

VIRTUAL WORLDS AND AVATARS



WRATH



TRANSCENDENCE



TEN STORMS



STORMRAGE



NETHERWIND



NEMESIS



JUDGEMENT



DRAGONSTALKER



BLOODFANG



CYBERSPACE // MEDIA SPACE

- The term cyberspace derives from cybernetics (Nobert Wiener, 1947): “the science of control and communications in the animal and machine.”
- The cyberspace is a cultural form. Both the organization of space and its use to represent or visualize things have always been a fundamental part of human culture.
- Spatial constructions in new media draw on existing traditions (geography, art, architecture), but they are also fundamentally different in one key respect. For the first time, space becomes a media type, such as audio, video, text, etc.
- It can be now instantly transmitted, stored and retrieved, compressed, reformatted, streamed, filtered, computed, programmed and interacted with.

EXAMPLES OF EARLY CYBER/VIRTUAL SPACES

- Aspen Movie Map (1978)
 - The first interactive virtual navigable space - a sort of primitive Google Street View which you could drive through the streets of Aspen, Colorado.
- Legible City (1988-91)
 - Virtual space not tied to the simulation of physical reality: it is an imaginary city based on a real city (Amsterdam) made from 3D letters in which you can bike through.
- Osmose (1995)
 - Slow and cinematic environment controlled by the user's breath (scuba diving)

CYBER SPACES / VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

- MUD - Multi-User Dungeons - *LambMOO*
- IRC - Internet Relay Chat - mIRC/Chat rooms
- RPG - Role-Play Game - *Dungeons & Dragons*
- MMO - Massive Multiplayer Online - Second Life
- MMORPG - Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Play Game - World of Warcraft
- LBMG - Location-based Mobile Games - Foursquare
- VRG - Virtual Reality Game - Adr1ft
- ARG - Augmented Reality Game- Pokemon Go
- 360 Video - New York Times
- Social Media - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

MUD - LAMB DAMOO

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Telnet british-legends.com
*η
Path.
You are standing on a path which leads off a road to the north, to a cottage
south of you. To the west and east are separate gardens.
*η
Flower garden.
You are in a well-kept garden. There is an unexpectedly sweet smell here, and
you notice lots of flowers. To the east across a path there is more garden.
*η
Cliff.
You are standing on the edge of a cliff surrounded by forest to the north and
a river to the south. A chill wind blows up the unclimbable and unscaled
heights. At the base of the cliff you can just make out the shapes of jagged
rocks.
*η
As you approach the edge of the cliff the rock starts to crumble. Hurriedly,
you retreat as you feel the ground begin to give way under your feet!
*leap
You are splattered over a very large area, or at least most of you
is. The rest of your remains are, evn now, being eaten by the seagulls
(especially your eyes). If you'd have looked properly before you leaped you
might have decieded not to jump!
Persona updated.
Would you like to play again?
:
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VIRTUAL REALITY

> Why we talk about virtual as opposed to real? _

> Is virtual reality less real than 'real'? _

> _

POST-MODERN NARRATIVE – THE SECOND SELF

- These virtual worlds are authored by their players, thousands of people in all, often hundreds of people at a time, all logged on from different places.
- The self is not only decentered but multiplied without limit. There is an unparalleled opportunity to play with one's identity and to "try out" new ones.
- Engagement with computational technology facilitates a series of "second chances"
 - to work and rework unresolved personal issues and more generally
 - to think through questions about the nature of self, including questions about definitions of life, intentionality, and intelligence.
- The medium enables the self to explore a social context as well as to reflect on its own nature and powers.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

- RPGs usually have a negative image being portrayed as depressing and dangerous environments. Many academics wrongly argues that games are a place for escape the real life. (the same argument was used for television and movies in the past.
- Turkle argues that RPG can serve as identity workshops
 - E.g.: a 19-year-old girl that was able to resolve personal issues through the game (put herself in somebody's else shoes).
- RPG are able to serve in this evocative capacity precisely because they are not simple escapes from the real to the unreal, but because they stand both in and not in real life.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES – NOT A GAME

- Virtual worlds are not just a game. They do not have a strict goal and work similarly to social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).
- They become not so much an alternative, but a parallel life.



YOU ARE WHO YOU PRETEND TO BE

> How many here tried to experience a different self in real life?

... Change the way you dress, speak, your gender, psychological traits...

> Virtual worlds provide environments for experiences that may be hard to come by in the real world.

> How many here tried to experience a different self in a virtual world?

FREE YOURSELF

- Ongoing: It never ends. There are always people logged on to the game; there is always someone to talk to or something to do.
- Anonymity: The character does not need to have its gender or share any recognizable feature with the player. The degree to which the player brings the game into his real life is their choice.
- Invisibility: The character can have any physical description and will be responded to in function of that description.
- Multiplicity: Several characters, playing out and playing with different aspects of the self.



THE VIRTUAL SELF

- Virtual communities such as MUD and MMORPG are the most dramatic example of the way the culture of simulation challenges traditional notions of human identity.
- Identity, after all, literally means one. When we live through our electronic self-representations we have unlimited possibilities to be many.
- The very notion of an inner, "true self" is called into question.



COSPLAY - WHEN THE ALT-SELF BECOME YOURSELF.



VIRTUAL WORLDS PROVOKE SELF-REFLECTION

- Turkle calls the virtual reality constructed by computers an evocative object because it provokes self-reflection and stimulates critical thinking. It led to reevaluations and reconsiderations of things taken for granted, for example, about the nature of intelligence, free will, and our notions of what is alive. Eg.:
- “Gender-swapping” in virtual reality, whereby men may play the roles of women and women the roles of men.
- Gun ownership
- Democratic Participation
- Hacking: Dibbell’s “A Rape in Cyberspace”



AI & BOTS

- Virtual reality is not "real," but it has a relationship to the real. By being betwixt and between, it becomes a play space for thinking about the real world.
- When people meet a bot or AI they often grant them a "sort of" intelligence — smartness, indeed a "sort of" life. But we insist that they lack human essence (cognition, uniqueness, soul, etc.). Computers cannot have intentions, feelings, the sense of an "I". We don't see them as humans.
 - Siri and Cortana are just a voice
 - They are made of artificial material.



UNCANNY VALLEY

- The uncanny valley is the hypothesis that human replicas which appear almost, but not exactly, like real human beings elicit feelings of strangeness and repulsion.
- Examples can be found in robotics, 3D computer animations, and lifelike dolls among others.



➤ *Tin Toy (Pixar, 1988)*



➤ *Mass Effect 3 (Bioware, 2012)*

AI ENCOUNTERS

- > It is not uncommon now for us to find ourselves in conversations with AIs.
- > The "thingness" of the bots is not part of your initial encounter or the establishment of your relationship with them.
- > You have unintentionally played out a Turing test in which the program has won.
- > We can start to wondering if an AI should or should not be required to announce their artificiality. What do you think?
- > But then, with people playing robots, there is a new level of self-consciousness about the asymmetry of demanding that robots not play people.



AVATAR FASHION SHOW
