

ENG 5042 – Remediating Narrative

MA in English and the Media

As narratives travel across various media platforms it adapts to each medium's demands of immediacy and hypermediacy.

Discuss with reference to a story of your choice

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Abstract

According to Walker¹ and Jenkins² narrative structure has changed from a boundary specific structure to a more fragmented configuration, shaping itself according to the demands of different platforms. These fragmented narratives, are perceived to be the result of the participatory culture that is pervading new media spaces. Fragmented narratives have different claims on the concepts of immediacy and hypermediacy defined by Bolter and Grusin³. The theoretical background is applied to the narrative distribution of *Magic: The Gathering*, to have a closer look at how the demands of immediacy and hypermediacy reflect the type of medium used and the type of narrative that emanates from them.

¹ Jill Walker, 'Distributed Narrative: Telling Stories across Networks', *Association of Internet Researchers 5th Annual Conference*, (2004) <<http://www.academia.edu/download/30234942/aoir-distributednarrative.pdf>> [accessed 3 February 2014]. (p. 2)

² Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

³ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000).

Theoretical Perspective

Narratives have been present since the beginning of mankind. Barthes postulates that narratives have been around since the dawn of humans.⁴ The traditional form of narrative that has been passed on from one generation to the other follows a structured beginning, middle and end. This traditional form is being challenged by the concept of storytelling across different media platforms, creating a more fragmented type of narrative.

This traditional form of narrative has been often linked with the three dramatic unities explained in Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁵ Modifying the structure outlined by Aristotle, Walker⁶ introduces the concept of a distributed narrative as opposed to a unified narrative.

Distributed narratives are shaped through fragments spread out in physical as well as digital spaces, giving rise to a type of narrative which consists of fragments found across various media platforms. Boundaries which were previously clear cut now become less distinct. The fragments of stories can still be connected together and ultimately these connections become essential in understanding distributed narratives. These parts of narratives can be distributed along physical and digital spaces interconnecting both spaces as they develop. In turn Walker claims that these narratives

⁴ Roland Barthes, *An Introduction to the structural analysis of narrative* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 237-72 (p.237).

⁵ Aristotle explained the three dramatic unities in his *Poetics* around 335. BCE. The three dramatic unities were originally intended to shape the structure of plays. Aristotle believed that the action within a play should take place within a single day, within a single location and the work itself should focus on one particular unifying concept.

Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*. Translated and with a Commentary by George Whalley, ed. by John Baxter and Patrick Etherton (Montréal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1997).

⁶ Jill Walker, 'Distributed Narrative: Telling Stories across Networks', *Association of Internet Researchers 5th Annual Conference*, (2004) <<http://www.academia.edu/download/30234942/aoir-distributednarrative.pdf>> [accessed 3 February 2014] (p. 2).

develop as the pieces join together on different media and therefore they do not collate media together.⁷ Walker believes that the distributed narrative is therefore the direct result of the network.⁸ This is very much in line with the view outlined by Castells,⁹ in which the logic of a programmed network is imposed on all its members. Therefore the network and its connections become the creators of such narratives. Similarly to Castells,¹⁰ Walker¹¹ looks at the connections between networks. This concept remotely draws on the intrinsic dilemma between Mc Luhan and Williams. For Mc Luhan¹² the participants are in control of what they are doing whilst for Williams,¹³ the tools used determine the way they should be used and not the users.

This interconnected space which has developed immensely through technology has made it quite difficult to follow the intransigent unities outlined by Aristotle. Although Walker's¹⁴ argument can be perceived as looking at technology as an important mover in the concept of distributed narrative, making technology that which allows the distribution to take place, there are still numerous productions today which follow or attempt to follow Aristotle's dramatic unities in various ways. Disney's animations which started off by the Laugh o' Gram are typical examples.

Clear cut boundaries provide the 'expected' chronological linear structure with a beginning, middle and end. With media platforms creating new spaces for delivery and distribution of narratives,

⁷ Although Walker, refers to these as Unities of Distribution, probably the term 'Unities' is not ideal as these represent ways through which narratives can be distributed across media platforms. It is then the connections between these distributions which is of importance in transmedia stories.

⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), pp. 358-366.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 358-366.

¹¹ Walker, pp. 7-8.

