

# Are You a Planeswalker?: Remediating Magic: The Gathering

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# Accessibility Slides

# *Magic: The Gathering* as a Platform

- ❖ **Material**

- ❖ Cards
- ❖ Art
- ❖ Tables/Surfaces/Play Areas

- ❖ **Mechanical**

- ❖ Rules
- ❖ Card Text/Interactions
- ❖ Theme
- ❖ Game Modes

- ❖ **Social**

- ❖ Players
- ❖ Secondary markets
- ❖ Fan works
- ❖ Transmedia

# Narrative Play in MTG

- ❖ **You are a Planeswalker**
  - ❖ Bring Player into the thematic world
- ❖ **Marvilization of theme**
  - ❖ Focus on Franchise Characters
- ❖ **Intentionally Thematic Play**
  - ❖ Deck Archetypes
  - ❖ Flavor Wins
- ❖ **Emergent Theme**
  - ❖ Card interactions
  - ❖ Flavor Judge

# Adaptation and Remediation

## ◊ Remediation

- ◊ “The representation of one medium within another” – Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*
- ◊ “a process of cultural competition between or among technologies.” - Bolter, *Writing Space*
- ◊ “new visual media... define themselves by borrowing from, paying homage to, critiquing, and refashioning their predecessors” – Bolter, *Writing Space*

## ◊ Adaptation

- ◊ “a relationship between two objects (the original and the adaptation) and a relationship between those two things and an entire realm of objects that press upon them.” – Cameron Kunzelman, “Subjectives and Affective Adaptations: Remediation and the Playstation 2 Videogame”

# hypermediacy and Immediacy

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## Magic: The Gathering Arena

- ◊ Competitive and Semi-Competitive formats
- ◊ Focus on Matchmaking play
- ◊ Closed Ecosystem
  - ◊ Cards Can't Be Traded or Sold
  - ◊ Limited to cards obtained through the game client
- ◊ Preserves the experience of the paper magic interface
- ◊ Streamlines computational and interpretive elements



Immediacy

Hypermediacy

- MTG: Online
- MTG: Arena



## Spell Table

- ❖ Uses Paper Cards
- ❖ Facilitates playing Magic remotely
- ❖ Minimal computational assistance
- ❖ Focus on the tabletop experience
- ❖ Emerged Primarily during pandemic era





- Spell Table

Immediacy



Hypermediacy

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## Tabletop Simulator

- ◊ Released in 2015
  - ◊ Developed during wacky simulator games era
- ◊ Literally digitizes the table
- ◊ Provides components to play any analog game
- ◊ Optional scripting support



- Spell Table

Immediacy

- MTG: Online



- MTG: Arena

Hypermediacy

- Tabletop Simulator





# Shandalar

- ❖ Released by Micropose in 1997
  - ❖ Last game worked on by Sid Meier before leaving to form Firaxis
- ❖ Bundled with Character Creator and Deck Builder
- ❖ Fully functional Magic: The Gathering Engine
- ❖ Action RPG
  - ❖ Players play as a Planeswalker trying to save the world
  - ❖ Play MTG against monsters
  - ❖ Collect cards from dungeons and merchants.

## Immediacy

- Spell Table



- MTG: Online
- MTG: Arena



- Tabletop Simulator



## Hypermediacy

- Shandalar





# MTG:BattleMage & Magic: Legends

- ◊ **Magic the Gathering: BattleMage**
  - ◊ 1997 Release by Acclaim
  - ◊ Real-Time Strategy Game
  - ◊ Cards present as only UI Elements
  - ◊ Focus on Thematic connection
- ◊ **Magic Legends**
  - ◊ March 2021 Release by Cryptic and Perfect World
  - ◊ Action RPG
  - ◊ Cards present as UI Element
    - ◊ Skills available based on cards in character deck
  - ◊ Focus on Thematic Connections
  - ◊ Cancelled in June 2021
    - ◊ Unavailable October 2021

# *Affective vs Subjective Adaptation*

- ❖ **Affective**
  - ❖ “Replicates the particular feeling of [an object] rather than the specifics of it.”
- ❖ **Subjective**
  - ❖ “places players within a particular subject position based on immersion”
- ❖ **Oscillating Subject Positions in Analog Games**
  - ❖ Dual Subject position in Analog Games
    - ❖ Player playing a game
    - ❖ Character in the story world of the game
- ❖ **Questions of Narrative**
- ❖ **Questions of Interface**



# Conclusions

- ❖ **Affective Dimension**
  - ❖ What aspect of Magic does this feel like?
    - ❖ Thematic
    - ❖ Mechanical
- ❖ **Remediation Dimension**
  - ❖ How much does this replicate the interface of Magic?
    - ❖ Focus on Cards at a table
    - ❖ Focus on Digital Interface
- ❖ **Important Questions for Scholars and Designers**
  - ❖ What experiences are important for the adaptation?
  - ❖ What is preserved, lost, or changed?
  - ❖ What experiences are privileged by an approach?

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