Representing the Hero: A Comparative Study between the Animated and Gameplay Cinematic

Trailers for *Overwatch*

By

Stella Kerr

Date

15 March 2017

Supervisor: Hanli Geyser

The University of the Witwatersrand

Student Number: 559823

Course Number: WSOA 7036

Master of Arts in Digital Animation

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of

Arts in the field of Digital Animation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It

has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Stella Kerr

15 March 2017

Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to thank the University of the Witwatersrand for enabling me to pursue my academic career, with professional facilities and supportive staff.

To my supervisor, Hanli Geyser, if it were not for your invaluable assistance and encouragement, this research would have not been possible. The effort and time that you have devoted to helping me during this long process is something I will always hold dear to me. You have succeeded in helping me realize my own potential and abilities, your knowledge and professional guidance is one of a kind and is extremely influential.

To my editor Genevieve Wood, Thank you for improving my research and assisting me in the finality of my research.

I would like to express my gratitude towards my three close friends, Chantelle le Bron, Emma Kerr and Tanya Blaeser. The determination I see in all of you has inspired me to follow my dream of completing my research report, thank you for being true friends along this path in my life.

I am grateful to my family, my mother Louisa Kerr, my father George Kerr, my brother Gareth Kerr and to my aunt Victoria Scourfield. Along this journey you all urged me to push myself to do better, to be better, and to stay motivated no matter what issues I am confronted with. For your emotional support, your reassurance and your concern in my research, I love you all.

Lastly, and most importantly, to my late grandfather, Professor Malcom WJ Scourfield. I know you are proud. Thank you for giving me the financial security to allow me to focus on what is important in my life. I know this is what you would have wanted me to do and I know

you would be content to see me accomplish my goal of writing my research report and

completing my academic career.

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Introduction

This research paper investigates how *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* use cinematic trailers to enhance the signification of the hero in their most recent game *Overwatch* (PCInvasion PC Gaming 2014). The animated and gameplay cinematic trailers for *Overwatch* are the two main case studies, selected as they strategically utilise cinematic language to signify the hero through characterisation and narrative structure, in order to establish identification. This research will provide a comparative analysis of the animated and gameplay trailers of *Overwatch* using the theory of semiotics to interpret prominent signifiers that inform viewers about the game within a transmedia context. This comparative analysis determines how and why *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* uses cinematic language to represent the hero in terms of both characterisation and narrative structure.

Overwatch is a team-based first-person shooter multiplayer game created by *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* (2014) set in a fictionalised version of a future earth. The game features explicitly diverse heroic characters that have unique abilities and traits that set them apart from one another. Chris Metzen, the senior VP of story and franchise development of *Overwatch,* states that "*Overwatch* represents heroism, sacrifice and nobility" (PCInvasion PC Gaming 2014). The heroic character is usually the protagonist of a story, and can represent any idealised individual who is willing to accept anticipated sacrifice or physical peril without personal gain in order to restore and protect the balance of the world (Franco, Blau, and Zimbardo 2011). I show the way in which cinematic methods to represent this heroes' nature are incorporated into computer game franchise advertisements. *Overwatch's* animated and gameplay cinematic trailers successfully apply characterization and narrative structure for a greater audience response, which develops into an experience of identification with the hero. The process of identification occurs

when an audience member temporarily adopts the character's experiences, establishing a connection with the character on an intuitive level (Cohen 2001).

The convergence between cinema and computer games has become a prominent part of contemporary culture. Dee Majek notes that "not only do computer and console games contain animated film footage, making use of cinematographic techniques for narration and establishing mood; they furthermore incorporate filmic styles during actual gameplay moments in a variety of ways" (Majek 2011, p.3). *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* uses different forms of media to inform the public about their latest games. Media communicate to large groups of people through industrialised forms of technology such as, television, cinema, mobile phones, computers, radio, video games and the internet (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008), where media elements are generally integrated in one way or another (Bastiaens 2014), where Henry Jenkins, an American professor of communication journalism and cinematic arts, introduced the term *transmedia* (2006a) (Bastiaen 2014) to describe the combination of different media platforms coherently merging to foster a greater sense of audience entertainment when gaming, through the process of identification (Bastiaen, 2014). Identification is an experience in the form of an internal process where the viewer adopts the goals, feelings and emotions of the protagonist character in a game (Cohen 2001).

The animated and gameplay cinematic trailers for *Overwatch* are a form of transmedia, "transmedia trailers can be used as a tool of transmedia storytelling and they tend to represent the fictional world of a video game in a linear, cinematic manner" (Švelch 2015). The language of film is incorporated into the cinematic trailers for the game in order to create an alternative way of identifying with the characters. According to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2006), the language of film is composed of four elements, *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing and

sound (Bordwell & Thompson 2006). These elements reveal what characteristics films use, and are valuable techniques requiring close examination when analysing cinematic style. This research examines the way in which *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* utilises different media elements, such as the language of film, in order strengthen the signification.

Michael O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler (2008), authors of *Media and Society,* argue that media "simply act as a mirror of society, or a window on the world, that can be used as a resource to understand society" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008, p.41). Heroism is a fundamental cultural concept, where diverse cultures use this concept and implicitely share an understanding of its meaning. Campbell describes this connectivity over the hero in the following way: "all stories consist of common structural elements of stages found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams, and movies" (Voytilla & Vogler 1999, p.1). Campbell argues that diverse cultures share a universal method of telling stories about a hero (Finding Joe 2011). The role that a heroic character plays must be motivated by universal needs, such as succeeding in a task, rectifying a problem, seeking justice or finding love (Voytilla & Vogler 1999). The character might have physical abilities and supernatural traits that distinguish them from anyone else in the universe, but their ambition is a universal need with which the public can identify, where the cycle of the hero's journey is inherent in every individual's life, since individuals are their own protagonists. This research offers a comparison between the animated and gameplay trailer for *Overwatch*, in the hope of discovering how each trailer uses signs to represent heroism in the form of cinematic language, to portray characterisation and narrative structure, examining how contemporary gaming companies use sign systems to enhance the viewer's awareness of the game.

The trailers for *Overwatch* are a form of media that offer the viewer a concise reconfigured experience of an upcoming title using sign systems to represent the game. A trailer is a one to three minute display that accentuates the most appealing elements of the game that enhance the viewer's awareness of the film, or in this case, the game (Kernan 2005). Trailers of games reveal their most attractive game play elements, visuals and characters in order to capture their viewer's attention and entice them to their use. The animated and gameplay trailers are both non-interactive entertainment media representations of *Overwatch,* where each trailer is developed by a creative team, accepted by a purchaser, distributed through a medium and then decoded by the viewer (Parsa 2004). Trailers are worthy of scrutiny due to their persuasive capabilities. In advertising in particular, the visual image is represented in an intentional manner with the goal of transmitting information as clearly as possible (Parsa 2004).

Blizzard Entertainment Studios is an American game development company originally called *Silicone and Synapse*, established in 1991 by its founders, Michael Morhaime, Frank Pearce Jr. and Allen Adham (Machinima 2011). The company was rebranded to the title *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* in 1994, when its three founders joined the educational software developer *Davidson and Associates*. Through the early stages of the company's growth, the founders recognised that *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* ought to be labelled an *'Entertainment'* studio because they did not want to be confined to one medium, "even at the early stage in their development, the newly minted *Blizzard* chose the word entertainment as opposed to something like games because they didn't want to limit themselves to one medium, ambition was something the guys never lacked" (Machinima 2011). *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* were the first game developing company to effectively use pre-rendered high quality trailers and in-game cut scenes, this contributed to the studios signature cinematic style (Machinima 2011).

Animated trailer

Figure 1: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch* (00'34") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

The animated trailer for *Overwatch* is a short story of two young boys, Timmy the youngest boy, and Brian the oldest boy, who are watching a video projection in the *Overwatch* museum. The animated trailer starts off with a 2D animated sequence, showing slow-paced images of the history of *Overwatch,* about how the heroes restored world peace. The heroes of *Overwatch* are introduced by a narrator as an Elite International Task Force (PlayOverwatch 2014), bestowed as guardians who restored world peace. The heroes are introduced by the narrator as a team of "soldiers, scientists, adventurers, oddities" (PlayOverwatch 2014). Figure one (PlayOverwatch 2014) depicts how diverse the group of heroes in *Overwatch* are, while they all stand side-by-side as a team. The one goal that connects these heroes is their common objective to secure freedom and equality in their world (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Figure 2: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch* (01'18") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

The museum is portrayed in a large scale, there are *Overwatch* artefacts, statues and weapons on display. The two boys are walking through the museum and viewing these objects that place the story of *Overwatch* on display. Figure 2 (PlayOverwatch 2014) shows the moment where Timmy performs Tracer's pose, with both of his hands on his hips. Timmy is identifying with Tracer, by trying to imitate her assertive stance. The process of identification occurs at this moment of the animated trailer, where Timmy is identifying with Tracer's particular characteristics, which make her unique because he wants to be like her.

Figure 3: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch* (02'53") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

There is a disturbance that takes place while they are viewing a particular artefact/weapon, namely, a gauntlet. A battle then takes place as shown in Figure Three, between four characters from the game, namely Winston, Tracer, Reaper and Widow-Maker. The villains (Reaper and Widow-Maker) are trying to steal the gauntlet from the museum.

Figure 4: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'34") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

The oldest child and the protagonist of the animated trailer, Brian, uses the gauntlet to protect Tracer and Winston from being defeated. The heroic character in the animated story is a protagonist that guides the storyline. Figure Four demonstrates how Brian is using the gauntlet to fight against Widow-Maker in order to help Winston and Tracer in their battle. The animated trailer represents the game *Overwatch* by "looking at certain human issues and questions and by the end of the narration, a solution, resolution, or overall message about the problem has been presented" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008, p.266). The animated trailer offers the viewer an insight into the story of *Overwatch* and how Brian helps to defeat the villains. Brian's character develops and grows through the use of the restorative three act structure.

Gameplay Trailer

Figure 5: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'28") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

The gameplay trailer for *Overwatch* introduces the game's environment through a sequence of maps shown in figure five. These maps display the space that will be used during gameplay.

Figure 6: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (00'54") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

The introduction involves glimpses into each hero's vocal quirks, playability and physical abilities represented in real-time graphics (see Figure 6). The viewer is introduced to features of the game, such as the characters abilities or limitations and the simulated spatiality of the environment where the characters conquer challenges during the activity of gameplay.

Figure 7: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'42") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

In Figure 7 (PlayOverwatch 2014), the playability and effectiveness of the game is demonstrated when the player interacts with the character and plot objectives. The gameplay trailer is a representation of how the players will interact within the environment portrayed, but this representation is scripted and recorded, and not interactive. The gameplay trailer offers the viewer an insight into how the game will be laid out in real time, and how the player of the game will interact with each of its characters. Digital games can operate on three different levels: cut-scenes; active gameplay; and the customisation of mods and skins (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 1999). These levels characterise aspects of the *Overwatch* gameplay style.

The term 'read' will be used in this research as the method for analysis to mean listening, viewing and interpreting, while the term 'text' refers to the cinematic trailers of *Overwatch*. While these terms privilege a specific form of knowledge production and consumption, they are used here within semiotic convention. The cinematic trailers for *Overwatch* are texts that use codes of representation in order to transfer knowledge or information about the game to a particular target audience. Characterisation and narrative structure are the two processes that the *Overwatch* cinematic trailers use in order to enhance the signification of the hero, and these two processes will be analysed using the language of film as a mode of semiotics. Cinema or film can be described as a visual language, because the image can communicate meaning when it is 'read' by the viewer, "the filmmaker knows this because he or she understands how to 'speak/write' in the film language. The audience understands it because they know how to 'listen to/read' film language" (de Valk and Arnold 2013, p.70). The methodology of semiotics is practiced when the reader interprets the text based on the signs and codes that they can identify in it. The interpretive sciences of semiotics will be a significant part of the theoretical framework of this research, and will act as platform from which to investigate the visual language in *Overwatch*.

This research will explore how *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* uses the semiotic structure of cinematography to provide alternative approaches to interpreting narrative structure and the representation of *mise-en-scène* to support the characterisation of the hero. The method of analysis will be based on the semiotic approach, how the language of film is strategically used in the signification of the hero. The *Overwatch* cinematic trailers adapt the fictional environments, narrative trajectories and the characters of the game into new kinds of cinematic signifiers to address the hero, in order to appeal to a target audience (Kernan 2005). This investigation will reveal the resilience of transmedia advertising, aiming to gain insight into how *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* has used cinematic style as a superior tactic to effectively represent *Overwatch*, thereby impacting contemporary gaming culture more broadly.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

Heroism

Joseph Campbell is a philosopher and one of the leading mythologists who studied the structure of stories in diverse cultures. Campbell argued that there was one structural composition that exists in all stories, which he called *The Hero's Journey* (Finding Joe 2011). This structure is composed of a basic three-part cycle, namely separation, initiation and return. In order for the character/protagonist of a story to reflect representational qualities of heroism, they would need to undergo the cycle of *The Hero's Journey*. The first narrative 'act', separation, means the character somehow trapped where they are, and desire to break free or escape their circumstance. The second act, initiation, is when the character experiences obstacles, where they may face their biggest fear. The third act, return, is when the character comes back to their ordinary world as a hero, having overcome these obstacles (Finding Joe 2011). There is no innate definition for what it means to be a hero, although Campbell establishes this cycle as a mode through which heroism may be constituted. When the character in a story goes to a mysterious world and is faced with their inner fears, where they are tested up until the moment of crisis, or whether the character overcomes this crisis and is redeemed becoming a greater and better person, in broad social terms, this constitutes heroism.

In the film created by Patrick Takaya Solomon *Finding Joe* (2011), 'the hero's journey' is explained as a mythical paradigm describing a cycle that exists in every person's life, that aptly describes the dynamics of human experience. The president of the Joseph Campbell Foundation, Robert Walter (2011), argues that the most significant characteristic of the hero's journey as a paradigm is that it teaches individuals to challenge personal limitations, in the hopes of discovering new possibilities about oneself (as can be observed in the documentary of *Finding*

Joe). What the character experiences may propose useful ways for the audience to deal with similar problems in their own lives, where, "we are not separate from the characters we see in our movies and in our novels, they are us, it is one journey" (Finding Joe 2011). Audience members identify with characters who are able to complete the cycle of the hero's journey.

