

NO TIME TO WASTE

Kairos in T.I.M.E Stories

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There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven: A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted. A time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building [...]; a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking. (Eccl 3:1-8, NLT-CE)

As described in Ecclesiastes, there is a time for every kind of action. Yet, seizing the opportune moment is a delicate matter. It requires a sensitivity for the intricate interplay of various factors. Opportunities are easy to identify in hindsight, but challenging to predict. In ancient Greek mythology, Kairos represents this golden opportunity. Despite being one of the numerous children of Zeus, Kairos is quite distinct in his appearance. He is frequently depicted as a winged man only wearing a loin-cloth. Yet, his trademark sign is his hair. The back of his head is shaven bald, while his remaining hair is tied back in a ponytail on his forehead. Kairos was always in motion, so the only way to stop him was to grab his hair. This mythological tale coined the expression “to grasp an opportunity (by the forelock).” If Kairos had already passed by, there would be no chance for a second attempt, because there would be nothing to grab ahold of. This conceptualization of an opportune moment spawned an entire genre: the time travel narrative. It can be found in literary works, like H.G. Well’s *Time Machine* (1895), as well as in movies, such

as *Back to the Future* (1985). Videogames presented also specific visions of manipulating timelines like EA's *Command & Conquer – Red Alert 3* (2008). They all have protagonists in common who travel back in time to make up for a missed opportunity. It comes to no surprise then that analog games would address this dream, too.

This paper will specifically take a look at *T.I.M.E Stories* (2015) for its interplay between game rhetoric and player rhetoric. *T.I.M.E Stories* is a prime example that analog games (against common misconception) are capable to unfold narratives. The *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* deemed board games utterly unable to tell a story or deploy rhetoric (Pekar, col.1069), however this game proves such statements wrong. *T.I.M.E Stories* tells the story of time agents protecting history from alterations. Its core game mechanic is built around effective time management and essentially engages the player in a constant pursuit of golden opportunities. After a short overview on the historical and theoretical importance of *kairos* for rhetoric, *T.I.M.E Stories* is introduced. Taking a macro- and micro-perspective allows to gain a deeper understanding how golden opportunities are at the center of gameplay and based upon that how procedural as well as verbal rhetoric try to attain this goal.

DEFINING *KAIROS* AND ITS MEANING FOR RHETORIC

Kairos is a central concept in Greek thinking and especially for ancient rhetorical theory. The meaning attributed to this term changed several times and it is important to clarify which specific interpretation is the basis for the following analysis. According to Sipiora (2002, p. 4), the systematic research on *kairos* started already with the Pythagoreans. For these it was an expression of harmony in respect of mathematical questions. The term underwent a significant semantic change with Isocrates and Gorgias: Isocrates put *kairos* at the center of his entire theory (Sipiora, 2002, p. 4). Whereas, Gorgias used *kairos*

for his sophist rhetoric to formulate an absolute relativism. Operating under the assumption that every action is context-dependent, the only binding doctrine for Gorgias was awaiting the opportune moment (Sipiora, 2002, p. 5). For Aristotle, *kairos* is implicitly the time base of rhetorical action. Aristotle combined the term *kairos* with rhetoric through the idea of appropriate behavior (*aptum*) (Sipiora, 2002, p. 6).¹ Taking a neo-Aristotelean approach to rhetoric, this link between context-sensitive, appropriate actions and *kairos* is the primary subject of analysis in this paper.

Despite the ancient origins of the term, adequate academic definitions of the term *kairos* are rare. Neither Richard Lanham's *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* nor the four-volume *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* cover the topic *kairos*. In the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* [Historical Encyclopedia of Rhetoric], James Kinneavy and Catherine Esklin (1998) suggested the short definition of *kairos* "as the correct or opportune moment to do something or also the right balance." (col. 837).² In context of gaming, this opportune moments shape player experience and becomes evident in every significant gaming moment. Its appearance has many faces. It is the moment in *Magic: The Gathering*, in which a player withholds one card just in case and

