**ECT 1210 - Reflection Paper #1**

By Connor Guarino

Over the last two weeks, I’ve gotten the chance to dabble and explore VR. Prior to this course, aside from the occasional 3D or 4D movie, my only experience in VR was a single game of Beat Saber in which my Mom ‘beat the brakes’ off me in score.

I think the reason I’ve inadvertently avoided VR is because I enjoy strategy and Diablo-style ARPG’s. Those two genres really haven’t taken off in the VR gaming space. When it comes to VR I think there’s a popular opinion that all games can really benefit from it, maybe not in its current form but eventually, and for me that seems kind of false. At no point do I want to take the perspective of my Path of Exile character that spins around at Mach 9 shooting beams everywhere. The top-down perspective exists for a reason in those types of games and there are already higher tech ways to remove your lunch from your stomach.

And I don’t need the VR experience of playing Magic the Gathering. While the idea of your cards ‘coming to life’ like they do in a certain cartoon about another (inferior) card game, I don’t want to wait sixty seconds for every card to do a heroic battle cry or terrifying roar. The experience I want is to test my brain against someone else’s via overvalued pieces of cardboard.

I think for a lot of games, the mouse and keyboard control system are pretty good, and I expect the only thing to beat it will be something that removes the need for peripherals just by virtue of removing the risk and discomfort of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and other Repetitive Strain Injuries. Furthermore, I think VR is slowly getting jammed into games where the VR elements don’t meaningfully add to the actual gameplay loop.

More recently though, I’ve discovered I have a particular physical aversion to VR. I have Visual Snow Syndrome which means there’s kind of a subtle radio static effect on everything I see. It is only really noticeable when I look at flat white surfaces which is fortunate because for some folks it is very obstructive to their vision. The only problems I’ve had with my vision were in my Medieval History in Film class where I learned grainy black and white movies can give me migraines because they add static onto my already existing static.

That was until I started playing games in VR in our lab. The first lab went fine because we were only really in VR for a few minutes. This was not the case in the second lab when we had time to actually experience VR. One of the first things I noticed was that my Visual Snow was kind of absent which was nice at first. However, after getting into a robot shooting game I started to have issues focusing my eyes and was really disoriented by the motion blur. But class quickly ended and when I removed my goggles, I experienced what I can best describe as ‘the graphics card in my brain crashing because I changed the image resolution’. I immediately got disoriented, had trouble judging distances between me and objects, and my Visual Snow was back with a vengeance. I sat for a bit using Anthony’s face as an anchor point while he made his closing remarks about the lab and managed to compose myself enough to shuffle out of the class. The fresh air outside helped immensely, and I immediately started to feel better. And then I got to the parking garage and took the elevator up to my car, which caused a horrible short burst of vertigo. After using all of my willpower to preserve the sanctity of the elevator floor, I eventually got to my car and called my Mom who happens to be a doctor and after about 15 minutes and getting the all-clear from her, I safely got home.

While I would rate that experience at a solid C-, I think it did provide me with a great deal of motivation and inspiration. I want to learn how to create experiences that aren’t ultra-saturated vibrant hellscapes waiting to assault and overwhelm your senses. I want to make VR accessible for crotchety game snobs with weird eyes and find ways that VR can meaningfully add to the genres of games I like. It reminded me of this quote written by the godfather of bitter old men, unbearable English majors, and spite-derived creativity.

“Bad taste creates many more millionaires than good taste.” – Charles Bukowski