¹² Marshall Mc Luhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (Toronto: Mc Graw Hill, 1964), pp. 18-19.

¹³ Raymond Williams. *Towards 2000*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp.15-21.

¹⁴ Walker, pp. 3-7.

these boundaries are shifting. Following Walker,¹⁵ a distributed narrative relies on distribution in time, space and even authorship. Such narratives are seen to take place over a number of spaces including both physical and digital spaces, and over a span of time, possibly at times even an unlimited time frame. The concept of distribution of authorship creates a wholly new concept in that a narrative can be built by several different authors in different spaces and in different time frames. Several narrators make up the story which travels across the various media platforms and across time.

Perhaps, such fragmented stories are in the end no narratives at all since they require the right set up and interface for the participants to acknowledge them as such. The initial dilemma presented by Walker¹⁶ therefore remains present – if the current concept of the narrative literally breaks down the traditional form of the narrative, and if technology has advanced in a way which has left a huge impact on the traditional narrative then, analysing the new type of narrative by using the same type of analytical tools that were used for the traditional narrative, would be highly misleading if a proper understanding of the distributed narrative is to be achieved. This implies an entire restructuring of the way narratives are perceived.

Walker¹⁷ claims that ‘distributed narratives demand more from their readers than reading or suspension of disbelief’. However one issue which remains unsolved is the question as to whether it is really the distributed narrative that is demanding more from the readers or whether the participants are making such demands from the media platforms, asking for more engagement. Mc Luhan’s¹⁸ notion of the machine as the extension of man can help narrow down the issue – if it is the extension of man then

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 5-8.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁸ Mc Luhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, pp. 158, 242-244.

is the distributed narrative making these demands on us or is it the participants (us) who are making such demands both on the narrative as well as on the media platforms?

The continuous connection between authors and spaces is highly evident in the concept of participatory culture outlined by Jenkins.¹⁹ He does believe in fact that media producers and media consumers are constantly interacting with each other following knowingly or unknowingly specific sets of rules while exchanging information. Although through this ‘participatory culture’ there is an element of exchange and interaction, Jenkins is careful to indicate that not all participants are participating on the same level. Individual participants might not have as much power as large corporations and some consumers can definitely have better chances of participating. This contrasts sharply with Walker’s²⁰ element of authorship control in the sense that what she terms as control on the participant’s side, is now being questioned by Jenkins due to the fact that in reality not all participants are on the same level playing field. In the Big Thinkers Series,²¹ Jenkins sustains this argument by referring to what he terms the ‘participation gap’, where participation depends on access to a learning experience as well as access to technological equipment. Agreeably, maintaining the power of a ‘participatory culture’ in a fast growing digital world is a major challenge.

Jenkins claims that this participatory culture is also linked to the concept of media convergence, which occurs in both appliances as well as individuals’ brains. Similarly to Walker,²² Jenkins claims that

¹⁹ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 1–24, 95–134.

²⁰ Walker, p. 7-8.

²¹ Henry Jenkins, *Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture and Media Education* (Big Thinkers Series, The George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2013) <<http://www.edutopia.org/henry-jenkins-participatory-culture-video>> [accessed 28 November 2013].

²² Walker, p.4.

individuals construct their own narratives from the scattered fragments in digital and physical spaces although the degree to which participants construct such narratives is not specified.²³

In line with Barthes' concept of the narrative which he claims, can only acquire relevance from the world which makes use of it,²⁴ the culture of convergence allows scattered pieces to form part of a larger whole. This sets the ground for 'collective intelligence' wherein no individual knows everything but rather each individual knows part of a larger whole.²⁵

Individuals can then combine their knowledge and create a larger more comprehensive whole. Each individual then according to this 'theory' plays an important role in constructing the narrative. Jenkins supports the above argument, by referring to previous cultures, tracing the concept of 'participatory culture' back to the middle of the nineteenth century which paved the way for the current digital media culture, where everybody creates and shares information.²⁶ This is very similar to the concept of a 'social network' which is based on exchange of information.²⁷ The elements of agency and

²³ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide*, p.96-102.

²⁴ Roland Barthes, 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*. 6 (1975), 237-72 (pp. 264-265).