Identification

Jonathan Cohen, author of *Defining Identification: A Theoretical Look at the Identification of Audiences with Media Characters* (2001) discusses identification as the manner in which an audience member experiences the world through the character's point of view, where identification focuses primarily on the act of sharing the character's perspective (Cohen 2001). Cohen states "Identification is a mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if the events were happening to them" (Cohen 2001, p.245). Identification is a prominent concept in media and communication studies (as well as the study of representation more broadly in cultural studies and critical theory), used to analyse how audience members respond to media characters.

According to Cohen, there is limited empirical study of the notion of *identification* in the context of audience studies that links media and the experience of identification. It is difficult to measure identification, because it is an imaginative experience that occurs during an "altered state of awareness" (Cohen 2001, p.255). However, Cohen however argues that future development of research methods that may measure identification will provide a substantial link between the media and identification (Cohen, 2001). There is no singular definition of identification because there are a variety of diverse theorists that have a different approach to identification applied in different contexts. The definitions, although varied, have one common component, "all of the definitions involve a bond or connection between an individual and

another person (or entity), that the individual adopts traits, attitudes, or behaviours of the other person" (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005, p.326). Therefore, an individual could reflect characteristics of the character they wish to identify with because they desire to be like them in some way. Hoffner and Buchanan, authors of, *Young Adults Wishful Identification with Television Characters: The Role of Perceived Similarity and Character Attributes* (2005), discuss how the term identification, through the lens of mass media literature, has been developed according to the two different terms of identification and wishful identification.

Identification, as Cohen (2001) defines it and as it is understood here, is when the audience member participates in and experiences with regards to what the character is going through in the text or narrative. Cohen introduced this definition stating that "through identification, a viewer loses his or her own identity and assumes the identity of the media character" (Hoffner & Buchnan 2005, p.326). This type of identification is temporary, because the participation during which a viewer adopts the character's feelings and goals only lasts during the act of viewing the programme or film (Hoffner & Buchnan 2005). Cohen introduces his own theory, a four-part method, which can be used to structure the measurement of identification between audiences and media characters. The first part is the feeling of empathy, where the audience member does not feel sad or happy for the character, but feel sad or happy *with* the character (Cohen 2001). The second part is when the audience member is able to share the perspective of the character; this is the cognitive response by means of which the audience member comes to understand why the character is behaving in a particular way (Cohen 2001). The third part is the process of internalisation, which refers to how deeply the audience member shares the same goals and aspirations with the character (Cohen 2001). The fourth and final part is the amount of self-awareness lost during the process of identification, which refers to how

much the audience member is 'absorbed' in the process of identification during exposure to the media character (Cohen 2001). These four parts are central theories to how Cohen attempts to operationalise identification. When the audience empathises with the character, understands the character, and shares goals with that character, and is absorbed entirely by the text, it may result in a deeper enjoyment of the text (Cohen 2001).

Wishful Identification is described as 'long term identification', where scholars recognise this process as an experience that extends after the audience member has finished viewing the text. This form of identification effects the audience member's relationship with the character and is not short term or temporary, but is now long-term, because, even after the viewing situation, the audience member still experiences identification. Hoffner and Buchanan discuss the concept of wishful identification as a particular kind of response to the effects of media as, "a psychological process through which an individual desires or attempts to become like another person" (Hoffner & Buchnan 2005, p.327). In some cases, wishful identification may cause imitation, because the text reveals a character that the viewer desires to be or act (Hoffner & Buchnan 2005). This means that the viewer desires to connect with the character, not only on an emotional level, but also on a physical level. The physical level of Wishful Identification goes far beyond imitation or behavioural influences, and in some cases, it has been reported that audience members have changed their personal values, activities or even appearances in order to fulfil the desire to be like or act like the media character.

Identification and wishful identification are powerful psychological experience. Cohen states that, "strong identification leads to greater enjoyment of media messages and, possibly, to greater impact" (Cohen 2001, p.260). This is due to the persuasive effects the way that audiences feel when they are introduced to characters. They are offered new possibilities to understand the

world through a different point of view, which could form a new attitude in or outlook from the audience.

Representation

Stuart Hall, the author of *'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices'* (1997) discusses the constructionist approach of representation, that is, how meaning is constructed in culture. Hall states that "representation is the production of meaning through language" (Hall 1997, p.16), where language in this sense refers to the different methods of communicating information from one person to another. The various languages that are used as 'systems of representation' are not necessarily a part of the linguistic domain. Language is a vehicle that stands for any material object in the world, such as a word, image or sound that can be 'read', interpreted or decoded (Hall 1997).

Constructionist theory, significantly influenced by Saussure's linguistic theories, holds that, "we use signs, organized [sic] into languages of different kinds, to communicate meaningfully with others" (Hall 1997, p.28). It is the symbolic function of the sign that that constructs meaning, not the material aspect of the sign. A sign can be any sound, word or visual image that stands for something else (Parsa 2004). De Saussure offered a dyadic model of a sign, he suggesting that a sign consists of two components, the first is the signifier (word/sound/image) and the second is the signified (concept/interpretation). The sign can only function when the signifier and the signified are evident to the viewer (de Valk & Arnold 2013). The signification is what holds the signifier and the signified together. Signification can only take place when the viewer/interpreter 'reads' the sign, or when "film is governed by a whole myriad of codes and signs that only take on meaning through the interpreter" (de Valk & Arnold

2013, p.69). Parsa puts it at the level of conscious communication, that information is encoded (constructed into a message) and then decoded (interpreted as a message) (Parsa 2004).

Codes can be described as a structure of complex patterns of association, or as Hall notes, "codes fix the relationships between concept and sign" (Hall 1997, p.21), and this means that the social and cultural context of an individual will affect how they interpret material objects that work as signs. Characterisation and narrative structure are the two processes that the *Overwatch* cinematic trailers use in order to enhance the signification of the hero. In order for society to share the same ideology about a particular concept or material object, they must roughly interpret the world in similar ways (Hall 1997). Cinema or film can be described as a visual language, because the image can communicate meaning when it is 'read' by the viewer. The author of *'Media Analysis Techniques'* Arthur Asa Berger (2013), explains how cinematography and *mise-en-scène* could be read and interpreted through the theory of semiotics in order to investigate its meaning (Berger 2013). I argue that, the trailers for *Overwatch* use cinematography and *mise-en-scène* to stylistically represent the character in a cinematic manner, in order to support the signification of the hero.

This research will use semiotics to 'read' the visual language at play in the cinematic trailers. The goal of an advertisement is to inform its target audience about a particular company or product, this information can be communicated using visual language or otherwise known as 'systems of representation'. As Hall accounts for (1997) Barthes developed Saussure's idea of the sign by proposing that there are two levels that create signification. These two levels are the denotative and connotative values of the sign. Barthes suggests that there is an, "analogy between 'natural' language (the phenomenon of speech and writing) and visual 'language'" (Burgin 1982, p.143), and that there are different ways of 'reading' a text. For instance, the

denotative message of the work is one that expresses the style and the physical attributes of the text, that is, all of what the viewer sees at first glance. The connotative message of the work is a more profound understanding of the visual representations that may eventually signify something different from that which is at first displayed. There is a collection of signs that is evident in the animated and gameplay trailers for *Overwatch* that strive to direct the viewer's attention to heroism.

Cinematography and *mise-en-scène* act as a vehicle for identification, because they present a collection of signifiers that transmit information to the audience. The information that the audience receives is intentional, where "the information the viewers receive about the characters is scripted, designed specifically to produce a particular impression in an efficient manner" (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005, p.329). Therefore, it is the representation of the character using signs that control, or determine, the level of identification in the text.

Chapter Two: The use of Narrative Structure in the Development of the Heroic Character

  Overwatch is predominantly a first person shooter multiplayer game that does not contain any cut scenes or in-game narrative input. The story of *Overwatch,* according to Chris Metzen, is not inherent in the active gameplay, because individual matches between players will not have plots (GrosData 2007). The animated and gameplay trailers are examples of how the *Overwatch* team reveal the narrative structure of events in order to show the game and its characters to the public. The game director and vice president Jeff Kaplan states that, "the characters will show some amount of backstory in the game through their chatter, while what happens on them won't be, maps themselves will be part of the story and reference events in the world" (GrosData 2007). The animated and gameplay trailers are a representation of *Overwatch* existing outside of the game space itself.

  Narrative discourse is a tool used for telling or absorbing information, its main purpose is to promote active thinking. The origin of the word 'narrative' based on its Latin etymology consists of two meanings, *gnarus,* knowing and *narro, or* telling, both of which express that the word is used as an instrument to communicate knowledge (Abbott 2002). Michel Foucault is a critical theorist and historian who established the term 'discourse' to account for critical narratives of engagement, "discourse is about the production of knowledge through language" (Hall 1997, p.44) similar to representation, Foucault contends that discourse cannot be created from one source, and it needs to be developed from a vast range of sources. Discourse is "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about" (Hall 1997, p.12), for example, a narrative consists of various visual elements that are read by viewers who recognise the greater discourse to which it belongs. Narrative discourse is the way in which events are represented and how information is conveyed to the viewer through signs that people can relate to.

The animated and gameplay trailers are both part of narrative discourse formed around the game, this means that each trailer's motive is to communicate valuable information to its audience about the game *Overwatch*. The animated and gameplay trailer are similar, in the sense that they both belong to a discourse, in which the purpose of each narrative is different. The animated trailer consists of a linear narrative and the gameplay trailer consists of a nonlinear narrative. Each trailer has a different internal narrative, which infers different objectives. In order to understand nonlinear narrative, it is essential to compare it to linear narrative. Linear and nonlinear narratives can both be analysed using the restorative three act structure, because they both have the pattern of a beginning, middle and end.

The narrative, according to Abbott, can be defined as, "the complex transaction that involves events, their manner of representation (whether it be by a narrator, actor, paint, or some other means) and the audience" (Abbott 2002, p.13). This means that any form of media or artwork can be perceived as a narrative as long as it works as the representation of something aiming to convey information. There are four key differences between the linear animated trailer and the nonlinear gameplay trailer that distinguishes them from one another, because both have different purposes of representation.

Linear/Nonlinear

There are four basic characteristics that propose differences between linear and nonlinear narratives, namely character, energy, structure, and the passive/active observer. These four distinctions provide a complex method of organising the differences and similarities between the linear and nonlinear. The animated trailer for *Overwatch* follows a linear narrative structure and the gameplay trailer follows a nonlinear narrative structure, where each structure has strengths and weaknesses, and is selected based on purpose or intention. Narrative structure is significant

to analyse with regards to how *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* advertises *Overwatch*, nonetheless, this should not imply that storytelling is more vital than the act of gameplay itself (Jenkins 2005). As Jenkins argues, "the goal should be to foster diversification of genres, aesthetics, and audiences, to open gamers to the broadest possible range of experiences" (Jenkins 2005, p.2), where offering the viewer/gamer diverse media experiences may provide a better understanding of the gaming world and its characters, which will motivate the viewer/gamer to engage with the text.

Character identification

The most important aspect of a linear narrative is to make the viewer invested in the protagonist, "the experience of the linear narrative is the invitation for the viewer to identify with the main character" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.155). Ultimately, it is the level of identification with the main character that drives the viewer's interest through the linear storyline (Dancyger & Rush 2007). Nonlinear narratives consist of multiple main characters and not a singular protagonist, where the goal of these multiple characters is often not revealed, or does not exist (Dancyger & Rush 2007). Dancyger and Rush argue that "the consequence is that the viewer is observing character, rather than identifying with a character and moving with the character through a dramatic arc" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.156). Characters are significant in both kinds of narrative structures, but they are used for different purposes. Linear narratives use characters to elevate the experience of identification so that the viewer can empathise, understand, share goals and become absorbed with the main character, like Cohen suggests (2001), to have a greater enjoyment of the text. Nonlinear narratives use characters to establish and promote action, "action supersedes characterization" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.152), the action of the

characters moving through time and space is more significant then how the characters are represented to the audience.

Narrative Energy

The energy of a narrative is established by the tone of how the characters react to certain situations, where an energy needs to exist in both linear and nonlinear narrative aspects. The energy serves to create tension, where it is the goals of the characters in the narrative that create energy (Dancyger & Rush 2007). In linear narratives, energy is created by placing the protagonist in a situation of conflict, where this helps the viewer identify with the main character, because the character is tackling an obstacle. When the goal of the character is challenged, the energy rises. The energy in nonlinear narratives is difficult to create, because the characters usually have no goals or obstacle to overcome as for linear narrative. Energy in nonlinear narrative is created by giving characters "opposing intentions" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.161), which means that one character wants one thing, while another character wants the opposite, creating tension. Another way that nonlinear narratives produce energy is to use dialogue of the characters in an unexpected manner (Dancyger & Rush 2007). The energy establishes some form of tension in linear and nonlinear narratives, both are created differently but have the same intention of using conflict to cause a disruption (Dancyger & Rush 2007).

Narrative Structure

Eckler indicates that traditional/classical linear narratives consist of a restorative three act structure, Act I is the setup/exposition which establishes the context and the main characters of the narrative, Act II is the confrontation which portrays the obstacle and Act III, which is the resolution, the conclusion of the narrative (Eckler 2011). The nonlinear narratives' structure is fragmented and lacks progression, but because there is no dramatic arc, the text becomes

unpredictable and thrilling. Dancyger and Rush explain the three act structure in relation to a hypothetical two act structure that is established in a nonlinear narratives, in order to create some form of comparison, noting that "the nonlinear film may be organized [sic] in two acts or without act breaks" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.160), the linear narrative uses act breaks to plan the characters growth in the text, the nonlinear narrative has no intention of portraying character growth. Nonlinear narratives deliberately go against structure, but it is significant to use the restorative three-act structure as a template to provide a justifiable comparison.

