April of last year after she received e-mails for five days from a fictitious man called Sebastian Bowler, from England, who said he was on the run from the law, knew her and where she lived, and was coming to her home to hide from the police.

There was even a fictitious [MySpace page](#) reportedly created for Bowler.

Although Bowler did not have Duick's current address, he sent her links to his My Space page as well as links to video clips of him causing trouble all over the country on his way to her former house in Los Angeles, according to the lawsuit.

"Amber mate! Coming 2 Los Angeles. Gonna lay low at your place for a bit till it all blows over," the man wrote in one e-mail.

Fictitious Man Claimed He Knew Alleged Victim, and Was Coming to Her House

Duick's attorney said the marketing company went so far as to send Duick a bill for damages the fictitious man supposedly made to a hotel room.

"Amber, ran into a little problem at the hotel," a note with the invoice stated. "After I'm done visiting you, I'm going to go back and sort out that front desk Muppet."

The alleged harassment lasted five days, according to the suit, and frightened Duick so much she contacted neighbors, friends and family, and the occupant of her former home about the man she feared was coming to visit. Her attorney declined to comment as to whether or not she called the police. She even made her longtime boyfriend sleep with a club and mace next to the bed for protection.

"As a result of the e-mails, [Duick] found it extremely difficult to work, and her job performance suffered," the complaint said. "[She] was unable to perform her job duties at standard levels."

It turns out the prank was actually part of a marketing effort executed by the Los Angeles division of global marketing agency Saatchi & Saatchi, which created the campaign to promote the Toyota Matrix, a new model launched in 2008.

Woman Sues Toyota Over Prank Marketing Campaign

Duick claims she was ridiculed by those she contacted about the fictitious man from England after they found out it was a prank, but to her it was no laughing matter.

Her attorney, Nick Tepper, said the Matrix campaign was similar to "Punk'd" a former MTV show starring Ashton Kutcher.

Introduction: Your Other You

TOYOTA MATRIX YOUR OTHER YOU

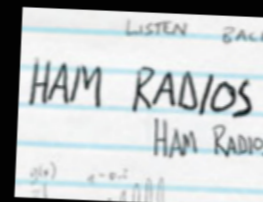
YourOtherYou is a unique interactive experience enabling consumers to play extravagant pranks. Simply input a little info about a friend (phone, address, etc.) and we'll then use it, without their knowledge, to freak them out through a series of dynamically personalized phone calls, texts, emails and videos. First, one of five virtual lunatics will contact your friend. They will seem to know them intimately, and tell them that they are driving cross-country to visit. It all goes downhill from there. The Matrix integrates seamlessly into the experience and you can follow the progress of your prank in real-time online. Each piece of the campaign assures that the experience is as Google-proof as possible.

YOUROTHERYOU.COM



Banners

A series of bizarre banners referencing different elements within the game were created to surprise viewers and ultimately drive traffic to the site.



Video Banners

Videos from each character ran as pre and post-roll on a variety of niche sites such as Adult Swim and IFC. They were also syndicated on sites like YouTube.com, heavy.com, spike, ebaumsworld and funnyordie.com, generating millions of views to date.



Saatchi & Saatchi

The Ethics of Pervasive Games

- Player Ethics
- Ethics and Unaware Participation
- Case Study: Vem Gråter
- Pervasive Games and Society



Social: Ethics

- The idea of a clearly delineated magic circle help to mark different social rules that everyone is expected to understand

