T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

KRATOS' JOURNEY THROUGH MYTHOLOGY IN *GOD OF WAR* THROUGH JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S *THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES*

MASTER'S THESIS

Sercan Doğan ARISOY

Department of English Language and Literature

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(Y1712.020005)

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DEDICATION

I hereby declare with the respect that the study "Kratos' Journey Through Mythology In *God Of War* Through Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand*", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (30/10/2020)

Sercan Doğan ARISOY

FOREWORD

This study does not focus on one particular literary work. Instead, it focuses on various works of multiple art styles on a surface level in order to evaluate how much artistic work goes into video games. Throughout the study, various works of art will be compared to video games in order to establish the idea that video games are products of art. Therefore, they are worthy of recognition as such.

September, 2020   Sercan Doğan ARISOY

KRATOS' JOURNEY THROUGH MYTHOLOGY IN GOD OF WAR THROUGH JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES

ABSTRACT

God of War is a video game franchise that focuses on the journey of the character named Kratos. Starting his journey as an anti-hero, Kratos grows as a character throughout his journey, learning to become more compassionate. Two reasons that make *God of War* an interesting case of study are how the video games incorporate an original character (Kratos) into mythology and how the series merge existing Greek and Norse mythologies through Kratos. *God of War, God of War II,* and *God of War III* revolve around Kratos' pursuit of revenge from Greek gods while the 2018 game focuses on Norse mythology.

Being introduced as a mortal war chief at the beginning of the game, Kratos begs the god of war Ares to save him on the brink of death in the face of a formidable foe. Ares makes Kratos his servant as the price of saving him. Ares then makes Kratos kill Kratos' wife and daughter to make him a perfect (senseless) warrior. However, Kratos is constantly haunted by his regrets and past deeds. Infused by rage, Kratos unleashes a personal war against Ares in pursuit of revenge. Athena guides Kratos through his journey as she believes Kratos' presence will end the reign of Ares. After slaying Ares, Kratos is declared to be the new god of war by Athena. From this point onward, Kratos is treated as almost the replacement of Ares in the following games of the franchise. In *God of War II*, Athena addresses Kratos as his brother. After the first game, the new entries depict Kratos to be a son of Zeus.

Keywords: Greek Mythology, Norse Mythology, God of War, Kratos, Video Games

JOSEPH CAMPBELL'IN *KAHRAMANIN SONSUZ YOLCULUĞU* ADLI KİTABIYLA *GOD OF WAR* SERİSİNDEN KRATOS'UN MİTOLOJİLER ARASI SERÜVENİ

ÖZET

God of War, Kratos adlı karakterin yolculuğunu konu alan bir video oyun serisidir. Bir anti kahraman olarak serüvenine başlayan Kratos, yol boyunca bir karakter olarak gelişir ve daha merhametli olmayı öğrenir. *God of War* serisini incelemeye layık kılan öğelerden biri, serinin kendi orijinal karakterini mitolojilere dâhil etmesi ve böylelikle Yunan ve İskandinav mitolojilerini birbiriyle ilişkilendirmesidir. *God of War, God of War II ve God of War III* Kratos'un Yunan tanrılarından öç alma gayesini konu alırken, 2018 yılında çıkan oyun İskandinav mitolojisiyle ilişkilendirilen topraklarda, Kratos'un yeni bir başlangıç kurmasına odaklanır.

Serinin başında bir fani bir savaşçı olarak tanıtılan Kratos, yenemediği bir rakip karşısında ölümün eşiğindeyken savaş tanrısı Ares'e, onu kurtarması için yalvarır. Ares, hayatını kurtarması karşılığında Kratos'u hizmetkârı yapar. Zaman geçtikçe Ares, Kratos'u kusursuz ve hissiz bir savaşçı yapabilmek için Kratos'un karısını ve çocuğunu ona öldürtür. Ancak Kratos sürekli pişmanlıkları ve geçmişte yaptıklarının gölgesine düşer. Öfke ile aşılanan Kratos, intikam almak için Ares'e karşı kişisel bir savaş açar. Ares'in hükmünün bu yolla son bulacağına inanan Athena, Kratos'a amacı doğrultusunda rehberlik eder. Ares'i öldürdükten sonra Kratos Athena tarafından yeni savaş tanrısı olur. Seride bu olaydan sonra Kratos, Ares'in yerine geçmiş gibi davranılır. *God of War II*'de Athena Kratos'a ağabeyi olarak hitap eder. İlk oyundan sonra çıkan *God of War* oyunları Kratos'u Zeus'un oğlu olarak betimler ve Ares'in rolüne büründüğünü gösteren, Ares ve Kratos arasında benzerliklere yer verilir. *God of War III,* tıpkı Yunan mitolojisindeki Ares için olduğu gibi, oyunculara Kratos'u kontrol ederken Afrodit ile cinsel münasebette bulunma seçeneğini verir. Video oyun serisi bu

anlamda mitolojiyi yeni bir ışıkta betimler ve bir adaptasyon stilini benimser. Var olan mitolojiyi, orijinal bir şekilde betimleme gayesi bulunmaz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yunan Mitolojisi, İskandinav Mitolojisi, God of War, Kratos, Video Oyunlar

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I. INTRODUCTION

In *God of War II,* Kratos invades numerous cities to spread the control of Sparta. Zeus, Athena, and many other gods grow afraid of the chaos caused by Kratos. To use this chaos as an opportunity to get the upper hand in the battle against the gods, Gaia shapeshifts into Kratos' deceased wife to tell him that killing Zeus will end his suffering. Kratos' rage and contempt against gods grow larger each time he faces a god. Athena sacrifices herself to save Zeus in the battle between Zeus and Kratos. When Athena is about to die, she reveals valuable background information about Zeus. Athena tells Kratos that he intends to kill Zeus out of fear just like how Zeus once set out to kill his own father Cronus for the same reason. Cronus also kills his own father Ouranos. So the cycle of sons killing their own fathers present in Greek mythology is represented and continued in *God of War* games as well. Kratos teams up with titans and they climb the mount of Olympus to kill Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, Helios, Hercules, Hera, and Hephaestus.

God of War 2018 (originally titled *God of War* but is referred to as *God of War 2018* in order not to be confused with the first game released in 2005) introduces many changes to the established formula of the previous games. Firstly, the game no longer takes place in areas associated with Greek mythology. Kratos is in Nordic lands interacting with Norse gods. The character that is known up to the release of the 2018 game is like the physical embodiment of rage and revenge. Kratos depicted in the 2018 game is less animated in his actions and more grounded in his demeanor. The video game opens up with the preparation for the funeral of his second wife Faye. Kratos has a son called Atreus who is still alive and accompanies Kratos throughout his journey. The journey itself is similar to how mythological stories function according to the depiction in Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Faye's death wish is for her ashes to be sprinkled from the highest peak of all realms. This quest establishes the goal of the journey as well as sets up the separation section of the standard path of the

mythological adventure of the hero (Campbell, 2004, p.28). As Faye is a Jotünn (i.e. giant) the duo's (Kratos and Atreus) journey essentially takes them to Jotünnheim (i.e. the realm of giants) where the player learns that Atreus is the god Loki. Similar to Kratos' integration into Greek mythology, the character is included in Norse mythology is an organic way in the sense that Kratos shares bonds with existing gods. In Greek mythology, Kratos is referred to as a son of Zeus. In Norse mythology, he is a husband to a giant, a father to the god Loki.

Even though the 2018 game introduces a new mythology into the story, Kratos' personality is not reset. He has the wisdom and scars of his past journey. Athena appears to Kratos as a ghost from Sparta, telling him that Kratos is doomed and he cannot help anyone and is unfit to be a father. *God of War 2018* heavily focuses on the father/son dynamic throughout the game where Atreus teaches Kratos compassion and Kratos teaches Atreus how to survive as a god. Even though Kratos wants to start fresh with a new family, the ghosts and visions of the past still haunt him. Kratos believes godhood is a curse he tainted Atreus with. Zeus' ghost appears while Kratos and Atreus are in Helheim and Zeus tells Kratos that he cannot escape his past. Later on, Kratos admits to Atreus that he has killed his father. Kratos' honesty towards his son brings the two together. The relationship between Atreus and Kratos builds up throughout the game. The entirety of the game's story is told in a single take, meaning there are no camera cuts or time skips in-between the events that occur in the game. This style of storytelling establishes an organic growth in the story since following the plot is no hassle. There are moments such as Kratos telling Atreus that both of them are gods that captivate emotional moments that showcase personal growth in characters. Similar to Gilgamesh's quest to find immortality, the journey is more important than the conclusion in the story of God of War 2018.

Video game adaptation of Norse mythology shares similarities and differences. Some of these differences relate to the portrayal of gods. The 2018 game presents Freya as the mother of Baldur, not mentioning Frigg anywhere within the game. Baldur is immune to all harm and the only thing that breaks this spell is a mistletoe. In the original mythology, mistletoe is the only object that is not asked to not harm Baldur. So, in the video game Baldur's immunity breaks after his hand is pierced by a mistletoe arrow's piece. Atreus (i.e. Loki) is the

one to carry the mistletoe arrows. In the mythological story of *The Death of Balder* (Gaiman, 2017, p.134), Loki deceives Höd to throw a mistletoe dart to kill Baldur (Gaiman, 2017, p.139). However, in the game, the mistletoe piece only breaks Baldur's immunity. While Kratos and Atreus watch Baldur trying to kill Freya, Atreus protests and Kratos kills Baldur to stop him from killing Freya. Before Kratos kills Baldur, Kratos says that the cycle of children killing their own parents must end. While the video game takes Norse and Greek mythologies and adapts them into new stories involving Kratos, the developers do not strictly stay faithful to the source material. The changes that are made showcase that video games do not just copy existing stories but adapt them to contribute to literature. While Freya is the mother of Baldur in *God of War 2018,* in the original story, Frigg is Baldur's mother. Baldur's characteristics are completely different in the game and in the mythology. The mythology depicts Baldur to be delicate *"Balder's face shone like the sun: he was so beautiful that he illuminated any place he entered."* (Gaiman, 2017, p.135) whereas the depiction of Baldur in *God of War 2018* is violent, aggressive, and short-tempered. There are also inconsistencies in the game where Jormungundr is present in Midgard however there is no mention of Loki's giant wife Sigyn. Furthermore, Loki himself is Atreus and he is a child. How Jormungundr came about is not explained in the game.

Even though God of War games take the liberty of altering mythology, this does not mean video game adaptations are lesser of value compared to film or book adaptations. Adaptation brings richness to literature and video games offer numerous tools for interactive story-telling that involve the audience into the telling of the story. Video games are quickly becoming works of art as the budget and the talent are growing significantly. Therefore, video games are the newest form of art in twenty-first century.

The only thing that does not change is the change itself. While the rapid development of technology provides new gadgets and services each day, the way people live their lives slowly but steadily changes. Literature and the way people interact with literature also change and improve as there are more options and variety in ways in which people interact with art. As technology enables new possibilities that were deemed impossible to achieve (e.g. planes flying) art also

develops and diversifies into new categories. Technology enables new art forms to emerge (Wolf & Perron, 2003, p.viii). Much like culture and language, art is in a constant state of evolution where the evolution is not only limited to the technological advancement but also related to humanity's understanding and perception of art.

For instance, storytelling started as an oral tradition, and with the invention of paper and writing systems, stories turned into documents that people can read. The evolution of stories from oral to written form comes with a lot of benefits. One major benefit is that written stories are consistent. Furthermore, they are more accessible in the sense that an individual can read a book whenever they want and go at their own pace. Whereas oral stories are not consistent, therefore cannot be recreated. Each retelling of the same story is a new version. It is not possible to pause someone for any given amount of time and pick up the story at a later date.

The industrial revolution enabled books to be printed at a much faster rate. Therefore, what started as an expensive way to handwrite books evolved to be produced much faster and at lower costs at factories. However, a truly cost-effective and environmentally friendly option became available with the invention of Kindle in 2007. The invention of e-readers has started the digitalization of books (Edman, 2019, p.63). Edman makes an important point about the benefits of digitalization by focusing on the reduction of environmental damage printing books brings. Considering the copies and the pages books require, material cost of printing books is detrimental to natural resources. One way to reduce the material cost is transitioning to digital books so that paper will be less necessary. Edman also draws attention to accessibility and the cost of books. Before industrial revolution, books were much rarer as they had to be written by hand in order to produce more copies. The amount of work put into the product naturally increases the price. Different techniques such as using carved blocks to print the same section multiple times can accelerate the process however, as long as the books are physically printed, there is still the obstacle of distance and the space needed to store the copies. Reaching a worldwide audience through a cost-effective way is only possible through digital books. On top of that, digital book stores have a universal selection of titles available for purchase.

Digital platforms for books make it easier for people to read books in languages other than their native tongues (p. 66). E-readers have features where the reader can highlight, translate, and take notes on the digital book. So, e-readers can help people study in a way traditional books can't. Another important feature Edman points out is the updates. Printed books are finalized and therefore cannot be changed until there is a new print run. So any typos in the story, in the names of author/s or name of the artists who did the cover art cannot be changed. Yet e-books can get updates. E-books have paved the way for audio books to develop. Blind people can enjoy reading whether they read as a hobby or for academic purposes with the help of audio books. Not only for the disabled but audio books create more opportunities to listen books during eating, doing chores and/or on transportation.

New possibilities like audio and digital books do not replace conventional, printed books. Technology is about accessibility, option and variety. A concern that Edman also touches on is the digital media replacing the physical counterpart. It is the idea where a new version of a literary style will replace the arts that come before it. Edman gives examples to two very important figures expressing their opinions:

Plato in his works (*Republic* and *Phaedo*) expressed disdain towards poetry and written literature as he believed written literature would cause people to write everything down instead of memorizing them (Edman, 2019, p. 65). Edgar Allan Poe believed that the rapidly increasing number of books on different topics is the biggest evil in the century he lived in (66). Claiming writing would prevent people from remembering information would be ridiculed in the twenty-first century given how widespread it is to take notes to study, remember, and revise. The comments made by Plato and Edgar Allan Poe not only show the changing nature of literature but also the impression people have towards any given forms of literature. The worry of losing the classical arts may be futile. Cinema and TV did not replace theatre. Conventional books and e-books can coexist. Records are still manufactured even though there are other physical and digital ways to listen to music. Technology brings convenience, variety and option. Emergence of contemporary arts may decrease the attention given to classic arts (e.g. poetry) receive may diminish. However, as long as the art style

keeps evolving and remain successful at capturing and interpreting human experience, the attention that a particular art form receives would only increase.