²⁵ Emile Durkheim in *Division of Labour* (1893) coins the term 'collective conscience' through which he sets the ground for the perception of society as being built completely on the thoughts and works generated by human beings. Following Durkheim, the beliefs, values and norms that are generated collectively by individuals in a society construct a particular society. In return however, this society that is created, becomes a great source of power on the individuals making up that same society.

²⁶ In the clip which is part of the Big Thinkers Series, Jenkins draws on an interesting example from previous cultures where people used to gather in a particular place to sew quilts. Jenkins, says that in such a case, there was no one particular expert about quilts but people gathered together to learn from each other. It was a sphere in which skills were passed on.

Henry Jenkins, *Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture and Media Education* (Big Thinkers Series, The George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2013) < <http://www.edutopia.org/henry-jenkins-participatory-culture-video>> [accessed 28 November 2013]

²⁷ Laura Garton, Caroline Haythornthwaite, and Barry Wellman, 'Studying On-Line Social Networks', in *Doing Internet Research*, ed. by S. Jones (London: Sage, 1999), pp. 75–104 (pp. 76-7)

engagement together with the established connections, enable participants to learn from each other.²⁸

Jenkins claims that there are various types of expertise and that the more participants are able to draw on as many different minds as possible, the more we can learn and increase our knowledge.²⁹

Referring to Pool, Jenkins says that since certain media allowed more participation than others, this would result in more freedom.³⁰ This view however contrasts with Castells' perspective in which he claims that social networks, establish certain rules which must be followed by the participants. Then in this sense networks are not as free as they are portrayed to be.³¹ Essentially the content that flows through the different media platforms, changes according to the medium that is being used thus modifying the way content is received. If convergence is perceived as a process then unity and stability, as in other processes, are constantly challenged by change. Convergence will remain a process rather than a stable fact.

For Jenkins, this convergence can either be seen as a new opening for opportunities for expression or else it can be looked at as form of expansion of the power of big media. In trying to show the impact of convergence on the way new forms of media are being consumed, Jenkins indicates that the actual content of any particular medium may shift, leading also probably to a change in audience however once a medium becomes an established source then it continues to function as such and

²⁸ Henry Jenkins and Mark Deuze, 'Convergence Culture' *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media*, 14 (2008) <<http://www.gigaart.net/T101/readings/JenkinsDeuzeConv2008.pdf>> [accessed on 4 December 2013] (p. 6).

²⁹ Henry Jenkins, *Sharing notes about collective intelligence* (Confessions of an ACA Fan, Henry Jenkins Theme on Genesis Framework, 2008) <http://henryjenkins.org/2008/02/last_week_my_travels_took.html> [accessed on 15 December 2013].

³⁰ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide*, p.11-13.

³¹ Manuel Castells, 'Materials for an Exploratory Theory of the Network Society'. *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(2000), 5-24 (pp. 10-11).

technology continues to improve on that medium.³² Therefore if the tools to be used with that medium might change through development, this implies that the functions of old media are being shifted and therefore old media will not be completely replaced. Jenkins claims that the continuous development and improvement of digital features have placed games on nearly the same playing field as films stating however that, it is solely the content which is converging and not the hardware. The ‘one box fits all’ form of media is heavily criticised by Jenkins in fact.³³ Convergence then focuses on ‘pitching the content’ accordingly, depending on the medium used, not only to enable the smooth flow from one medium to another but to also bring out the best from each medium.

Jenkins believes that it is not the story that we are doing away with but the actual story structure which might change. He is in accordance with Walker,³⁴ sustaining that stories are still very important for humanity, but the story structures that humanity is used to are now changing, offering a much larger range of narrative possibilities rather than just one solitary beginning, middle and end. Spreading of content he claims might not be a completely new concept - drawing on Roman Catholic belief he maintains that Bible narratives were in actual fact an example of transmedia storytelling.³⁵

According to Bolter and Grusin, through the above mentioned process of spreading content around various media platforms, different audiences are attracted depending on the affordances of each medium with each medium strongly claiming to offer a different experience from the previous one.³⁶

³² Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide*, pp. 8-9.

³³ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide*, pp. 13-15.

³⁴ Walker, pp. 5-7.

³⁵ Jenkins, *Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture and Media Education*.

³⁶ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000) pp. 65-67.