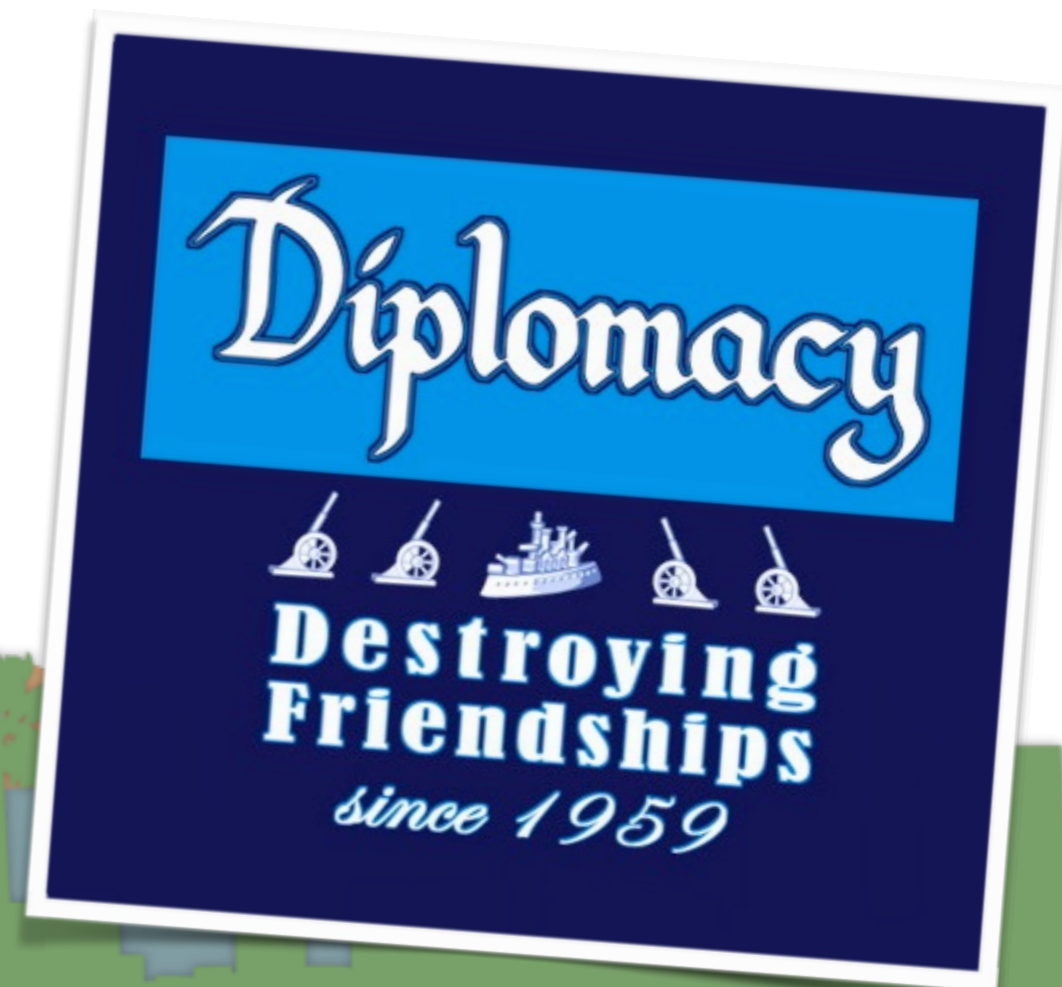


- But pervasive games blur the magic circle, making appropriate play complicated



Social: Ethics

- Within the magic circle you get to do things that would otherwise not be allowed
- You are freed from consequences
 - sort of
- **ludic markers** delineate the circle



Social: Ethics

- “The game of Diplomacy I won, I won through an enforceable side contract (which lost me a friend and got me some accusations of cheating, but this is par for the course for a good Diplomacy game). I was Britain; my friend H was France. H and I knew each other from an medieval times role-playing game, in which we both held land and money. The medieval kingdom of this game had a law on the books that any oath witnessed by a noble was binding on both parties and would be enforced by the king. So H and I went into our role-playing game and swore an oath before a cooperative noble, declaring that we would both aid each other in a permanent alliance in Diplomacy, or else all our in-game lands and titles would be forfeit.”



Social: Ethics

- Usually social norms are negotiated through various mechanisms
 - laws
 - politics / history
 - stories
 - taking action
- In secretive pervasive games, not everyone knows what's going on and can't participate in establishing norms