History witnessed the emergence of new art forms with the aid of the enabling technology. The enabling technology provides new opportunities artists can leverage and if the public shows interest, then the mediums have the chance to develop into more concrete forms. (Wolf & Perron, 2003, p.viii). For this reason, each style of art benefits from masterpieces that carry the genre further. English theatre would not be the same if Shakespeare had not written brilliant plays that captivated the human condition so well. Fantasy novel genre would not be at the same place without J.R.R Tolkien's extraordinary world-building. The evolution of suspense in films cannot be discussed without studying Alfred Hitchcock. Successful works inspire people. In a healthy and developing genre, there are new interpretations of ideas competing with each other (Wolf & Perron, 2003, p.viii). As Steiner says, there is nothing new under the sun (quoted by Edman, 2019, p. 25). Ultimately, it is up the artists to interpret the world in ways that inspire people to see the world to form new perspectives. Shakespeare's plays are interpretations of existing stories. Yet, the way he retells these stories is the mark of his mastery. On the other hand, Alfred Hitchcock has recurring elements in many of his films. Yet none of the repeated tropes hinder the feeling of suspense in his films. The concept of perfect murder and getting away with it can be seen in *Psycho, Rear Window, Strangers on a Train,* and *Dial M for Murder.* Furthermore, Hitchcock's choice of the cast shows similarities with James Stewart playing key roles in *Rear Window, Vertigo* and *Rope.* Lead female actresses in Hitchcock's films share similar physical qualities by being fit, blonde heterosexual women. Even though Hitchcock's films revolve around similar topics of suspense with similarities in the choice of cast, none of them have the same story. Hitchcock uses unique techniques and flavours to make his films stand out. *Rope* embodies a one-take style where there are no time skips in the telling of the story as the whole story takes place in only one apartment. The majority of *Rear Window* takes place in one room but has the viewer stalk the neighbours along with the main character. Reasons for the desire of perfect murder are different in each film where Brandon in *Rope* sees murder as a right for intellectually enlightened, Norman Bates in *Psycho* is psychologically

troubled to commit murder and Gavin Elster in *Vertigo* believes murder as a form of revenge is his right as he believes that his wife is cheating on him. Hitchcock does not rely only on murder to better the suspense genre. Even though there are various films that focus on murder, *Birds* move away from the perfect murder formula and focuses on nature's revenge for suspense. Birds are not animals that are associated with danger, suspense or killing. However, Hitchcock combines birds and his style to establish suspense.

The evolution of art is not only limited to the invention of the book or its many different versions. Theatre also benefits from the use of technology. Speakers enable the possibility of various sound effects from environmental to pre-recorded speech to be a part of live acting. Microphones enable plays with big audiences possible. Another staple of theatric performance is lighting. Shakespeare's Globe was designed in a way to let daylight get in as plays could not be performed at night. However, being able to illuminate dark environments enables plays to be performed at any time of day. Projection technology enables the possibility of different backdrops to be shown to the audience and it enriches the visual representation of plays. These features are some of the many technologies that help plays stand out. In the twenty-first century, plays are respected parts of literature. Nevertheless, during the Renaissance period, there were negative opinions towards theatres as well. The church had massive influence over people and relating to any kind of play was considered ungodly. There was the idea that theatre was a distraction that distracted people from doing godly deeds like going to the church or working. Both the way people interact with theatre and the public opinion towards it have matured as numerous great works have matured the potential and the value of theatre. As the dynamics of the world change over time, so do people's perception and literature is effected subsequently (Edman, 2019, p.76).

Art does not develop or evolve overnight. All art forms have room to evolve with enabling technology and/or more awareness of life. The awareness can be about development in psychology, philosophy, sociology, and on all fields that literature benefits from. Another field of art that has been developing since the nineteenth century is film and motion picture. Illustrating and explaining stories through still drawings have been an instinctual desire of humanity since

the dawn of time. There is an innate desire to tell stories, hear about them, and communicate through shared experiences (Campbell, 2004, p.32). As the human psyche is stimulated by dramatic patterns found in tales. What started people drawing doodles on walls to tell stories has developed into productions with big budgets, using various technologies and collection of talents from different principles. The film industry is not only limited to big-budget blockbusters. Anyone with a recording device can share their narration and stories through the internet. There is a profound desire to tell stories; people recording or photographing themselves with cameras, recording their voices through recorders, or writing their journeys on diaries are all ways in which people record their experiences and make them immortal (p. 39). The development of the film industry is closely tied to technological achievements. In 1891, Edison Company created a prototype called Kinetoscope which enabled one person at a time to view moving images. The success of Kinetoscope is important as it paved the way for the film industry to flourish. Kinetoscope is not a popular invention that defined the film industry people know in the twenty-first century. Many works of art using these inventions have contributed to the widespread of the medium. The year 1895 marks the first time where paid viewers were able to view a film through the device Cinématographe consisting of a projection machine, a camera, and a printer in Paris, France (Brittanica, 2017). A decade into the twentieth century, film industries started to form in various countries. As people spent more and more money to see films, bigger studios and specific places called cinemas were built. Attention and the financial investment by people establish healthy growth for the medium. The inclusion of synchronized sound and colour in films required process to become cheaper and therefore accessible. By 1930, cinema experienced its golden age, attracting 31 million people visiting cinema in Britain each week (scienceandmediamuseum, 2020). Theatre shares similarity with cinema in the sense that in both art fields, viewers gather in a place and watch a visual show. While during Shakespearean Theatre, the public had a notion of plays being ungodly, in the twenty-first century, claiming that seeing plays or films is ungodly can be ridiculed by the majority of society. Digital technologies have paved the way for faster production for films and visual varieties of cinema such as 3D, IMAX, 4DX (including effects of light, smell, and motion) cinema continues to grow not only as an artistic but also a social event. The change in

perception towards literary fields through centuries shows the changing nature of what is considered artistic. As Clarissa Pinkola Estés puts it, as long as the stories are told in blood-red wholeness and authentic depth, the form in which the story arrives matters little (Campbell, 2004, p.32).

Each new literary field is revolutionary in the sense that they enable artists to form their art in new ways. The evolution of written literature through novels to e-books enable spoken tales and poems to be immortal and reach people that spoken words could not. Written literature enable people to experience literature at their own pace and length. Written literature also enables newer generations to study and learn about previous generations and their lifestyles. It can be easy to study a generation that is one prior to own, however for a twenty-first-century individual to understand the sixteenth century, written literature among history documents is very valuable. Written literature also solidifies stories. Contrary to stories in oral tradition, written texts are finalized and therefore are not changed while experiencing. Written works of art make literature more accessible. Deaf people cannot listen to stories told orally. Also, language learners may have a hard time following spoken words. Therefore, delivering the story in a written format may help language learners understand the story more thoroughly. An individual may stop reading and look at the meaning of the words they do not understand. However, stopping someone while they are telling a story to ask the meaning of a word may hinder the momentum of the story and take away from the experience.

Plays brought a new dimension to storytelling. Apart from providing a new artistic profession that is acting, visualization of stories has altered the writing process as well. Plays have stage directions and voice cues in the scripts. A sense of time and place gained more prominence within stories as people who interact with the story were able to witness it. The audience can also be a part of the play, making it the first interactive and written forms of literature. Listener participation can also be a point of discussion for oral stories. However, stories told orally put the listener in a passive role whereas, in plays, the viewers are active throughout the play, absorbing the conversation, visuals, characters, and the environment. However, in the case of oral stories, there is only a singular source of the story that is the storyteller. Operas are worthy of consideration

when stage arts are in question. The marriage between theatre and music shows that the emergence of new art forms leads to more possibilities in terms of the practice of art. The film industry is relatively new being invented in the twentieth century. As previously stated, the emergence of the film industry is not an overnight occurrence. The industry maintains its growth in scale and budget. Much like how written art has immortalized oral stories, films immortalize performance and story. Benefits that written literature provided also apply when it comes to the transition into the film industry. Viewers can manipulate the performance in the actions of pausing, rewinding, or fast-forwarding. An individual can watch a play during their lunch break which makes art a part of even mundane tasks. The authenticity of the art may seem lacking due to the person not physically partaking in it. However, options like recorded media enable art and literature to reach a wider audience. Some people live on the outskirts of cities and they may not be able to afford going to see plays due to financial and/or time restrictions. Yet, having the option to indulge in art at their residences is encouraging for people to explore art.

Edgar Allan Poe advocates poetry for the sake of poetry in his work *The Poetic Principle* however who sets the distinction between a poet and a non-poet does not have a clear answer. There is not any universally recognized criteria to be considered an artist nor any guidelines to follow and conditions to meet to produce art. The unities derived from Aristotle's *Poetics* may be an attempt to make a list of rules to follow to be a great artist. Three unities that are respectively called unity of action, place and time require a play to occur during the span of a day, at a single place and through a single plot. Yet Shakespeare's plays do not abide by these rules. *The Merchant of Venice* focuses on various themes such as the idea of mercy, revenge, self-interest versus sacrifice and discrimination. Characters are portrayed through different perspectives to establish roundness. Shylock appears to be a heartless money dealer through his interactions with Antonio and Bassanio. On the other hand, Shylock is portrayed as a father who fears for the safety for his daughter and potentially suffers from loneliness through his interactions with his daughter Jessica. In the case of *Hamlet,* the internal struggle and dilemma the character Hamlet suffers from cannot mature during the span of twenty-four hours. The state Hamlet is in gains

magnitude as time passes. Hamlet could not blame himself severely if he was able to avenge his father's death in a single day. Three unities can be restrictive and hinder creative freedom. The purpose of three unities is said to be for the sake of suspension of disbelief. The idea before the unities support the understanding that an audience cannot believe traversal of long distances while the setting is stationary. In the same sense, a story that takes a long time to unravel cannot possibly be performed on stage. So, unities of time and space are concerned with relatability. However Samuel Johnson in his preface of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* finds unity of time and space unnecessary stating;

> *"His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect, than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought."* (Johnson, 1995, p.47).

As Johnson states, whether Shakespeare was aware of the unities and rejected them consciously or was not particularly aware is impossible to know (Johnson, 1995, p.59) however Shakespeare's plays standing strong against the test of time and still being known in the twenty-first century are strong indicators of artistic mastery.

Shakespeare's success and Edgar Allan Poe's seclusion of art by restricting the element of public opinion surfaces an interesting discussion. Works of literature or any artistic field may count as art as long as they preserve certain aesthetic standards and/or popular enough for wide-spread appeal and relevance. It is important to point out that the plays of Shakespeare are not popular without substance. His brilliant portrayal of characters, colourful environmental depictions and circuitous plots are acknowledged by public and critics alike. Yet the answer to the dilemma of what constitutes as art may not be answered by neither popularity nor property. Popular books, films or plays may have incoherent chapters, inconsistent behaviors of characters and/or a general lack of focus. At the same time, restricting art with regulations limits the artistic creativity. Education for good storytelling can help rough storytelling skills to be

refined. However, plays of Shakespeare prove that a work of art may not fit the existing rules of what is considered art and still be acclaimed for its artistic mastery. Clarissa Pinkola Estés depicts dysfunctional restrictions to be an artery that is clogged that causes story tradition to be narrowed (Campbell, 2004, p.11). Estes makes the said criticism about stories that are predictable and revolve around the same topic of sex and violence, yet restrictive systems such as three unities limit the possibilities of storytelling no matter which plots stories are based on.

Comparative literature is a good example for literature having the capability of expanding its borders. Comparative studies in the field of literature show that people all over the world do experience emotions such as joy, grief, excitement, anxiety and so on similarly. It is thanks to literature expanding its borders as to what counts as literature that the similarities between emotional experiences are discovered. As Steiner says, there is nothing new under the sun and the new stories are reimaginings of emotions or situations that have been explored before. How the plays of William Shakespeare are not original stories. However, the artistic depiction and the flavour the playwright provides make for a worthwhile addition. Therefore, different authors around the world may bring unique tastes to existing stories and/or stories that are built around emotions/concepts that have been explored previously in other works. In Hülya Bayrak Akyıldız's words, the recreation of an existing dilemma is a richness in itself (Edman, 2019, p.60). Adaptation itself is a natural part of human experience. Each retelling of a story told in oral tradition reimages it in a slightly different way. In written literature, what the reader gets from the story is unique to them. Each reading of a story creates a new version of it. Comparative studies bring forth the similarities (or differences) in works all around the world. These studies bring the world together. Comparative studies is similar to internet in the way that they both connect the world together. Early stages of comparative literature seem conservative in the sense that the works that were compared needed to be worthy and well-known in order to justify the comparison (49). However with the developing society, there are a lot of books being published every day. Keeping up with what is considered worthy of comparison is difficult to maintain. Popularity of a work may not always be an indicator of quality and

with the amount of works being published, the variety is huge. Consequently, restrictions may hinder the ability to recognize worthwhile adaptations and reiterations.

Evolution of literature brings new styles of storytelling that pave the way for new possibilities to emerge. Novel, theatre and cinema genres have enabled appreciation to distinctly different styles of art. As people accepted and invested in new art forms, works of art had room to develop and flourish. Video games have started to gain more and more relevance as people show interest in video games. As the industry breaks new records each year, the variety of games becomes richer. There are various genres of videos games that enable more people to find the games that they enjoy. The popularity of the industry gives video games room to develop to be able to provide remarkable artworks. As the enabling technology keeps getting stronger each day, video games develop to become much more complex and multi-layered both in terms of storytelling and gameplay. The industry has grown to such an extent that video games benefit from the motion performance of actors, expertise of film directors, musicians, historians. Video games offer new tools for storytelling and each work that benefits from these tools, move the industry ahead.

Emergence of new ways to tell stories may decrease the attention given to prior artistic styles. However, the possible reduction in interest does not mean that one art form is superior to the other. Variety naturally divides attention and people interact with the medium that they like the most. It is impractical to judge people by the way in which they interact with art. After all, human experience is in the centre of literature (Edman, 2019, p.50). In an imaginary case where classical literary styles like poetry, theatre and novel are less popular, the reason of people's lack of appreciation of fine arts and finding new art forms such as video games easier to interact with may be due to literature falling behind on depicting and reflecting the way people live. On the other hand, the art is not a unified form of ideas that are consistently coherent and function as if they are a single entity. Each day is an opportunity for a literary style to be rejuvenated through new works. Storytelling aims to capture authenticity to immerse the reader in the story. Each new story also forms the collective identity and a sense of culture (53). When authenticity to human experience and remarkable

storytelling are in question, criticizing public's choice may prove fruitless. As pointed before, Edgar Allan Poe's comments on mass production of books being evil did not stop the production of books. Three unities of Aristotle did not stop Shakespeare from following his own style and being recognized by Queen Elizabeth I herself. In the twenty-first century, claiming that mass production of books is evil would not make sense. On the other hand, Shakespeare's works along with many other plays that came after his plays have proven that the audience can make sense of stories that do not fit the rule of three unities. The two examples that are given (Merchant of Venice and Hamlet) showcase the change in public's view and perception. What may seem ridiculous like mass production of books have become commonplace in later centuries. Fantastic literature can be full of imagination for the eighteenth or the nineteenth century, however for the twenty-first century and onward, same works of literature may function as a vision for the future (73). As human is in the centre of literature, the way people live their lives and the dynamics of the world also effect literature (76).

All the points that are made so far are the ground work for video games to be considered a legitimate artistic style. There are many benefits to expanding literature and art to include video games and no legitimate reason to avoid them altogether. The most important factor may be how literature evolves and is being taught. If literature relies too heavily on a certain art style, genre, period or movement, students of literature may not be able to discover the wide variety brilliant works from different styles (Edman, 2019, p.78).

