

# Breaking the Meta: Origins and Influence of Fourth Wall Breaking Games

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## INTRODUCTION

When discussing games, thoughts that often come to mind are how does it utilize and engage methods to make players feel immersed in a virtual and imaginary world. For example, the advanced technologies used for perfect rendering, realistic character movements or vocals, curiosity arising from the storyline in the game and the mastery of feeling in control. Players are usually focused entirely on the game in front of them when becoming immersed in the game. Game designers need to consider is how to utilize challenges to put players in a state of flow, immersing players with a mix of gameplay and narrative. However not many games take advantage of the idea of a human player and the direct interaction that happens between the human player and the digital game.

With this concern, some exciting new trends are emerging in the games industry in terms of metagaming. When considering realism, some the characters and settings in the game can be made to seem self-conscious, seemingly understanding the doubts of player, communicating with them, and acknowledging they are living in the game as a virtual character. Game designers understanding of the relationship between themselves, the players, the game and equipment, can be used to create some tricks through these connections. After the initial process of immersing the player in the game, they can also be pulled out. Like a complex artificial intelligence, it can give the player a sense of both novelty and potential fear after the game seemingly understands their mind and the

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feelings. We can trace back this fourth wall breaking technique through non-game media and even traditional non-digital media such as drama. There is a metaphor from drama - the fourth wall, which indicates an imaginary wall in the traditional three-wall frame stage, through the wall audiences can see the plot development in the world of drama setting [1]. Bertolt Brecht was an advocate of this technique in drama; he believes that it gave him the chance to use his work to communicate with his audience in a new way. It can also help the audience keep thinking critically about the work; while conveying the ideas and raising the awareness of audience. He found that the effect of *Verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect): e.g., Doing something unexpected in the starting scene or performing the play with the house lights on helped prevent the audience from becoming too lost in the play. The same method can be found in movies, comics, and TV series in an amusing way. One of the most famous examples is the character Deadpool, who always turns to face the camera and directly talk to the audience, as well as making pranks in both open and end credit sequences to tease the production team.

This metagaming method has more been using in the indie games, such as *Undertale*, *Doki Doki Literature Club*, *The Stanley Parable* and *Icey*. Since it is a useful way to create a topic and innovation in the gameplay, something that can help indie game developers stand out in a crowded market. Some examples of in game techniques they use are Easter eggs; hidden secrets somewhere players don't expect, "mind-reading" by reading files on the players system or even having characters can hack the game. Some hold the idea to convey a concept that makes audience self-reflect, some that simple use as an amusing way to make a funny character has his own self-conscious. It can be found in Some AAA Game series like *Metal Gear Solid*, such as the famous scene where Psycho Mantis orders the player put their controller down and watch the controller rumble and shake on the ground to feel his power. Also in the "E" ending in *NieR: Automata*, two characters in the game (accessories) directly ask the game's player if they want to change the current bad ending. When the player goes against the credits to change the outcome, each time the player dies, the text will again appear, mocking the player with phrases such as "This is just a game," "Do you think your actions make sense?" There are always other players in the real world joining you in the last fighting to help the player come through the final round, and leave a message to encourage player. These AAA games also consider combining the cinematic technic with gameplay; will think about cultivating a meaning way to communicate with the player. Stephanie Boluk and Patrick propose in the book *Metagaming* that a metagame is a game as a game also a linguistic proposition, perfectly rendered realistic graphic help immerse players, making them believe them is part of this imaginary world. However, breaking the fourth wall can break a player's immersion from the game. This paper, aims to discuss the metagaming technique that exist in gaming, and how is has evolved from traditional media, what is the relationship between them, how they can develop in the future, and what is the significance for the game designer and the player.

## **OPTIONAL BIO**

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