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Research on the Correlation Between the Alienation Effect and Immersion of Breaking the Fourth Wall in Games

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Abstract

Breaking the fourth wall is a very popular concept right now, and depictions of breaking the barrier between virtuality and reality are often used in game advertising. In VR games, game manufacturers describe the experience after breaking the fourth wall as an experiencer who will be completely immersed in the virtual world, as if they are actually living in the virtual world. At the same time, research in the field of traditional drama also shows that breaking the fourth wall can also bring a sense of alienation to the player, allowing the experiencer to clearly realize that he and the character are in a completely different world, and to conduct aesthetic criticism of related works of art.So why there are two completely different feelings after breaking the fourth wall will be the content of this article. This article will focus on the theoretical analysis of the relationship between two different cognitions and two completely different cognitions after breaking the fourth wall. Finally, it will be analyzed from three directions: game perspective, game art style, and different world views of the game. Finally, it was concluded that when players break the fourth wall in the game, these three factors will cause the experiencer to have two completely different cognitions.

Keywords: Breaking the fourth Wall, Game, alienation effect,Immersion

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of VR technology, the scale of the VR game industry is also growing. More and more VR content production manufacturers and VR equipment manufacturers are promoting that VR technology can break the fourth wall. They believe that through VR technology and devices can provide users with more immersion by breaking the fourth wall. But is breaking the fourth wall really all it takes to gain immersion? Obviously there are different voices in the field of drama, such as the alienation effect theory advocated by Brecht. He believes that breaking the fourth wall will not only not bring a sense of immersion to the experiencer, but will instead put the experiencer in a state of rational thinking and conduct aesthetic

criticism of the content.So why do these two different feelings occur, and what is the connection between them?

2. The Fourth wall and breaking the Fourth Wall

2.1 The Fourth wall

The concept of the fourth wall originated in theater. In modern drama, the emergence of the stage makes the world of the actors on the stage and the world of the audience become two worlds, and the "invisible wall" where the actors face the audience is the fourth wall. The dramatist Diderot wrote in "On the History of Drama" "Whether you are writing or acting, don't think about the audience, just pretend that they don't exist. Imagine that there is a handle beside the stage. The giant wall that separates you from the audience".Now, the fourth wall refers to the boundary that separates the real world from the virtual world. As shown in Figure 1,It can be a computer screen or mobile phone screen when you play games, a movie screen in a cinema when you watch a movie, or even a cloth during a shadow puppet show.

Fig 1. ‘The Fourth wall’ in different forms

2.2 Breaking the Fourth Wall

"Breaking the fourth wall" was originally a drama professional term based on the "fourth wall". It refers to interacting with the audience through the scenery or the actor's monologue, thereby breaking the boundary between the audience and the actor. Connect the virtual world on the stage with the real world where the audience lives. But with the emergence and development of electronic media, this concept has also been supplemented. In short, "breaking the fourth wall" means breaking the boundary between virtuality and reality. But breaking the boundary between virtuality and reality will have two completely different consequences. The first is the alienation effect advocated by Brecht. He believed that we should be reminded that we are watching a movie or a play by breaking the fourth wall. The effect is similar to a person breaking down a wall and shouting to the audience, "Look, there is a wall here. We are two people in two different places." In this way, the audience can remain rational and make aesthetic criticisms of the works of art or think and reflect on the phenomena expressed in the works. Another result of blurring the boundary between virtuality and reality is to drag the audience or players into another virtual world and make them sink into it, unable to extricate themselves, with a high sense of immersion. In this experience, audiences and players are no longer mere

viewers, but also actors in this virtual world. With the continuous development of VR technology, VR games have become the advocates and the most representative expression carrier of this concept. Due to the VR presentation principle, when the player puts on the headset and sees the images in the game, the player can quickly enter the virtual world and play a certain role in it. Of course, not all VR games emphasize that they "break the The fourth wall."

Breaking the fourth wall is a flexible artistic device that can alternately be used to distance audience from the story and draw them in closer. Its uses can be political or aesthetic, dramatic or comic. Whatever its ultimate goal, breaking the fourth wall always reminds us that we are in the process of viewing and participating in the telling of a story.