When it comes to the appreciation of video games and its artistic potential, time can be an important factor to consider. One of the aspects that makes humans different from the rest of the living organisms is the heritage of experience and knowledge of prior generations. Generations deliver their experiences to newer generations through schooling, written documents, stories and cultural traditions. These teachings form the collective consciousness and establish a sense of worth given to every single part of life. The shift in the impression towards books and theatre occurs due to people acknowledging the value in art through ongoing years from the emergence of the art style. The acknowledgement leads to the acceptance of existing art styles but unfortunately

carries the judgement of newly emerging styles. Contrary to Generation X (people born between 1960 and 1989) and Generation Y (people born between 1990 and 1999), Generation Z (people born between 2000 and 2009) is growing up in a world where video games are already widespread. In the case of Generation X and Millennials, video games were not widespread enough to be experienced as an artistic activity. Technology prior to the year 2000 somewhat limited what could be done in a game and therefore hindered at the artistic potential. Consequently, the majority of Generation X and Millennials may have an outdated idea about what video games are. They may see video games as time consuming activities that children play yet serve no purpose other than mindless fun. Traces of such misconceptions will be explained in later chapters in this study. However an undeniable fact is that while Generation X and Millennials might have had to play more traditional and physical games like tag or hide and seek, whereas Generation Z is born into a world where video games are widespread. This fact may lead to difference opinions towards video games among generations.

When video games are presented as a form of art, arguments presented against the idea share similarity. They seem more like excuses rather than solid arguments as they can be refuted quite easily. One of the most common arguments is that video games cause violence. The correlation between video games and violence becomes exceptionally prominent during the aftermath of any underage person committing any crime related to violence (e.g.2018 Florida school shooting). This particular correlation will be refuted in depth in later chapters of this study. However, the link between video games and violence is not only refuted by data, it is also historically inaccurate. If said claim (video games cause violence) were to be true, the removal of the activity would have resulted in the chain reaction (violence in that case) nonexistent as there is a supposed direct correlation made. However video games did not exist since the dawn of humanity. Yet violence has always been a part of human history. Cain murdered Abel, committing the first murder in Bible. Bible (or any other holy book) may not be accepted as a reliable source of evidence even though religion may have a huge impact on people's perception of life. The world experienced two massive world wars that need no introduction. There were no video games during mass killings

of Nazi genocide or witch hunts in Britain.

One might claim that the given examples are adult crimes and in the case of video games, minds of children are more fragile when it comes to differentiating fantasy violence from actual violence. This is a sound argument and a healthy concern which was also brought to the attention of video game industry. ESRB and PEGI are two companies that operate to evaluate video games for their content and decide on a rating for each game title. The games are not sold to children that do not meet the proper age requirement. Parents are also expected to fulfill their duty by actually checking the age rating of the video games their children are playing and not carelessly purchase games that their children want desperately. One may also argue that if these rating systems were functional, there would not be violent behavior amongst children. First of all, it is impractical to present a single element (e.g. video games) as the sole reason for violence. There may be many factors for violent behavior in children and each case can be different. The reasons can vary from distress to violence in family of origin, substance abuse or video games. Furthermore, American Psychological Association made an update to their resolution about the connection between video games and violence in February 2020 declearing that *"Attributing violence to violent video gaming is not scientifically sound and draws attention away from other factors"* (American Psychological Association, 2020). Violence in youth is in fact too complex to attribute to one singular activity. On the other hand, associating a large group of people (in this case children) with a single attribute (i.e. innocence) is a simplistic and often an unrealistic approach. Ideally, for an individual to make such a strong claim (i.e. children are innocent), said individual has to meet every single child on earth and do extensive psychological tests.

The innocence of children may be a myth as the claim generalizes a large number of people with a particular trait. William Golding's renowned postmodern novel *Lord of the Flies* takes a group of children on a virgin island to inspect them in an environment in the absence of social conditioning to deconstruct the popular belief of the innocence of children. The idea of children being innocent is not only a public idea, but literature also has works that support the idea of children's innocence. In early chapters of Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, the main character David is portrayed in an innocent way, being the victim of

mistreatment by grown-ups. Charles Dickens' depiction of cruel adults is not only limited to *David Copperfield.* His famous novella *A Christmas Carol* contrasts the main character Scrooge's cruelty and cold heartedness with Christmas' atmosphere, a time of giving and caring. William Blake's poem *The Chimney Sweeper* depicts industrialization as the oppressing and abusive power over innocent and fragile children. Much like Charles Dickens, William Blake also amplifies the innocence of children through contrasting children with the cruelty of adults;

> *When my mother died I was very young,*
>
> *And my father sold me while yet my tongue*
>
> *Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"*
>
> *So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.*

Literature helps build up social constructions which may be harmful as oversimplification and generalization of characteristics of children may cause society to be blindsided when a particular child behaves distinctly different compared to characteristics assigned to them by society. When a child (in legal terms, anyone under the age of eighteen) behaves in a not so innocent manner, society is baffled. This bafflement and the vulgar nature of children is depicted masterfully by William Golding in *Lord of the Flies*. At the end of the book, when the naval officer meets Ralph, Ralph is described as a scarecrow. The naval officer feels embarrassed by the condition of the British boys;

> *"I should have thought," said the officer as he visualized the search before him, "I should have thought that a pack of British boys—you're all British, aren't you?—would have been able to put up a better show than that—I mean—"* (Golding, 2015, p.182).

The bafflement and embarrassment depicted in *Lord of the Flies* can be similar to how American society felt after the mass school shooting in Florida in 2018. In search of answer and solution, people may be inclined to find video games at fault rather than realizing the underlying societal problems and the distorted idealization of innocence of children. There are multiple problems with this approach. The least concerning problem is that video games have a bad reputation. The bad reputation causes a double standard when it comes to the

artistic value, worth and representation. A much bigger problem of looking for a scapegoat for violence in children is that the unfair criticism of video games shifts the focus away from the underlying psychological and environmental factors that need attention and solutions.

There is an idea that the introduction of new art styles distracts the attention given to classic art styles (such as poetry, theatre, and novel) and somewhat variety is a bad thing. Edman states that Generation Z are more interested in the film adaptation of art works rather than reading the original material (Edman, 2019, p.53). There are many factors that should be considered before stating that new art forms art threatening the existence of classical ones. Firstly, more variety would naturally decrease the number of people interested in any given art. If written form of art were the only form of art, people that would like to hear stories, would have no other option but to read the written material. Yet as art diversifies, people enjoy more options to choose from. Secondly, criticizing public's taste just because the majority of people's choice does not align with a concept may come across as disrespectful to the individual's freedom of choice. Art and literature are centered on humanity and if a form of art thrives, the success needs to be acknowledged. The quality of the said art style can be criticized individually by comparing or contrasting with other forms of art. However, people cannot be dictated on what is worthy and not. If an individual finds value in a very badly produced film, then there is value in that film for that person. Everyone is welcome to discuss art and try to persuade others to see the value in their own opinions. However, at the end of the day, it is the individual's decision to choose what they want to interact with. Lastly, competition between the worth of different art styles may prove to be fruitless. Instead, finding similarities and considering variety richness carry art to inspiring heights. As Edward Said says, intellectual writing is about being inclusive and is about the world (23).

II. KRATOS AS A MODERN MYTHOLOGICAL HERO

This study aims to present Kratos' similarities to existing heroes in Greek and Norse mythologies by drawing similarities between Kratos and the characteristics of a hero explained in Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The overall aim of this endeavour is to establish video-game genre as a worthy addition to literary arts.

A. What makes Kratos a Hero?

Even though the term 'hero' is used to describe Kratos in this study, Kratos' journey starts as an anti-hero as he does not have heroic characteristics. However the character becomes interesting with the fourth game where Kratos travels to the land of Norse Gods and tries to establish a new family. Qualities depicted in *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* helps establish Kratos as a hero that is not lesser than the ones presented in other mediums. He, as a hero, shows all the qualities and goes through story elements that make epic heroes epic. Along with Kratos' involvement and traversal through different mythologies, his ruthless anger, his determination to establish his own ideology into his surroundings make him an interesting video game character. Whether Kratos is a worthy character of praise or not is up for debate. However, Kratos certainly introduces a breath of fresh air to heroic depiction of characters. Albeit good or evil, Kratos has been changing his approach to life throughout his adventures as he experiences the hero's journey. Kratos' change of character can be felt the best in the character's most recent adventure that takes place in *God of War 2018*. Moving away from the gods of Olympus, Norse lands provide a ground for a new beginning for the character. The game opens up with the death of his wife, setting the mood for loss as well as the hero's call for his upcoming journey.

All video games, films, plays and novels start with scripts. Even before the invention of writing, people gave meaning to their surroundings, created fantastic stories and mythologies (Edman, 2019, p.35). Mythologies of regions and

folklore unique to cultures carry over generations. These stories are adapted with care and passion with newer artistic expressions. Therefore, adaptation is a natural part of human experience (60). A unique adaptation of mythology through a modern art style is the focus of this study. The video game franchise called *God of War* and the antihero known as Kratos as well as the series creator Cory Barlog will be analyzed to potentially find artistic depiction of mythology in the video game.

B. Kratos' Beginning in Greek Mythology

When the title of god of war is uttered, almighty god Ares comes to mind. Greek god Ares has close ties with Kratos. Kratos was first introduced to players as a captain of a Spartan Army. He fought many wars and his bloodthirst had no boundaries. That is until he faced a formidable barbarian foe that his power could not match. It was at that moment Kratos called for Ares and later becomes a servant of his in exchange of being saved. The video game itself bases its story on mythological heroes. The inclusion of mythological figures reinforce the idea of a story inspired by the existing Greek mythology. Even though video games may not be considered art by some, in itself, video games find inspiration from mythology and history. So as an art style, video games do not ignore the existence of existing art forms, they are inspired by them, just like adaptations. Stories that are passed through generations are still relevant and constantly evolve. This evolution may not make new generations forget or ignore the original stories. On the contrary, new adaptations may inspire new generations to seek the original works as the adaptations may encourage in people to learn about the origins of the characters. Inclusion of Kratos in Greek mythology changes the destiny of characters. For instance, Ares dies by the hand of Kratos after making him kill his own wife and daughter through illusions. Ares' excuse for his mischief is to make Kratos a 'true' warrior. Enraged by fury, Kratos seeks revenge and kills Ares. The absence of Ares leads a void in Athens. So, Athena bestows the title of god of war upon Kratos. In later games, Kratos is referred to as a son of Zeus. There is also an instance where Athena calls Kratos her brother. Kratos' personality is quite similar to Ares as well. Kratos is depicted to be an exceptionally brutal video game character. Most of the action in *God of War* games depict gory and bloody execution scenes. *God of War* games quickly show to the player that Kratos is no

hero. In the early stages of the first game, Kratos saves a boat captain from the throat of a hydra that he had just slain. Instead of saving the man, Kratos just takes the key and tosses the old man down hydra's throat. It is rather unusual for a video game to control a character who does not help people in need. The characteristics of Kratos are similar to Ares' characteristics. There is also a section in the third game where the player has the option of indulging in an intercourse with Aphrodite. In Greek mythology, Ares and Aphrodite share a romantic bond. *God of War* video game has the mortal warrior fight against the god of war, defeat him and take over the title. In fact, the title is not the only thing Kratos takes from Ares. Kratos also embodies Ares' role in Greek mythology. The implementation of a new character to an already existing dynamic is refreshing and a new take on mythology. The video game does not present a mortal character who seeks the mercy of gods but one that challenges and ultimately destroys them.

C. Kratos' Journey Through Norse Mythology

Kratos' journey becomes refreshing with the 2018 entry of the game series, *God of War 2018*. The interesting aspect of this game and what really makes it worthy as an adaptation are that Kratos is in Nordic lands interacting with Norse gods. The end of the last canonical game leaves Kratos mortally wounded after his battle with Zeus. The trail of blood camera follows indicates that Kratos has fallen off Olympus. The beginning of 2018 game has Kratos cutting off a tree mourning the loss of his late wife Feye. He has a son called Atreus. The way the story is told in *God of War 2018* has a lot of redeeming qualities from storytelling perspective, characteristics of the Kratos, his transition from an antihero to a hero and Kratos' interaction with Norse gods and his son.

Firstly, the way that the story unfolds is uninterrupted. There are no time skips or black outs throughout the story. Alfred Hitchcock has used this technique to some level in *Rope,* disguising camera cuts in the close up shots of characters' backs. The fact that a video game has the ability to use a technique previously used in cinema shows that video games can benefit from film techniques and borrow ideas. In fact, other art forms benefit from video game techniques. Films and books use gamification through stories in which the reader/viewer has to

choose how the story continues. *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* makes the viewers choose options to get a conclusion to their story from various endings. There is literally a book series for children called *Choose Your Adventure* (e.g. *Sky-Jam)* by Edward Packard where the reader gets to make choices at certain points of the story that lead them to different outcomes. There are multiple entries to the 'choose your own adventure' genre from different authors. There are video game series that use live action footage and gamify them to tell stories. This genre is called fmv (full motion video) games. One of the recent and high budget fmv is *Erica* by Flavourworks. Author Andrzej Sapkowski has his book series *The Witcher* adapted into first video games by CD Projekt Red first and then an episodic series on Netflix. So there are inspiration and cooperation between various artistic fields.

Secondly, Kratos embodies the aspect of heroes explained in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Joseph Campbell presents three classical parts to the mythological journey of a hero; departure, interaction and conclusion (Edman, 2019, p.33). *God of War* 2018 masterfully depicts the story including these parts while telling the redemption story of an antihero and a father. The journey starts with the deceased mother's last wish. Feye wished her ashes to be scarred from the highest point of all realms. Through their journey, Kratos and Atreus progressively get closer to each other. The authentic interaction between a father and son signifies the successful implementation of character development to the journey. While on the journey, Kratos teaches his son how to hunt, survive as a god and interact with others. Hardened by decades of battle, Kratos leverages the foreign land he is in to escape from his past and build a new life. The game depicts the change by dispatching the character's signature weapon Blades of Chaos and having him use a never-before-seen weapon called Leviathan Axe. Kratos' son Atreus is a token of a new beginning and hope. Atreus experiences his first kill for hunting and his first accidental kill of a human with his father. In both instances, Atreus finds himself feeling vulnerable and lost with the weight of forcefully taking the life of other beings. Kratos stands by his son, teaching him how he needs to get used to that feeling to survive. Even though the interaction between Kratos and Atreus seem one sided as Kratos is the father providing knowledge and Atreus the child receiving, the binary opposition of the characters

influences them in such a way that both of the characters meet at a mutual point. Atreus learns how to control his anger and Kratos learns how to be more passionate, caring and loving. Even though Kratos appears as one-dimensional, the sole representation of rage and war, the latest entry in the franchise complicates the character, making him go through a journey and change as a result. The game's director Cory Barlog explains both he and the development team have grown over the years while making games for this franchise. Barlog explains that he has put so much of himself into the character of Kratos. His marriage and his son inspired him to tell the story in 2018 game. Head of Santa Monica Studios (the developer studio for *God of War*) Shannon Studstill explains that Cory Barlog has changed after getting married and becoming a father. Barlog's marriage initially gave him the idea of what would happen if Kratos was given a second chance. So, even though it is a video game, the game director has put his perspective into the story. Cory Barlog's addition to the character of Kratos is no different than Shakespeare breathing life into Hamlet. Barlog's inspiration of Greek mythology is no different than Shakespeare inspiration of existing stories. Both video games and plays start with drafts. In fact, Cory Barlog's father J.M. Barlog is an author. Cory writes his first story drafts with his father. Consequently, Kratos' growth through the story as a father, a foreigner and peace seeker transforms the character in a natural pace, making him a complex god. The conclusion to the journey has the characters at different points than where they had started. Throughout the journey, Atreus learns that he is a god and learns how to survive as one. At the end, it is revealed to the player that Atreus is actually Loki and his mother was a giant. So Kratos' inclusion in the Norse mythology has him depicted to be the biological father of Loki.