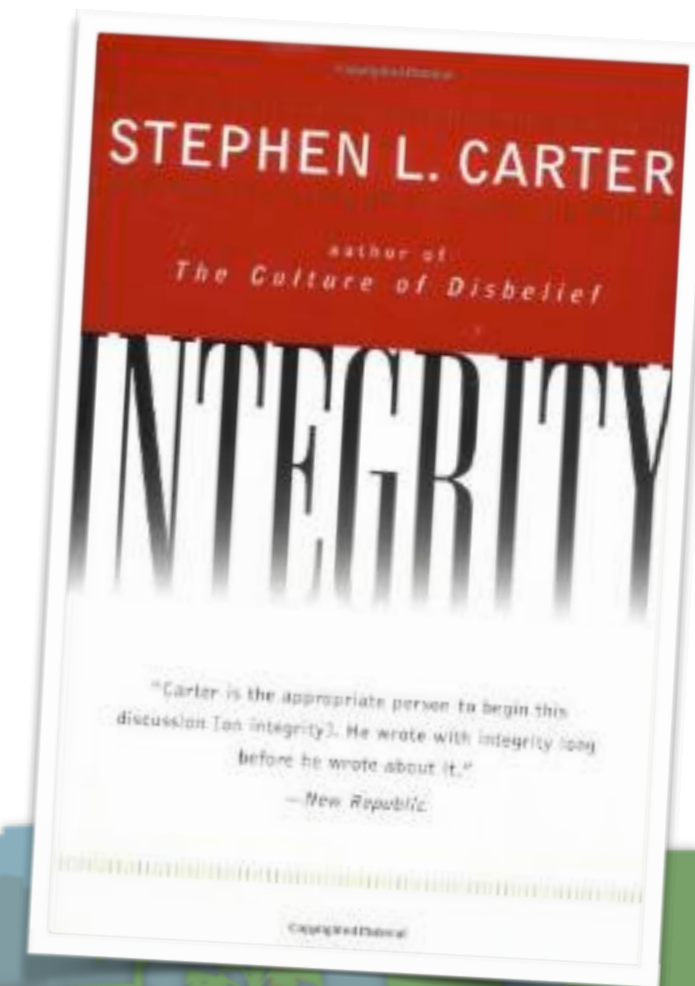
Social: Ethics: Player Ethics

- **transgressive communities**
 - communities that transgress norms (typically laws)
- ethics and laws aren't necessarily in alignment
 - but you break the law at great risk
 - Martin Luther King Jr. argued that you have a moral obligation to break unjust laws
 - Some "games" express this
- Quote from Ninjalicious
- "dignity"



Social: Ethics: Player Ethics

- As a player, you need to have a clear sense of your ethics, so that when you come to legal and ethical boundaries you maintain your integrity.
- Integrity
 - Thinking about what is right and wrong
 - Acting on what is right
 - Telling others why you have done so



Social: Ethics: Obfuscation of Consequences

- It is difficult on pervasive games to understand consequences of actions
- Two worlds
 - ordinary world
 - game world
- It is difficult to be ethical without understanding the consequences
- It is irresponsible to deliberately impair your ability to understand consequences of actions (e.g., getting high)



Social: Ethics: Obfuscation of Consequences

- When could it be difficult to understand the consequences of a game action?



Social: Ethics: Division of Accountability

- If Game Masters are deliberately blurring the magic circle
- If Players knowingly enter into the illusion
- Who is responsible for ordinary world consequences?



Social: Ethics: Division of Accountability

- Wanderer
 - parkour inspired GPS game
 - You travel at constant speeds in the direction indicated by the game.
 - You get points if you turn when told to turn (randomly)

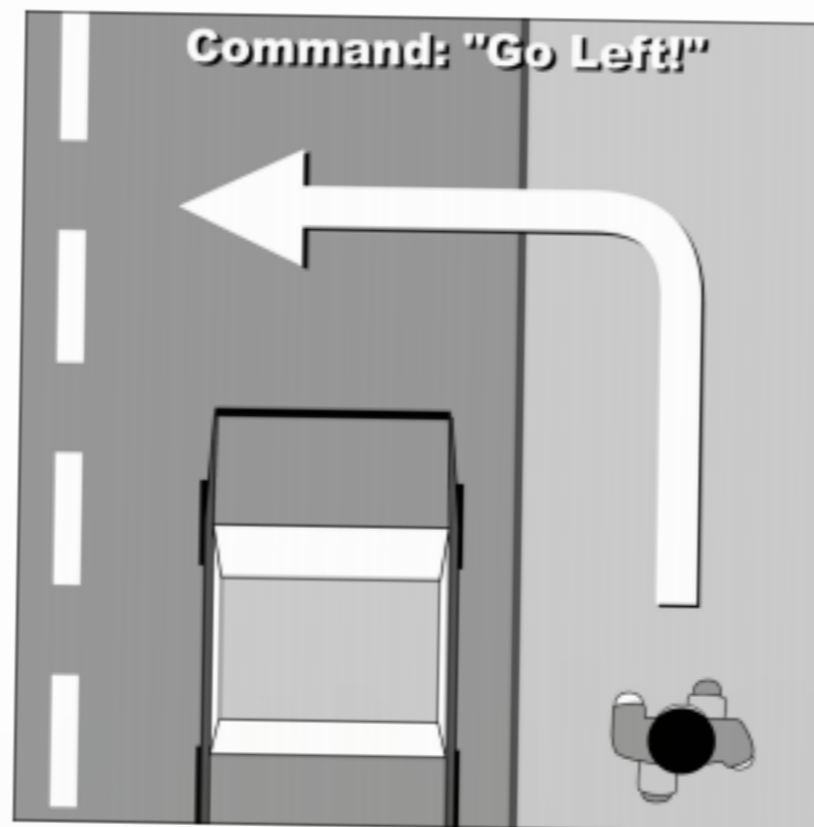


Fig. 3. The player gets the command "Go left!". Because a parked car blocks his way, he first has to run forward and then to the left. If he fails to do this within the given time limitation one credit is lost. This example shows how real objects become obstacles in the game space