1. It is important to understand that *kairos* is constant theme in Aristotle's work without being explicitly addressed in his writings. For a long time, Aristotle's understanding of *kairos* remained untouched as a scholarly subject until modern research engaged itself again with this topic. André Wartelle (1982) was the first to examine in his *Lexique de la „Rhetorique“ d'Aristotle* the occurrence of term and was able to identify 13 reference to *kairos* with an analog search method (p. 204 f). Yet, the term's full scope was only revealed by computer technology and the PERSEUS program. Its algorithms searched through Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*-version and found 16 references in total (Kinneavy, 2002, p. 66). Kinneavy interpreted these results in such a way that "the concept stands out in spite of the relative absence of the term." (p.66). In his joint essay with Eskin, he demonstrated the implicit application of *kairos* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Although the literal term *kairos* is absent in of all Aristotelian definitions of rhetoric, the "concept of a specific act in a concrete case" is present (Eskin & Kinneavy, 2000, p. 434). Kinneavy et al. (2000) traced its elements in all descriptions of rhetorical genres (p. 436-438) as well as the Aristotelian sources of persuasion (p. 438-441).

2. = ["der richtige oder günstige Zeitpunkt, etwas zu tun, oder auch als das richtige Maß"]

suddenly it prevents a lethal blow against one's life points. It is the sense of victory, after persuading a fellow player in *Dead of Winter* to make a move that supports one's victory conditions as a betrayer. However, it is also this missed opportunity in *Risk* to finish the game, which enables an opponent's victory. All these situations reveal the presence of *kairos*. These golden moments differentiate themselves from others due to their significance. John Smith provided a more extensive definition that picks up on this notion:

[*K*]airos points to a *qualitative* character of time, to the special position an event or action occupies in a series, to a season when something appropriately happens that cannot happen at "any" time, but only at 'that time', to a time that marks an opportunity which may not recur. The question especially relevant to *kairos* time is "When?" "At what time?" (Smith, 2002, p. 47)

Kairos serves as the qualitative differentiator of gameplay actions. It marks moments of great triumph and downfall already by posing the implicit question of "Is it the *right* time to do this?" Rhetoric aims to overcome the paralyzing potential of this question. The game rhetoric forces the player to consider their every action and pursue strategies to grasp every favorable moment. Players will apply verbal rhetoric persuade their fellow players to engage in actions which they consider beneficial for their goals and avoid such they deem dangerous. This twofold presence of rhetoric is specifically strong in *T.I.M.E Stories*.

T.I.M.E STORIES AND ITS TIME TRAVEL NARRATIVE

The game series began 2015, published by *Space Cowboys*, distributed through *Asmodee* and contains artwork by Benjamin Carré, David Lecossu and Pascal Quidault. *T.I.M.E Stories* established itself quickly among critics and might be considered one of the most significant developments in the board games industry in recent years. It was nominated for the prestigious

Kennerpiel des Jahres 2016 [Expert game of the year] with the following words:

The innovative and sweeping concept allows the players to immerse themselves in a wide variety of scenarios and to solve mysterious puzzles. If time runs out they use the knowledge they've previously gained in the next run. This is how *T.I.M.E. Stories* creates a thrilling group experience that swings between crime thriller and role-playing game, between past and future. (Spiel des Jahres, n.d.)

Fundamentally, *T.I.M.E. Stories* is a narrative driven puzzle game. A group of up to four players must find a sequence of actions which allows them to solve their main objectives within a given in-game time limit. Hereby, *T.I.M.E. Stories* displays a unique relationship between the core game and its expansions. Usually, additional content is integrated into already established game elements, like in *The Settlers of Catan* (1995). There, each expansion is just added to the main game and expands the players variety of choice. Core elements and add-ons merge for a larger gameplay experience. However, *T.I.M.E. Stories* expansion packs offer primarily new narratives with unique mission objectives to solve within certain time frames. Sometimes new mechanics are also introduced to deal with the challenges presented to the player in these stories. The main game contains the game board, the first story deck, and a repository for saving the game progress. Each expansion contains a new story deck with a complete mission.

The basic setup of each game session establishes a doubled narrative frame. Set in the future, mankind accomplished to unlock the secret of time travel (see figure 1). In order to prevent the potential negative impact of manipulating historic events, the T.I.M.E. agency was established. The group of players take over the role of special agents. These can safely travel back in time be basically possessing (historically) insignificant individuals and control them.



Figure 1. A panoramic scene from the futurists setting of the game.

Time and setting differ immensely between decks. The players can engage in cases spanning from conspiracy in ancient Egypt to zombie outbreaks in the 1990s. *T.I.M.E Stories* does not shy away from establishing different visual representations or borrowing from literary genres. The first story deck, *The Asylum*, displays clear influences from Lovecraftian literature, while *The Marcy Case* reminds of *The Walking Dead* (see figure 2).