Loki is not the only character from Norse mythology Kratos interacts with. Throughout Kratos' journey, Mimir's head accompanies him. When Kratos meets Mimir for the first time, one of Mimir's eyes is missing. Mimir's body is also fused with a tree and he tells Kratos that Odin has imprisoned him in that tree for 109 winters. It is there that Kratos and Atreus learn that the highest peak in all realms is in Jötunheim (i.e. the realm of the giants). Mimir's initial introduction is an underlying message to the cruelty of gods that are redeemed heroic in Norse mythology. Kratos continues his dislike of gods just like he did in Greek

mythology. So characters like Odin, Thor and Baldur are depicted in a negative light, drawing attention to alternative takes on the characters, elevating the stories with a unique perspective. Kratos and his son Atreus also get help from Jörmungandr, the world serpent. In Norse mythology, Jörmungandr is one of three offspring of Loki along with Fenrir and Hel. In the story of *God of War* 2018, Jörmungandr already exist while Loki (referred to as Atreus) is still a child.

Mimir's backstory about how he had been tortured by Odin sets up the profile of Odin. Along with Mimir, the player gets to interact with Freya learning that Odin has banished her from Asgard and Freya has to live in Midgard. Kratos does not face Odin throughout the story of 2018 game. Yet, the player forms an impression of Odin prior to facing him. Mimir's situation when Kratos first sees him bears similarities to Prometheus. Firstly, both Mimir and Prometheus are known to be clever. Both of them have been tied to something that limited their movement. Prometheus is tied to a rock and Mimir is infused in a tree. Both of them are abused on a daily bases by gods. Zeus makes an eagle eat Prometheus' liver every day and Mimir states that he is tortured in creative ways every single day by the hand of Odin himself. Very much like Zeus, Odin is depicted in an evil way. Prometheus is saved by Heracles (quoted in Edman, 2019, p.34) and Mimir is saved by Kratos. On top of that, Kratos battles Baldur, a son of Odin, throughout the game. Odin personally asks Baldur to seek Loki. Baldur attempts to kill Kratos many times to get a hold of Loki. So the Norse story of Loki's adoption is interpreted through a unique perspective.

Worthy of the mythic journey of mythological heroes, Kratos and Atreus find themselves having learned lessons and grown at the end of their journey. Kratos tells Atreus that he is from a faraway land and he has indeed killed his own father. Upon which Atreus questions godhood, wondering if being a god is all about family members killing each other. Kratos then embraces Atreus and tells him that they have to be better. So the story does not only function as an extension of Norse mythology, but it also embodies a critical approach. Kratos and Atreus sprinkle Feye's ashes from the highest peak of all realms Jötünheim, and it is revealed to the player that Feye was actually a giant. The player is also shown murals in Jötünheim that the characters do not see. Murals function as a vision of what is to happen in the future. In one of the murals, Atreus is seen

killing his father Kratos. So the game also deepens the motif of fate versus choice. Whether these characters are going to write their own story or become parts of the cycle is unknown.

III. PROGRESSION OF ART

Throughout history, story-telling has been a practical way of entertainment and an important tool to pass knowledge from older to younger generations. Estes talks about gathering places where people would tell stories to each other. Riverside being one of those places where people used to come together and discuss global events, come up with heroic solutions that make perfect sense to the speakers and to the crowd they are speaking to (Campbell, 2004, p.37). Estes also expresses disappointment about the extinction of such gathering places. As she puts it, if there are no places to gather there cannot be any stories to tell *"No river: no gathering place. No gathering place; no stories"* (Campbell, 2004, p.34).

It would be truly horrid if people suddenly lost story aspect of their lives. Modern world constantly changes the way people live through the advancements in technology. However, it is difficult to see any kind of cultural story-telling loss due to the amount of inconsistencies that Estes' words carry. On one hand, Estes does not care the form in which art is presented as long as it carries depth *"It matters little how the stories arrive- whether they take shape in day-time reveries, night-time dreams, or through the inspired arts, or simply told by human beings in any number of ways."* (Campbell, 2004, p. 32). According to these statements, the form in which the story appears in should not matter as long as it tells a deep story. However, Estes also generalizes cartoons and video games by claiming that they are thematically barren *"... very many young ones nowadays are exposed exclusively to endless "crash and crash" and "smack 'em down" computer games devoid of any other thematic components."* (11). There are multiple problems with these statements.

First of all, the generalization of cartoon and video game genres serve no value to the argument at hand. Both of these mediums are too vast to be considered one certain way. Describing cartoons to be all about crash is an extremely one-sided approach and damages the credibility of the author. After all,

cartoon is a style of art that consists of hand-drawn images (or in today's standards, computer generated graphics or both hand-drawn and computer generated graphics) put together to form frames to deliver a situation or story. So, there is an immense amount of work that cartoon art style demands. Disregarding the passion and the work that goes into the production of cartoons undermines the art on an unfair level. While Hollywood actors and actresses get various type of awards for their performance, the work cartoonists put into their projects is not even recognized. This is a double standard.

Apart from semantics and the double standard, Estes might have delivered an idea where the majority of cartoons and video games to include violent imagery. Even then, violent imagery does not automatically equal to shallow story. Cartoons and video games are not the only forms of art to show violent imagery. Film industry is quite prone to use violent imagery. Yet, they are not stigmatized to lack meaningful story-telling. Theatre plays as well as epics are known to have a lot of bloody scenes. *Hamlet's* final scene includes poisoning, sword fighting, death and murder. *Oedipus Rex's* main character stabs out his own eyes out. Despite the existence of many examples like these, theatre and epics are not called devoid of deep stories. This is also a double standard. The medium in which art is presented cannot be one way as a whole. Ultimately, cartoons and video games are just ways of art. What artists achieve with that style is the topic of discussion, not the style itself.

Even though she criticizes contemporary styles of art being devoid of deep and engaging stories without presenting any evidence or study, Estes also expresses her disappointment with the lack of creativity and innovation in story tradition by saying; *"The story tradition becomes so narrowed that, like an artery that is clogged, the heart begins to starve."* (Campbell, 2004, p.11). There are not any logical reason to criticize contemporary styles of art such as cartoons and video games. After all, lack of appreciation of new forms of art may discourage artists to come up with original new stories and instead continue to produce what is already accepted by society. Estes states; *"A man killed another man." "He killed him again and again. Period."* (12). So if new forms and storylines are at disadvantage just because they do not give the same feeling as old stories do, art cannot flourish or progress. Artists cannot deliver authentic and original stories

when they do not feel free about the form and themes they like to include in their stories. There are not any fundamental differences that makes it difficult for new forms of art to be considered authentic Involvement of technology should not be a reason since various established art forms already benefit from technology one way or the other. Estes does not seem to think technology is a problem since she considers video blogs to be an 'acceptable' form of story-telling or transferal of personal experience; *"People who have fallen and been fatally injured in the wilderness have been known to manage to use their own cameras to photograph themselves."* (39). Self-documentary through the use of camera which is a technological device seems to be an acceptable way of personal story-telling according to Estes' standards.

It is difficult to find a logical reason to consider new mediums such as cartoons and video games to be unauthentic story telling styles. The oppositions against new styles of art seem too generalised to have any merits. There are more than a million video games available to purchase on various store fronts (Sabolev, 2020). It is impossible to come up with a statement that covers the video games as a whole. Video games have different dynamics, budgets, mechanics and player-bases they target. The most general criticism one can make about video games should be about a video game intellectual property that has multiple games released under the same franchise like *Final Fantasy, Skylanders, The Sims, Pokémon* and so on. These franchises are known to follow certain formulas and release multiple games under the same concept with improvements. Therefore, video game franchises can be generalised in order to reach a general understanding. However, generalizing video games as a whole and devaluing them because of only including violence would be similar to calling all novels harmful because some characters die in novels.

The stance the preface of the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* has towards video games is not a secluded case. Tanya Krzywinska and Douglas Brown have a similar approach to video games in their study on Posthumanist concepts in video games. Since this study focuses on a video game character, perception towards video games and their potential as an art form are very important topics. There seems to be two distinct approaches when it comes to video games as well as its relation to literature and story-telling; One of the

approaches is that people who are gamers and are passionate about video games, trying to explain how video games are not all about violence and destruction. The other approach is the academics that try to put forth how video games are not welcome with a preconceived misconception of video games being for kids and anti-social people. The tone of *The Video Game Theory Reader* and *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* are very different in the sense the former is exceedingly fascinated by video games and looks forward to how it will evolve, the latter is offended by the association of video games and art. Video games have existed for long enough to deserve attention and care put into to be understood.

It is about time society acknowledges video games to be more than being useless pass-time activities that 'lazy' people partake in. Technological advancements have paved the way for new art forms to appear. As Robinett puts it; "*There is a natural progression in the emergence of a new art form. Often there is an enabling technology that must be first invented to make it work* (Wolf&Persson, 2003, p.8) the essence of art involves development and progression. Considering certain forms of art to be more prestigious would not only make it hard for art to grow but it would also cause new art forms to be judged unfairly due to already established genres. In other words, if new works or genres of art are constantly devalued in the face of styles that had thousands of years to develop, artistic freedom and the integrity would suffer as a result.

Just like language, art benefits from the variety of options. For example, the word 'good' can be used to describe a variety of things in the English language and the word itself is pretty common. However just because the word "good" exists does not undermine the flavour of other words such as 'nice, okay, fine, suboptimal, sufficient, impressive etc. The variety in language gives speakers the freedom to express themselves better. After all, even though the word "good" is common and practical, it can have a too general of a meaning to add any substance to a given context. The existence of alternatives and the variety of ways to express oneself intrigue creativity and ignite self-expression. The same philosophy can be applied to art. Much like adaptations of existing classics like Broadway adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew, Kiss me Kate;* new forms of art can enrich already existing classics and add more meaning to art in general. After all, artistic endeavours aim to interpret life in unique perspectives and enrich the

human experience. Natural progression of art as Robinett names, should be celebrated and welcomed. Disregarding any form of art due to a stigma believed by a certain portion of the population would only limit creativity.

Owing to the capabilities technology brings, game developers join forces with musical orchestras, film directors, playwrights, linguists, character and art designers, historians, 3D animators, motion capture and voice artists to create unique experiences that are known as video games. Video games have come to a point where they are used to help patients deal with traumas, help children learn valuable life lessons through interactive environments, have people form friendships through virtual social hubs and most importantly give artists a brand new outlet to unleash their creativity with tools that were never available before.

As years pass, there are multiple devices with screens everywhere from smart phones to tablets, computers to various household items. Companies like Google, Microsoft and Nvidia work to bring video games to all devices via cloud gaming services. Cloud gaming technologies like Google's Stadia and Microsoft's Project X Cloud enable people to stream their games from companies' servers instead of through hardware. The device the player uses does not process the game data itself and only stream the visual and audio data from the servers and sends over the button input back to the servers in order for player to interact with the game. This streaming technology enables any device to play virtually any game as long as the game is in the servers. Streaming technology abolishes technical shortcomings of devices. How powerful the device is does not matter, as long as the user has a stable internet connection, they can have a huge library of video games to choose from. Needless to say, since the games are played from servers, there is no need to download any data to the device itself. So the memory in a device is not a limitation either.

There is also a subscription model video game console companies such as Microsoft and Sony pioneered to provide a wide library of video games where users pay a monthly fee to access. Users also have the option to download the games and play them through hardware if they do not have stable internet connections. Such services make video games much more accessible for very affordable prices. Video games can be played on various devices and through different services. As they become more accessible, more and more people play

video games.

Video games have been growing to be more common in daily life. Interactive entertainment has become a part of human life. *Grand Theft Auto V* surpassed the record of the fastest entertainment product that reached 1 million dollars in profits. There are simple games for mobile phones that are widely popular. As the medium continues to grow and diversify, more and more people voice the need to understand and define the ever growing nature of video games. In 1993, video games were first considered a form of art in France (Wolf&Perron, 2003, p.13). Twenty-six years later, one particular video game is used as a reference point for the restoration of Notre Dame Cathedral. *Assassin's Creed Unity*, a video game that takes place in the fictional world of 18th century France has a detailed model of the famous cathedral. The video game has garnered the attention of authorities and a copy of the game was secured to be used as a reference point for the restoration of the Notre Dame Cathedral. This, among many other, is an example of the influence of video games in real life.

The already existing art styles such as films, novels, poems etc. have already established an understanding of art. On that front, Tanya Krzywinska and Douglas Brown examined video games in terms of their value for posthuman literature. In their study, Krzywinska and Brown state that video games provide visual aid to the player in order to help the players overcome challenges presented by the video game. The nature of these obstacles are different than the ones found in the real life due to their learnt algorithm rather than unexpected circumstances. So video games provide 'easy' challenges to create a false sense of competency. Instead of indulging gamers into real challenges, video games create a fake sense of challenge to satisfy players' desire to succeed. Consequently, video games are criticized by Krzywinska and Brown to be financially motivated. However the point made by Krzywinska and Brown do not represent the entirety of the video game industry. The game in question that is criticised by its memorisable and helpful nature is called *Orcs Must Die*. It is a game developed by Robot Entertainment and was released in 2011. As the video game industry has been developing and changing since 2011, some of the criticisms that focus on a particular type of game prove invalid. Since the launch of the criticized game, many games that have contradictory mechanics have been released and gained

popularity. Some of the most famous games that require team work and certainly do not have memorisable patterns are *League of Legends*, *Dota 2*, *Fortnite* and *Overwatch*.

All of these video games are played online and present game mechanics that require gamers to communicate and work together. In *Overwatch*, two groups made of six players try to achieve various objectives such as pushing payload or area domination on various maps. Characters in *Overwatch* do not level up. The amount of time the player spends playing as a character does not make a difference in the character's power level. Each character has their own set of skills that are unique to them and players try to overpower each other using their heroes. Players can change their characters for situations that require different tactics. The game itself does not impose a certain tactic on players so the players are free to choose their heroes and playstyles. The game mechanics can be considered similar to team chess. Since some games are played as teams against other teams, video games present endless possibilities and are not entirely memorisable.

