diegetic presence in cinematic virtual reality

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introduction

Cinematic virtual reality (CVR) is an emerging storytelling medium that affords viewers fictional experiences via heightened representational capacities. CVR works are mediated through a VR system with 360° video, binaural spatial sound, and body tracking capabilities; the term captures both linear and interactive narratives, and both ludic and narrative media.

Presence is often defined in presence research as a psychological state of being present in an environment. In the context of fiction, diegetic presence is the psychological state of being present in a fictional environment.

In this study, I examine the features of CVR works that are designed to promote a sense of diegetic presence in their viewers. I analyze qualitative differences among these ways of 'being there' into four modes of diegetic presence: each of these orientations affords the viewer particular aesthetic experiences.

methodology

'presence research'

film theory / aesthetics   textual analysis of CVR works

emotional engagement

perceptual information of C's experience

?

viewer's presence as C

presence-preservation

Producers of CVR works make artistic choices driven by the motivation to maximize the viewer's sense of presence in the fictional environment. These choices, which often depart radically from the norms of traditional film, are critically shaping the aesthetics of the new medium.

naturalistic occupation of space-time

maximal presence preservation

minimization of non-diegetic elements

limitations, experimentation, innovation

Diegetically motivated transitions
Diegetical means of user feedback and interaction
Measuring effects of edits on presence
New editing norms: match-on-attention
Attempts to measure narrative comprehension

modes of diegetic presence

A. Viewer as non-diegetic spectator

B. Viewer as pre-existing character

C. Viewer as unobservable observer

D. Viewer as actual self

bibliography

Selected media

Auto
Abel VR
Accounting
Blume
Found
Keyed Alike
Invisible
Lone Echo
Miyubi
Mr. Roboto
Notes on Blindness
Reaping Rewards
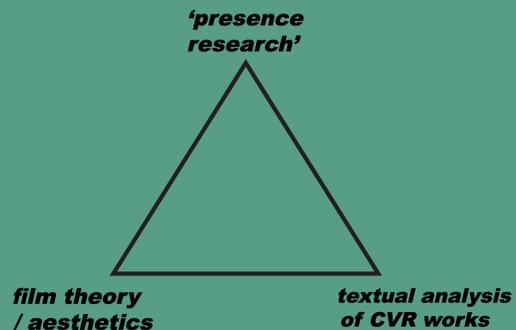*Tabel VR*
The Invisible Hours
The Spacewalker

Selected literature

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Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (MIT, 1997)
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Oxford Handbook of Virtuality (OUP, 2013)
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KM Lee, "Presence explicated," Communication Theory 14, no. 1, 2004
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