The success of any new medium becomes highly dependent on the extent to which consumers are convinced that the new medium ‘improves on the experience of older ones’.³⁷ Similarly Jenkins claimed that even though the technological aspect might be ready for more development, the success of the new media depends on whether society acknowledges the importance of such development. This leads to a more important focus on content, where similarly to Jenkins³⁸ and contrary to Mc Luhan³⁹, the content rather than the medium becomes the message. As argued earlier, content can be shared or distributed in various ways depending on the media available in a particular time in which all this is happening. Focussing on content, Bolter and Grusin establish immediacy and hypermediacy as ways through which content can be represented.⁴⁰

Through immediacy, a particular medium strives to create a ‘window’ for the participant to go through to the particular event. According to Bolter and Grusin media try to eliminate themselves from the scene.⁴¹ The audience is made to forget about the medium and should be made to feel that there is an actual unified perspective in the representation. This aspect however can be challenged greatly since certain technicalities (especially in digital gaming) such as game loading time or inadequate graphics may impinge on the actual experience of immediacy. One other challenge to immediacy is that the audience is in actual fact being provided with a set perspective as in the case of Alberti’s window.⁴² Ultimately the perspective from which the audience looks at things is set and given and is therefore a stark reminder of the medium rather than a way to erase it.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 68.

³⁸ Jenkins and Deuze, pp. 8-9.

³⁹ Mc Luhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, pp. 240-244.

⁴⁰ Bolter and Grusin, p. 21.

⁴¹ Bolter and Grusin, pp. 25-27.

⁴² The concept of Alberti’s window is based on the notion of the frame as described in *De Pictura*, by the architect Leon Battista Alberti in 1435. The window that is associated with Alberti which is probably the first study about perspective and speaks of a frame through which a particular view may be obtained. It is the frame and not the entire flat surface within the frame that is of importance here.

The concept of hypermediacy acts somewhat differently. The viewer according to Bolter and Grusin⁴³ becomes engaged through the interactive experience offered by the medium. The user acknowledges the medium and also acknowledges the processes for representation. Similarly to Walker's⁴⁴ concept of fragmentation, the viewer's perspective here is fragmented as many 'windows' can be presented to the user simultaneously and the user is aware of them at all times. The medium is continuously present. Content is represented over multiple media and in a multidimensional manner.

Whether immediacy or hypermediacy act in isolation or in conjunction with each other, is a fact which requires further discussion. The underlying thought however is that ultimately the message (the content) being conveyed is still in one way or another attached to the medium that is transporting it. Through the process of remediation, a new sensory experience is created each time content flows over and through different media platforms. According to Bolter and Grusin a new reconstruction of the real takes place each time.⁴⁵

⁴³ Bolter and Grusin, pp. 31-34.

⁴⁴ Walker, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Bolter and Grusin, p. 45-47.

Case Study: Magic: The Gathering

Background

First launched in 1993, Magic: The Gathering was originally a trading card game in which two or more players challenge each other using a deck of printed cards. The game itself consists of different planes which might resemble our world in certain ways. Planes can be vast expanses or reversals of normal reality – the list is endless and this is why the game itself is looked at as a multi-verse. The players whose wizardly role involves casting spells, using artifacts or other creatures to win over their opponents can be seen to draw a lot from other role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons.⁴⁶ Each player must own a set of cards in order to play and each set of cards is practically unique to the player. The player can then play, trade or buy more cards in order to increase the power of the card deck.

The game can be followed on different platforms including books, graphic novels, comics, video trailers, website, blogs, computer games, various gaming consoles as well as apps, making the game available to a wide variety of consumers.

A critical assessment

Magic: the Gathering can be perceived as a role-playing game which affords distribution on different platforms. It is a role-playing game because each time a participant plays, each player inhabits not only

⁴⁶ Dungeons and Dragons is another role-playing game, originally launched as a table-top game in 1974 and eventually move to other media platforms such as the early home computers in the 1980s.

the plane (and therefore the space) in which that particular narrative is taking place, but also the character s/he is playing with (the wizard with which s/he is going to challenge other players). Since there is a relatively unstructured way of play, the players determine the way the narrative goes. This ties in with the concept of partial shift of control from producer to participant through which the participant does not necessarily need to adhere to a particular traditional structure.⁴⁷ The bottom ground rules of the game however need to be followed implying that participants are not completely free in shaping the course of the narrative.