Linear narrative uses a chronological sequence, where events are portrayed in the order in which they have occurred, which helps the viewer move from a critical moment that opens the story, through the rising action of the dramatic arc and towards the resolution, which finally closes the story (Dancyger & Rush 2007). A dramatic arc forms the three-act structure that organises the viewer's expectations. The identification that the viewer feels will carry them through the dramatic arc to its ending, granting the viewer a sense of completion. Nonlinear narratives are told using a loose chronological sequence, the experience of time is random and the scenes are not organised or linked (Dancyger & Rush 2007). There is no dramatic arc in the nonlinear narrative (Dancyger & Rush 2007), the characters do not proceed on a dramatic arc and the plot is not used anymore, because chronological order is no longer significant. The characters do not proceed on a dramatic arc, because the plot is muted as chronological time is no longer significant (Dancyger & Rush 2007). The experience of the non-linear film can involve a sense of randomness, because there is no dramatic arc. The non-linear structure consists of an exploration of situations and scenes.

Active/Passive Viewer

There are two ways in which a viewer can observe a narrative, the first is a passive observer and the second is an active observer. The viewer of a linear narrative becomes a passive observer because the text is predetermined; where viewers understand that different genres have fixed outlines, the arc is predetermined and follows a story form expectation, for example, if a viewer decides to watch a comedy, they expect there to be a positive and happy ending (Dancyger & Rush 2007). The viewer is a passive observer, because they have no influence on how the narrative will unfold, and it is primarily a safe viewing experience (Dancyger & Rush 2007). The process of identification places the viewer into the position of a passive observer, in linear narratives it is the main character that exercises choice, not the viewer or audience (Dancyger & Rush 2007). The linear narrative emphasises feeling (the story as a whole) rather than sensation (short term). In nonlinear narratives, the viewer becomes an active observer, this means that because the structure is open-ended, there is freedom of interpretation. Dancyger and Rush note that "writers of non-linear video games provide choice for the player in order to encourage involvement" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.163), nonlinear narratives inspire participation and increase the desire for the viewer to became interactive. The non-linear emphasises sensation (short term) rather than feeling (the story as a whole), as with the linear narrative.

How does cinematography effect the narrative?

Cinematography originates from the Greek word meaning, "writing in motion" (Brown 2016, no pagination), this means that the movement of the camera used to film the *mise-en-scène* can act as a signifier that elicits information based on the motion that is applied to the shot. The narrative structure of the film depends on the cinematography of each shot or scene because it is

the vehicle that transports information to the viewer. Brown notes that "as filmmakers, we must direct the audience's attention: 'look here, now look at this, now over here…'" (Brown 2016, no pagination), cinematography has multiple motions and camera movements that viewers can read as signifiers to help them interpret what they are seeing (Berger 2013). Cinematography is used in many different types of narrative structures as a form of transmedia, using a variety of media to propose alternative ways of interpreting information. Cinematography is a significant element of the language of film utilised as a cinematic technique, and shows direct resemblance to camera movement within games (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008). In the narrative sequence of games the camera tends to push the focus towards the spatiality of the gaming environment, "the camera can move through space, turn corners, and negotiate movement through buildings" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008, p.311). The type of camera shot and the type of camera movement is pivotal when investigating representation, because it is not only a question of 'what' is being filmed, but 'how' it is being filmed that is significant to interpret the intentions of the narrative.

Cinematography is the process of filming, which includes the *mise-en-scène*, involving camera angles (mid-shot, medium-shot, close-up etc.), positioning of the camera, camera movements, the framing of the scene, and any special camera effects. Semiotics can be applied to any media that uses the camera as its medium, first and foremost because camera angles can function as signifiers (Berger 2013). There are four camera shots and seven camera motions that employ conventional meaning, established with audiences over the course of cinematic history, when they are practiced.

Berger (2013) suggests the close-up shot, medium shot, long shot and the full shot can act as signifiers of a film. By way of example, the close up shot shows only the face of the character,

which could signify the feeling of intimacy. The medium shot shows most of the body of the character, which could signify a personal relationship. The long shot reveals the setting and numerous characters and this could signify the context and scope. The full shot shows the full body of a character and this could signify any social relationship between characters. This demonstrates how the cinematography in the cinematic trailers of *Overwatch* will be investigated as signifiers constructing meaning for the viewer to decode (Berger, 2013).

According to Berger (2013) there are seven camera movements or motions that can also work as signifiers of film, pan down, pan up, dolly in, fade in, fade out, cut and wipe. Pan down is a camera motion looking downwards, this signifies authority of power. Pan up occurs when the camera moves upwards, this signifies weakness or smallness. Dolly in is when the camera moves inward, signifying focus or observation on the focal point. Fade in is when the shot is blank and then fades to an image, signifying it the beginning of a film. Fade out is when the shot fades from an image to a blank screen, signifying the end of a film. Cut is a drastic change from one shot to another shot, signifying excitement. Finally, wipe is when the image or shot is wiped off of the screen, signifying a forced conclusion (Berger 2013). These are all signifiers that help viewers interpret what they see in film, they are cinematic techniques that work as visual language developed as a set of conventions over the course of cinema history (Berger 2013).

Application to animated trailer

This analysis will involve a discussion about the restorative three-act structure and how it is prevalent in the animated trailer for *Overwatch*. Dancyger and Rush (2007) introduce the concept of the restorative three-act structure in their chapter two titled *Structure*. The animated trailer represents the game in a form of a linear narrative, with a restorative three-act structure. Dancyger and Rush indicate that the most common articulation of the structural model is the

three act restorative structure (Dancyger & Rush 2007). This structure consists of three acts: Act I is the setup/exposition, which establishes the context and the main characters of the narrative; Act II is the confrontation, which portrays the obstacle; and Act III, which provides the resolution of the narrative. These acts are the structure that forms the conventional storyline narrative and work as a guideline according to which the sequence of events will unravel. In the animated trailer for *Overwatch,* the main character is the oldest boy named Brian, who is present in Act I, Act II and Act III. This character drives the story, because he is a large aspect of how the three-act structure unfolds as a cohesive storyline. Dancyger and Rush write:

> For Spielberg, the classical narrative is used to celebrate the potential in the character. Even if life is sacrificed, it's a choice the character makes. The plot exists to energize that struggle, to make a hero of the main character or to acknowledge that views of children can be wise, sometimes wiser than the views of adults. It's a romantic vision. It represents the classic narrative impulse at its clearest (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.67).

Brian's character attaches itself to each act because it escalates with the dramatic arc. Dancyger and Rush (2007) suggest that each act has a *point of crisis,* called the *plot point,* and that this is what propels one act into the next act. Dancyger and Rush note that "the plot point hooks into the action and spins the story around in another direction" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.18), where this creates the energy and tension that links all the acts together. The *plot point* in each act will be closely investigated through the use of cinematography in the language of film. The three acts are character-driven, and are able to articulate character development through

these stages, thus proving how the animated trailer for *Overwatch* could be beneficial in representing the protagonist's growth and accomplishment in becoming a hero.

Figure 8: The Hero's Journey Model (Voytilla & Vogler 1999, p.2).

The cycle of the hero's journey is apparent in the three-act structure as follows: Act I involving separation; Act II involving initiation; and Act III, involving resolution. Campbell's formula of the Hero's Journey will be used here to analyse the linear narrative structure in relation to the three-act structure. According to Voytilla and Vogler, "the Hero's Journey [sic] provides a flexible and adaptable model with the potential for an infinite variety of shapes and progressions of stages" (Voytilla & Vogler 1999, p.1), where the cycle can be applied to the

restorative three-act structure, because each act displays character growth and development. The hero's journey model (see Figure 8) illustrates twelve stages that the hero will experience in chronological sequence (depending on the story). These twelve stages are, the ordinary world, the call to adventure, refusal of the call, meeting the mentor, crossing the threshold, tests, approach to the inmost cave, the ordeal, reward, the road back, the resurrection and return with elixir (Voytilla & Vogler 1999). These stages may shift, change or even be avoided in stories, but can be used as a guideline to establish the character's growth. All conventional stories share common structural components that are common with the stages found in the hero's journey (Voytilla & Vogler 1999). The structure will vary depending on the hero, this is because not all stories are exactly the same or follow the same stages. The hero's journey model is closely associated with the restorative three-act structure, as seen in figure eight. The hero's journey cycle can be broken down into three acts that connect to the hero's character growth throughout each stage of his/her journey.

Act I

In Act I, the two brothers are introduced to the viewer in their ordinary world; the ordinary world is also known as the hero's home (Voytilla & Vogler 1999). The call to adventure exists all around Brian in the *Overwatch* museum, particularly after he and his brother watch the projected video about the *Overwatch* history, team heroes, and what *Overwatch* stands for. The call to adventure here is offered in the form of "a message of announcement" (Voytilla & Vogler 1999, p.3), while Brian watches the projected video. Brian refuses the call to adventure by turning away in scepticism once the projected video is finished. The refusal usually occurs when the hero is unwilling to leave his ordinary world, afraid of failure (Voytilla and Vogler, 1999). Brian is introduced as a withdrawn teenager who has a great amount of disbelief in *Overwatch*,

"the ordinary world gives us the opportunity to identify with the hero's drives, urges, and problems, while showing us unique characteristics that make him three-dimensional" (Voytilla & Vogler 1999, p.2), Brian is walking through the museum, hunched over with his head down, his hood covering his head, and his hands in his pockets. Brian's flaw is that he has no faith in the *Overwatch* team, and he holds a deep resentment towards it. The cinematography of Act I in Figure 9 accurately portrays how Brian is a three-dimensional character in his ordinary world has a feeling of angst towards *Overwatch*.

Figure 9: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch* (1'20") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Shot type

The denotative descriptive level of the shot type during Act I in figure nine includes Brian appearing reserved and negative about how *Overwatch* has been shut down and discontinued. The shot of Act I is a 'medium shot', because it shows most of each character's body, from their waist upwards. The medium shot, according to Berger, signifies the personal relationship between each character in the shot. Brian is looking away from Timmy, and does not

want to interact with him at all. The relationship between the two brothers is conflicted, because they have different views about *Overwatch.* Brian has no hope in the *Overwatch* heroes. Timmy feels the complete opposite, he is very positive and vocal about how incredible the heroes of *Overwatch* are, and he believes that these heroes will save the world. The medium shot signifies distance between the two brothers, both physically and emotionally. The brothers have opposite affiliations towards *Overwatch*, where the distance signifies a certain detachment.

Camera Movement Type

The 'dolly shot' is different to zooming, namely when the camera stays still and the focal length changes. The dolly camera will move in relation to the character (Brown, 2016). When the camera is moved closer towards the character, it will create a superior visual expectation of movement for the viewer. Berger suggests that a dolly in camera motion signifies observation and focus (Berger 2013). When Timmy is acting out how Tracer shoots her pulse pistols, Brian looks away from Timmy. The camera slowly dolly's in (very slightly) towards Brian's face. The term 'dolly shot' means to move the camera forwards or backwards on a horizontal axis parallel to the ground (Kundert-Gibbs & Derakhshani 2005). The camera moves inward towards the object or character that the director wants to viewer to acknowledge or pay attention to at that specific moment of the shot. The camera movement of *dollying-in,* according to Berger, can signify observation or focus in cinematography (Berger 2013). The movement is subtle but evident; if the camera is moving towards Brian then he is the established focal point. The camera's shot placement and movement establish Brian as the main character. The purpose of the first acts *plot point* is to setup the story, to reveal Brian's personality and attitude.

The persuasive effects of identification produce a greater impact on the audience member, because it "increases the intensity of, and involvement with, the exposure to mediated

texts and makes their meaning more memorable" (Cohen 2001, p.260). Act I introduces the

protagonist and intentionally attempts to anchor the viewer to the experience of identification. In

linear narratives, identification is the most significant process that needs to be established in the

first act. It is the connection between the protagonist and sharing one perspective that increases

the enjoyment of the narrative (Cohen, 2001). Cohen notes further that, "identification means

that the knowledge of the audience members is processed from the character's perspective and is

transformed into empathic emotions" (Cohen 2001, p.251), where Act I invites the viewer to

identify with the protagonist in order to captivate the viewer into the story by introducing Brian

in his ordinary world and establishing that he has refused the call to adventure.

Act II

Act II starts when one of the *Overwatch* heroes named Winston falls through the glass

roof of the museum, whereupon a fight scene takes place. Winston asks the boys if they are

enjoying the exhibition of *Overwatch* and then immediately tells them to get to cover

(PlayOverwatch 2014). Brian feels protective over his little brother Timmy, and grabs his hand,

pulling him to a safe place to hide. Winston and Tracer are struggling stop Reaper and Widow-

maker from taking the gauntlet. Act II demonstrates Brian crossing the threshold, which is the

moment Brian's concealed heroic nature comes to life when he goes through the experience of

self-realisation (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.180). Brian reveals his true self by crossing the

threshold, where he has to accept his fears and help Winston and Tracer protect the gauntlet.

"Crossing the threshold signifies that the hero has finally committed to the journey" (Voytilla &

Vogler 1999, p.3), Brian is going from his ordinary world and entering the special world (see

Figure 10). Brian understands he needs to join the fight, because Winston and Tracer are losing

the fight. This moment of self-realisation is apparent in Figure 10, where the cinematography

elevates Brian's decision to cross the threshold. Brian is able to rise above his conflict and earn redemption.

Figure 10: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch* (4'06") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Shot type

In Act II the heroes of *Overwatch* are introduced as secondary characters, and this is where Brian is confronted with an obstacle. The shot is a medium shot, which draws focus to the relationship between the two brothers, similar to Act I. Timmy is facing Brian, the viewer cannot see his own facial expression. The aim of this camera shot is to emphasise the facial expression of Brian deep in thought, where Timmy's head is blurred out in the foreground, but Brian's face is in focus, the shot shifts to a close-up shot but camera position remains a medium shot, revealing the relationship between Brian and Timmy at that moment of self-realisation.

