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MEANINGFUL NON-SPACES



VIDEOGAME GEOGRAPHIES

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1. SPACES AND NON-SPACES

2. THE MEANING OF THE IN-BETWEEN

3. *DARK SOULS*

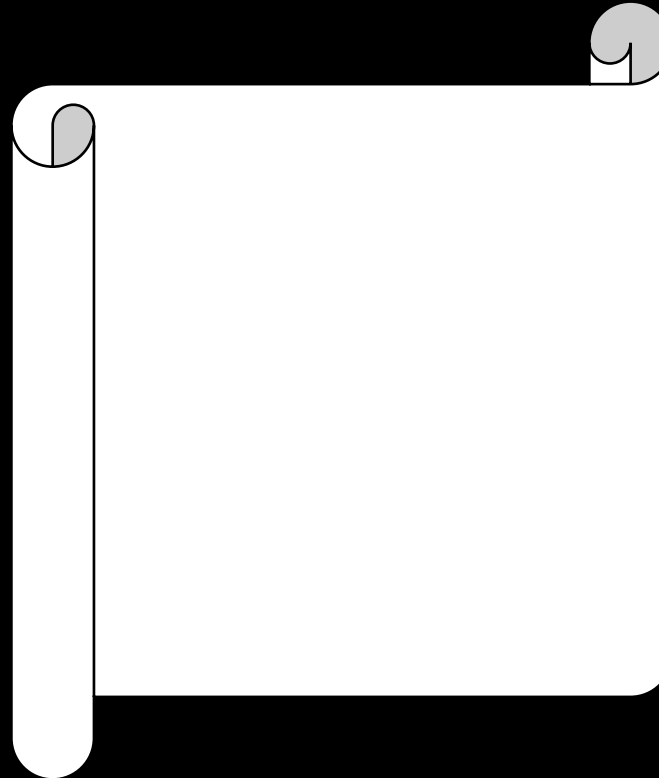
4. *RETURNAL*

5. A QUESTION OF TIME AND NON-TIME?

The Single Screen



The Scroll



3D Geography



(based on Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith, and Tosca [2008] 2016, 136-140)

- How do they encourage exploration?
- How do they self/orchestrate player experiences?
- How do they handle transit?

...LOADING

Place: geometrically defined entity

Space: “a practiced place”

(de Certeau 1988, 117)

Non-place: defined by alienation and transit

(Augé 1994, 94-103)

Societal, metaphorical non-places pervade our everyday life in shape of the liminal.

(Wels et al 2011,1)

Inevitable emphasis on acts of movement, as well as border-states.

(Wirth 2012, 9-10)

Non-space: part of the medium but outside of the practiced videogame?







Surreal passages connect the fractured, eternal geography.

Symbolically empty non-spaces of a hierarchic up-down topography:

- Spatialising challenge
- Representing acts of passage

(Ascher 2014, n.p.)

Non-spaces as sole indicators of progress in a stasis of undying decay.

Every death and every alleged escape from Atropos reset the game and change its geographical layout.

However: Dying provides players with additional narrative bits and glimpses that add an ambiguous frame/parallel narrative to Selene's *purgatorio*:

- Mimicking intrusive re-experiencing of a trauma

(Ehlers, Hackmann and Michael 2004, 403-407)

- Defining trauma as cyclic



Both analysed case studies provide a seamless gamplay flow in which non-spaces serve as meaningfully disruptive rites of passage:

- *Dark Souls*: traversal of mythical quality, agency as death-defying
- *Returnal*: alienation of cyclic psychosis, agency as duty of re-experience

“If we want to study video games ... we need to establish a methodological framework that is sensitive to this, their distinctive temporal immediacy.”

(Kirkpatrick 2015, 55)

A way to approach the growing popularity of time loop scenarios in game design?

(Simond and Huges 2021, n.p.)

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