Following Walker's analysis of the ways through which narrative can be distributed, *Magic: The Gathering* can be seen to adhere to these three elements of: distributed space, distribution in time and distribution of authorship.⁴⁸ The whole action of *Magic: The Gathering* takes places in fragments over different spans of time. The fragments are not only based on the issuing of new decks of cards but also on the fact that participants engage in the game in a multitude of ways and at different points in time. Additionally, the action does not occur in a single location but in various locations both physically and digitally. Players can engage in a duel using the original medium, this being the cards or else they can engage in a game by going online or else through the use of any of the gaming consoles or apps provided. Players can research more facts about their characters online or discover them in book, ebooks, graphic novels or comics. Within the game itself, multiple experiences can occur in multiple worlds, hence its concept of the multiverse as opposed to universe. The third aspect denoted by Walker is that of the distribution of authorship wherein no single author or group of authors has complete control over the narrative.

⁴⁷ Walker, pp. 3-5.

⁴⁸ Walker, pp. 5-17.

Various authors have indeed contributed to the storyline of Magic: The Gathering by writing various novels often published in the form of ebooks, graphic novels and comics to complement the narrative. This is even contended by Doug Beyer,⁴⁹ one of the members of Wizards of the Coast's creative team,⁵⁰ claiming that over the years different authors most of whom were players themselves have written stories with the intention of complementing the whole narrative itself. Besides, each player is continuously constructing a narrative each time a duel occurs, since the characters can be actually follow the lines of thought of the player and be therefore 'made to do' whatever the player wants them to do at any particular point in time.

Then again however, Beyer in his interview claims that one particular book such as '*The Secretist*'⁵¹ tells the story of one world in one year and from the point of view of main character, therefore the narrative is not so fragmented in this aspect as it still shows an identifiable unity. However, '*The Secretist*' then is only a fraction of the larger narrative which forms the whole of Magic: The Gathering. Essentially then '*The Secretist*' becomes a part of a larger whole and its significance can only be achieved in relation to the whole multiverse. These narratives were produced to fill in a narrative void within the card game. The players themselves wanted a more tangible storyline.

This view of distribution of authorship however is adverse to Jenkins' perspective associated with participation, wherein he claims that participation does not imply that everybody participates on the same level.⁵² This aspect is crucial here since it acts as a sort of stabiliser allowing us to reconsider the

⁴⁹ Daniel Tack, 'Doug Beyer Talks Magic: The Gathering Creative', *Forbes*, February 2013.

⁵⁰ Wizards of the Coasts, founded by Peter Adkinson in 1990, is the publisher of role-playing games such as Magic: The Gathering and Pokemon. <<http://company.wizards.com>> [accessed on 25 November 2013].

⁵¹ Doug Beyer, *The Secretist*, Kindle Edition, (Wizards of the Coast: Amazon Digital Services, 2012).

⁵² Henry Jenkins, *Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture and Media Education* (Big Thinkers Series, The George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2013) <<http://www.edutopia.org/henry-jenkins-participatory-culture-video>> [accessed 28 November 2013].

fact of control through authorship since admittedly, individual players and participants might not have the same power as large corporations in influencing the storyline. Then again, following Jenkins' argument, the interest driven communities that are being developed as a result of media convergence and the participatory culture, might also be a new form of influence on the general public. This argument draws on Stallabras⁵³ who claimed that this interactive environment which can very often take place within the home, can act as very powerful tool of social control. This raises a few dilemmas in that the process of audience engagement, the audience is probably being alienated⁵⁴ by a new form of technology or rather being subtly controlled by new media? If all this is the result of social development, and therefore a result of the new needs and desires of the individuals, then consumers in the frantic race to acquire more freedom, are probably placing more subtle control on themselves.