Camera Movement Type

The camera movement is identical to the movement in Act I, *dolly in.* There is a moment in Act II where Brian thinks about whether or not he should stay and hide with his younger

brother Timmy, or if he should help the hero's fight. The camera moves inward, focusing on

Brian, where he is confronted with an important obstacle that he needs to decide whether or not

he should face. Act II involves the main character finally realising their mistake, in this case,

Brian's mistake is doubting *Overwatch's* heroes in Act I. Brian had no faith in the heroes before

he is confronted with them in his own life, he now acknowledges that they are protecting him

and his little brother from harm. According to Dancyger and Rush, the highest level of

identification occurs when the main character realises their mistakes, this is because the viewer is

now "in sync with the character" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.24). The character and the audience

have equal insight into the obstacle that needs to be challenged. In Act II, "the structure leads us

to believe that if the character had made a different decision, the story would be over" (Dancyger

& Rush 2007, p.24), the *dolly-in* camera movement focuses on Brian during the moment he

decides what path he should take. The main characters' act of willingness is what propels the

narrative into Act III (Dancyger & Rush 2007).

The energy of the linear narrative reaches its height in Act II, where Brian is placed in a

conflicting situation that causes tension, because the decision he makes will determine the fate of

the storyline. Brian is the protagonist, and it is his reactions that control the energy in the linear

narrative, where the camera shot and movement work cohesively to capture Brian's endeavour

while he decides how to challenge his obstacle. Identification with the Brian occurs because his

goal of helping Tracer and Winston save the gauntlet is being challenged. Cohen notes, "the

audience member comes to internalize the character's goals within the narrative" (Cohen 2001,

p.252). In Act II Brian participates in his heroic quest, and is initiated into the world of

Overwatch, because he has to take on the role of a hero. When the viewer acknowledges that

Brian is in a conflicting situation, this elicits empathy based on personal experience of struggle

(Cohen 2001). The protagonist's deed of willingness to decide to take on a challenge is what propels the narrative into Act III (Dancyger & Rush 2007).

Act III

Once Brian undergoes self-realisation, he participates in the fight by protecting the gauntlet. This is the when Brian engages with his ordeal, when he is endangered with a life threatening situation (Voytilla & Vogler 1999). Brian uses the gauntlet by fitting it onto his right arm and hand like a large glove, to strike a punch at Window-Maker. The gauntlet on Brian's right hand has enough force to blast Widow-Maker across the museum. The gauntlet malfunctions and breaks after Brian has used it to punch Widow-Maker. Widow-Maker and Reaper catapult themselves out of the museum once they recognise that they are outnumbered, when Brian joins the fight. When Brian gives the gauntlet to Tracer, there is a moment where he discovers that there is a hero to be found within himself. That, although he is young, and lacks confidence in himself or in *Overwatch*, he is able to conquer any obstacle he faces. Brian has a second chance to earn redemption and to become a hero. Cohen writes, "the meeting of identification is a species of empathy, in which we do not merely sympathize [sic] with a person, we become that person" (Cohen 2001, p.257), the viewer will experience identification when the character undergoes self-realisation because the viewer has adopted the characters perspective and has shared the perspective of that character through all three acts. The viewer is able to identify with what obstacle the character is going through and is able to grow with the character. In each respective act, Brian changes in progressive phases, which articulates character development and finally character restoration (Dancyger & Rush 2007).

Figure 11: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch* (5'06") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Shot type

Act III uses a medium shot, again, focusing on Brian and Timmy's relationship. Timmy is standing behind Brian, which could signify that Timmy now feels safe with his brother, because Brian is able to conquer evil just like the heroes of *Overwatch.* They are much closer now after the obstacle that Brian has faced and the connotation establishes the bond these two brothers now have after going through such a difficult situation or task. Cohen writes that "films use camera angles to foster identification" (Cohen 2001, p.257), where the medium shot camera angle is used in Act III to invite the viewer into the story to identify with the main character (Cohen 2001).

Camera Movement Type

There are two camera movements that are prevalent in the third act's shot, dolly-in and pan down. Dolly-in is used in Act I and Act II and is maintained throughout each act break, because it creates a sense of focus to emphasise the main characters actions. The camera dollies-in towards Brian in Act III while he is holding the broken gauntlet, where the camera movement

establishes that Brian is going through a very important experience, because he is finally feeling

self-realisation. The other camera movement that is used in this shot is called pan down or tilting,

which means that the camera is rotating on an up-and-down axis (De Leeuw 1997). Brian and

Timmy are being looked down upon by the camera, whilst both observing Tracer. This camera

movement, according to Berger, suggests that the object or character of the camera's focus

reflects weakness or smallness (Berger 2013). Tracer is taller than Brian and Timmy, therefore

this pan down/tilting movement could also suggest her greatness as a hero, and she is a superior

as a hero, looking down at the two children. The children are shown to be smaller through the

pan down camera movement, suggesting that they are mortal and vulnerable in relation to Tracer.

Figure 11 shows Brian giving the gauntlet to Tracer, in the moment of Brian's

resurrection. This stage of the Hero's Journey, Brian, as for a trajectory described in other

contexts, "is reborn or transformed with the attributes of his ordinary self in addition to the

lessons and insights from the characters that he has met along the road" (Voytilla & Vogler

1999, p.5). Brian has transformed into a hero himself, because he faced a near death obstacle to

restore peace, where he is resurrected from his old self, who was once negative about *Overwatch*

and its heroes.

When Brian hands the gauntlet to Tracer, she looks at the Brian and Timmy and says,

"you know, the world could always use more heroes" (PlayOverwatch 2014). This is the

resolution of the story. Kaplan explains that this is the moment when *Blizzard Entertainment*

Studios calls their potential gamers to be a hero in *Overwatch.* In the Blizzcon 2014 *Overwatch*

unveiled panel, Kaplan states, "I love when Tracer in the announce trailer at the very end says,

'you know the world could always use more heroes', we felt like that was us talking to you guys,

inviting you into the world" (PCInvasion PC Gaming 2014). This is where the cycle of the

Hero's Journey restarts, and this call to adventure is the means by which *Blizzard Entertainment Studios* encourages the viewers to come to identify with the heroes and experience in the world of *Overwatch* through the participation of gameplay. Johnson explains that the cycle of the hero's journey exists in films is actually speaking to the viewers, "it is that impulse within us, it's that seed of potential that wants to be actualised" (Finding Joe 2011). The animated trailer for *Overwatch* is inviting the viewers to discover their own hero within themselves, through the game.

Application to gameplay trailer

Jenkins introduces the term, 'spatiality' as the core drive of gameplay narrative experience, because, "many games centre around the struggle to explore, map, and master contested spaces" (Jenkins 2005, p.4). The structure of space in a game will assist in providing the viewer with a compelling experience (Jenkins 2005). Jenkins structures his framework of 'spatial stories and environmental storytelling' into four main categories, namely: evocative spaces, enacting stories, embedded narratives and emergent narratives. Investigating the nonlinear narrative structure of the gameplay trailer for *Overwatch* will require the model Jenkins two structures of spatiality. The first is evocative spaces where I investigate the relationship between cinematography and environmental spaces. The second is enacted stories, where I establish how the cinematography effectively represents the characters, and specifically how opposing characters create the conflict. These concepts, theorised by Jenkins, address the design of game spaces, and how they strategically utilise space to instil narrative possibility in interactive gameplay. These two cases will be used to examine how the gameplay trailer for *Overwatch* is able to give the viewer information about the characters, or how they could interact

within the space. The narrative uses the environment within the game space to provide information about the game and its characters.

The performance of gameplay, according to Lindley is "a combination of resource management, strategic and tactical decisions" (Lindley 2002, p.208). In the *Overwatch* gameplay trailer, these potential decisions are represented through the games' maps and through character conflict. When comparing a nonlinear narrative to the linear narrative, it is critical to establish their structural differences regarding the restorative three-act structure. The nonlinear narrative has no direct plot trajectory, or dramatic arc, because it has an alternative intention to that of the restorative three act structure. Dancyger and Rush, argue that the nonlinear narrative is structured in two acts (Dancyger & Rush 2007), meaning that the *Overwatch* gameplay trailer can be analysed through two major acts with act breaks that use environmental spatiality to create energy and tension.

There are two acts that are prevalent in the gameplay trailer that are repeated. Act I portrays the games maps, then Act II jumps to character conflict, after Act II there is a jump back to the Act I of the games maps, and then another jump back to Act II of the characters fighting. The gameplay trailer does not contain an Act III, because there is no resolution; instead, Act II jumps straight back to a repeat Act I. Therefore, the two acts become a cycle that is repeated to produce the effect of action within the gameplay space, where, as Jenkins writes in another context, "spatial stories are held together by broadly defined goals and conflicts and pushed forward by the characters movement across the map" (Jenkins 2005, p.7). The camera shots and movement of the environment magnifies the spatiality of the games maps and characters that inhabit it. The nonlinear structure involving the two-act cycle, works cohesively with the

cinematography to establish the essence of space and how it is used to signify interactive

conflict.

Act I

The first act in the gameplay trailer focuses on the representation of the environment,

portraying its depth, three-dimensionality and open space in which the characters will participate

in during the act of gameplay. Act I introduces the first map created for *Overwatch*, situated in

Egypt at the Giza Plateau with the title 'Temple of Anubis' (see Figure 12). Identification with

the character is no longer important in the nonlinear narrative, because it is superseded by the

space and the action that takes place within the space. Evocative spaces, according to Jenkins,

describe "spatial stories [which] can evoke pre-existing narrative associations" (Jenkins 2005,

p.5), which could mean that the space within the gaming environment might reference former

narratives which the player/viewer could recognise. The gameplay trailer offers its

viewers/players a vivid representation of environmental details. A sequence of environments is

represented that are displayed to the viewer and they offer strong images that represent the maps

in the game. These maps represent the gaming space through which the player could manoeuvre,

using their chosen hero. The game director and vice president of *Overwatch* Jeff Kaplan states

that "the characters will show some amount of backstory in the game through their chatter while

what happens on them won't be, maps themselves will be part of the story and reference events

in the world" (GrosData 2007). There are hidden narratives located in the gameplay

environments that constitute evocative space.

Figure 12: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (00'19") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Shot type

The shot type is a long shot, used to show the viewer the setting characters that are present in the narrative (Berger 2013). The long shot, according to Berger, conveys scope or context, enabling the viewer to acknowledge the location and the space within the games environment. This type of shot can be linked to Jenkins' evocative spaces, because it offers the viewer a "well-developed mental map of the spaces" (Jenkins 2005, p.6), this is a strategic attempt to introduce the staging ground where the games heroes' will perform their attacks and defenses.

Camera Movement Type

The gameplay trailer is a nonlinear narrative structure that utilises cinematography to develop the space of the environment in *Overwatch*. According to Eleftheriotis, the goal of mobility in cinematography is to "explore and reveal the three-dimensional volume of objects and space" (Eleftheriotis 2010, p.40), where movement of the camera will intensify the three dimensionality of the environment or subject matter. The mobility of a camera movement can

transform the space and perspective of the environment into a solid more vivid representation of the games' maps (Eleftheriotis 2010). *The Temple of Anubis* is the game map that is filmed using a pan camera movement. The word pan is short for panoramic, a horizontal movement that moves 180 degrees from either left or right (Brown 2016). The definition of panning is when the camera rotates on "a side to side axis (parallel to the ground)" (De Leeuw 1997, p.114). The pan and tilt camera movements are the most basic motions in cinematography that are easy to work with, because they mimic a human's behaviour of viewing, where, "when we watch an event, our tendency is to stand still and move our heads" (De Leeuw 1997, p.114). Panning will feel like a natural movement, as if the viewer is the participant looking around the *mise-en-scène* of the game's environment. When the camera moves through the gameplay environment, it increases the viewer's awareness of volume and space (Eleftheriotis 2010).

Act I represents the space of the environment using a pan camera movement, the camera slowly moves from right to left. When the camera pans through the Temple of Anubis in the gameplay trailer, its purpose is to set up the scene to make the viewer aware of the surroundings, for example, "a pan through the town at the start of a movie, are designed to set the scene for the audience" (De Leeuw 1997, p.115). In the first act, it is necessary to portray the spatiality of the game, where identification is not the main objective in a nonlinear narrative. The space in which the action will take place between the characters surpasses identification, because the viewer of a nonlinear narrative is observing, not identifying with a character. There are no characters in the first act, the audience is being introduced to, "specific visual information that informs them about the content and context of the scene" (De Leeuw 1997, p.115), and the camera consequently suggests how to 'read' this text using pan camera movements.

If cinematography is one of the four elements in the language of film, this infers that camera movement can be read as a visual language. Since most languages are written from left to right, and text is predominantly a chronological sequence that gives information to the reader, the order of events helps the reader understand the content. The nonlinear film is acting against the order of events, where this anti-chronology is prevalent in the camera movement. The camera movement is moving from right to left which suggests a backwards, loose sequence that is out of order, "reading film images is influences by the same mental processes involved in writing and reading language" (Nielsen 2007, p.53). The right to left motion means that the director is suggesting an alternative method of viewing the trailer. The introduction scene focuses on the exploration of a situation, where Dancyger and Rush propose that nonlinear narratives place a larger emphasis on the exploration of a scene than on its exposition (Dancyger & Rush 2007). The right to left motion of the camera panning over the environment could reinforce the impression of exploration.

Act II

Act II of the gameplay trailer involves the two opposing teams of heroes using the map as a battlefield to fight one another. At this stage, the camera is not focused on the environment as in Act I, but on the characters that are wandering and interacting in the environment. Enacting stories, "can provide a staging ground where narrative events are enacted" (Jenkins 2005, p.5), meaning that despite stories taking place within the gaming environment, they do not have to follow a plot trajectory, because they are driven by spatial exploration and not plot development. The design of the game world facilitates the protagonist's movement forward through obstacles in order to accomplish a resolution (Jenkins 2005). This portrays the enacted representation of gameplay and the way in which characters interact with one another in the environment. Enacted

stories could be regarded as the gameplay in *Overwatch,* because the player is undergoing

obstacles in the game with their chosen character and this helps drive the games narrative

forward. In gameplay, the player is exploring the game's environment so as to accomplish

certain tasks to move forward in the game and achieve goals.