3. Immersion and Alienation Effects

3.1 Immersion and Stanislavsky System

Immersion is best expressed by Janet Murray in Hamlet on the Holodeck "Immersion is the metaphorical term derived from the physical experience of being submerged in water." Murray broadly describes immersion as the psychological submergence into an alien world or experience.In this state, players are completely immersed in a virtual world and enter a state of "flow".

At this time, players are no longer players, and the audience is no longer just spectators. They have entered the virtual world as actors. This state is very similar to the Stanislavsky System. In the Stanislavsky System, actors should think about all the emotions and behaviors of the character in that time and space, and perform them. When performing, the actor should enter the stage of selflessness. The actor is no longer an actor who performs what the character should do. , but the actor is the character. What the audience sees is what the character is doing, not what the actor is performing. For viewers or players who enter a state of immersion, they do not realize that they have become actors in the virtual world at the moment they enter the immersion state. They are a character existing in the virtual world, just like they started out Just like living there.

3.2 Alienation Effects and Brecht

The alienation effect was created and advocated by the Chinese drama innovator Brecht. The significance of this effect is: "Let the audience have a position to analyze and criticize the event depicted", mobilize the audience's subjective initiative, and encourage them to think calmly and rationally, thereby overthrowing the "fourth" on the stage. wall" purpose. In the performing arts, the distancing effect requires the actor to maintain an emotional distance from the character. Different from Stanislavsky System, Stanislavsky System emphasizes that actors should forget themselves when performing, make themselves become the characters in the play, and use the characters in the play to perform natural "actions" rather than perform. Brecht proposed the dual image of the actor as the core of narrative drama performance theory, expressing the contradiction between the actor and the character as a binary state of external opposition. In other words, when an actor plays a role, he should not put himself in the position of the character, but should put himself opposite the character. This is the distance between the actor and the character. In a stage performance with an alienation effect, the actor shows that he is acting, the audience is watching the play calmly, and the emotions of the actor and the character are not mixed. At the same time, the emotions of the audience and the characters are not mixed, so

that the audience can maintain rational thinking and judgment.

In games, players are both the audience and the role players in the game. How to break the fourth wall and achieve the high immersion state of Stanislavski's system or the alienation effect advocated by Brecht will be explained and discussed below.

4. The Relationship Between Immersion and Alienation Effects in Games

Although the alienation effect and immersion seem to be two unrelated concepts, in fact they are two sides of the same coin, and this coin is "breaking the fourth wall." It's just that at the beginning of creation, creators will make more immersive works or works with alienation effects according to their own needs.

4.1 Immersion and Breaking the Fourth Wall

In game promotions in recent years, game launches often use breaking the fourth wall to flaunt the realistic game modeling, textures and game experience of their games, striving to prevent players from feeling that this is a virtual world in the game. world. In this case, breaking the fourth wall refers to blurring the boundary between virtual and reality, trying to pull players from the real world into the virtual world, and trying to make the player not feel this process, as if the two worlds are connected.

There are certain conditions when you want to achieve immersion by breaking the fourth wall, otherwise the player may enter a state of alienation effect. First of all, the game must be a first-person perspective game, because only from the first-person perspective can players enter into the role of the game characters and have the opportunity to achieve what Stanislavsky said is an "experiential" performance. Once the player is in a third-person perspective, "God's perspective" or other types of game perspectives will affect the player's experience, putting a certain distance between the player and the role they play in the game, thus affecting the immersion the player obtains. Because in these game perspectives, the player's identity as the controller in the game will be magnified, while the identity of the game role player will be reduced. Secondly, the scenes in the game should be as close to current life as possible, and should be as real as possible, rather than using some artistic art style. Only in this way will players not feel unfamiliar after entering the game, and players will not be disappointed. It creates a sense of separation between the virtual world and the real world, allowing players to quickly enter a state of character experience and immersion. Of course, this is not absolute. If it is a game with a stylized art style, players can also enter an immersive state, but it will take longer for the players to adapt to that style, and they need to pass through some mirrors from time to time. Reflection to tell the player "You also have this art style". But obviously, neither the speed nor the difficulty of entering an immersive state is as easy as a realistic game. Finally, the story and background of the game are best of the current era. Games with a historical background are actually okay, but games with a future background are prone to many unreasonable things that go against common sense in real life. These things will make it more difficult for players to enter an immersive state and make it easier for players to break away from immersion.

