

# The Ergodic Revisited: Spatiality as a Governing Principle of Digital Literature.

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## Akademisk avhandling

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## **Title**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the role of the spatial in four works of digital interactive literature. These works are Dreamaphage by Jason Nelson (2003), Last Meal Requested by Sachiko Hayashi (2003), Façade by Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern (2005) and Egypt: The Book of Going Forth by Day by M. D. Coverley (2006). The study employs an original analytical method based on close reading and spatial analysis, which combines narrative, design and interaction theories. The resulting critique argues that the spatial components of the digital works define reader interaction and the narratives that result from it. This is one of very few in-depth studies grounded in the close reading of the spatial in digital interactive literature.

Over five chapters, the dissertation analyzes the four digital works according to three common areas. Firstly, the prefaces, design and addressivity are present in each. Secondly, each of the works relies on the spatial for both interaction and the meanings that result. Thirdly, the anticipation of responses from a reader is evaluated within the interactive properties of each work. This anticipation is coordinated across the written text, moving and still images, representations of places, characters, audio and navigable spaces. The similar divisions of form, the role of the spatial and the anticipation of responses provide the basic structure for analysis. As a result, the analytical chapters open with an investigation of the prefaces, move on to the design and conclude with how the spaces of the digital works can be addressive or anticipate responses. In each chapter representations of space and representational space are described in relation to the influence they have upon the potentials for reader interaction as spatial practice. This interaction includes interpretation, as well as those elements associated with the ergodic, or the effort that defines the reception of the digital interactive texts.

The opening chapter sets out the relevant theory related to space, interaction and narrative in digital literature. Chapter two presents the methodology for close reading the spatial components of the digital texts in relation to their role in interaction and narrative development. Chapter three assesses the prefaces as paratextual thresholds to the digital works and how they set up the spaces for reader engagement. The next chapter takes up the design of the digital works and its part in the formation of space and how this controls interaction. The fifth chapter looks at the addressivity of the spatial and how it contributes to the possibilities for interaction and narrative. The dissertation argues for the dominance of the spatial as a factor within the formation of narrative through interaction in digital literature, with implications across contemporary storytelling and narrative theory.

## **Keywords**

Digital literature, narrative studies, interactive narrative, ergodic, cybertext, spatial, addressivity, interactive design, representational space, spatial practice.

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