IV. VIDEO GAME AND FILM INDUSTRIES

Brown and Krzynwinska claim that video games are developing to rival film and cinema industries since video games have the ability to tell interactive stories. Choose your own adventure games such as *Detroit: Become Human* have a unique style with the options they present to gamers throughout the story. However, video games with their unique story telling style develop not as rivals to film and cinema industries. On the contrary, video game and film industries evolve while improving each other. While films benefit from computer generated graphics technology to reach massive scales and cut down on the production cost, video games benefit from directors and actors to implement the feeling of realism in virtual space. A good example of the marriage of video games and film can be *Erica* (Flavourworks, 2019). *Erica* is an FMV (full motion video) game. The genre uses real life video footage and gamifies the video files by adding interactive elements and choices for the narrated story. In *Erica,* story is told by real life performances by a real cast and the player does various interactive tasks such as; turning pages, devices on/off, focusing on certain points, choosing certain dialogue options to progress through the story. Just as the game is a marriage of film and video games, it establishes an experience that cannot be achieved in neither films nor video games alone. *Erica* combines visual narrative with player input and story choices. So, the video game enables the player to watch the scenario they choose. *Erica* is not the first FMV game in gaming history, however, what sets the game apart from the other titles is the production value. The acting, cinematography and story line are no less in terms of quality than film industry. It is difficult to be objective when it comes to evaluating the value of an art product, however playing *Erica* is surely a unique experience in the sense that it is similar to watching a film where you are actively participating in the story by making choices along the way. The game pulls the player in with the interactive elements. The story becomes more engaging as the player can choose the options that they like. In one of the branching paths for the story, the

main character can follow peculiar visions she sees or walk out of the building next to a police officer. So in this scenario, thrill-seekers can go after the eerie visions in a dark corridor, while people that enjoy calm and relaxing stories can choose the safety of being around other people. *Erica* is not the only game that uses real life footage as a part of video game. There has been titles that go as early as 90's. There are also interactive movies that can be considered a part of FMV games.

One of the earliest and the most controversial example is *Night Trap* (Digital Pictures, 1994). Not to be confused with the film by the same name, *Night Trap* is a FMV game where the player is a special agent, looking after a group of tourists who visit a house full of dangers to spend the night. The player has to protect the tourists by triggering various traps within the house in order to capture the criminals in the house. Like, many examples given in this study, *Night Trap* symbolized a new world of possibilities in story-telling. The game is a product of a system that used VHS tapes to provide a realistic gaming experience. So, the desire to improve visual fidelity to enrich the gaming experience has been present even in the early stages of video game industry. *Night Trap* was in the center of controversy and was blamed for unwanted behaviour in children. Despite the backlash, the desire to invent and explore new possibilities is so integral to human experience that the FMV style of video games are still made. *Erica* may cater to a niche crowd of gamers, however one day an incredible FMV game can attract more attention and interest to the art style.

Attempts at making FMV games did not stop with *Night Trap* and 90's saw the release of many peculiar yet original titles. One of these games is called *Wirehead* (The Code Monkeys, 1995). The protagonist Ned Hubbard (starred by Steve Witting) in *Wirehead* has a chip implanted in his brain that lets whoever has the controller command his actions. The origins of the chip is not explained yet not only is this an interesting depiction of a transhumanist concept, it is also a setup to make the player become a part of the story. In many instances of the game, the main character directly looks at the camera and talks to the player.

Apart from FMV games, another example of film and video game industry working together is *Quantum Break* developed by Remedy Entertainment. Along with Shawn Ashmore acting as the lead character who can control the flow of

time, *Quantum Break* tells its story with in game cutscenes and a video series starred by real actors. Like Shawn Ashmore, there are many actors and actresses that garner interest with their performance and find roles in video games. Ellen Page and William Defoe gave life to characters with their voice, looks and performances in the game called *Beyond Two Souls*. In the game *Death Stranding,* game director Hideo Kojima does not only work with actors such as Norman Reedus, Mads Mikkelsen and Léa Seydoux, but also works with Spanish film director Guillermo Del Toro to deliver an original story of a cargo delivery employee in an apocalyptic world. Keanu Reeves announced one of the most anticipated game *Cyberpunk 2077* at E3 Gaming Conference and the actor also appears as a character within the video game.

During the period where the studio was active, Telltale Games worked with a lot of established intellectual properties and gamified them in episodic and season-based formats. Some of these are *The Walking Dead, Guardians of the Galaxy, The Wolf Among Us, Batman* and *Jurassic Park.*

Video games do not limit themselves by only adapting films or TV series into games. Andrej Sapkowski's *The Witcher* series as well as Dmitry Alexeevich Glukhovsky's *Metro* series are two of the book series that were made into video games. Especially *The Witcher* series have garnered immense popularity thanks to the video game series developed by CD Projeckt Red. With the increase in popularity, Netflix has made a live action series with the intellectual property. The existence of video games does not damage the popularity or credibility of the film industry or any other medium for this reason. Video games continue to evolve as their own style of art, inspiring many people and artists to interact with them and tell stories. As Campbell puts it, people yearn to be nourished and taught.

V.   THE PERSPECTIVE OF GOD OF WAR'S CREATOR CORY BARLOG

In its basic form, Kratos can be described as a game character that appears in multiple games released on various gaming consoles. The book adaptation written by *James M. Barlog* is the official novelization of the *God of War 2018* game that was released by SIE Santa Monica Studio. The connection between the novelization and the game goes deeper than a paid commission. The author of the novelization James Barlog is the father of the 2018 *God of War*'s director Cory Barlog. J. M. Barlog was also the story consultant for *God of War 2* Cory Barlog was the game director. Theoretically, a game director whose father is an author can write a compelling story as he would be able to readily access criticism from an author. Great authors such as James Joyce and J. R. R. Tolkien are known to discuss their story elements with their close circle to refine their work. In fact, the process of revising and rewriting is a natural process for the betterment of literary works.

In the interview (Playstation Access, 2020) Cory Barlog expresses his desire to tell stories. In early years of his career, while working for various films, he was advised to transition to video game industry which would fit his desires better. He also mentions his desire to write books as he has very specific stories in his mind. Cory Barlog expresses that being in control of the project is a huge part of his work ethic. This almost seems like the behaviour of an artist who has already visualized their artwork so vividly that the work that goes into the creation of the story is a matter of materialising existing thoughts and ideas that reside in the artist's mind. Barlog makes an important statement about the unique experience the video games provide. He explains that the length of video games being much longer than those of films and TV series enable people to get to know the characters better.

When the distinction between novels and video games are in question, the interactivity video games provide enable players to form personal connections in

the story. Cory Barlog talks about puzzles being commonplace to engage players with the game. Through puzzles, people adopt active role in order to progress. Whereas in films, TV series and novels, people are passive while they experience the story. Players being active throughout the story is an important part of storytelling in order for people to connect with stories naturally. Netflix experiments with viewer engagement with shows like *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* where viewers get different endings based on their choices.

What elevates video games from data to art is the human experience put into it. Barlog talks about how much of himself has been put into the character of Kratos as well as to Kratos' relationship with his son, Atreus. It is important to note that Barlog also has a son and he expresses that if he had a daughter, the child of Kratos would also be a girl (Playstation Access, 2020, 6:45). This comment may be the clearest indicator of a storyteller putting parts of themselves into the characters they create. Barlog's personal addition to the video game also reinforces the idea that even for video games, there is a connection between the creator and the creation. The personal stories, memories and ideas developers put into video games are the primary source that transforms data into art. The message delivered through art turns data, paint, shapes and sounds into stories. It matters little in which way the art is delivered. As long as the person finds meaning in the delivery, the work should be recognized for its artistic value.

2018 adaptation of the series brings about a number of substantial changes to the gameplay as well as to the maturity of Kratos. Barlog expressed that what makes *God of War* unique is not the Greek Mythology but the characters. As the director puts it, *Kratos* had been an anti-hero pursuing his own vengeance (Playstation Access, 2020, 9:36). Kratos did not care for anyone and the only people that he cared for (i.e. his wife and daughter) were already dead. So, the character lost the sense of passion for living beings. With 2018 game, the character is given a new challenge to conquer. A character who is not known for caring for others has a child to care for and protect. The player views Kratos in a new light and this new experience is a growth for the character rather than a change. This growth is also partially due to the growth of the developers. As mentioned earlier, Barlog's life experiences have reflected onto the character and made Kratos more relatable.

What makes video games stand out from other forms of art is that the interaction between the player and the story is an active process. Therefore, players also grow with the story. In the case of Kratos' story, Barlog talks about the feedback he got from players about how *God of War 2018* has helped them understand their parents more. As the creative staff and the fans of the video game age and face different problems in life, the video game they work on becomes a tool to share their experiences. In the 2018 game, Kratos has to figure out how to look after his son. Being a god of destruction and a symbol of revenge, this new task is difficult to comprehend for the Kratos. But once he does, the outcome is inspiring enough to affect the players.

As Barlog points out, being able to motion capture actors delivering their performances in person enables the authenticity of the emotions to appear in virtual space. Along with character performances, cinematography is important as well. *God of War 2018* prides itself by having no camera-cuts throughout the game (Playstation Access, 2020, 21:55). No camera cut enables story to flow without interruption. It is a difficult deed to accomplish in films. No cut camera is both challenging and powerful. A filming style used in a video game further reinforces the connection two industries share. Furthermore, Cory Barlog has also worked in film industry. Being experienced in both film and video game industries, Barlog predicts that more film directors will come over to video game industry (24:44). So, the cooperation between film and video game industries will become ever more apparent. The artistic talent video games attract and employ yield artistic results where cutscenes of video games look like scenes from films. Camera placement, lighting, character posture, filter and setting are all elements that developers can control with the available technology. So there is no technical limitation to prevent cinematographic techniques to be used in video games. No camera cut is not the only technique video games use to enhance visual fidelity. Video game *The Order: 1886* uses 2.35 to 1 aspect ratio throughout its entire run to give the game a cinematic feel. *The Order: 1886* is one of most realistic looking video game even years after its release with realistic lighting, texture and particles that float in the air. Enriching the experience by taking a supernatural take on Victorian Era with demons and magical powers, *The Order: 1886* gives players stunning and realistic graphics. So much so that, it is difficult to

distinguish where the cutscenes start and end since the transition into gameplay is so smooth. *The Order: 1886* prides itself in artistic representation so much so that the game has a photo mode where the player can pause the action at any time during the gameplay and take photos of what is happening on the screen. Various filters, light effects, a free roaming camera are given to the player to elevate their distinct artistic tastes. *God of War 2018* also has a very similar photo mode with the addition of toggling characters on and off from existence and even changing the facial expressions of the characters. It is also interesting to point out that the only way to make Kratos smile in the entire franchise is to manually select the smiling face in the photo mode. Kratos does not smile at all in any of the games. Visual fidelity in video games can help emotion transfer more smoothly to the player as players can relate to realistic characters more easily compared to pixelated blocks.

There are many techniques that become available as technology improves such as motion capture, real life texture rendering, shortening loading times along with artistic choices to make the video games feel more cinematic. Video games may appear to evolve to rival films, it is possible for video game and cinema industries to work interchangeably. Cory Barlog has worked in both film and video game industries and this experience may be the reason why he thinks that there will be more film directors working in the video game industry (Playstation Access, 2020, 24:44). The tools at video game developers' disposal have improved so much that there has appeared a need for directors to maintain the best quality of the video games. Arranging the proper lighting, the positioning of the camera and actors delivering their lines in the proper tone have become key aspects of the development process of video games. The development process of majority of high-budget titles have come to a point where video game developers have to focus more on conveying the proper tone, delivering proper emotions and the weight of scenes rather than providing players a false sense of achievement. Video game developers know that with the visual authenticity, there is a sensitive balance between a masterpiece and a bug-filled technical mishap.

There is no room for technical error in a video game title if the studio aims to convey an impactful story. *Mass Effect: Andromeda* was heavily criticized by critics and the fans alike for how terribly bad the facial animations were and how

buggy the game was. When the game launched, the facial animations completely missed the mark of the emotional weight of scenes. For instance, a character talking about how tired she was while having wide-awake eyes and a stoned expression on her face did not resonate well with the fans of the series. Game was inevitably a financial failure and Bioware Studios (the studio that developed the game) were not allowed to continue working on the series by the decision made by the publisher company that owned the studio. So the lack of care put into the visual and artistic aspect of the video game is not something that players ignore. Video games are not only about 'winning' or getting a (false) sense of achievement. There are easy games that present little in terms of challenge, but playing a game just for the reasons given above does not represent the entirety of the gaming industry nor people. There are quite a lot of games that have serious artistic work put into them and there are also a lot of video game fans that expect at least a serviceable level of artistic representation. Mishaps by developers break the immersion and the game becomes more about dealing with technical issues rather than enjoying the experience.

For every example of a failed video game, there are others that achieve incredible results with love and care put into them. When facial animations are in question, *L.A. Noire* prides itself by having some of the most unique and realistic facial animations in the industry. Conveying emotion through facial expression is such a pivotal part of the game that the interrogation mechanic in the game asks the player to observe the facial reactions of the characters to see if they are lying or not. The characters in the game show signs of stress if they are lying and the players can use the clues they have found to support their arguments. Ninja Blade's *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* uses motion capture, facial animations and voice recordings at the same time to deliver a truly authentic performance of the actors. This technique translates to characters' movements and facial animations to match each other to provide authentic animations within the game. Technology is developed enough to be able to render body movements and facial animations at the same time and provide instantaneous transition into the virtual space. With the second game in the same series called *Senua's Saga: Hellblade II* (IGN, 2019, 1:05), the improved technology enables more subtle facial movements on characters. Subtle facial movements not only bring the performance of the video

games closer to that in films. They also enable emotion to reach the player easier and in a more authentic way.

VI.   ART OF MUSIC IN VIDEO GAMES

Along with the facial animation, sound design is another field where video game industry steadily excels at. Sound design is an important factor to create atmosphere. Films are known to use sound design to convey emotion, mood and sometimes to alert viewers; video games are no different. Developers of Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice talk about how three dimensional sound design enables developers to decide what ear hears what. Along with direction, the distance of the sound can be adjusted to make object sound far or close. A system called Impulse Response Creation used in Resident Evil 2 Remake analyses the space and the texture of the environment to provide closed off or echoed sound effects.

Sound design and loading times are quite important for immersion so Playstation 5's lead system architect Mark Cerny spoke in length about how much research was put into those aspects in the development of the next generation video game console Playstation 5 (Playstation, 2020, 40:00). Cerny also points out that many of the improvements that are made to the console have been long requested features by game developers.

Music is an important factor to set the mood for scenes. Since there are a lot of key cinematic moments in God of War 2018, the importance of music cannot be dismissed. The developers cannot just set a couple of soundtracks for the game and play the songs interchangeably, disregarding the emotional weight of the scene at hand. Music in many games change according to what is happening in the video game. Bear McCreary is the composer of the music in God of War 2018. Bear has worked in various different projects in film and television. His website (www.bearmccreary.com) shows his work on TV series like The Walking Dead and Battlestar Galactica along with God of War 2018. So, the choice of the music composer also supports the idea of video game industry being closely tied to film and TV industries.

While getting a sense of the story, McCreary and Barlog discuss the events

in God of War 2018 as if the events happened in real life. McCreary talks about how it is the story that drives him to make music and in the case of God of War 2018, McCreary easily comprehends the tone for the game as Barlog had a very well-thought-out story and a character arc (Playstation Access, 2020, 29:30). Icelandic is said to be the closest language to Nordic. That is why, McCreary worked with an Icelandic choir to give some of the soundtrack that authentic feel and pronunciation of the Old Norse (34:49). McCreary uses a wide range of uncommon instruments. The expertise shown by the musician shines an artistic ray over the video game soundtrack. In examples of modern video games with high budgets, a lot of care and research are put into the artistic representation in the game. Sound and music within video games are not composed to only compliment the game mechanics. They are composed to have their own character and support the story. Music in video games add depth and meaning to the grand story just like in films. Video games are able to dynamically change the sounds played to fit the mood. Like the example in God of War 2018, in the case of a battle, the music changes to fit the high tempo of the battle.