Figure 2. An example of the different art style seen in *T.I.M.E Stories*, here in *The Marcy Case*

This impression is especially reinforced by changing visual styles of each deck. The latter one uses a graphic novel style (see figure 2), while the former reminds of oil paintings (see figure 4). The player experiences here the duality of timelines. The board game, representing the future, establishes a sturdy frame for each mission. It is the player's symbolic time machine that is literally frames all adventures. It equals the constant flow of time of

the players reality. The board offers dedicated spaces for cards included in every deck. Meanwhile, these decks encapsulate the individual narratives. Every era and story differ visually and through the exploration of the individual deck is subject to the manipulation through player engagement. Therefore, this alternate timeline is in constant motion, altered by player interaction and subject to potential time loops. This unchanging basic set of rules in contrast to the player driven motion of cards on play field are two level upon which *T.I.M.E Stories* rhetoric will be dissected.

THE MACRO-LEVEL – CHASING KAIROS

T.I.M.E Stories requires to perform effective time-management. After an exposition scene at the T.I.M.E agency, each episode starts with the group of players laying out the map (consisting of four cards) and the landscape of their landing area (see figure 3, upper left corner). From here on out, the remaining card deck is now explored through active decisions by the group. Yet, the exploration takes place under restricted time conditions. The entire group operates on a community time counter (see figure 3, board game center).

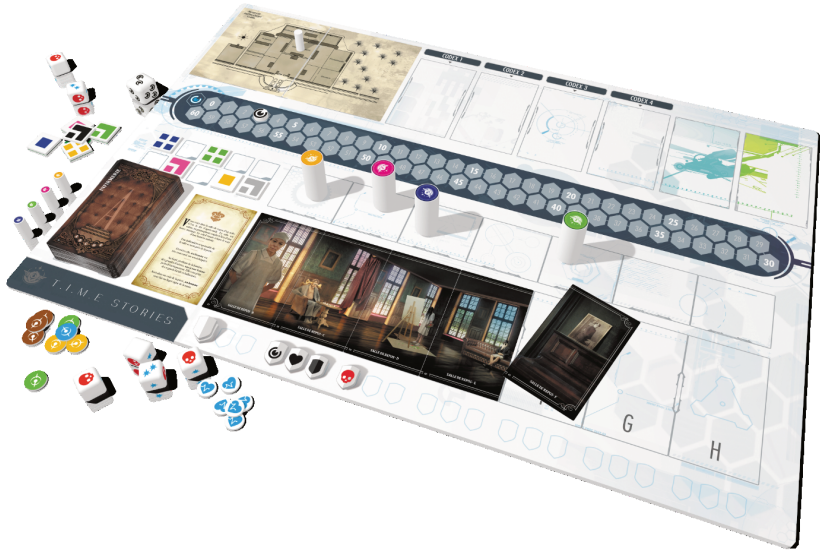


Figure 3. *T.I.M.E. Stories*'s gameboard with the time counter at its center.

Several actions will reduce the remaining time, like moving between locations, exchanging items, or continuing challenges that were not resolved in the previous round. Meanwhile, the players have no prior insights which regions in the game hold relevant items or information. Players have to be careful, otherwise they will miss the opportunity to fulfill their mission on time. Certain areas hold items that are necessary, while others are purely optional yet improve the likelihood to succeed. The former often unlock the access to previously unknown locations and further expand the possibilities to invest time in. There also those areas which only stifle the progression and serve as an obstacle. By design, the players are not meant to solve an episode within the first playthrough, but gain information, iterate their approach, and find together a more time-efficient way in the next round. This universal set of base rules deploys the game's procedural rhetoric.