Figure 13: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch*

(00'24") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Figure 14: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch*

(00'45") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Shot Type

There are two camera shots that represent what Dancyger and Rush (2007), call 'opposing intentions' in Act II, where both are long shots, showing the relationship between the characters with the environment. The public distance between each opposing team is established by showing two similarly framed shots of two different teams coming out of two different locations (sides) of the map. The first shot in Act II is of the defense team that is let out of their base first, because they are required to equip themselves for an enemy attack. The second shot is of the attacking team, which occurs after the shot of the defense team because the attackers have to wait till the defense team is ready. Both teams are introduced using different shots to create an opposition, the defense team is grouped into one shot and the attacking team is grouped into one shot.

Camera Movement Type

The energy of the narrative is established in Act II using different camera motions, the first movement of the defense team is a dolly out. On a live action film set, "the dolly shot can also be referred to as tracking, trucking, or traveling" (Kundert-Gibbs & Derakhshani 2005, p.58), because the camera follows the movement of the character or object it is capturing. Camera movement must always be motivated, "the movement should not just be for the sake of moving the camera" (Brown 2016, no pagination), and each shot of the gameplay trailer follows the action of each team, when they are let out of their bases using the dolly shot. In Act II, the first shot is of the defense team leaving their base, the dolly shot is moving backwards, away from the characters. The dolly shot is tracking the movement of the defense team running out onto the map to show the significance of space and territory.

The cinematic techniques introduce profound connotations of the first shot in Act II, when the dolly shot moves outwards. The camera only moves backwards when the characters move forward, where the result is that the camera is intentionally moving backwards to follow the characters that have now entered their quest. The dolly movement starts tracking the movement of the characters and the camera movement is utilised to "accompany the journey" (Kundert-Gibbs & Derakhshani 2005, p.58) of the characters. The camera shifting backwards with the characters' motion also controls the distance from the character to the viewer, once again emphasising space and terrain. The cameras movement connects to Jenkins concept of enacted spaces, because the gameplay narrative may not unfold in a linear structure, but the conflicts and goals are propelled forward by the movement of the character across the map (Jenkins 2013).

The second shot in Act II represents the characters differently than the first shot, where the opposing team is now allowed out of their base to come and attack the other team's defenses. When the attacking team sprints out of their base, the 'dolly shot' moves towards the characters. The 'dolly shot' moves forward, but the characters are running so fast that they run past the camera. This suggests that the characters have a sense of urgency in the manner of their speed to attack the other team. When the camera moves inwards towards characters, it signifies observation of the characters, although, these characters run so fast that they disregard the camera moving closer towards them. The sense of space has been depleted, because all the gameplay action is going to take place on the other side of the map.

Shot one and two in Act II are both used strategically to create the energy in the nonlinear narrative. Energy is created by portraying two teams on opposite sides of the map from those who are about to fight one another. The different camera movements represent opposite sides,

the backwards motion for the defense team, and the forwards motion for the attacking team, signifying that each team has a different agenda and has opposing intentions.

Other than the camera motion, there is an additional characteristic of the narrative in Act II that enhances each team's oppositional conflict. Dancyger and Rush have noted that "in the non-linear story, voice is central" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.162), there is a voice in the gameplay trailer that is called Athena, this is an AI (Artificial Intelligence) system that announces the objectives in gameplay (Gamepedia n.d.). The voice Athena is a vocal tool used in game narration to help the viewer/player understand the intention of the game. In Act II the first shot introduces the team that is defending, Athena says, "Attackers incoming, prepare your defenses" (PlayOverwatch 2014). The second shot introduces the opposing team that is attacking the defenders, when the attackers are getting ready to fight, where Athena says, "prepare to attack, 3, 2, 1, capture the objective" (PlayOverwatch 2014). Wendy Despain, the author of 'Professional Techniques for Video Game Writing' talks about the 'hidden narrator' that is prevalent in games. Despain suggests that "instead of an external voice, the game puts the narrator inside the game" (Despain 2008, p.132), Athena's voice in *Overwatch* offers the player narrative information through the act of gameplay (Despain 2008). The immersive experience of gameplay is greater when the narrator is experienced internally within the game space. Athena's voice is integrated into the gameplay trailer to inform the viewers about what each team needs to do, and this dialogue accompanies the camera movement to familiarise the viewer with an immersive sensation.

Act I Repeated

Straight after Act II, the nonlinear structure jumps back to Act I, however there is a difference in the way the environment and space is represented to the viewer. There are eight

different shots that portray three of *Overwatch's* maps. The three maps that are shown are 'King's Row', 'Hanamura' and the 'Temple of Anubis'. Kings Row is the first map shown, there are two shots that introduce the opposite sides of the map, where the first shot is the base for the attackers, and the second shot is of the base for the defenders. The game's spatiality is now connecting the environment with the opposing team's locations (bases). The second map that is portrayed is Hanamura, through four shots, one after the other. The first three shots are of one side of Hanamura maps, where this side of the map is located for the attacking team and is close to the first point objective (a landmark that needs to be captured). The fourth shot is of the complete opposite side of the map. This location is where the defenders base is positioned. This is similar to Kings Row, where both portray the opposition of each team through spatial locations. The third map is of the Temple of Anubis, where the two shots show the attackers side of the map. Each map offers the viewer various locations of the three maps.

Figure 15: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'28") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Figure 16: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'31") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Figure 17: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'39") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Shot Type

The maps comprise eight long shots, signifying a progressive scope of the respective maps settings (Berger, 2013). The non-linear film is random and unpredictable, which is vital because "the intensity of the individual scene" (Dancyger & Rush 2007, p.157) is more effective

than an organised chronological structure that progresses like the linear narrative. This intensity is evident in the way the shots of each map change at a fast pace, where each cut creates a fast-paced delivery of the camera shots, which evokes a sense of action. The denotation of a camera 'cut' is when one shot switches to another instantly, where the connotation, according to Berger, stimulates a sense of excitement in the viewer because of the obscure, fast-paced changing shots through each environment.

Camera Movement Type

The three maps are portrayed using panning and tilting camera movements in no specific structure or order. In Act I (Figure 12), the shot discussed has a panning motion. In the Act I repeated (Figure's 15, 16 and 17), the sequence of shots that display the three maps include variations of panning and tilting movements. The tilting camera movement refers to when the camera moves up and down in a vertical motion, while simultaneously staying in one fixed position (De Leeuw 1997). The camera shots use a variety of motion, where some are only tilting, and some are only panning, while other shots are using both tilting and panning movements simultaneously. Pans and tilts are used to track the action in the scene, where if there is no character to track in the scene, then the camera will follow descriptive information about the environment to "flavor the action" (De Leeuw 1997, p.115). This is similar to Act I (Figure 12), the camera movement mimics the way the viewer will naturally observe the subject matter in the scene (De Leeuw 1997). The camera motion is more fluid in (Figure's 15, 16 and 17) than in (Figure 12) because it is now using pan and tilt in a simultaneous manner, which will make the movement seem even more natural to the viewer. These camera movements are used to imprint the maps in the viewer's minds, so that when the potential player plays the *Overwatch* game, they will have a strong mental map of King's Row, Hanamura and the Temple of Anubis.

Act II Repeated

Act II is the final act, this act depicts focuses on the characters abilities in the game and on how the player is going to interact within the gameplay environment. Act II introduces players to the potential immersive experiences in the game *Overwatch.* Immersion is described as "absorption in the narrative of a game or identification with a character" (Nacke & Lindley 2010, p.3), and this act is used to excite or entice the viewer to become an active player of the game. This act represents a predetermined experience of gameplay immersion, where the viewer is being shown what immersive experiences can occur when playing the game by viewing the act of gameplay. The cinematography assists in the signification of the hero, using three different camera shots, and camera movements, to create a feeling of identification through immersion. The concept of immersion is defined as, "a gradual, time-based, progressive experience that includes the suppression of all surroundings, together with focused attention and involvement in the sense of being in a virtual world" (Nacke & Lindley 2010, p.3). Immersion is introduced to the viewer of the nonlinear gameplay trailer, where it portrays one of the heroes, Reaper, participating in the game.

Figure 18: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'49") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Shot Type

Point of view, or POV, "is the perspective from which the reader experiences the action of a story" (Rasley 2008, p.9), the viewer is experiencing the narrative through the characters perspective and seeing what the character sees. The viewer is able to identify with the character, because the camera acts as the characters eyes, where the viewer will witness the world through the characters POV (Rasley 2008). The denotation of POV is similar to the denotation of FPS (First Person Shooter) in games, both of which show the world through the character's perspective (Nacke & Lindley 2010). In Act II in Figure 18, the first shot is in FPS perspective, as Reaper charges into the building where the opposing team is situated, and the viewer is shown that it is Reaper, because his weapons are foreshortened at the base of the screen. Nacke and Lindley have noted that "in a FPS game, players can fully identify with game characters represented only by weapons or hands" (Nacke & Lindley 2010, p.2). There is also an image of Reaper on bottom left hand side of the screen, representing the character screen that is shown during gameplay, and this changes according to which character the player has chosen to fight.

Figure 19: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'50") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

In Figure 19, the camera jumps backwards into a full shot of Reaper, where this shot establishes the way Reaper interacts through the environment of the game. Reaper is moving through the space in a circular motion, which is how the other players will see him attacking them. The connotation of the full shot portrays Reaper's relationship to the opposing characters in the game, through his actions. This shot also establishes the way Reaper interacts with the environment of the game while using his abilities. The full shot distances Reaper from the viewer, while the shot before this one is FPS perspective which causes the viewer to feel connected to the character. The jump out of Reaper's body demonstrates the contrast between playing and viewing the character. This is where the conflict escalates in the nonlinear narrative of the gameplay trailer. The full shot is utilised to establish how this character fights during gameplay, only once he has finished killing the other characters does the shot jump back to FPS perspective.

Figure 20: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (04'53") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

When Reaper has killed the opposing characters in Figure 19, the shot jumps back to FPS perspective in Figure 20. On the players screen in red and white writing is says, "eliminated Symmetra's sentry turret" and "eliminated Mercy" (PlayOverwatch 2014), this provides information about the attack, and who Reaper has killed. The words on the screen between Reaper's guns confirm exactly what has occurred when Reaper was attacking his enemies during the previous full shot. FPS perspective is used in Figure 18 and Figure 20 because it is slowly introducing the playability of the game through the representation of FPS immersion (Nacke & Lindley 2010).

Camera Movement Type

There are three main camera movements that create contrast between the act of viewing and the act of participating as a player. The first camera movement is through the FPS perspective, where the Reaper's motion is responsible for the movement of the camera because the camera is his sight. The movement is fluid, similar to the way a human would move through

space, where the Reaper's goals are what drives him through the games map. The dolly-out

movement is portrayed in Figure 19, where the camera moves out of Reaper's FPS perspective

into a full shot of his actions as if the camera was jumping out of Reapers body. The camera

moves backwards out of Reapers FPS perspective, but it remains attached to the character in

space, where the camera is tracking Reapers movements. Reaper's performance within the space

is being tracked by the camera, and tracking is able to "provide steady and smooth movement

that follows and centres action" (Eleftheriotis 2010, p.39). Camera movement permeates the

performance of Reaper because the camera follows his actions (Eleftheriotis, 2010). Once

Reaper has finished his attack, the camera dollies-in, back into FPS perspective. The camera is

now going back into FPS perspective to focus on Reapers sight, where the FPS perspective of

Reaper "acts as a surrogate for our eye and our attention" (Eleftheriotis 2010, p.43). The space of

the environment is experienced by the viewer as if they were the character (Eleftheriotis 2010),

the camera movement is a substitute for the viewer's movement, and the viewer is able to

identify with Reaper and his actions, through the motion of the camera (Eleftheriotis 2010).

The movement from FPS, to full shot and then back to FPS is done in a fast-paced

manner. The connotation of the fast-paced camera movements represents the energy of the hero

Reaper enacting his duty in gameplay by eliminating his enemies. The purpose of the camera

movement in the final act of the gameplay trailer is to establish how Reaper participates during

gameplay. Jenkins explains that in enacting stories "the conclusion needs to show the successful

completion of those goals or the final defeat of an antagonist" (Jenkins 2013, p.8), and in this

instance, the camera movement follows the Reaper while he accomplishes his goal to show how

he has defeated his enemies, who are the antagonists.

Chapter Three: Characterisation of the Heroic Character

Eder, Jannidis and Schneider state that characterisation is "the process of connecting information with a figure in a text so as to provide a character in the fictional world with a certain property, or properties, concerning body, mind, behavior, or relations to the (social) environment" (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider 2010, p.32). Characterisation refers to the character traits of a person in a text. The characterisation is a collection of physical or emotional characteristics that the character portrays in the text, which are frequently used to offer the viewer significant information about the character (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider, 2010).

Since the 19th century, literary scholars have differentiated two modes of characterisation used to elicit character traits in media-specific texts, namely direct characterisation, and indirect characterisation (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider 2010). Direct characterisation refers to when a narrator reveals the personality of the character in the text, where the character traits are explicitly mentioned to the reader (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider, 2010). This means that the presentation is controlled and does not allow the reader much freedom to interpret the character, because they are being offered predetermined character traits (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider 2010). Indirect characterisation refers to when the reader is required to interpret the personality of the character based on how the actions, words, opinions or behaviour of the character is presented in the text (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider 2010). In contemporary culture, writers prefer to use indirect characterisation, because it is a skillful method of enabling the audience to participate in the text, where the audience can interpret the character based on the visual and audio elements that are represented (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider 2010). The indirect method is the way in which people in society read people in their own lives, indirect characterisation is, "closer to life, because this is the way we infer personality traits of other human beings" (Eder, Jannidis &

Schneider 2010, p.33). The viewer's interest in the text is likely to increase due to their active role in constructing the identity of the character, where this is based on how the filmmaker has represented the character (Eder, Jannidis & Schneider 2010).