As stated earlier, Bolter and Grusin state that new technologies shape themselves according to the earlier technologies of representation.⁵⁵ Although older media are 'refashioned', the presence of older media is still relevant and therefore there is an important element of hypermediacy. The digital media platforms in Magic: The Gathering (gaming consoles, apps, website) have all in their own way enhanced the actual card game. Therefore Mc Luhan's concept of one medium being represented in another medium is still relevant here.⁵⁶ In such remediation however, the principal medium from which the whole concept of Magic: The Gathering started remained essential throughout. Game consoles for example, still have a digital deck of cards and the game is still played through the use of cards. Magic:

⁵³ Julian Stallabras, 'Just Gaming: Allegory and Economy in Computer Games', *New Left Review*, 1 (1993), 83–106 <<http://www.stanford.edu/class/history34q/readings/Cyberspace/StallabrasJustGaming.html>> [accessed on 10 December 2013].

⁵⁴ The term alienation reflects the Marxist perspective in that it refers to the fact that humans have become mere instruments in a large universe which controls them. This concept is highly debatable since this depends on the perspective from which such instruments are looked at.

⁵⁵ Bolter and Grusin, pp.76-8.

⁵⁶ Mc Luhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, pp.10-12.

the Gathering then, does not work by erasing the previous media as suggested by Bolter and Grusin through the concept of immediacy.⁵⁷ Rather, it works by actually enhancing the older media through the new technologies available.

Since *Magic: the Gathering* is now available on various digital platforms it has not only increased audience engagement but also reached out to varying audiences since its narrative can be created on different levels. The books, ebooks, graphic novels and comics which have been published alongside the development of the game are all fragments which complement the whole narrative of *Magic: The Gathering*. The authors of the above mentioned books, ebooks, graphic novels and comics are different and this contributes greatly to the notion of audience engagement especially when considering that a large number of the authors were and still are players themselves. Participants are continuously and actively seeking out new information in order to be part of the *Magic: The Gathering* culture. Conversely, these different platforms could also be viewed as markets which are targeting particular segments within society.⁵⁸ In providing narratives on various media platforms, such industries are making sure that they have reached out to various niches in society increasing their market power.

⁵⁷ Bolter and Grusin, pp.25-9.

⁵⁸ Henry Jenkins, *Transmedia Storytelling 101* (Confessions of an ACA Fan, Henry Jenkins Theme on Genesis Framework, 2007) <http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html> [accessed 3 December 2013].



Figure 1. The narrative of Magic: The Gathering develops over different media platforms. No platform is aimed at eliminating another, but rather complement each other.

The constant interaction between the large team of Magic: The Gathering employees and the audiences, leads to continuous participation and recommendations for future cards by audiences. Story lines for the game itself follow the same faith. Such feedback is crucial for Wizards of the Coast corporation which is the mother company of Magic: The Gathering, and is not taken lightly. In fact participants feel that their mode of engagement has been successful when they see the new batch of cards has the recommendations that they themselves have suggested. Doug Beyer, justifiably claims that:

‘creating a multiple-world-spanning, multiple-viewpoint fantasy story that plays out over novels, cards, comics, web articles, player’s guides, and videos –while working with a team of writers and countless artists, producers, and other creators – is crazy hard, but it’s something we’ve learned a lot about.’⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Daniel Tack, ‘Doug Beyer Talks Magic: The Gathering Creative’, *Forbes*, February 2013
<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/danieltack/2013/02/20/doug-beyer-talks-magic-the-gathering-creative>> [accessed 20 December 2013].

This is what Jenkins terms as the ‘interest-driven’ culture that is currently shaping the world.⁶⁰ The narrative of *Magic: The Gathering*, or rather the distributed narrative as defined by Walker⁶¹ is woven through the actual cards, the online games and blogs, the game consoles, the books, ebooks and the video-trailers posted regularly on You Tube. Precisely, each medium is doing what it can do best with the underlying intention of attracting larger audiences and probably as defined by Jenkins⁶² ‘consumers’. The medium therefore can be seen as a tool therefore through which more players are attracted to the lore of the game, increasing agency and engagement. The environments then are not solely created by artists but they are also the result of participating audiences, since their elaborations continue to expand such worlds.

Recurrently, this contrasts sharply with Stallabras who claims that new media do not necessarily provide the participants with an improved experience, but on the other hand they are simply part of a growing market.⁶³ This market he claims is channelling more people into staying at home and participating in an ‘interactive environment’ which in reality acts as a form of social control rather than idyllic freedom.