(Analog) games like *T.I.M.E. Stories* communicate messages to play through their rules. With the rich thematic variety of analog

games spanning from war games over pulp-fiction adventures to economic simulations, it is not surprising to see embedded rhetorical messages. A famous example for rhetorical messages encapsulated in analog games are *The Landlord's Game* and *Monopoly*. Kate Salen and Eric Zimmerman described their differences as follows:

Despite the strong similarity between *The Landlord's Game* and *Monopoly*, there are distinct (and wonderfully incongruous) differences in the rhetorics each evokes. While the play rhetorics of progress and power apply to both games, *The Landlord's Game* was distinctly anti-capitalist in its conception. The game's conflict was not premised on property acquisition and the accumulation of monopolies, but instead on an unraveling of the prevailing land system. Because properties in the game could only be rented, there was no opportunity for domination by a greedy land baron or developer. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 520)

Despite similar topics and comparable game mechanics, both games transmit opposing messages. *Monopoly* promotes a pro-capitalist notion while *The Landlord's Game* serves as social criticism. The reason for such a difference is the embedded *procedurality* within these games communicating their individual messages. For Lassard (2014) procedurality “describes an object whose actual manifestation results from the strict application of a specific set of rules (or procedures) to a particular context. Procedurality allows for the delivery of responses to changes in input and setting.” (p. 407). Originally designed for the study of digital games, procedural rhetoric as a “practice of persuading through processes” (Bogost, 2007, p. 3) can also apply to analog games. Board games can invoke social criticism and even include calls to action, including the demand to be time-conscious like in *T.I.M.E Stories*.

T.I.M.E Stories' procedural rhetoric transforms players into *kairos*-seekers. Informational deprivation forces the player to search for intel, while time constraints prevent endless

exploration. The game creates among players the “need to optimize their actions” (Space Cowboys, n.d.). A simple game mechanic motivates for such behavior: The fewer playthroughs a group requires, the higher the rewards at the end of a case. Those benefits (like additional time or automatically solved challenges) apply for future cases and ease those playthroughs. This tension between insufficient information and desire to act timely makes the deployed procedural rhetoric visible. In the first playthrough, the storyworld is established and simultaneously distracts the player from optimal play-decisions. As long as the players are still constructing their mental representations of the given storyworld, it is hard to assess which information are purely aesthetical and which are truly relevant. From the second attempt forward, the group has an elementary understanding of the events and can actively seek out win-condition fulfilling combinations. However, the challenge intensives with the increased temporal gaps between rounds.

Real-life time progression between play sessions intensives the procedural challenge. Next to the obvious decrease of immanent knowledge of the storyworld,³ locations of items, their causal relations, and ideal utilization might not be memorized sufficiently for the goal of a perfect playthrough. Hence, the global experience in every story deck communicates to the player that a cohesive gameplay behavior (in form of continuous or closely stacked sessions) is advantageous. This advocated persistence hints directly towards *kairos*. The individual group has to understand that only careful and long term orientated gameplay will allow for maximized output per in-game time unit.⁴ So the game’s rules actively shape player behavior and it

3. The player performance is directly linked with her memory. Albeit the developers do not ban support-media (like notes, photos etc.), they do not encourage it either; *T.I.M.E Stories* does not provide any notebook material for the players. However, the save module contained in the core game certainly indicates an awareness that players might want to interrupt a given playthrough. They allow to place revealed cards separately and even mark the specific time remaining for the returning group.

therefore clearly rhetorical and so are the players amongst each other.

THE MICRO-LEVEL – EVERY MOVE COUNTS

Taking a closer look at the smallest gameplay unit reveals frequent rhetorical interaction. Every location is a set of several cards that constitute together a panorama (see figure 4).



Figure 4. Parts setup of the Day Room panorama.

Already this simple design choice holds kaireotic meaning. Every location is literally split up into its relevant segments; every segment is represented by a card. The players have to base their decision only on two sets of information: (1) a descriptive card briefly explains what is seen on each card; (2) the individual segments offer visual cues for the player to assess which actions are most likely required. Every player can choose on which panorama tile her character shall start. No real-time restriction pressures the player to make a rash choice, however the in-game counter requires efficiency. With three/four agents in a game,

4. Digital videogames also deploy procedural rhetoric that communicate time sensitivity and long-term orientation. For more on this subject: Dwulecki, S. (2017): "I am thou... Thou art I..." —How Persona 4's Young Adult Fiction Communicates Japanese Values. In: *Creatio Fantastica*, 56, (97-113).

the group can split them up to maximize informational gain under the risk of activating time-consuming traps. In a purely egalitarian game, like chess, each player would hold potentially the same power. In *T.I.M.E Stories* however, the diverse set of controlled characters gives each player strengths and weaknesses (see figure 5). While some characters are focused on fighting, others are better in solving skill challenges. Therefore, not every character is equally suited to complete a challenge. This roleplaying element further perpetuates the necessity to apply the right measures at the right time.



Figure 5. Character cards from *The Asylum*.