In order for the filmmaker to direct the viewer's attention to the character, the *mise-en-scène* of the text needs to have a strong composition. *Mise-en-scène* is an element from the language of film used in the media to control the gaze of the viewer of the cinematic trailers of *Overwatch* to read the indirect characterisation. According to Bordwell and Thompson, *"mise-en-scène* includes those aspects of film that overlap with the art of the theater: setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior [sic] of the figures" (Bordwell & Thompson 2006, p.158), in order to control the *mise-en-scène*, everything in the scene needs to be placed or staged for the camera. The composition is the setting of the scene that directs the viewer's attention to the lighting, costume and behaviour of the characters in each trailer. According to Ward "good composition reinforces the manner in which the mind organizes [sic] information" (Ward 2003, p.14). Setting is significant as it is the common characteristic that visually links signs together within the scene in order for them to be 'read' effectively by the viewer.

Composition of setting helps to emphasise the other elements within the scene, and could create a focal point with which the viewer may identify. Everything that is placed in the scene is premeditated by the film director, so that the viewer will engage in depth with the visual language that is at play in the scene (Ward 2003, p.14). In order to visually communicate information in the scene, the composition of the setting needs to be simple. The composition should eliminate any unnecessary visual components that might lead the viewer astray from the main narrative so that the message of the text is clear and strong (Ward 2003). If the composition

is simple, direct and organised, the viewer will be able to read the visual language with greater ease.

The indirect method of characterisation uses the STEAL method to describe the character. STEAL stands for the, speech, thoughts, effects, actions and looks of the character (English Literature Hub 2016). The animated and gameplay cinematic trailers of *Overwatch* will require the STEAL method for analysis, because the heroic character is represented using indirect characterisation. The properties or character traits can work as sign systems to represent the personality of the character in the text. Once the viewer recognises the physical and emotional qualities that are prevalent in the character based on their character traits, the experience of identification will occur. Character traits work as signs that communicate meaning, where Hall indicates that "languages communicated by facial expression, the use of body to communicate meaning, the use of clothes to express meaning" (Hall 1997, p.11), work as signs to communicate valuable information about the character. Indirect characterisation refers to when the viewer participates in reading the signs that are apparent for the character.

The animated and gameplay trailers for *Overwatch* use the setting, lighting, costume/appearance, and the behaviour encompassed in the *mise-en-scène* to represent the characterisation of the hero. The setting and lighting of the *mise-en-scène* establish the focal point of the scene, following the golden ratio (see below). Both trailers utilise the composition of the setting and the illumination prevalent in the *mise-en-scène* to direct the viewer's interpretation of the hero's personality and abilities. Once the focal point of the composition is established, the costume/appearance and behaviour of the characters will be investigated using the design principle of symmetry. Symmetry strengthens the visual representation of the hero (Coogan, 2013). Berger explains the notion of semiotics through a media lens and offers an

alternative way to reading media through its visual elements. Semiotics is described by Berger as the queen of interpretive sciences and is used to investigate the meaning in many different fields of study (Berger 2013). The golden ratio and the design principle of symmetry are two methods of analysing indirect characterisation.

Composition of the Setting: The Golden Ratio

The golden ratio is the formal mathematical ratio that consists of an irrational number, as determined by Euclid of Alexandria 300 B.C. The golden ratio was designed primarily for geometrical use. Throughout history, the golden ratio has been adopted as a method to break down compositional elements in nature and in art, "biologists, artists, musicians, historians, architects, psychologists, and even mystics have pondered and debated the basis of its ubiquity and appeal" (Livio 2003, p.6). If the golden ratio has been applied in so many subjects and fields of study it could contribute to a possible universal understanding of its visual elements. It is a suggested formula for balance, not a method for determining what balance might be. The golden ratio can be applied to film composition and could be considered a method of investigating balance of proportion. The animated and gameplay cinematic trailers for *Overwatch* share a similar composition in both of their settings, which uses the golden ratio to direct the viewer's attention towards the hero.
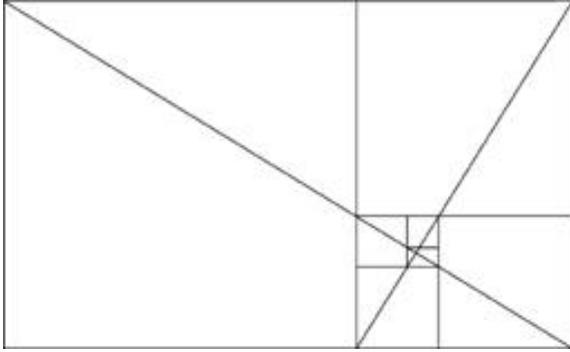
Figure 21: The Golden Rectangle (Livio 2003, p.85).
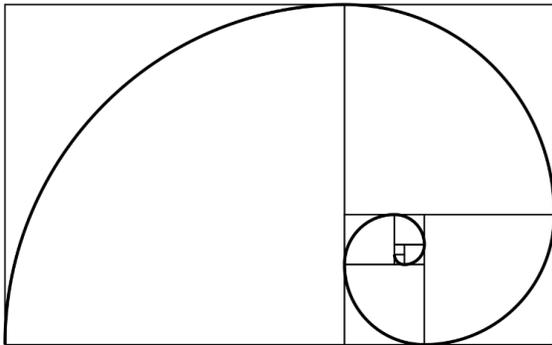
Figure 22: The Golden Spiral (Livio 2003, p.119).

The mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci who lived in the 12 and 13th century, realised that there is a unique sequence of numbers that generates the golden ratio. These numbers that shared a similarity to the golden ratio were thereafter referred to as Fibonacci numbers. According to Belmonte and Pappas, the Fibonacci numbers are approximately equivalent to the golden ratio value of 1.618 (cited in Livio 2003). This value of the golden ratio creates the height of the so-called golden rectangles, seen in Figure 21. Within the golden rectangle in Figure 21 (Livio 2003), there is a formation of squares that get smaller and smaller when they are subdivided. The golden rectangle is then used as a template, where the logorithmic spiral will emerge. The logorithmic spiral is called the golden spiral in Figure 22 (Livio 2003), when it is

scaled according to the exact dimensions of the golden ratio inside of the golden rectangle. The

golden spiral exists in the animated and gameplay trailer in Figures 23, 24, 25 and 26, the golden

spiral works to direct the viewer's eye towards the focal point of the frame.
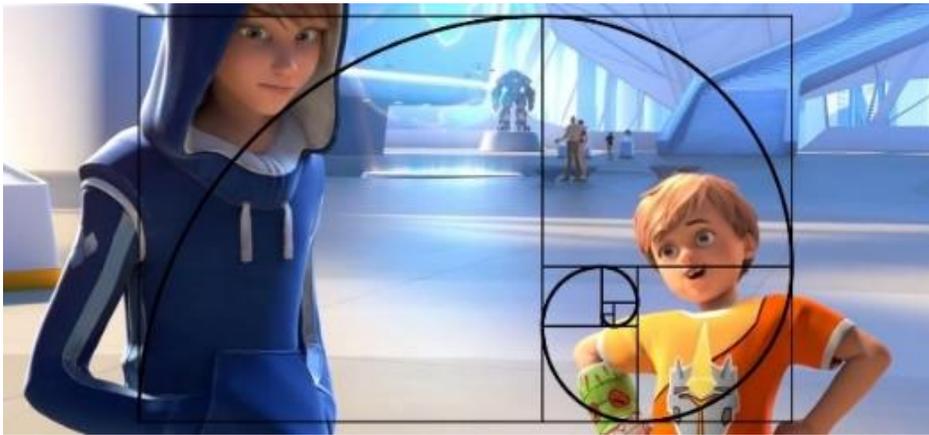
Figure 23: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch*

(1'18") (PlayOverwatch 2014).
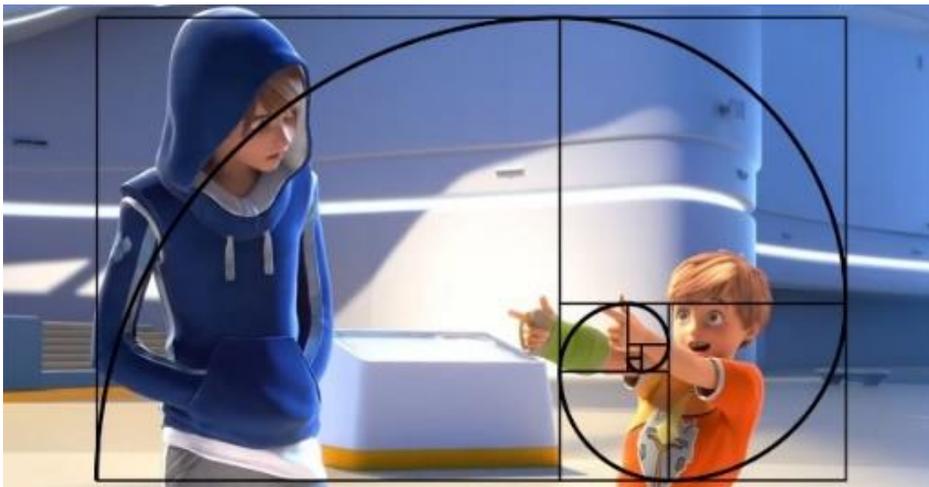
Figure 24: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch*

(01'22") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Brian and Timmy are both standing inside the *Overwatch* museum. Figures 23 and 24 denote Brian the older brother standing on the left side of the frame, and Timmy standing on the right side of the frame. Superimposing the Fibonacci spiral over the composition reveals Timmy to be the focal point of the image. In this way, the golden spiral shows where the viewer will first be compelled to gaze.


Figure 25: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for *Overwatch* (00'52") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Figure 26: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Gameplay Trailer for Overwatch (00'42'') (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Figure 25 (PlayOverwatch 2014) denotes a market place in the background, with Tracer's name in bold letters on the left side of the frame, while Tracer is prominently standing in the foreground on the right hand side of the frame. Figure 26 (PlayOverwatch 2014) denotes Tracer standing inside of her base. When the golden spiral is superimposed onto Figures 25 and 26, it portrays Tracer to have been constructed as the main focal point.

In both of the cinematic trailers, the composition guides the viewer's attention to Timmy and Tracer. The template of the golden ratio shows how each composition shares a similar method of directing the viewer's attention towards the hero. The application of the golden spiral is evident in Figures 23, 24, 25 and 26. As Livio puts it, "nature loves logarithmic spirals. From sunflowers, seashells, and whirlpools, to hurricanes and giant spiral galaxies, it seems that nature chose this marvelous shape as its favorite 'ornament'" (Livio 2003, p.117). As the golden spiral is a part of natural form, viewers may be attracted to its harmonious configuration regarding its composition, making it what we might refer to as aesthetically pleasing. The composition

prompts the viewer to construct its focal object/character in the particular shot, in this case,

Timmy and Tracer respectively, as most significant to the eye.

Composition and lighting: Personality and abilities of the character

The lighting in a frame works to aid the composition by illuminating certain elements

inside the frame that the filmmaker has chosen to intentionally draw the viewer's eye towards a

particular object, character or gesture (Bordwell & Thompson 2006). Bordwell and Thompson

note that "in cinema, lighting is more than just illumination that permits us to see the action"

(Bordwell & Thompson 2006, p.124), the direction of the lighting in a frame can dramatise

certain objects or characters that the filmmaker wants the viewer to engage with (Bordwell &

Thompson 2006). The animated trailer in Figure 23, highlights Timmy's face. The gameplay

trailer also uses lighting to highlight the character, where in Figure 25, Tracer's face receives a

prominent amount of lighting. Figures 23 and 25 both use the three-point lighting technique to

draw focus to the 'hero'. The three-point lighting technique includes a *backlight,* which comes

from above or behind the figure, the *key light,* which comes from a diagonal direction in front of

the figure, which is the main light source and the *fill light* is positioned close to the camera.

These lights highlight or center the attention on the character as the focal point of the

composition. Three-point lighting is used in Figure 23 and 25 to direct the viewer's attention to

Timmy and Tracer. The lighting is similar in each frame, because their faces are both highlighted

on (their) right side.

Three-point lighting is effective because it utilises three different light sources to

"highlight and define shape" (Mullen 2011, p.376) of the character's facial expression. This

lighting enables the viewer to determine that a given character's facial expression will reveal the

character's personality, where "facial expressions often reveal much of a characters personality

and passing emotions" (Kerlow 2000, pp. 293-294). There is a strong similarity between Timmy's and Tracers facial expression in Figures 23 and 25. The denotation of Tracer's facial expression is of her smiling with her mouth open, her one eyebrow is raised and her head is slightly tilted. This may tend to lead to the interpretation that Tracer is an emotionally happy character, where, as Kerlow notes in another context, "the emotions, thoughts and intentions of characters are a perfect vehicle to generate empathy" (Kerlow 2000, p.295). Empathy, Cohen suggests, is one of the main emotional stages the viewer will experience with character during the process of identification (Cohen 2001).

There is a light source in the animated and gameplay cinematic trailers that imitates a direct light source similar to the way in which sunlight is cast in Figures 24 and 26. The CG (computer generated) light that imitates sunlight is known as a *directional light,* which is used to illuminate large areas in a three-dimensional scene (Brooker 2002). The main purpose of a directional light source is "to cast parallel light rays in a single direction" (Brooker 2002, p.376), as a good solution to simulating sunlight. Where the three-point lighting method directs the attention to the frontal pose and faces of Tracer and Timmy in Figures 23 and 25, directional lighting is focused towards illuminating for the eye the abilities and weapons of the characters in both Figures 24 and 26.

Figures 24 and 26 uses a directional light source to illuminate the objects in the scene that are significant to the representation of the hero's abilities. These abilities that are highlighted by the directional lighting of her pulse pistols. Tracers dual pulse pistols enable her two fire rapid shots at her enemies when they attack her in gameplay. The pulse pistols are short-range firearms that distinguish her from any other character in the game, because no other character uses this weapon to defend themselves. Timmy identifies with Tracers abilities based on her dual pulse

pistols which are Tracers weapons, where Timmy mimics Tracers 'fighting' stance, holding two

hypothetical guns, ready to fire. Timmy has both of his hands clenched as fists, his index fingers

extended forwards and his thumbs standing upwards. This is Timmy's way of mimicking

Tracer's pulse pistols.