When Mccreary is told about the themes of the unnamed project which are folk music, mythology, Nordic ethnic instruments, vocal writing, and classical thematic development, he then asks the question if the producers are talking about a God of War game. The immediate connection between mythology and God of War really showcases how Kratos is known to be some sort of a mythological hero (or anti-hero) of modern times. The difference between classic epics and video games is an important topic of discussion. The format that they are presented in are different. The way people engage with them are different. However, when it comes to recognition of these stories, both video games and epics are well-known among the crowd they appeal to. The innate desire to tell stories has not vanished. People still tell stories for various reasons. The difference between old epic stories and new video game stories can be that the former have stood the trials of time while the latter is still new and may not have reached its fully grown state. Yet, the lack there of Video Game Studies lessons in literature departments can be a sign of the need of recognition of the art style since modern works like Harry Potter is studied at universities. A lot of what makes God of War and Kratos important come down to the talent behind it.

Mccreary on his own blog expresses how talented of a storyteller Cory Barlow is; "Cory was the director of my favorite game in the series thus far (God of War II), and I could immediately see why. He is a natural-born storyteller." (Mccreary, 2016). The interaction between Mccreary and Barlog is important for the game to have a fluid progression and represent itself in unity. Mccreary talks about how he took detailed notes of the artistic and narrative aspect of the game to visualize how to accompany the epic story with the proper music. God of War 2018 explores a variety new of themes, emotions and characters and it is important for the music of the game to represent that change in tone. Mccreary points out the importance of the guidance from his partners at Sony to really fit the music to the narrative; "I spent several months working with Cory, Pete, Keith, Sony music director Chuck Doud, and the rest of the development team, crafting this theme.". Mccreary goes onto talk about the instruments he used such as nychelharpa and hurdy gurdy to give the authentic feeling of Norse mythology. Previously, hiring Nordic singers to get the authentic feeling was mentioned and using the suitable type of instruments to get the feeling of Norse tunes really signifies the artistic passion and work that has gone into God of War 2018.

Video game events are another social part of the style that grows in scale rapidly. The event that concerns the music of God of War 2018 is the E3 conference in 2016. The significance of this conference is that God of War 2018 was first revealed in this public event. However, this was not a conventional reveal of a game at a convention. The event started with a live orchestra performance of the game's music at Shrine auditorium where there were five thousand people watching the event live. Bear McCreary describes his experience as;

> *Unlike most press conferences, the first sound heard was an orchestra tuning up. Then, I emerged from behind the red curtain and walked to the front of the group. I took a bow, turned to my musicians, and raised my hands. The crowd hushed. Clearly this show would not start with speeches or visuals, but would begin with music. With my arms raised in anticipation, I took a deep, long breath. I reminded myself to enjoy every second of what was about to unfold: scoring a*

live playing of a video game in real time with a full orchestra (Mccreary, 2016).

God of War 2018's reveal on E3 2016 conference is an artistic marvel on its own. The game's main theme was played by live orchestra in the reveal event which was followed by a live gameplay session where the orchestra played the related soundtrack based on what was going on in the game. For instance, while the characters explore, the orchestra would play a soothing score and when a fight was up, the music would change from a soothing to an action/epic soundtrack. Mccreary talks about how much of an artistic challenge that was by saying "This event, however, was further complicated by the fact that the picture would change every time because it was live gameplay, not a pre-rendered video." (Mccreary, 2016). The live event represents a symbolic unity between art and gameplay. Mccreary defines himself as a composer for film, television and games on his website as well.

The experience Mccreary had at E3 2016 is nothing short of an artist displaying their hard work and inspiring a crowd with the beauty of art. Mccreary expresses how his score took almost two years to perfect during which, he closely worked with the developers to get the suitable feeling for the game and characters. The event is also important to help define what gamers are like; "…the audience erupted into cheers, as if what they heard was the chorus to their favorite song." (Mccreary, 2016). The audience is able to listen to an art piece and appreciate it at a gaming event. Such instances help break the misconception of video games promoting violence and gamers being anti-social people that need to go out more and exercise. As Mccreary puts it, the audience did not know which game the overture belonged to "They still had no idea what the music was for, but they were pumped". Presenting an overture (which is an artistic part of a game). The absence of the video game element (or at least the visual representation of it) shows how much thought and work has been put into the artistic aspect of the video game. So much so that the main music theme of the video game can be performed live and ignite excitement among the viewers.

The idea of live orchestra came from the former CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment America Shawn Layden. Mccreary talks about how a lot of people worked together to provide the quality worthy of the event. The live orchestra at

E3 2016 was such a huge event that there were a lot of people working behind the curtains to make it a reality. So, not only artists and game developers but also organisers and managers put a lot of hard work into providing a unique experience for people. One thing that draws a lot of eyes into video game industry is the budget of the projects. Just like block-buster films, video games continue to grow in budget and video game franchises started to become huge entertainment empires.

On the other hand, the excitement that stems from the recognition of the establish character like Kratos cannot be ignored. One redeeming factor that classical literature has over the contemporary art is that the former has stood strong against the trial of time. A similar statement can be made for the character Kratos as well. Kratos first appeared in the first God of War game in 2005. Since then, Kratos' popularity has only increased and just the appearance of the character is enough to ignite excitement among gamers. Mccreary describes Kratos' reveal at E3 as; "Words fail to describe how I felt in that moment. The reaction from the crowd was thunderous, threatening to shake the walls. The whole auditorium was on its feet." (Mccreary, 2016). The reaction given to the announcement showcases the quality and the reputation that have been built up with the previous instalments. The appearance of Kratos at E3 2016 is quickly followed by a live gameplay. During the battle scene at the end of the demo, the music score changes to one of Mccreary's notes and he expresses that the music made him feel as if he was experiencing the battle himself;

> *"I conducted the orchestra at the foot of the monumental screen, striving to keep up with the combat. I found myself subconsciously moving my body as if to avoid massive hits from the troll, swinging left and right, ducking as I cued the orchestra to follow me. It was the single most thrilling videogame experience I've ever had!"*

These sort of statements from artists working closely with video games are important as such instances show that the video games are much more than virtual data providing wasteful fun. Video games have grown to merge with art, enabling art to be expressed in a wider variety. Classic arts have all merged with technology one way or the other. Authors mostly prefer computers to write. Books are printed by machines by publishing houses. Plays can be performed in

dark environments thanks to the illumination technologies. Entire production and screening of films are done with technology. The data provided is not based on any scientific study however it is always practical for the production of art to involve technology while technology is such a vital part of daily life. So, how much technology goes into the process of making art should not be a merit to define the value of art. The important factor should be how well and coherent the artwork is presented. For an artist like Mccreary, the live orchestra experience at E3 2016 is very inspiring "…the game is still in production, and I still have a lot of music to compose. I returned to my studio with newfound inspiration." (Mccreary, 2016). Seeing the excitement in such a large capacity with the element of surprise must have been a great source of meaning and fulfilment for the people that have worked on God of War 2018. It goes to show how much potential video games have on general public and also for the people who work on these games. From the developers to the artists that have poured their souls into the project, the burning passion the fans have keep artists and developers excited to be making an entertainment product that people are looking forward to experience.

Just orchestrated scores do not make video games artistic masterpieces. However, the budget provided for the artistic aspects of the game indicates the importance developers give to artistic representation of the project. There are also game scores with vocals as well. Occasionally, these songs are performed at their own events. Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim is a video game which has an epic adventure along with an equally epic soundtrack. The original theme score involves orchestrated music with chorus. Video games host many different genre of music. One video game franchise that stands out with soundtrack with vocals is Persona series. Persona 5 in particular has many soundtracks with vocals sang by Lyn Inaizumi. Persona 5 has a signature style of music, combining Jazz and Japanese pop beats with English lyrics. Persona franchise is also very symbolic with a lot of references to psychology and literature as well. One of the soundtracks from Persona 5 titled Beneath the Mask has lyrics that go as;

"I'm a shape shifter

At Poe's masquerade

Hiding both face and mind..." (Ramadhana, 2019, 0:51).

Poe's masquerade that is mentioned in the lyrics refer to Edgar Allan Poe's The Masque of the Red Death. Being a shapeshifter at a masquerade can refer to tricking death by shapeshifting. The game itself has various undertones relating to identity and mind, hence the name Persona. Using Carl Jung's Persona theory, the game antagonizes certain individuals who use deceit and exploitation to overpower others. Persona 5 touches on sensitive social matters such as plagiarism, sexual harassment, exploitation and hierarchy in society. There are countless more examples of extraordinary art from video games. The hard-work artists put into game projects shows the passion people have to express their vision through the contemporary form of art. Devaluing or belittling works of artists just because of the artistic form in which they have decided to express their passion through is biased and unfair to artists.

It is also important to note that video games are very expensive and usually require a lot of people to work together. So video game industry creates a lot of job opportunities for various artists from illustrators to musicians, programmers to motion capture and voice artists. The vast majority of positions available for artists in the video game industry is important for artists to be able to financially provide for themselves and their families. If artists cannot financially provide for themselves with their art, they would have to do other jobs to earn money which would hinder at their ability to practise their art efficiently. There needs to be the demand and appreciation of new art forms and products for the said artistic fields to develop. If society values classics over the contemporary and underestimate the potential of video games by perverting the purpose of video games to one thing or the other (e.g. mindless fun and violence), art cannot evolve. There are many distinct artistic visual styles presented in video games along with very unique mechanics that cannot be replicated in other art form. Technologies such as toys to life, augmented reality, 3D and virtual reality have all found their way into video game format. So, video games are in a way a playground for artists and developers alike to try out new artistic endeavours. The big budget given to some video games is also indicative of the interest the general public has towards video games. While the impression towards video games steadily change over the years, generations are growing up playing video games. Consequently, Generation Z and Generation Alpha are not going to be people that

were suddenly exposed to video games out of nowhere. For these generations, video games will have been quite widespread and their views on video games may be different than those of Generation X and Xennials.

VII. VIOLENCE IN VIDEO GAMES AND ITS EFFECT ON ART

Refuting the reasons given to oppose video games is necessary to understand how baseless the oppositions are as well as the artistic value of video games.   Baseless oppositions may be formed due to not having sufficient information to form an educated opinion. An individual may have already formed an idea based on their surroundings before properly studying the topic at hand. On that tendency, society-wide oppositions to a concept related to a minority is not a rare occurrence. In fact there are various topics that people form opinions on and the misconceptions get passed around without any merit to them. John Cornivo discussed and refuted common arguments against homosexuality in his book What's Wrong with Homosexuality where he analysed common arguments thrown against legalization of same-sex marriage in United States to challenge the misconceptions in people's minds. Nurşen Adak studied intimate partner violence that had men in the receiving end of the violence titled The Other Side of the Medallion: Violence Against Men. In her article, Adak focused on the feminization of intimate partner violence; "In most societies, interiorizing the practice of violence against men by women is an unacceptable notion as it threatens masculinity…"(Adak, 2013). Even though Adak and Corvino did not work on the topic of video games, their work consist of society and their perception of concepts that are not favoured by the majority of society. Examples on the topic of society's tendency on inaccurate notions can be diversified. In order to not wander too far off the topic of this study, the aim of presenting the studies of Adak and Corvino is to focus on the existence of societal misconceptions. Therefore, taking a closer look at the arguments presented against video games can be a great way to comprehend the nature of video games better.

The generation the person is born in can be a factor on how the person perceives video games. Generation X and Xennials did not have video games

growing up. Hypothetically speaking, the definition of fun for these generations could be toys, roleplaying or physical activities that are turned into games. There might have been many things that were gamified for them. Video games were certainly not one of them simply because of the fact that technology was not developed or affordable enough to be widespread enough to have a mainstream understanding of it. Even if the said generations were introduced to video games somehow, they were introduced from the point view of adulthood. Being introduced to video games as a child and growing up with it as opposed to experiencing video games as an adult where you have significantly less time for entertainment can lead people to have different perspectives on what video games are about.

Video games have a history of being associated with youth violence. The connection between violence and video games can seem irredeemable when one considers how violent the graphics in video games can be and how much time children spend playing them. Needless to say, children have fragile minds compared to adults. This is why it is important to monitor and curate the content children consume whether it is media or video games. When it comes to parental responsibility, providing a safe environment for children to grow into healthy adults is both the responsibility of the parents and the society. Having said that, the violent behaviour in children and youth may or may not be because of the influence of video games. However, drawing a direct correlation between video games and youth violence may cause potential underlying issues to become harder to recognize.

One of the first example of correlation between video games and violence might have become apparent to the mass media with the release of the fighting game Mortal Kombat (NetherRealm Studios, 1992). Mortal Kombat is a fighting game franchise known for its bloody gameplay and gory finishing moves called fatalities. The design principle behind fatalities is that they are supposed to be outrageously graphical and gruesome death scenes that are impossible to perform in real life but can be achieved at the end of a round when a player overpowers the other. The game garnered huge backlash and caused the fatalities and blood to be censored. The game had a multi-console release, in many consoles, the blood was turned into sweat, fatalities were less intense and were named finishing

moves. The controversy surrounding the game initially paved the wave to the establishment of ESRB, the video game rating organisation.