The group could stick together and explore one segment after the next to minimize such risks, but this would negatively impact their time-efficiency and in the long-run likelihood to succeed. The group has to analyze the situation, make reasonable assumptions about potential challenges, and inevitably take risks. Yet this uncertainty creates a tension-field that allows for rhetorical action aimed to find *kairos*. By design, the individual elements are geared to prevent a group to finish a *T.I.M.E Stories* deck within the first attempt.⁵ The developers themselves state that players have to “convincing [...] sometimes even the other

[players].” (Space Cowboys, 2015). A conflict in conviction sets up the rhetorical case.

Rhetorical activity in gameplay can originate from the player as well as the game itself. The interplay between participants creates frequently rhetorical situations.

The “rhetorical case” arises when a speaker found the *zertum* (his inner certainty), declared it his concern, comes forward with oratorical impetus and willing to actively enforce it with his *Ego autem dico* [= “but I say”].⁶

All these factors can apply in an analog game setting. No matter the nature of the game (competitive or cooperative), players will reach distinct points at which they are of opposing opinions. Such difference might arise from contrary goals as well as disagreements on tactical decisions. A player becomes a rhetorician by utilizing her “communicative agency [...] to gain informational sovereignty”⁷ (Knape, 2000, p. 76) and persuade her fellow players. *Kairos* with its abstract nature is implicitly already present in all these theoretical thoughts:

Effective intervention in a rhetorical context is not simply a matter of selecting from a menu of technical strategies, but rather matching those to context and the nature of the moment. In a larger sense, *kairos* facilitates a discussion about the dynamic relationship between choice and constraint that is the key point at which games and writing intersect. (Mullen, 2013, p. 67)

Kairos is a decisive factor for this procedure to be successful. How open or camouflaged such activities are depends on the audience and situation. An orator is required to tune in and apply

5. A first attempt win is statistically highly unlikely, because it requires the players to have a constant streak of beneficial dice roles or almost perfect decision making despite intel-deprivation to maximize player output per time unit.

6. = [“Der „rhetorische Fall“ tritt dann ein, wenn ein Sprecher das *Zertum* (seine innere Gewissheit) gefunden hat, es zu seinem Anliegen macht, mit oratorischem Impetus hervortritt und ihm mit seinem *Ego autem dico* [= „ich aber sage“] aktiv Geltung verschaffen will.“]

7. = [“kommunikativer Handlungsmacht [...] informationelle Souveränität zu erlangen.“]

anticipatory audience considerations (Knape & Ulrich, 2014, p. 18). Aristotle's demand to adhere to *aptum* (aptness) finds its expression here. A player must acknowledge the right timing "for keeping silent" and find the right "time for speaking." (Eccl 3:7, NLT-CE) Meanwhile, games have the ability to actively support this quest. The game successfully rises the likelihood of such an occurrence by frequently putting the players in front difficult situations.

The first scene in *The Asylum* illustrates this field of diverging intentions. The group arrives at the waiting room which consists out of five cards (see figure 3). No matter the size of the group, playing with three or four characters, at least one card cannot be uncovered within the first turn. Assuming a group of four players, the last untouched tile poses a conundrum. Unless the group dedicates an additional time unit to explore, the content remains unknown. With four players for one remaining card, the output per player per time unit is at its lowest possible value. Only its content might render a reveal reasonable. In the gameplay equivalent of *Schrödinger's cat*, this card can be considered mutually irrelevant *and* vital for the success of the mission (Schrödinger 1935). A long-term oriented player could argue that a second playthrough is quite likely. The last card can be revealed in the next playthrough and therefore time conserved. A risk averse fellow player could counter with the possibility that this card might unlock a required item. The rhetorical case is already active with just those two opposing perspectives. As long as there is just one member with a divergent opinion, the group will have to negotiate and persuade one another to reach an actionable common-sense (*sensus communis*), because the group can only move as a unit from one location to the next. Keeping the group operationable means for its member to identify every situations *kairos*.

YOU SHALL NOT WASTE TIME – PROCEDURAL RHETORIC IN *T.I.M.E* STORIES

In order to fully grasp how rhetoric shape behaviors in the game, it is worth to further differentiate the utilized *kairos*-definition “as the correct or opportune moment to do something or also the right balance.” (Eskin & Kinneavy, 1998, col. 837)⁸ Phillip Sipiora (2002) distinguishes between the „right time“ (*eúkairos*), the moment „without opportunity“ (*ákairos*) and the „wrong time“ (*kakakairos*) (p. 2). A simple example, early in *The Asylum* story deck exemplifies those categories (see figure 6). In the dormitory, the players can choose between three titles.