Timmy's facial expression in Figure 23 is nearly identical to that of Tracer's in Figure 25,

where he is imitating Tracers personality. Timmy is also mimicking Tracer's pulse pistol

weapons, prevalent in Figure 24 and 26. This is where wishful identification can be found

occurring, where Timmy is imitating Tracers behavioral characteristics. Wishful identification in

the game occurs when the viewer desires to be like the character in the text, "for example, by

emulating the characters attitudes, appearance, behavior, or other characteristics" (Hoffner &

Buchanan 2005, p.328). The three-point lighting of Figures 23 and 25, as well as the directional

lighting of Figures 24 and 26 directs the viewers' attention towards this process of Wishful

Identification. The similar facial and body gesture that Timmy and Tracer are sharing offers the

connotation of wishful identification, representing the action of Timmy participating in imitating

Tracer's personality and attitude in a flawless manner. The lighting of the *mise-en-scène*

illuminates the similarity of facial and body gestures between Timmy and Tracer, in a direct act

of wishful identification.

Symmetrical Signifiers of Heroism: Costume/Appearance and Character Behaviour

According to Peter Coogan, author of *'What is a Superhero'* (2013), symmetry can

represent the hero both metaphorically and physically, and acts as the visual language of heroism

(Coogan 2013, p.61). If an individual's attraction of symmetry resides through instinctive

behavior and is a natural occurrence, then it is significant to investigate examining how visual

representation can cause identification. Identification is significant in capturing the viewers'

attention, because it may offer, "a feeling of connectedness to another person. It involves seeing aspects of oneself in that person, experiencing a sense of relatedness or overlapping of identity" (O'Shaunessy & Stadler 2008, p.434). In order for the media text to be effective, identification is needed to create a psychological bond between the audience member and the character.

Symmetry is a formal principle of design that resonates in nature and is an attribute that is used to represent characteristics that are desirable to human beings (Coogan 2013). In biology, it is common that living things have a near-identical right and left side. Biologists term this *bilateral symmetry*, where the transformation of this symmetry is the reflection of an imaginary mirror that vertically divides the body, which means that the left side of a human body (when mirrored) will have a close likeness to the right side of the human body. *Bilateral symmetry* is pivotal when discussing the concept of attraction because it exists in nature, when two sides of the body are mirrored it is easier for an animal to recognise an ideal mate through symmetry (Coogan 2013). Although there is no empiricism to verify it, this could explain why humans find symmetry appealing in design and to how it could evoke a feeling of identification in the individual. Humans can identify through symmetrical form because they can recognize patterns pertaining to their own form. For example, when an individual views an artwork that is stylised or even abstract, if it exhibits any subtle traits that relate to symmetry or balance the viewer will see themselves within the artwork (Coogan 2013).

In character design, the personality and abilities that form the characterisation of the character are significant, because this determines the player's enjoyment of gameplay. The goal of effective character development is to create believable characters that viewers/players can easily identify with in order to make the game unforgettable (Adams, 2010). Cinematic trailers of games are similar to the trailers of feature films, because they are used to promote the upcoming

attraction by means of marketing to a selected target audience of consumers. Media in contemporary culture uses a variation of marketing-laden visual texts to reach consumers about a particular product (Kernan 2005). The experience of identification, according to Cohen, "is likely to increase enjoyment, involvement, and intense emotional responses" (Cohen 2001, p.260), therefore, identification is a significant tactic used in advertisements in order to capture the attention of its viewers with admirable characters. Symmetry is a visual signifier that transmits strong connotations about heroism in particular, where Williams states that "symmetry is an expression of harmony, beauty, balance, order and authority, and people use it all the time" (Williams 2009, p.325). The use of symmetry through the characters costume/appearance and their behaviour can be found to activate the viewer's expectations of the character's personality and abilities, and is therefore heavily used in marketing and trailers.

Character Costume/Appearance

Tracer and Timmy are both wearing clothes that have images on them that can help the reader interpret the characters through indirect characterisation. Timmy and Tracer both have two signs that are symmetrically designed that can connote meaning about their personality and/or abilities, as discussed below.

Figure 27: Frontal Image of Reinhardt on a T-shirt (Gear.blizzard.com 2017).

Figure 28: 'Justice will be done' Image of Reinhardt (Overwatch.gamepedia.com 2017).

In Figure 23, Timmy is wearing a t-shirt with an image of Reinhardt on it, who is one of

the hero's from the *Overwatch* team. Reinhardt's face in Figure 27 is similar to the image on

Timmy's t-shirt in Figure 23, they are both a simplified representation of the hero Reinhardt in

Figure 28. The denotation of this sign consists of a frontal facial pose of Reinhardt, where the

image is simplified into flat grey and yellow/orange colours. Figure 27 is a symmetrical signifier

of the hero Reinhardt in *Overwatch*, where Timmy can be understood to be wearing this t-shirt

because he has some sort of affiliation with or admiration for *Overwatch*.

Figure 29: Gul'dan in the film adaption: *Warcraft* (Villains Wiki 2017).

The second image is on Timmy's cast, on his right wrist. The denotation of the image

looks like a drawing of a warlock from another one of Blizzard Entertainment Studio's games

called *Warcraft*. The drawing includes a green face with big red eyes with red lines for the hair

and a mouth with sharp teeth. This is Timmy's own visual interpretation of what the Warlock

looks like in *Warcraft*, the scribbles, inaccurate colour and inconsistent outlines are indicative of

a child's style of drawing (Timmy), or someone who is artistically immature.

Both the images on Timmy work as symmetrical signifiers that make it possible to

convey his a great interest in *Overwatch,* and in other games from Blizzard like *Warcraft*. The

two characters that are portrayed on Timmy's costume are a connotation that make visible and

readable his devotion to the Blizzard's arsenal of heroes throughout their franchise of games. If

interpreted this way, we are led to assume wishful identification of Timmy, where he desires to

have abilities of Reinhardt and a warlock (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005). Timmy is portrayed as a

fan of Blizzard's heroes, where wearing them on his clothing and even on his cast underscore

this.

Figure 30: The Royal Air Force Roundel (QM Fashion, 2017)

Tracer is wearing a type of fighter pilot's gear/jacket similar to the aviator's uniforms in

WWl in Figure 25. The jacket is brown and beige, with a distorted collar and cuffs. On Tracer's

uniform there are two symbols that signify her nationality, these signs could work as signifiers to

help the viewer interpret her identity. The first sign is an emblem in Figure 30 of the Royal Air

Force (RAF) in Britain, which was used in WWl. The denotation of the sign consists of a circular

shape, where there is a red circular centre, and two outer colour rings, one white and the other

blue. The emblem was designed in 1916, originally created to be a bull's-eye target, and is

conventionally a symbol for speed and swiftness (Houze 2016). This sign links to Tracer's

ability of blink and recall, these abilities enable Tracer to teleport with extreme speed, where her

movements are deliberately fast-paced to aid her in her ability of avoiding attacks from other

players by soaring backwards or forwards in time. "The bull's-eye symbol in various

combinations of red, white and blue, thus signifies broadly patriotic nationalism of the first half

of the twentieth century" (Houze 2016, p.54), the connotation of Tracer's costume could suggest

that she is devoted to her country and that her abilities consist of speed and swiftness based on this emblem.

Figure 31: British Flag - The Union Jack (Union Flag) UK (Projectbritain.com 2003).

The second sign is the British flag, also known as the 'Union Jack' on Tracers shoulder in Figure 25. The British flag "represents the UK; however it holds different meanings which include contrasting images of Britain as imagined by its citizens" (Guibernau 2013, p.38), the flag in Figure 31 suggests Tracer's origin, and her culture and identity (Guibernau, 2013). The two symbols on Tracer's uniform could signify Tracer's patriotism and devotion to her country of origin. Tracer's patriotism is represented using the RAF emblem and the British flag, the signs establish her dedication towards her country of origin.

The design principle of symmetry is evident on Timmy's t-shirt and Tracer's jacket, both of which are designed to be easily identifiable through symmetrical design. As Coogan has noted, "symmetry is useful for conveying information because the brain tends to remember it more clearly" (Coogan 2013, p.60), where this is a strategic tactic for representation, because the visual language is made straightforward. These signs offer the viewer visual elements by means of which to interpret Timmy's and Tracers personality and abilities, based on their costume and appearance.

Character behaviour

In the animated and gameplay cinematic trailers, Tracer is represented in two ways that use the formal principle of symmetry through her heroic 'emote'. According to Chi, Costa, Zhao and Badler, 'emote' originates from the term *Expressive MOTion Engine*, where the purpose of the *Expressive MOTion Engine* is to generate naturally pleasing gestures and bodily movements into 3D animated characters (Chi et al 2000, n.d). There are two poses within Tracers heroic 'emote', the first pose is with both of her hands on her hips, the second in a fighting stance with both her arms thrust forward holding her pulse pistols at the ready. As Adams has noted, "one of the cardinal rules of fiction writing is that you should show rather than tell things about the characters to the reader" (Adams 2010, p.145), an emote of a character reflects the behavioural attributes of a character based on movement which could signify some aspect of their personality or abilities based on how they carry themselves (Chi et al 2000, n.d).

The pose of a character is different to an emote, the pose is a static position that the character holds for the camera (the audience), whereas Williams notes, "we should keep words to a bare minimum and make everything as clear as we can through pantomime, we should feel we only have the body to tell the story" (Williams 2009, p.324). The pose thus acts as a performative sign that expresses behavioural character traits. Pantomime is an art described as a 'language of action' that is an essential characteristic of performance in theatre (Aubert 2003). It is a means by which characters convey meaning through their behaviour, expressing their performance through body language and exaggerated gestures. The pose of a character is presented to the audience in a clear manner, so that the audience can 'read' the visual information in body language. Tracer's two poses are a form of pantomime that act as performative signifiers that express her personality through a symmetrical, static stance. The two 'heroic' emotes are

portrayed using the principle of symmetry as a visual signifier of what being a hero might look

like.

Figure 32: Screenshot of Tracer in-game Heroic Emote 'Victory pose' (01'40'') (xLetalis 2016).

Figure 33: Screenshot of Tracer in-game Heroic Emote 'Fighting pose' (01'39'') (xLetalis 2016).

Character Behavior: Personality

In Figures 23 and 25, Timmy and Tracer are both posed in Tracers first 'heroic' emote, the pose reflects the characters behaviour once she has won a victory (Letalis 2016). This could offer the viewer insight into the character's constructed personality based on the process of indirect characterisation, whereby the viewer interprets the looks and appearance of the pose. Tracer and Timmy are both posed with their hands on their hips, the arms are bent at the elbows, and are locked at a 90 degree angle on the left and right side. The denotation includes both of the characters standing tall with their chests out, chin up and back slightly arched. Timmy and Tracer are positioned facing forward towards the camera, so as to maximise the appeal and physicality of the pose (Coogan 2013). The body of each character is naturally symmetrical, reinforcing the representation of symmetry prevalent in the physical body. This can be read as an amplification of all that symmetry, which connotes sacrifice, balance, vision or rebirth (Coogan

2013). Timmy experiences wishful identification, where, mimicking her 'heroic' emote, he is

trying to copy Tracer's behaviour in Figure 23. This symmetrical pose in Figure 32 shows

Timmy and Tracer to be positioned in a manner of 'Superman pose', which according to

Coogan, is a performative signifier linking symmetry with 'goodness' (Coogan 2013).

Character Behavior: Abilities

The pose in 24 and 26 is Tracers second 'heroic' emote, pose is a kind of fighting stance,

portraying Tracer being ready for action or a potential attack. Tracer and Timmy pose with both

of their arms stretched forward, Tracer is holding two pulse pistols, one in each hand. The stance

of the character is grounded and controlled, where one foot is placed forward and the other foot

further back, with knees slightly bent to ensure stability, ready for an attack. Tracers fighting

pose in Figure 33 represents the character's abilities, particularly focusing the attention on her

pulse pistols. The abilities of a hero can be illustrated through their body language, where

"symmetry plays an important part in superheroes and their formally communicative properties"

(Coogan 2013, p.60). Timmy in Figure 24 and Tracer in Figure 26 are both positioned in this

fighting stance, Timmy is imitating Tracers second 'heroic' emote, again, trying to imitate

Tracer's behaviour and experiencing wishful identification. If the signification of heroism is

based on symmetry and the heroic pose reflects an amplified version of this symmetry, then it is

more likely to increase identification with the heroic character. Timmy is experiencing wishful

identification, where the viewer will identify that he is imitating Tracer's behaviour suggesting

that he aspires to be like her.

Blizzard Entertainment Studios represents two of Tracer's poses symmetrically. The

symmetrical posing of a Tracer is significant when representing the hero, because connotes

power, balance and order (Coogan 2013). Coogan explains the way in which the principle of

symmetry exists in many superhero character designs, and is significant performative signifiers of heroism (Coogan 2013). This kind of body language in both 'heroic' emotes in Figure 32 and 33 respectively, can be understood as an "amplified performance of symmetry" (Coogan 2013, p.62), where, because the human body is already symmetrical, the denotation of a symmetrical pose will intensify the visual display of symmetry. Tracer's two 'heroic' emotes unveil her personality and abilities, the straight posture and the grounded fighting stance, both visually communicate connotations of confidence and strength (Coogan 2013). Therefore, Tracer's pose could determine positive attributes of her personality and abilities.

Asymmetry as a signifier for vulnerability

In the *Overwatch* animated and gameplay cinematic trailers, the hero Tracer is represented using the principle of symmetry, her personality and abilities are amplified with her two character poses, where "the superhero is a compelling visual communication vehicle that utilizes [sic] tried and true design elements coupled with powerful social connotations in order to convey specific ideologies connected to our society's beliefs and cultural practices" (Coogan 2013, p.63). Tracer's character design is a manner of visual language that represents heroism through symmetrical poses. Timmy attempts to mimic Tracer's poses but the cast on his wrist in Figure 34 is the object that can be read to signifies the main difference between Tracer and Timmy, namely mortality and immortality, respectively.

Figure 34: Screenshot of Blizzard Entertainment Studios Animated Trailer for *Overwatch*: Close-up of Timmy (1'18") (PlayOverwatch 2014).