Social: Ethics: Player Consent

- Many games require players to give up privacy
 - surveillance, etc.
- Ethical considerations suggest that players should consent
- But if players are told everything that is going to happen, the game can be ruined
 - If you know that things are triggered based on heart rate, then the mystery is gone
- How can you provide consent for unknown game structures?



Social: Ethics: Player Consent

- Even “consenting” may not be sufficient
 - If you don’t understand the implications, then it isn’t “informed consent”
- Mitigating strategies
 - Game Master hotline
 - safe words
 - clear out-of-game locations (headquarters)



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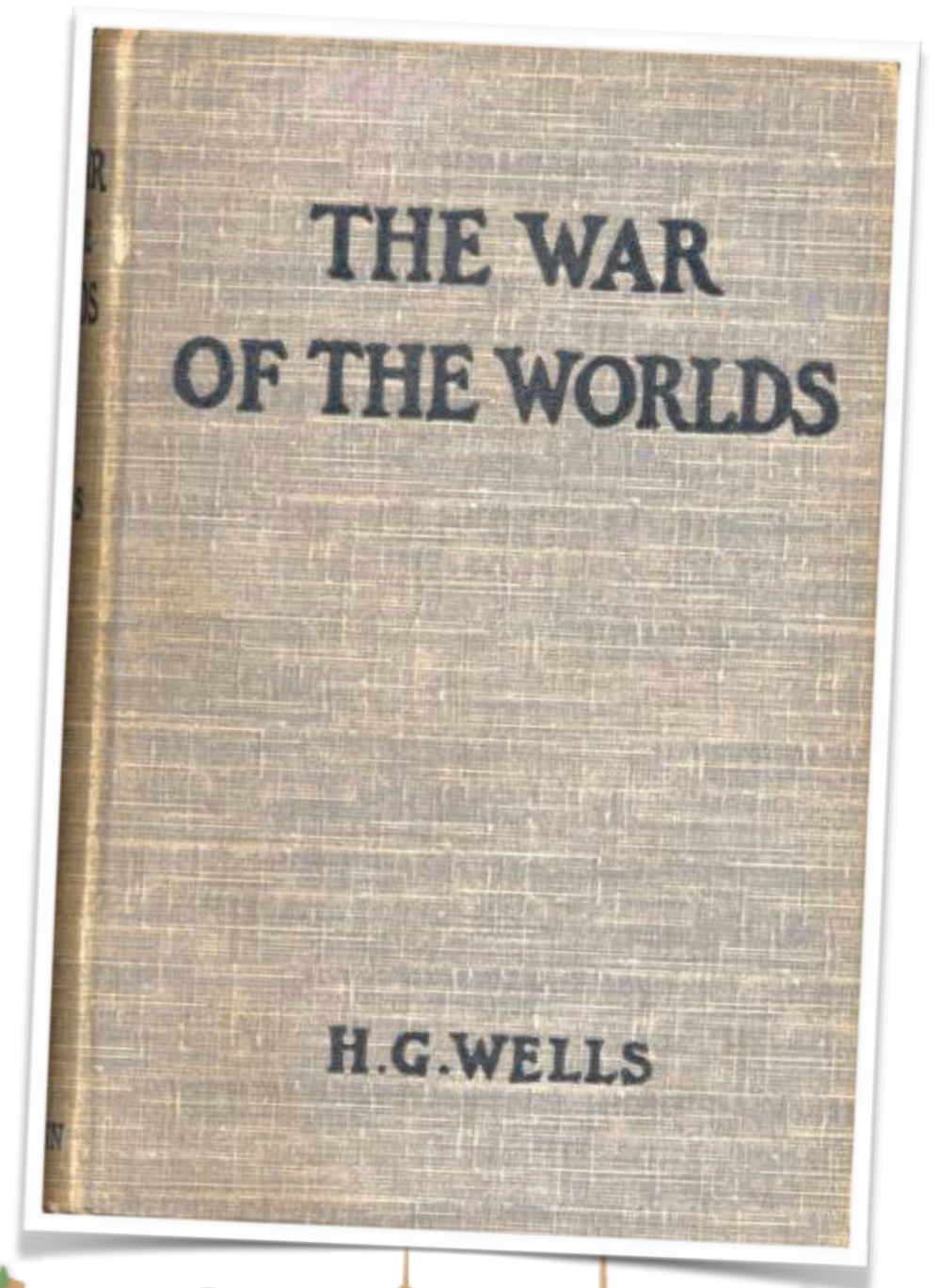
Social: Ethics: Unaware Participation