Following Jenkins, the characters in such transmedia narratives, do not need to be introduced to the audience because they are known from other existing sources.⁶⁴ Similarly to Walker’s perspective,⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Henry Jenkins, *Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture and Media Education* (Big Thinkers Series, The George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2013) <<http://www.edutopia.org/henry-jenkins-participatory-culture-video>> [accessed 28 November 2013].

⁶¹ Walker p.7-10.

⁶² Henry Jenkins, *Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture and Media Education* (Big Thinkers Series, The George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2013) <<http://www.edutopia.org/henry-jenkins-participatory-culture-video>> [accessed 28 November 2013].

⁶³ Julian Stallabras, ‘Just Gaming: Allegory and Economy in Computer Games’, *New Left Review*, 1 (1993), 83–106 <<http://www.stanford.edu/class/history34q/readings/Cyberspace/StallabrasJustGaming.html>> [accessed on 10 December 2013].

⁶⁴ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide*, p.122. Jenkins draws on Homer’s *Odyssey* claiming that similarly to today’s narratives, Homer’s work must have been created from the bits and pieces of information heard over

Jenkins indicates that narratives are distributed over time and space but more importantly they also seem to carry an appeal to a particular audience at a particular point in time. Characters in narratives become important as it is through them that a direct experience is reached and in this in fact what happens in *Magic: The Gathering* where in each player embodies a particular character to construct a particular narrative at that point in time, drawing on fragments of information acquired from different forms media. The narrative created appeals also to that particular point in time and to that particular audience involved directly. The same cards in *Magic: The Gathering* might be used later on for another game and a new narrative can be constructed. According to Jenkins⁶⁶ ‘a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole’.

This definition can be applied to *Magic: the Gathering* in that each time a new game is played, a new narrative unfolds so that no game is practically ever the same. Also in *Magic: the Gathering*, multiple novels, graphic novels, comics and video trailers have emerged alongside the game itself, each of the platforms developing a part of the story in its own way. This aspect of ‘collaborative authorship’ which Jenkins applies to the acclaimed *Marvel Comics* and the way they pitched the content of their superhero comics to fit the genres of particular countries can be used as a model for *Magic: The Gathering*. *Wizards of the Coast* strives to get the best out of each medium and to attract different genres of audiences precisely through collaborative authorship.⁶⁷

time and in different spaces. In Homer’s time, most of the people knew already who Odysseus was since the story was transferred from one person to another in fragments, with probably people adding on or removing bits as necessary.

⁶⁵ Walker, p.7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 97.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

Consequently each new medium is expected to improve on its predecessor as shown by Bolter and Grusin.⁶⁸ Computer graphics in most digital platforms and trailers increase audience engagement as they refashion the space and the whole experience of the user. Magic: The Gathering deliberately makes use of advanced graphics in computer games, apps as well as trailers to enhance the experience of the participant. Essentially the original cards on which the whole concept of the game is based, remain the main feature and therefore the original medium has remained present. Users are continuously aware of the medium be it the original cards or the digital cards. Despite the participants' immersion in the game, the medium never becomes invisible so the concept of immediacy does not really apply. Conversely, the numerous platforms on which the whole narrative is distributed continue to augment the element of hypermediacy.

⁶⁸ Bolter and Grusin, p. 54-55.

Conclusion

The participant's experience is ultimately the decisive factor. Whether the narrative has travelled across media platforms and acted like '*Alberti's window*' to achieve immediacy or as the '*Wunderkammer*' (the curiosity cupboard) of the Baroque period to achieve hypermediacy as indicated by Bolter and Grusin⁶⁹ is highly debatable. Based on Bolter and Grusin's⁷⁰ notion that each new medium is now expected to justify itself by improving on and filling the void created by its predecessor, the whole process of remediation can therefore be seen as a continuous race to achieve the real through the new media technologies, which in themselves will cease to remain new as technology continues to develop.

Then again, using Magic: The Gathering as a case study, despite the fact that the original card game has been refashioned in numerous ways on different platforms does not in any way imply that one medium might essentially be offering a better representation than the previous one. Rather, Magic: The Gathering has to be seen as an integrated effort by means of which the game and its narrative have literally moved through different platforms, spreading the narrative across multiple media and across time.

⁶⁹ Bolter and Grusin, p. 41.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 54-55, 60-61.

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