Figure 6. Scenery from *The Asylum* in which each tile holds a different kind of *kairos*.

On the left, there is a patient bound to his bed. If the players decide to investigate his segment, he claims that someone wants to murder him and asks to be released. The players can perform a skill challenge to free him. If they are not able to solve the challenge within the first attempt, they can decide to spend more time (meaning reducing their time counter) and keep trying in the next round. The players are not informed about the result

8. = [“der richtige oder günstige Zeitpunkt, etwas zu tun, oder auch als das richtige Maß“]

of this challenge and can therefore only speculate, whether the outcome will be beneficial or not. In this specific case, the attempt to help the patient is procedurally punished. As it turns out, he was strapped to bed due to his violent nature. In the moment he is released, he starts attacking the players. Those cannot escape the fight and are stuck until they neutralized their attacker. Not only does these challenges cost most likely time, but it requires entirely different abilities. As previously stated, the players take control of different characters and thereby a character suited to release the shackles might be at an utter disadvantage in a fight. The required combination of different skills sets, the rules preventing an escape and the lack of any reward for this encounter renders the entire event a moment of *kakakairos*, a *wrong time* to show humility. All these elements are part of the game's narrative in combination with its set of rules and therefore display procedural rhetoric. Whenever the players decide to engage with this location, the players lose time and potentially health, which might become vital in future fights. The only advantage here is the knowledge to avoid a confrontation in the next gameplay cycle by not interacting with this character. The procedural rhetoric communicates clearly to not engage again with this tile.

On the right side, the players can look out of a window. With no challenge to overcome, the player is only provided with a small bit of information. Its value depends on the players previous and future decisions. The group is informed about a greenhouse and a short glimpse at a creature which looks like a giant cat with wings. This information on its own would constitute *ákairos*. Without any opportunity to act at this moment, the players hardly lose nor gain anything. Later in the game, this bit of information might enable to player to avoid a potentially disastrous fight with a manticore at the previously encountered greenhouse. Without any instant benefit or punishment, the game's procedural rhetoric leaves this space neutral. Therefore,

even a seemingly uneventful moment can enable the players to find the good time, *eúkairos*, through reducing informational deprivation. This also applies to the last segment.

The central piece of the panorama displays cabinets. The players can break these via skill challenges. Doing so will provide them with up to three objects, out of which each holds different value. One of them is essentially useless, because it is required for a sequence of actions that will force the players to spend extensive time without providing any relevant insights for the case. The second object, a ruby, is potentially useful as it unlocks a powerful artifact towards the end of the game which can be used in another story deck. The last item is an essential information to solve the case. If the players acquire this intel early, they can avoid visiting the entire room in future playthrough cycles. Hence, this tile encapsulates an *eúkairos*. Either the players gain the means to acquire a powerful artifact or they can actively save time in their next attempt. Both ways, they gain an edge for the future actions. Also the *kakakairos* is present, as the useless item might lure the players towards actions wasting their time contingent.

All three tiles hold different values. A player will naturally strive towards the establishment of an *eúkairos* and be interested to prevent any situation that would be considered a *kakakairos*. As demonstrated with the example of the dormitory, the game rules establish a procedural rhetoric. Just like the game's ruleset favors certain actions over others, so do the players. Their interactions with one another are shaped by the game to search for opportune moments and encourage interpersonal, verbal rhetoric.

EGO AUTEM DICO VOBIS – VERBAL RHETORIC IN *T.I.M.E* STORIES

Players will try to persuade their fellow players. Their individual goal might be to engage in actions which they consider beneficial for group's success or to discourage them from taking

disadvantageous alternatives. In order to exemplify how the procedural rhetoric encourages verbal rhetoric, another example from the later stages of *The Marcy Case* story deck is analyzed. The players arrive at a hotel and have three segments to choose from (see figure 7).