4.2 Alienation Effects and Breaking the Fourth Wall

Different from immersion, the user experience pursued by the alienation effect is completely different. Therefore, designers must pay attention to different points when designing games. If the sense of immersion is achieved by breaking the fourth wall between virtuality and reality to blur the boundaries between the two worlds, then the alienation effect is to let players clearly know that there is a connection between the two

worlds. The fourth wall' is such a boundary, and it is not in a state of empathic experience like immersion, but in a state of a rational observer, so that it can conduct aesthetic criticism of the game's script and story. If it is said that when entering the immersion state, it is necessary to make the player not feel "breaking the fourth wall" as much as possible, then when entering the alienation effect state, it is necessary to let the player know about it as much as possible, so as to tell the player "Come and look, there is a wall here, these are two different worlds" to remind players that they and the virtual characters are in two different worlds, thereby preventing players from gaining a sense of immersion and allowing players to remain rational. , and then think about the deep thoughts that the game wants to convey.

Table 1.Factors that Influence the Final Outcome When Breaking the Fourth Wall

	Immersion	Alienation Effects
Personal Perspective	First-person perspective	third person perspective
Art Style	Reality	unrealistic, stylized
Story Background	modern	future, past or an imaginary world view

The most important thing for players to obtain the alienation effect is to make the players realize that they and the characters are in two completely different worlds as much as possible. Vision is the absolute most important component. Vision accounts for 70% of how we perceive things, so it is very important to start with vision. The visual content in the game can be mainly divided into two parts. The first is the perspective. The perspective is the factor that has the greatest impact on whether the player enters immersion or alienation. Games that emphasize immersion are all from a first-person perspective, especially after the advent of VR games. Games that emphasize the alienation effect generally use a third-person perspective, among which the side-scrolling third-person perspective is the most representative. The experience from this perspective is the same as the experience of watching a drama. It is the same experience as sitting under the stage and watching the actors on the stage perform. The alienation theory was proposed by Brecht after studying drama. theory. Unlike 3D third-person games, in the third-person perspective of side-scrolling games, players can only see the side of the game world, while 3D third-person games will follow the character to move 360 degrees, so the 3D third-person game Three-person games have a certain sense of immersion, but compared to first-person games, the player's field of vision is wider, but the immersion is relatively weaker, and the player has a stronger sense of control over the character. Secondly, the things that the player can see should be as different from reality as possible, and the art style should be as stylized as possible. This will emphasize the distance between the player and the game character and allow the player to clearly understand themselves. The world you are in and the game world are two completely different worlds, which strengthens the alienation effect. Finally, it is whether the things the player sees are consistent with the player's perception of the real world. If the game world is a weird world that is completely different from the real world, then the player will not easily enter a state of immersion, but will be more likely to enter alienation. Effect, but this is not absolute. As the game time goes by, players may slowly adapt to such a weird world and enter an immersive state. Of course, this has a premise, that is, if the perspective is a first-person perspective, if If it is a third-person side perspective like a side-scrolling game, then even if the player plays the game for a long time, it will be difficult to enter a state of immersion.

5. Conclusion

Through this research, it can be found that there are two main aspects of creating two completely different experiences by breaking the fourth wall. One is whether the way of breaking the wall can make the players feel it. If they can feel it, then players will have an alienation effect, if the process of breaking the wall cannot be felt, it will be easier for players to enter a sense of immersion. In fact, it is a visual experience. The visual experience is divided into three parts: perspective, whether the things seen are similar to reality, and art style. If it is a game with a first-person perspective, a realistic style, and a world structure consistent with the real world, it is easier for players to enter a state of immersion. If it is a third-person side view perspective like a side-scrolling game, the absurd world structure and With a distinctive art style, players do not need to enter a state of immersion, but will be more likely to enter a state of alienation effect. But this is not absolute. If you play a game with a bizarre world structure or a distinctive art style from a first-person perspective, as the player's play time goes by, the player will slowly accept and adapt to such game settings, thus slowly entering a state of immersion.But these are only studies based on the theoretical level. The next step is to find experimenters to conduct comparative analysis experiments on the game play experience and related questionnaire results to further prove this inference.

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