Coogan states elsewhere that "superheroes represent what we want to be, either physically or spiritually" (Coogan 2013, p.63), Tracer and Timmy's costumes/attire and behaviour represent confidence and strength with which the viewer might identify. Even though Timmy and Tracer are posed in a very similar manner, there is a slight difference between both of their stances. Tracer's stance favours her left side, where her body weight is supported by her left hip and leg. Timmy's stance on the other hand favours the right side of his body, where his body weight is supported by his right hip and leg. This slight difference is significant, because Timmy is leaning towards the side of his body that has been broken, where his wrist is inside a cast. In both characters there is an amplification of symmetry, Timmy's cast slightly throws the visual weight off balance, and causes an incidence of asymmetry instead. As Coogan observes generally, "asymmetry can connote various negative emotional traits" (Coogan 2013, p.62), where comic book artists use asymmetry to create a sense of conflict or tension in a character. Asymmetry in design is a way to make viewers feel uneasy or restless, suggesting negative

emotions. This slight change of visual weight could direct the viewer's attention to Timmy's cast, which could represent his mortality and vulnerability, where, even though he is trying to pose as a hero, he is still a human being. Timmy's right wrist is in a cast, rendering him defenseless, signifying his weakness as a child or human being.

Cohen argues, "cinematic techniques of establishing shots provide the possibility of identifying with the camera telling the story or with the hero of the film chosen by the director to provide the primary point of view" (Coogan 2013, p.257), where cinematic techniques are strategically used to create identification, because the information that the viewer receives is through the camera. The camera is able to control the viewpoint of audience members and focus the viewers' attention to the protagonist of the text (the identifiable character).

Game development companies like Blizzard Entertainment Studios' use cinematic form to communicate information about *Overwatch* to its audience. Metzen states, "we want to create characters that have a very strong personality" (PCInvasion PC Gaming, 2014), such that the players and audience members can understand the character's abilities and personality. Identification is used in media to drive consumer consumption, because the source of the message is intentionally produced to be more attractive than the message itself (Cohen, 2001). As argued elsewhere, "the superhero will be there to symbolize the struggles we all must endure in our personal journeys to vanquish the foes within ourselves" (Coogan 2013, p.63). Identification is a form of persuasion used in media as it is able to overcome the limitation of a singular perspective, by offering the audience member an alternative perspective with the character they identify with. The ability for the media text to lead the audience into identification is a measure of its efficacy.

Comparison and Conclusion

The various methods of communicating information via the animated and gameplay trailers to the viewers about *Overwatch* produces a substantial source of knowledge consisting of signs. Bastiaens has noted that "in transmedia storytelling, engagement with each successive media heightens the audience's understanding, enjoyment and affection for the story" (Bastiaens 2014, p.3), where the narrative structure of each trailer is used to elevate the viewer's engagement with the game. There is one main similarity between the animated and gameplay trailer in narrative structure, where they both use cinematography to signify. However, each trailer has four key differences that set them apart from one another, based on how they represent, character, energy, structure and the passive/active observer.

Animated Trailer

The purpose of the animated trailers linear narrative structure is to demonstrate the protagonist going through "an individual process of change, growth, and development" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008, p.273). The animated trailer is profoundly connected to the cycle of the Hero's Journey, and aims to portray the growth of Brian's character. The experience of identification or empathy will increase when the viewer witnesses the protagonist going through the restorative three-act structure that alters their character. Cinematography is used to film the three acts by focusing much of the attention on the main character of Brian. Viewers are drawn into "the narrative world as the main characters encounter obstacles, turning points, complications, and conflicts that threaten to prevent them from attaining their objective" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008, p.269). The energy of the animated narrative is elevated using cinematography, to focus the viewers' attention on Brian as he endures his obstacle in the linear narrative trailer.

Gameplay Trailer

The gameplay trailer however uses cinematography in two ways, the first being to portray environmental spaces in which the game's characters will participate, the second is to reveal an enacted story that is taking place inside the environment's space. These two instances rely heavily on cinematography, because the camera movement and camera shot work as signifiers that generate meaning of the text, where Jenkins' notion of spatiality is eminent throughout the gameplay trailer. The gameplay trailer has a different purpose of communication in relation to the animated trailer. Jenkins suggests that games should be examined more as "spaces ripe with narrative possibility" (Jenkins 2005, p.2), than as conventional stories. This means that games don't necessarily dedicate gameplay to the telling of linear stories, but that the narratives in games are centred on the exploration of maps and spaces in the 3D interactive environment (Jenkins 2005). Jenkins argues that "spatial stories are not badly constructed stories; rather, they are stories which respond to alternative aesthetic principles, privileging spatial exploration over plot development" (Jenkins 2005, p.7). The gameplay trailer pursues Jenkins' concept of spatiality by portraying evocative spaces in Act I and enacted stories in Act II. I argue that the main purpose of gameplay trailer is to demonstrate a continuity of character action through pre-determined maps that exist in the games space, and to invite "audience interaction" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008, p.270). This alternative, nonlinear narrative method is used particularly in computer games, to invite the viewer to participate as an active observer, ultimately making them an active player of the game *Overwatch* (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008).

The differences between the linear and nonlinear narrative structures are significant because they surface why it is valuable to offer the public two different methods of identifying

the game. The animated trailers main focus is to connect the character to the viewer by establishing identification (Dancyger & Rush 2007). The gameplay trailer is different, where, instead of solely relying on identification as its main drive (although it is still significant) it is more, "a branching of narrative structure that invites audience interaction and participation by offering choices among multiple pathways, settings, and character traits" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2008). Using a linear narrative structure as well as a nonlinear narrative structure to promote different aspects of the game *Overwatch*, linear being a story and the nonlinear being gameplay, will intensify the audiences response. This comparative evaluation leads me to determine that the linear and nonlinear narratives are mutually effective in representing the hero, but have different motives. They still however, follow the same objective of promoting the game *Overwatch.*

The cinematic technique of *mise-en-scène,* demonstrated through characterisation, is split into two sections, the first of which investigates how the composition of the setting controls the focal point as well as how lighting of the frame directs the viewer's attention to the hero's personality and abilities. The golden ratio is used as a template to lay over each shot, Figure, 23, 24, 25 and 26, showing how the shots direct the viewer's attention to the a focal point within frame. The golden ratio demonstrates in these instances that the hero is the focal point in the animated and gameplay trailer, once placed over each shot, Timmy in Figure 23 and 24 portrays the same composition as does Tracer in Figure 25 and 26. After establishing the similarity between the each shot's composition, the composition of the lighting in a similar manner directs the viewers' attention to Timmy and Tracer. The three-point lighting method in Figures 23 and 25 directs the viewers' attention to each characters facial expression focusing the viewers' attention of the shot towards their personality. The directional method for lighting used in Figure

24 and 26 are both used to illuminate the abilities of the Timmy and Tracer. Once the composition of the setting and lighting establishes how the focal point is the hero (Timmy and Tracer), the viewer's gaze is drawn towards signs that radiate symmetry.

The second section is an investigation of symmetrical signifiers. Symmetry is prevalent in the costume/appearance and character behavior/pose. All of the *mise-en-scène* works to navigate the viewers' attention to symmetrical signs. The clothing on Timmy and Tracer consists of signs and emblems that are symmetrical in their design, and this activates symmetry as a significant characteristic of each of their appearances. Timmy is identifying with Tracer by imitating her poses, showing wishful identification, because Timmy is trying to copy her in a physical manner. Symmetry is a visual signifier that distinguishes characters who are heroes and characters who are not (Coogen 2013). Coogan notes that "individuals we humans consider to be beautiful or attractive are likely to have faces and bodies we perceive as symmetrical" (Coogan 2013, p.60). What each trailer has in common is a similar use of composition, where the setting and lighting are both utilised to establish a focal point.

The costume/appearance of Timmy and Tracer displays how they are different, where the pose also shows their differences, which reflect their personality and abilities. The animated trailer throws symmetry off balance, where Timmy's cast can be read to signify his mortality, as well as his fragility and instability as a human being, in relation to the gameplay trailer of Tracer who is a heroic being. Even though both of their poses are nearly identical and evoke symmetry, the visual weight is off balance, because of Timmy's cast. It is important to show how heroism is characterised in relation to a human being participating in wishful identification, because it expresses how and why human beings are different, and why human beings desire the heroic figure. Grand notes, "it is a difficult world, and we all crave the Hero. When we feel endangered,

we want immortality" (Grand 2010, no pagination). Wishful Identification is the process in which Timmy creates his own sense of immortality by imitating a heroic figure (Tracer).

Blizzard Entertainment tactically apply innovative representational techniques in the game *Overwatch* by using cinematic language to signify visual elements of the hero. The animated and gameplay cinematic trailers for *Overwatch* work cohesively, forming a large basis of 'sign systems' that familiarise viewers with the concept of heroism in contemporary gaming culture. The comparative analysis establishes how and why the animated and gameplay trailers depend on a cinematic dialect, demonstrated throughout narrative structure and characterisation, in order to signify the hero, both providing similarities and differences that have unique assets. Each trailer uses resilient cinematography and *mise-en-scène* to deliberately work as signs to guide the viewer's attention towards the hero. The purpose of these tactics is to visually lead the viewer in the direction of the character or object that will encourage a sense of identification. Identification alters the perception of the viewer, placing them in the same position as the character, so that they will experience the text through the characters point of view. The cinematic trailers for *Overwatch* use the visual elements in a subliminal way that influences the viewer in their experience of identification with the hero. Cinematography and *mise-en-scène* set up the visual information displayed in narrative structure and characterisation to develop carefully planned signs in order to adapt a greater connection between to the viewer and the hero, thus establishing identification.

The game *Overwatch* is one form of media dedicated to gameplay, while the trailers are another form of media dedicated to cinematic style. By using different variations of media to signify *Overwatch*, the viewer's enjoyment of and engagement with the text will be heightened because they can experience the text through different perspectives. The animated and gameplay

trailers utilise cinematic techniques to make the text desirable, where "it is not so much about creating tension or excitement, but more about the mystery, which in its turn delivers a hunger for more information" (Bastiaens 2014, p.4). The animated and gameplay cinematic trailers for *Overwatch* are worthy of academic attention, because they both use premeditated signs throughout the narrative structure and characterisation. This comparative analysis is significant, because it supplies a theoretical context for understanding a strategic application of methods that effectively represent the hero.

Equally, both trailers seamlessly devote cinematic techniques to the representation of the hero, the purpose of this is to entice the viewer to become a player of the game, as a result, becoming an *Overwatch* hero themselves. The hero in contemporary gaming culture, "can now be seen as the key protagonist in a vast cycle of mythology that has evolved to express and mediate this unprecedented expansion of human action and identity" (Coogan 2013, p.57), through cinematic trailers for *Overwatch*, the concept of the hero is updated and transformed into new cinematic signifiers. The co-founder, president and CEO of *Blizzard Entertainment*, Mike Morhaime states that "ultimately, one of our core values at *Blizzard* is gameplay first, and gameplay really trumps anything" (Machinima 2011), where the trailers are assembled to increase the magnitude of consumers who will purchase the game for gameplay. The hero is represented in both trailers using diverse approaches, both forming a different yet well-rounded experience of the game *Overwatch* through a cinematic lens.

To date, *Blizzard Entertainment* has released six animated short stories for *Overwatch* titled, 'Recall' (2016), 'Alive'(2016), 'Dragons' (2016), 'Hero' (2016), 'The Last of Bastian' (2016) and 'Infiltrate' (2016). Each animated short offers the viewer a deep insight into the background of each character, the relationships characters have with one another, the

environments linked to the characters and what abilities they have. The animated short stories for *Overwatch* are explained as open-ended narratives that appear inviting, the director of 'Recall' and 'Dragons', Ben Dai, states that *Blizzard Entertainment* "are sowing the seeds of future episodes" (KillerPreztail 2016). Each short story of the *Overwatch* does not necessarily give the viewer excessive amounts of information, where this is prominent in transmedia advertising, "by creating the necessary 'gaps' in the story which can be filled in by the audiences' creativity, or by means of another platform it is possible to generate a lust for more" (Bastiaens 2014, p.5).

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â *Overwatch* presently extends across additional media platforms, from comic books, to merchandise, to gameplay reviews, all found on *Overwatch.wiki,* which is a website dedicated to their assortment of gamers. Waugh states that, "we are ravenous consumers of media, we take in so much content because we love it and we are passionate about it" (KillerPreztail 2016). The six short stories that were also researched, developed and released through multiple variations of media, but still shadow their predecessors, (the animated and gameplay cinematic trailers), and prove how positive the audience response was at the game's unveiling. The *Blizzard* team intentionally set a high standard of cinematic techniques throughout the animated and gameplay cinematic trailers during *Overwatch's* launch at Blizzcon 2014. The director of the animated shorts, 'Alive' and 'Hero', Jeremiah Johnson, has suggested that the high quality of the cinematic techniques were intentional. The animated and gameplay cinematic trailers are the standard that they have established, where the animated shorts have to follow through that standard of quality (KillerPreztail 2016).

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Identifying with a hero is fundamentally about, "imagining a better world and creating an alternative version of yourself- bigger, brighter, bolder than the real thing- to patrol and protect" (Coogan 2013, p.11). Cinematography and *mise-en-scène* are read as a cinematic language, they

are signs that are "used in advertisements to implant/images into the mind, it is these images that are later remembered, whilst the words themselves are often forgotten" (Parsa 2004, p.846). The impression of the hero is imperative, James Waugh advises that "these hero's we are creating can inspire others to be heroic" (KillerPreztail 2016), by introducing the hero's to the public that denote attractive visual elements through narrative structure and characterisation will inspire potential gamers towards heroism in *Overwatch.*

The theoretical engagement of cinematic trailers for games is worthy of academic consideration because transmedia platforms form intertextual connections to establish identification. Additional research on this topic using the semiotic approach is vital to understanding the manner in which gaming companies develop cinematic trailers to bridge the gap between the viewers and characters within the game. Furthermore, this research is substantial, because it determines how and why representing the hero plays a pivotal role in establishing identification throughout transmedia platforms. Viewers are drawn in by heroic characters because, "as individuals and as collectives, we imagine the hero as the antidote to our suffering" (Grand 2010, no pagination), perhaps these *Blizzard Entertainment* trailers are a direct representation of heroism, where participating in gameplay provides the remedy to our everyday adversities.

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