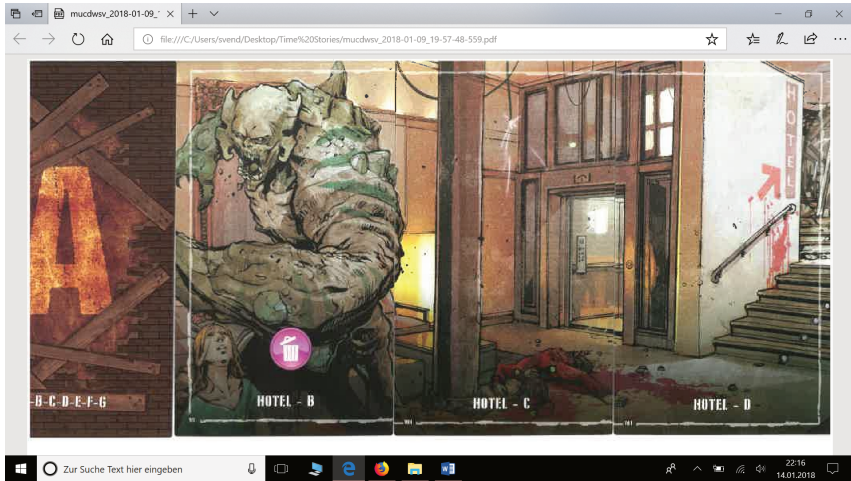


Figure 7. A scenery consisting out of three segments from *The Marcy Case*.

On the left, a monster attacks a young woman. As part of the story deck, the group of players have the task to find a young girl called Marcy. The attacked woman might be a person of interest. Depending on previously acquired information, the group may or may not know that this individual is not their target, nor do they gain any significant advantage by rescuing her. They can only assess that a fight would result most likely by interacting with this segment. Depending on their informational situation, the players may come to different conclusions how to proceed. As mentioned in the introduction, kairos is only revealed with certainty in hindsight. Hence, the potential for this card to hold eukairotic or kakakairotic potential is equally given as explained through the Schrödinger's cat simile. Rhetoric occurs when at least two players favor different options and try to make their judgment count. "Rhetoric is communicative contingency-

management”⁹ (Knape, 2006, p.12) and attempts to dissuade from alternatives that are subjectively considered harmful or disadvantages. One player might argue that rescuing the women, no matter if she is the target or not, might be rewarded. Another position could be that a fight for a character non-crucial to the win-condition is a waste of time. Not knowing that this is clearly the wrong time (*kakakairos*) to help, the players have to commit to a certain plan of action. Rhetoric as contingency-management helps them by reducing the options to one actionable option the group can agree upon.

The same necessity arises from the other two tiles. It is unknown to the players whether the elevator is still functional or the staircase intact, but the illustrations on the cards provide hints. Despite its unlikeliness, the delapidated hotel has a functional elevator. An indication for this is the functional light in the cage. Meanwhile the staircase is visibly blocked by debris. Choosing the latter option results either in a loss of time or health. Here, the game provides the players with arguments that hint them towards the better of two options. The elevator has no disadvantage linked to it and thereby eukairotic in nature. Meanwhile, the staircase holds a penalty for the non-observant player and it therefore kakakairotic. Already the smallest decision and a difference in opinion opens the potential for rhetorical activity. Whenever the game lures the players towards a certain choice, the players have to negotiate amongst each other if they want totake the risk or press onward.

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

It is not enough to be in the right place at the right time.
You should also have an open mind at the right time.
(Erdős, 1998, p. 99)

Paul Erdős emphasizes in the statement that placement, timing,

9. = [“Rhetorik ist kommunikatives Kontingenz-Management.”]

and mindset only unfold their full power if they come together. The combination of these factors renders Kairos so difficult to catch. Just being at the right place at the right time means nothing, if a mind is set and unwilling to seize the moment; the same applies to other possible configurations. All the possible variations of these factors can create the setting of a time travel narrative. If one factor out of place, the seed for tragedy is laid and the motivation to alter past events born.

As demonstrated above, these very same factors are demanded from the players of *T.I.M.E Stories*. This game (series) sets itself apart with its unique gameplay mechanism. Its time-management demands force the players to construct a long-term plan to maximize output. Its setup naturally creates a field of tension (through procedural rhetoric) that the players have to overcome by successfully negotiating a plan of action (via verbal rhetoric). All these expressions of *kairos* exemplify this otherwise highly theoretical concept. It was shown that unraveling its presence can be the heart of gameplay and demand rhetoric as a means of persuasion to steer a group towards it. Therefore, this paper helped to give some insights into the already quite underdefined and under researched field of kairos and which influence it *plays*.

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