Another game that ignited a lot of controversy along with Mortal Kombat is Night Trap. Night Trap was previously mentioned as a full-motion-video game and was praised for the innovative nature. In this section, Night Trap is the topic of discussion for the controversy it ignited. On 12th September 1993 (Senate Committee, 1993), Senate Governmental Affairs & Judiciary Subcommitties in US held a meeting on the topic of violence in video games where Night Trap and Mortal Kombat were discussed. Senator Herbert Kohl (who was a Chairman of Justice Subcommittee) opened up the hearing talking about the importance of discussing the type of games parents' gift their children, especially as they were close to the holiday season. The first key point that can be analysed by the Senator's speech is that he likely thinks children are the main audience of video games and titles such as Night Trap and Mortal Kombat were made targeting this demographic. Senator Joseph Lieberman (a Regulation Subcommittee Chairman) continued this narrative of protecting children from guns by controlling the content in video games (2:32). Lieberman draws correlation between violent crimes and violent imagery. To his credit, he does not specifically target video games as the only reason for the violence. He may indeed believe violent imagery is the cause of violence in society. Yet as it is stated by American Psychological Association in 2020, such association cannot be made. How Joseph Lieberman connected societal problems of his time to video games is very similar to how Donald Trump has associated video games with the Florida school shooting in 2018 despite the fact that there were no testimony on the connection. It is interesting how video games on the matter of violence are guilty before proven innocent. (3:40) Lieberman spoke about how the new generation of video games had crossed the line of violence (particularly against women) and sex. Up until 1993, there had been various films way gory and violent than video games. A cult example is Deadly Friend. Based on 1985's novel Friend by Diana Henstell, Deadly Friend is directed by American science-fiction horror film director Wes Craven, known for his gory and bloody directorial style. The lack of blood and gore in the film was criticized by makers and the film ended up having gorier scenes with head explosions, ultimately shifting the focus of the narrative. The

film came out in 1986. By then, not only did films have various scenes of gore and blood, but there were also film directors renowned for such style. Deadly Friend was released seven years before Mortal Kombat and Night Trap. However, Deadly Friend was not considered important enough of a problem to host a senate hearing for. The lack of reviews criticizing the gory and bloody violence in the film shows that the media did not react substantially to the gore and blood depicted in a film that came out earlier than Mortal Kombat and Night Trap. Nur Emine Koç states that the amount of violence on television is so excessive that individuals grow accustomed to them (Koç, 2018 p.32). Lieberman criticizes Night Trap for glorifying assault on women. Hitchcock's Dial M for Murder (1954) revolves around a hired assassin's plan at killing an innocent woman. Psycho (1960) has a woman murdered while she is having a shower. Even though the scene is not sexualized, it can be criticized for portraying a woman as naked with the undertone of being defenceless. Vertigo (1958) has James Stewart stalking a woman on the streets and Rear Window (1954) has him stalking various people from his house. Hitchcock's film Marnie (1964) is described as a "Suspenseful Sex Mystery". Alfred Hitchcock's films are celebrated for his masterful thriller techniques. On the other hand, when same concepts are used in video games, they become a reason for the increase inviolence and perversion in society. This is a double standard and it is not justified. Night Trap has the player watch over a house in order to stop the people that try to hurt women. Yet, somehow the game is interpreted as glorifying violence against women in a sexual manner. Leiberman says; "The fact that new generation of video games crosses that line containing the most horrible depiction of graphic violence and sex, including particular violence against women." (3:32). He then claims that these particular video games will rob the good will out of the Christmas holiday season. He then makes a claim that functions as a proof of his thought process, saying; "Instead of enriching a child's mind, these games teach a child to enjoy inflicting torture." (3:55). At this point, it becomes pretty concerning as to which video game Leiberman talks about. As Night Trap has the player trying to prevent others from hurting women and not having the player become person that hurts other innocent people. Yet when it comes to criticizing video games as a whole, there does not seem to be a need for solid proof or study. Seeing the depiction in a certain scene without the context of it does not justify such an extreme view on

the whole industry. It is not a healthy way to seek solutions for problems as serious as violence in society. The approach itself oversimplifies the violent behaviour in children. Basing violent behaviour in youth solely on violence in video games may distract parents and society from the actual underlying reasons such as violence in family of origin, childhood traumas or any other reasons. This is why it is harmful to reach a conclusion on video games based on face value or with limited amount of examples. Lieberman often comes back to sexual depictions of violence or sex in general in video games. However he does not exemplify his approach with more video game titles. Therefore, it is not clear as to which games he has in mind. The intention of the legislation is to introduce a game rating system that will educate people (mostly parents) on the age rating of video games. These systems today are carried out by ESRB and PEGI which are funded by video game companies. Yet, according to Lieberman, the rating board is the least video game industry can do, not the best they can do and goes on to claim that sex and violence should be left out of video games altogether (8:29). Artistically limiting video game industry is unfair as film industry is not held up to the same standard. Such a regulation focusing on video games could make sense if only very young children played video games. However the hearing does not present any sociological or psychological data on that front supporting the idea that it is only children that play video games. It can also be easy for children to watch films that they are not supposed to watch. So limiting video game industry while film industry is not regulated in the same way solves no problem. Lieberman advises parents to be educated about the video games their children play. This may prove to be much more useful than just censoring content in video games as a whole.

When Lieberman finishes his speech, Senator Herbet Kohl starts his speech by claiming that they are not to a point where they are asking if video games can cause harm to children, they are sure that the video games can. On February 2020, American Psychological Association has published their revision of 2015 resolution on violent video games;

> *The following resolution should not be misinterpreted or misused by attributing violence, such as mass shootings, to violent video game use. Violence is a complex social problem that likely stems from many*

factors that warrant attention from researchers, policy makers and the public. Attributing violence to violent video gaming is not scientifically sound and draws attention away from other factors. (American Psychological Association, 2020).

According to the research, just censoring video games is not enough to reduce violence in youth as there are multiple factors to consider when a child's psyche is in question. Kohl goes onto comment on the game called Lethal Enforcers (Konami, 1992). Lethal Enforcers is a fmv game that is sold with a gun-shaped peripheral intended to be used as a controller (Senate Committee, 1993, 16:06). Given United States' history with gun violence, it is understandable and important for the country to be extra sensitive about any kind of gun usage in terms of gameplay. However while gun-shaped peripherals are questioned, toy guns or water guns are not mentioned. In essence, both physical toy guns and gun-shaped peripherals are used for entertainment. Toy guns such as water guns are considered children's toys. In fact, children use toy guys to aim at each other to play whereas peripherals are pointed at a screen. Games should be moderated based on the content they have and only suitable age group should be able to play certain games. However the way Senate Committee Hearing presents the case is biased and limiting. While video games are presented to be harmful for children, other industries such as toy companies or film industry are not held up to the same standard. On the other hand, being able to distinguish fantasy violence from real violence is an important social skill children should develop in order to adapt to society in a healthy way. Educating people may prove more fruitful than censorship. Media featuring guns can be a great way to show how harmful guns can be. 1930 film All Quiet on the Western Front masterfully showcases the hardship of war and the emotional trauma war causes by focusing on individual soldiers and their moment-to-moment emotions. These depictions take place in the midst of war where there are lots of guns and killing.

Another masterpiece featuring guns is the video game called Spec Ops: The Line (Yager, 2012). The brilliance in Spec Ops: The Line lies within how the game combines generic shooter gameplay with a psychological deterioration of war psychology. The game is a mixture of hallucinations and actual events. The game opens up with a very action-based shooting section where the player shoots

at 'enemy' choppers. The term 'enemy' is used very loosely here as these people just happen to be at the opposite end of the player's gun. Upon the end of the chapter, the character seemingly dies from a plane crash and the player faces a screen that says earlier. This indicates that the twelve chapters the player is going to experience take place before the prologue chapter. Yet upon closer examination of how the game world changes based on the decisions made by the player, one could tell that the character the player controls is already dead and the whole experience is a way for the character to deal with his guilt and trauma. Throughout the levels, the player witnesses the gruesome murder of innocent masses and the character progressively feels worse after each life he takes, questioning his decisions and the point of killing. One of the most spectacular contrast to generic shooting games come from the loading screens. If the player dies, while the game loads the level, the player witnesses loading screens that display some interesting sentences. Some of these are; "Do you feel like a hero yet?", "You are still a good person", "Can you even remember why you came here?" and "To kill for yourself is murder. To kill for your government is heroic. To kill for entertainment is harmless.". In the later chapters of the game, the character is welcomed to hell, facing all the corpses he had killed up to that point. The finale of the game is quite interesting as the main character witnesses the surrender of the team they have been fighting despite them having the upper hand. Upon meeting their leader, the main character realizes that their commander has been dead for a long time. Then, the main character tells himself that this is all in his head just before he is confronted by a younger version of the enemy character. Finally, the player is asked to take responsibility of his actions for killing innocent people. The player can choose to kill either the main character or the hallucination. If the former option is chosen, the game ends, if the ladder is chosen, the hallucinations become way severe and the main character narrates that he was not alive throughout the span of the game. Spec Ops: The Line is a different game compared to generic shooter games because in the generic sense there is always a sense of heroism and necessity to kill as Spec Ops: The Line puts it "To kill for your government is heroic.". Yet, such productions rarely, almost never focus on the trauma of war or the almost irreparable damage war causes. The ironic statements that are shown in the loading screens of Spec Ops: The Line are also expressed in All Quiet on the Western Front. In the film, new

recruits are lectured by an orator to establish a morality of war where they should feel proud to be soldiers as they have the honour of protecting their country. The film presents this morale code as an important step to set the mind ready to kill without questioning. The real terror becomes quite obvious when the main character Paul (starred by Lew Ayres) gets trapped in a pit with an enemy soldier. Paul kills the enemy soldier as an act of self-defence and spends enough time in the pit to reflect on his actions. He finds a photo of the deceased soldier's family in the soldier's pocket and mourns his death. He questions his actions, telling himself he did not know the person nor had any ill will towards him. He tells himself the person that he killed was carrying out the mission that was 'bestowed' upon him.

So such works of art, even though they feature guns, can be important to showcase real human emotions and conditions. Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and William Goldings' Lord of the Flies also depict the cruelty of humanity by showcasing violence and inhumanity. If the art is restricted, limited or censored heavily, artists would be unable to express select parts of human experience. Especially, the experience Spec Ops: The Line provides is very striking as the player is given the choice to choose between the bad options. All choices leading to bad results is a functional way to show that in war, there are no winners. There is just loss, for everyone. This striking message is ampflied through choices the player makes. The world of Spec Ops: The Line changes according to the choices made by the player and further enhances the idea that the main character is hallucinating the story. As objects seem to change shape in a moment's notice, the player gradually realizes the weight of war. The setting of war in Dubai seems like any generic shooting game as the characters are set out to find survivors, much like the soldiers in All Quiet on the Western Front setting out to protect their country, however what they experience in the field is nothing like how the situation was glorified to be. "Does one need to experience war to know how damaging it is" and "does one need to experience death to know there is no going back?" are interesting questions to think about when censorship is in question. Because art has a great way of putting people in the shoes of others. Therefore, "There are guns in this game, therefore the game is bad." sort of approach Senator Herbert Kohl seems to showcase can be superficial when one

considers the depth of art. Because context matters in storytelling.

After the hearing about Mortal Kombat and Night Trap, another game called Doom (id Software) came out in 1994. Doom is a first person shooter game where the player controls a military officer fighting his way through space. It is an objective-based herd shooter. There are waves of aliens attacking the character and player is supposed to eliminate them. It is not a game for people that look for a deep story but the game was very successful and was followed by sequels. However, since the game has graphic violence and depiction of hellish monsters, it was involved in controversy. It is unfortunate how the video game that revolutionized third person shooter genre and really elevated the technology of video games is a subject of human violence. The initial levels of the game were given to people for free, encouraging them to make their own levels, thus pioneering user created content and online distribution.

Gun violence is an important topic when it comes to the safety of the society. When gun violence in youth is on headlines after crimes like mass school shootings like the 2018 school shooting in Florida, society grows eager to find a reason for it. On February 14th, Nikolas Cruz (aged 19) killed seventeen people at a school. Cruz was heavily armed with a bulletproof vest, ammunition and an AR-15 firearm. He put his gun in a rifle case and killed seventeen people with a semi-automatic rifle at Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Upon this, Donald Trump hosted a meeting with video game developers and critics at the White House on 8th March 2018 sharing his concerns regarding the violence in video games and movies. Fox News broadcasted a discussion on the relation between violence and video games on 9th March 2018. The discussion on Fox TV was between Fox News host Laura Ingraham, Ben Shapiro the editorial chief at Daily Wire and Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, the author of the books On Killing, Warrior Mindset and Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill. Dave Grossman's book Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill is directly labelled as "a call to action against TV, movie and video game violence". The foreword of Grossman's book begins with "To the children of the world and the survival of their innocence". Societal contrast between William Golding's depiction of innocence in youth and Grossman's foreword clash while the former questions the authenticity of the said innocence while the ladder seems to accept the concept as a natural fact. Dave

Grossman's stance on killing shows inconsistency though. He is against children killing and focuses on media consumption on the normalization of video games. He calls for action to stop teaching children to kill. On the other hand, Grossman has videos teaching police officers how not to hesitate killing. Craig Atkinson produced a documentary about American police force called Do Not Resist (Atkinson, 2016) in which Dave Grossman is seen teaching police forces to answer violence with superior violence. Grossman calls it righteous violence, and claims that violence itself is an instrument. In the deleted scene from the film, Grossman can be seen lecturing a crowd about how killing is not a big deal for a 'mature warrior'. He goes on to claim that there are many emotions that come after killing however if one can choose, they should choose to feel good about it. The satisfaction of hitting the target (in this case a living being) and the guilt of not feeling bad about killing are okay according to Grossman based on his speech (Atkinson, 2019). There are many inconsistencies in Grossman's philosophy.

Firstly, an underage person killing an individual and a police officer killing an individual are both killing. Grossman claims that police forces may kill people to ensure the safety of more people. Killing a person is not the only solution to ensure the safety of others. Killing all suspicious people still would not guarantee the safety of society. Nikolas Cruz had no criminal past. He might have been influenced by video games or he might have been influenced by heroic soldiers killing people on whim. Given the fact that not every child who plays video games mass murders students, it is likely that Cruz's mental problems were the cause of his actions. As Nbc News report, a Youtube user named "Nickolas Cruz" reportedly posted that he was going to be a professional school shooter (nbcnews, 2018).

In the news report The Guardian has put out, Atkinson expresses his desire to expose how ubiquitous Grossman's philosophy is and how his idealization of killing has been adopted throughout law enforcements (theguardian, 2016). United States and the whole world really noticed the effects of this philosophy quite heavily with the murder of George Floyd by a police officer on May 25, 2020. Floyd was unarmed and begged for mercy as he was struggling to breathe. Floyd was unarmed yet despite constant begging, he was killed by officer Chavin blocking his air canals as he knelt on Floyd's neck. In the police officer's

defence, he did not immediately aim to kill Floyd. Police body camera footage (10 Tampa Bay, 2020) shows that Chauvin tried to communicate and cooperate with Floyd yet Floyd caused difficulties. The public uproar and protests after Floyd's killing indicate the public restlessness of violence in United States. Government bodies try to prevent it. However focusing on video games, especially when the connection between violence and video games do not yield convincing data. Grossman teaching police officers how to enjoy killing does not make killing okay. Works like Speck Ops: The Line, All Quiet on the Western Front and Born on the Fourth of July (Stone, 1989) display the devastating aftereffects of war as well as the inconsistency between the depiction and the experience of acts of violence.

Regardless of the country, tendency of a government glorifying war can be a way of teaching people how killing can solve problems. Video games as well as films can play role in the glorification of war. For that reason, films and video games have rating systems. However, politicians or cultures can promote violence as well. Correlating war and being a soldier to adjectives like honour, power or safety may paint a misleading representation of what war is and how war affects people. As long as the notion to connect war and safety exists, blaming video games for violence in youth or limiting artistic expression may be fruitless. In fact, 2020 has witnessed countless protests against police violence in United States. Video games did not appear to be connected to the police violence. Violence exists at a larger scale, separate from video games. Video games did not invent violence. Consequently, appointing video games as the sole reason for violence in teenagers may not decrease the violence. On the other hand, disregarding the artistic potential of video that have violence means discarding a huge potential of innovative and authentic storytelling.

VIII. VIDEO GAMES AND SENSE OF REALITY

Another area that video games excel at is the visual representation of life. This potential can be leveraged to take someone to the historical places they can only read or watch about. Three dimensional environments that video games use present a unique opportunity for artists to develop virtual worlds similar to real life counterparts to replicate the feeling of living in that environment. These places can vary from touristic attractions around the world to a particular era of human history. If done authentically, video games can offer a journey to the players where they can freely roam around historical places. Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed franchise is a great example to how much research is done for the sense of authenticity. There are more than a dozen games under the franchise and each game focuses on a different historical era of a particular region. When the video games become popular, there bound to have different media adaptations of the franchises they belong to. There are nineteen books under Assassin's Creed name. There are also five films.