- People who aren't playing *are* participating
- Mitigation:
 - Secret life strategy: You are your ordinary self, but you also have a secret double identity
 - Limits design space
- This is most problematic when games stage disturbing scenes
 - fake murders
 - fake kidnappings



Social: Ethics: Unaware Participation

- People who aren't playing *are* participating
- Mitigation:
 - Clear ludic markers:
 - Costumes
 - Video cameras
 - Sometimes this isn't enough:
 - "War of the Worlds" radio



Social: Ethics: Unaware Participation

- Offenses, Harms and Nuisances caused by games
 - **Offenses:**
 - Sensory irritation
 - Bad manners
 - Contempt for other people
 - Indecency
 - **Harmful vs. Nuisance**
 - “lasting setback to one’s assets”
 - Consider “**risk**” as well
 - DUI for example



Social: Ethics: Unaware Participation

- Invitations
 - Socially expanded games invite non-players to move from participation to playing
 - Watch
 - Help
 - Referee
 - Play
 - Can you refuse to play?
 - Is that refusal meaningful? (do you have to repeat?)



Social: Ethics: Unaware Participation

- Invasions
 - Not everyone *can* refuse
 - Emergency personnel
 - Maintenance staff
 - Someone is always responsible for maintaining order
 - If a non-player calls about being afraid of a LARP
 - there was no refusal possible
- Mitigation
 - Tell authorities before hand



Social: Ethics: Unaware Participation

- Invasions
 - Sometimes invasion is the point
 - Surprise birthday party
 - Political statement
 - Artistic game



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Case: Vem gråter

- ➡ Being a reality game, *Vem gråter* was not a game at all, but rather a piece of fabricated reality closer to candid camera – the participants of the game were not aware that the events portrayed were ludic or designed. It created a series of events with hidden clues allowing the participants to dig deeper into the mystery, a ghost story based on historic events. A set of staged paranormal events was carried out at the university, including a tape recorder hidden in a ventilation shaft, sending out sounds of a crying child, a tower of furniture built overnight, and coal scribbles on a wall. The installations were staged late in the evenings when the premises were relatively empty. The game also featured an actor pretending to be an occult investigator, fabricated web sites, announcements at university bulletin boards and a set of hidden clues around the town intended for the people solving the riddle. In practice *Vem gråter* went haywire, since the people encountering it (mainly the maintenance staff at the school) considered it rather as vandalism than a poltergeist mystery. It also demonstrated the unsuitability of horror themes in games that might occasionally not be recognized as games. (for more info, see Montola et al 2006)



Social: Ethics: Case Study

- Was it:
 - a cool mystery puzzle
 - pranks and vandalism
 - an actual crazy guy wandering around campus
 - real, the ghosts were real the university was haunted



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Social: Ethics: Games and Society

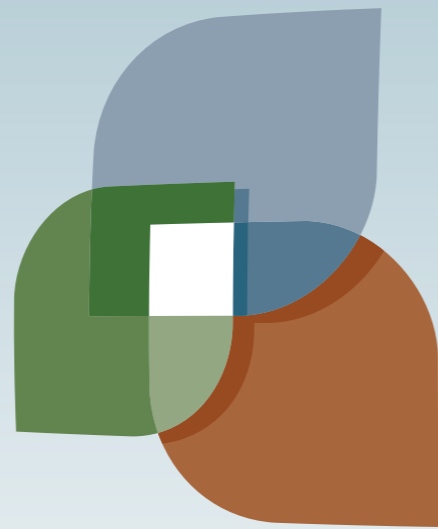
- Societal Context of Play
 - Where a game is played, when a game is played matters
 - pre / post 9/11
 - Momentum's technomagical demonstration
 - Abstract tours vandalism



Social: Ethics: Games as Art

- Games as Art: Banksy





L U C I

