

Hamlet on the Holodeck



The Future of Narrative Cyberspace by
Janet Murray, 1997

Chapter 3 : From Additive to Expressive Form

Unique properties of film:

- The way the camera moves
- The way the lens opens, close and change focus
- The way the celluloid processed light
- The way the strips of film could be cut up and reassembled



Photoplays



ELIZA Comes to Life

In 1966, Joseph Weizenbaum, a professor at MIT created a computer program called ELIZA.

- replies to typed in statements
- was a Rogerian therapist
- echoes back the concerns of the patient without interpretation
- displays interest in topics like sex and family



Digital Environments are Procedural

Procedural means relating to an established or official way of doing something.

Computers are engines. It was designed to embody complex behaviors. To be a computer scientist is to think in terms of algorithms and to be constantly identifying the exact or general rules of behavior that describe any process.

Digital Environments Are Participatory

The primary representational property of the computer is the codified rendering of responsive behaviors.

Eg, Zork

- players move through dungeon rooms by typing in navigational commands and other appropriate commands



What is immersion?

“Immersion is not a property of a game or media text but is an effect that a text produces. What I mean is that immersion is an experience that happens between a game and its player, and is not something intrinsic to the aesthetics of a game. The confusion in this conversation has emerged because representational strategies are conflated with the effect of immersion. Immersion itself is not tied to a replication or mimesis of reality. For example, one can get immersed in Tetris. Therefore, immersion into game play seems at least as important as immersion into a game's representational space. It seems that these components need to be separated to do justice and better understand how immersion, as a category of experience and perception, works.[19]”

-Elena Gorfinkel

Digital Environments are Spatial

Spaces do not need to be represented by recognisable geography

In an interactive environment, space can be constructed via navigation.

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>east
Kitchen
On the table is an elongated brown sack, smelling of hot peppers.

>up
You have moved into a dark place.
It is pitch black. You are likely to be eaten by a grue.

>turn lantern on
The brass lantern is now on.

Attic
This is the attic. The only exit is a stairway leading down.
A large coil of rope is lying in the corner.
On a table is a nasty-looking knife.

>take rope
Taken.
```


Digital Environments are Spatial

“...challenge for the future is to invent an increasingly graceful choreography of navigation to lure the interactor through ever more expressive narrative landscape”

– Murray



Level Design

https://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/OvidiuMantoc/20180716/322077/Level_Design_Study_The_Last_of_Us_Part_II_gameplay_trailer_level.php

Digital Environments are Spatial

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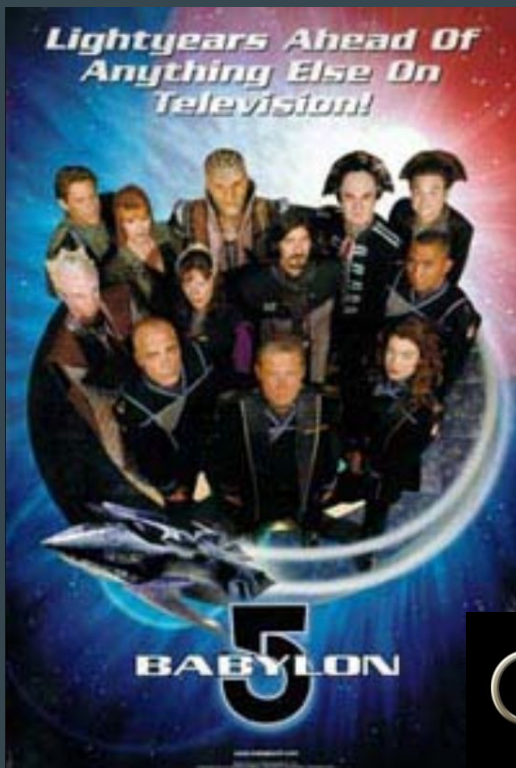
– Murray



Digital Environments are Encyclopedic

“the limitless expanse of gigabytes presents itself to the storyteller as a vast tabula rasa crying out to be filled with all the matter of life. It offers writers the opportunity to tell stories from multiple vantage points and to offer intersecting stories that form a dense and wide-spreading web.”

– Murray



Digital Complexities

“The more we see life in terms of systems, the more we need a system-modeling medium to represent it—and the less we can dismiss such organized rule systems as mere games.”

– Murray

Interactivity \longleftrightarrow Immersion

“When we are immersed in a consistent environment we are motivated to initiate actions that lead to the feeling of agency, which in turn deepens our sense of immersion. This phenomenon can be thought of as the Active Creation of Belief.”