What makes Assassin's Creed very interesting is its discovery mode. What discovery mode provides cannot be achieved by any other artistic form other than video games. Discovery mode is a museum tour where the player gets to witness the history through a narrated tour. While the player is in the game, they move the character to certain locations in the ancient place to listen to the narration, visuals from real life and information about the events that take place. Assassin's Creed: Origins takes place in ancient Egypt and Assassin's Creed: Odyssey takes place in ancient Greece. They provide experiences where the player can get to see historical places in their ancient form. During development, game developers work with a lot of historians and go through countless visual materials to not only bring the ancient buildings to the virtual space but also the ancient life as well.

Needless to say that the atmosphere and the experience mean a lot to the artists that are involved in these projects. The idea of a video game here is not simply made of ones and zeros, doing chores to win the game or pile of codes that

are just combined to give players an artificial sense of achievement. Video games in this capacity are the hub where numerous artists and developers put their passion and hard work into. The end result is not a mechanical commodity but an artistic wonder. Therefore, dismissing the huge industry of video games by making bad examples of hand-picked titles is not only disrespectful to video games and people who enjoy them, but also to artists and people from various professions that work on them. Bear McCreary has done work on film, TV and video games. It would be absurd for his work in film and TV to be recognized while his work in video games to be ignored.

Realistic graphics accompanied with the performances of actors contribute to video games feeling more natural and organic. As video games always aim to replicate real life to give a natural feeling, the aim of the industry is to be familiar to the player. The familiarity comes from the replication of real life. The only difference video games bring is enhancing realistic themes with the tools provided. As a general explanation, art can be defined as altering reality to create beauty and/or meaning. All artistic products go through a process. Therefore, dismissing video games because of them being virtual or not real is futile.

Unlike being a competitor to film and television industry like Brown and Krzywinska put it, (Brown & Krzywinska, 2015, p.192) video game developers work with people from various artistic professions to bring genuine experiences to video game players. Video games cannot overwrite physics rules, they have to imitate real life since players understand the story and mechanics from relativity. The storytelling techniques in novels, films and plays have had many years to develop and reach the state they are at now. It would not be practical for video games to swoop every known story technique and start from scratch. Video game developers benefit from what is already known about storytelling and improve it with the new tools that are only available in video games. Warren Robinett makes the same point about the progression of art in the foreword of The Video Game Theory Reader; "There is a natural progression in the emergence of a new art form. Often there is an enabling technology that must first be invented and made to work" (Wolf & Perron, 2003, p.8). Robinet talks about the emergence of art forms that are considered classical in today's standards. They were once 'the new kid in the block' too. There were times where professions like novelist,

playwright, poet or film direction did not exist. However, with the invention of paper, pen, languages and letters, people organically found new forms to express themselves through stories they wanted to tell. As Clarissa Pinkola Estes mentions, there is a strong drive in the psyche to be nourished (Campbell, 2004, p.35). The form in which the story is tailored matters little as long as the story is authentic and profound.

One popular misconception about video games can be the synthetic virtual feeling the form presents. It can be argued that since technology is involved, authentic human emotions cannot be transferred. The distinction between fragile human soul and cold-hearted and merciless machined structure has been heavily emphasized in the field of literature since Industrial Revolution. One concentrated example of that can be William Blake's Chimney Sweeper where industrial work is depicted to be cold and merciless whereas the child who is put into that kind of environment is depicted to be fragile, unhappy and hopeless. This study discussed the involvement of technology of various classical art styles and how each style benefits from technology to a certain level. If technology's involvement does not prevent the emotion to be transferred in classical art styles, its involvement in video games should not prevent emotions to be transferred to players either. Technology being presented in a negative light continued in postmodern era as well. George Orwell's 1984, Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, Phillip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep have depicted technological societies devoid of sincerity and overall departure from the essence of humanity. The negative depiction of technology is not only limited to postmodern era either. Altered Carbon written by Richard Morgan created a dystopian future where synthesis of human life takes form and people are able to revive themselves through new bodies. So, the theme of technology has been commonly used with unfamiliarity, divergence of humanity and the essence of living. Therefore, the consistency of this negative depiction of technology might have shaped opinions about new inventions. People might have unknowingly adopted misconceptions towards preliminary inventions.

Upon taking a closer look at video game industry on the other hand, it is possible to see a complete fascination video games have towards existing literary genres. One of the fascinating examples can be seen in the game Detroit: Become

Human directed by David Cage. When the character controlled by the player enters a police station, it is possible to hear the news reporter on the TV mentioning a book written by an android called 'Do Humans Dream of Mammalian Sheep'. This is obviously a reference to Phillip K. Dick's book Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep. Needless to say that the said book does not exist let alone being written by an android. However, it is rather interesting for a video game to give nod to a book that both tell their stories around the theme of an android. The difference being, while the book is about hunting androids, the game centres around androids fighting for freedom. So, the difference between Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep and Detroit: Become Human are not only about their approach to technology. The latter shifts perspective of the player and puts them into the shoes of androids fighting for their freedom in an unjust, human-centered world. Furthermore, Detroit: Become Human can be credited for the originality of their narrative. Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes; "It is not too much to say that lack of compelling and unpredictable heroic stories can deaden an individual's and a culture's overall creative life." Taking that approach into consideration, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep can be criticized for the perspective it takes while delivering a story about a society with androids. Detroit: Become Human on the other hand, shifts the narrative and tailors a new story with an existing theme of technology versus humanity. Taking the side of humanity has been overused. Therefore, Detroit: Become Human is an example of the creative vision Estes mentions where the player is shown how unfairly androids are treated. In the world of Detroit: Become Human, humans are the 'bad' people. Upon finishing the game, one feels as if they have not been told the whole story of the endless menace of humanity versus machinery. Examples Estes wishes that existed, do exist in video games. Seeing this, it is confusing to read Estes refer to video games as devoid of thematic components other than "crash and bash" and "smack 'em down" (Campbell, 2004, p.12).

It might as well be a lack of exposure to a vast variety of video games that makes it difficult to form an accurate approach to and understanding of video games. This study hopes to remedy the misconception a little bit to the point where individuals can look at video games and consider them to be for all ages and they can be more than just "crash and bash" and "smack 'em down". There

are games that offer no substantial or deep stories and are just made for a quick relief. However it is a genre of video games and does not represent the whole video game genre. The point of this study is not to establish video-games as the almighty, never-seen-before type of story-telling giants that are going to wipe out all existing art forms. The aim of this study is to signify the scale of video games and encourage people not to generalize the industry, taking one game as an example and presenting it as the proof of why video-games are not welcome. Any criticism that is done for a video game, should only be limited to that particular video game, not the entirety of the genre. That large scale of a generalization is not done for any other art style. If E. L. James is criticized for the lack of depth in her novel Fifty Shades of Grey, critics do not use her work to signify how shallow J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter or Suzanna Collins' Hunger Games series are. This would damage the said critic's credibility as it is known that one particular work of fiction cannot be used to define the medium as a whole. Every author is different. None of the works of the same author are the same. There can always be similarities. Even similarities between works can never be used in such a huge scale as to define a whole genre or style.

Douglas Brown and Tanya Krzywinska talk about various different genre of games such as Assassin's Creed, Destiny, Orcs Must Die and Crisis. However, the conclusions they draw from the games they exemplify can be refuted by other game titles. The desire to define and the attempt to summarize video games deserve recognition. However, the conclusion shall not overextend to the industry entirely. This study makes a statement about video games as well. However stating; "video games and their relation to art cannot be generalized" and "video games cannot be 'xyz' because of these couple video games." are vastly different conclusions. The former mentions one step in pursuit of understanding video games, the latter takes a shortcut by generalizing and oversimplifying the topic at hand.

IX. CONCLUSION

There is a natural progression to art, usually enabled by supporting technologies. Said evolution brings many benefits while retaining any benefits that were specific to any prior art form. When paper and writing have become commonplace, oral stories have evolved into scripts. Yet written scripts did not stop people from telling stories. People are still able to tell stories in person without the need of written scripts. Every time a person tells another about a situation, it is essentially a story. The desire to tell stories inherently resides within the psyche of human. The freedom of choice applies to later evolutionary stages of art as well. Cinema has not stopped theatre. TV has not stopped cinema. E-books did not stop physical books from being printed. Digital store fronts for music distribution did not stop physical cd or records productions. Even though, it may seem like contemporary fields of art decrease the attention given to classic arts such as theatre, novel and poetry, the decrease is only natural due to the increase in options. Variety in artistic styles is richness and literature itself is supposed to evolve as people and the way they live evolve with time as well. If human is at the center of literature, the way people use technology to tell stories should not be ignored by literature as that conscious ignorance would cause literature to fall back on how people live their lives in twenty-first century.

Despite negative comments by famous authors like Edgar Allen Poe, mass production of books did not cause evil endeavors any more than hand written books did. The option to write books by hand is still available although using a computer to write makes the process much easier. Erasing and rearranging texts are much easier digitally and the notes are easier to carry around in a flash drive. Yet, writing by hand is still relevant today. Students take notes by hand during lectures, some keep physical diaries and some simply prefer the feeling of paper and pen. The classic and modern options are available. Mass publication of books enabled wider range of audiences to access stories and read them at their leisure. E-books made it easier for people to reach books around the world and read

books in the languages they desire. In a given country, published books are naturally mostly in the official language of the country. However, e-books both enable comparative studies as well as reading for language acquisition. Audio books not only enabled a wider audience including deaf people to read, but they also made the activity of reading doable during other activities. People can listen to books during their lunch breaks, while in bus or when the environment is dark. Some people may understand context better when they listen to audio books instead of reading the books themselves.

Emergence of theatre is substantial in terms of visual presentation of stories. Visual presentation of stories somewhat deepened the storytelling as stage cues were also included in the scripts. Theatre enabled various job opportunities for people who wanted to indulge in art as their professions. Plays paved the way for art and public to merge and create an inter-dependent dynamic where viewers were able to become a part of a play. The architecture of Shakespeare's Globe unified the crowd and the artists to the point where the crowd would react to the performance. It is a possible to argue that visual elements to storytelling may hinder at the ability of imagining the story to a certain extend. As stated previously, the emergence of a new art field does not threaten the existence of another. People who wish to imagine the stories in their minds can just read the scrips of the play and not watch the performance.

Emergence of new genres may trigger the fear of losing the original authentic experience. However, various art works from different eras have shown clear appreciation to existing classical artworks and styles of previous generations. Victorian era novels such as Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights by the Brontë Sisters depict characters reading novels as a commonplace activity. John from Brave New World is described to be on a higher intellectual level than other characters within the systems as he has read works of Shakespeare in his childhood. A horror game called Silent Hill 3 published by Konami features a Shakespeare puzzle where the player has to identify which plays of Shakespeare the given quotes are from. Then the player is tasked to find which anthologies the plays are in and find out a code. Not only by readers, artists of new art fields are also aware of classical arts and pay homage to works that inspired them in their works.

God of War is a video game series that shows appreciation to classic literature by combining elements from Greek and Norse mythologies through adaptation and inspiration while introducing a new character to the mix. Kratos evolves as a character through his interactions with Greek and Norse gods, reaching maturity along the way. Especially, 2018 game follows the merits of the journey of a mythological hero set by Joseph Campbell. Evolving technology also enables God of War 2018 game to be told in an uninterrupted manner, leveraging filming techniques also used by directors like Alfred Hitchcock in Rope. God of War franchise and Kratos offer a unique addition to mythologies, connecting them through a character and pointing out the similarities between Norse and Greek mythologies through the Kratos' mythological journey. Odin and Zeus share similarities in their depiction in God of War series and God of War 2018 can be considered a comparative literary interpretation of the rich history of mythology. Depictions of the gods in God of War games are usually non heroic. The negative depiction of gods such as Odin and Baldur while depicting characters like Jörmungandr as helpful for the main character create a unique adaptation of the characters that offer an original take on well-known characters. This is why the study done by Douglas Brown and Tanya Krzywinska where they claim that video games use existing literary topics just as a base to develop a game on does not represent the entirety of video games. Kratos' journey is a bridge between Greek and Norse mythologies and the character's involvement in both is an original interpretation of the two mythologies. Kratos in Greek mythology is the god of war after killing Ares while Kratos in Norse mythology is the biological father of Loki.

The changes made to the original mythological stories are not necessarily a cause for concern when the authenticity of mythologies is concerned. Literature is completely created with imagination (Edman, 2019, p.72). People have always imagined stories and shared those with others. Every literary work is a product of imagination and people cannot be expected to not imagine new stories just because a healthy amount of stories already exist. Contemporary authors like Neil Gaiman has written about mythology with Norse Mythology and he has also created comic book series like The Sandman. For the healthy growth of literature, variety is necessary. Continuing the education of literature through a small

selection of famous authors, playwrights, poets and their works would limit the reach of literature and discourage students from exploring the richness of literature (78).

Additionally, video game industry is developing to become more widespread and mainstream. There are many genres in video games, covering various tastes. As technology progresses and developer tools are becoming easier to use, making video games as well as playing them are becoming more accessible. Streaming services make video games accessible through any device that has a screen without relying on hardware specifications. Essentially, an individual with a solid internet connection can play high profile video games through their smart phones. There are also subscription services where the user pays a monthly fee and gains access to a large selection of video games, having the option to stream those games or download and play them on the desired hardware. Online store fronts provide huge discounts on digital games and even give select titles for free. Internet of things and complex technological devices often come with some form of games preinstalled. These devices range from Tesla cars to Amazon kindles. The accessibility of video games creates a user-friendly system where people can choose how to play the games that they want. The popularity of an artistic genre provides the time and room it needs to flourish and provide the necessary environment to be able to develop masterpieces that elevate the value of the genre.

The arguments made against video games are distracting and do not represent the entirety of the style. The idea that video games cause violence is baseless according to the resolution made by American Psychological Association. Violence in youth is a serious matter that can have various reasons. Simplifying such serious social problem to be just caused by video games hurts the society by distracting the focus from the underlying problems of violence. A direct link between video games and violence is not supported by research. In fact, research shows that such connection cannot be made. Video games causing violence does not seem logical either given the fact that the human history is filled with genocides, slavery, mass murder and world wars. Video games have not been around but violence has been as far as known history of humanity is concerned. Presenting video games to be responsible for the glorification of

violence is a double standard. Exemplified with the game Spec Ops: The Line, video games can also criticize war and violence on a fundamental level. On the other hand, just like any other media, all video games should be curated and age-restricted by rating boards funded by government bodies. Authors like Dave Grossman should face the same reaction that video games that glorify violence do. Dave Grossman teaches police force how to enjoy killing and how it is not a "big deal". Consequently, presenting video games to be the reason for violence can take the attention away from underlying serious structural problems in the society. Skin colour, race, sexual orientation and expression, language, religion, sex and age should not be excuses for killing. Police force is not supposed to kill criminals either.

This thesis focuses on video games and the artistic potential they have. Kratos as a character and God of War as a video game franchise have artistic, mythological and literary worth. The series is inspired by existing myths and adapts them to enrich literature and mythologies while introducing mythologies to new generations. Starting his journey as an antihero, Kratos grows as a characters and becomes wiser, establishing his own philosophy and stance in life, growing as a character.

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