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<p style="text-align:center">*God of War*: Story of Fatherhood and Redemption</p>

In 2018, God of War, an action-adventure game developed by Santa Monica Studio and published by Sony Interactive Entertainment was released. The game itself dates to 2005 where throughout the games made in the franchise, the story shifted from a mythological narrative of killing by Kratos, a god, to one which is more about the emotional regret of past actions and fatherhood over a child, Atreus, by a now more moralized Kratos who is the main character. For the analysis, I have used a video of the gameplay and a Polygon article as my artifacts to analyze Kratos, and the game itself.

Rhetorical Situation: In "Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps Toward Rhetorical Analysis", Carrol highlights that "rhetorical messages always occur in a specific situation or context." God of War is set in a mythological place where Kratos, the god of war, goes for burying his wife's ashes as a personal quest while also taking his responsibility as a single father. In this narrative game, the player goes through the theme of responsibility, personal growth, and the struggle that Kratos overcomes to change the way he used to be, which is a merciless killer of gods.

This can also be compared to actual Greek and Norse mythology. As the article by Ryan on Polygon called "How God of War Ragnarök's characters compare to actual Norse

myth" says, in Greek mythology the actual "God of War", is shown as a person who takes to ruthless violent actions. Kratos in a similar way does the same throughout the start of the franchise, but he slowly changes from the original depiction of the character Ares (the actual god of war in real mythology) is. There are also many connections to the actual Greek gods in the game apart from Kratos such as Baldur, Freya, Thor and many others. But their characters vary from their original roles. For example, Freya is the goddess of love and fertility but is shown as witch who tries to kill Kratos due to the death of her son by Kratos. Baldur is also part of Norse mythology and is known for his invulnerability. Kratos is the Ghost of Sparta and a warrior who starts off as one but later turns to a remorseful father.

The audience for this game includes past fans of the franchise as well as those who like action-adventure games. Those who like narratives and mythology would also enjoy this game very much. As Carroll says, for effective communication, we must understand the audience. Hence for old players, there are some incidents that recap past games to create a sense of nostalgia while also having the story of Kratos as a father creating a father-son relationship to which any player can emotionally connect (as can be seen with the lecturing by Kratos to his son in the start of the gameplay video). This creates a connection between the player and the character. The arrival of the villain later and the immediate protection of the son by the father also create a sense of excitement and connection to the father's protectiveness while also providing powerful combat later for those who love action.

In terms of constraints, Carroll says "Constraints limit the way the discourse is delivered or communicated" where rhetoric operates within special limitations. In God of War, the developers had the challenge of creating a new game with a new narrative approach constraint rather than the previous killing spree story mode while not losing the original essence of the

game. The game they made in the end successfully goes past these constraints bringing a final polished copy to gamers with a balance between fights and narrative.

Genre: God of War is of the action-adventure genre where there are fast-paced fights along with a narrative involving Greek Gods. As Jacobson, in "Make Your "Move": Writing in Genres" says, "Rhetorical moves are the parts of a text that carry out specific goals; they help writers accomplish the main action of the genre" and Tardy notes, "moves analysis can highlight variation within a genre and show how writers have options to achieve their aims.". In the case of God of War, the genre, action-adventure, serves as a tool that helps the developers to create worlds with fast-paced events and emotional storytelling giving a mix of exploring, puzzle solving, storytelling, and several action elements like fights which are all the "main actions" of the genre. Apart from this, the variations of emotion and storytelling compared to other action games creates a more unique experience also making them the rhetorical moves of the game. It was all this I considered when producing my artifact of a recording of my gameplay where I wanted to show the emotional father-son bonding scene as well as the fight scene that follows.

Discourse Communities: In "Understanding Discourse Communities*"*, Dan Melzer explains how discourse communities are built around shared goals, communication mechanisms, genres, and specialized language. As he states, "Genres arise out of social purposes, and they're a form of social action within discourse communities" (Melzer 104). When creating my artifact, I considered discourse communities that have similar lexis of gameplay terms like "boss fight" or "cutscenes" and hence decided to have a major part of my gameplay be the cutscene (the video part that plays apart from the actual game) as it shows more about the storytelling aspect which later leads to a boss fight (which is a fight against one of the higher powered opponents in a game) a major part of many action games.

Translingualism: In making my artifact, I used recontextualization and entextualization to convey the story without spoken commentary. As Sánchez-Martín explains, translingualism recognizes that meaning can be communicated through various modes beyond language, such as visuals, gestures, and sounds (*Beyond Language Difference in Writing* 275). For example, in the cutscene, I showed the interaction between the boy and his father followed by the first appearance of the boss, giving context to the upcoming fight instead of directly heading into the fight. Hence, I relied on visual storytelling to build the emotion in the audience.

As Canagarajah says about entextualization, where meaning is re-embedded in new contexts, allowing different audiences to grasp the significance through modes other than speech or written text, the expressions and body language of the boss along with the dramatic introduction all help the viewers understand how the player and the enemy are related. So regardless of the person watching being unaware of the word cutscene or boss fight, they would understand by watching.

Conclusion: After I had finished composing the artifact, I took a moment to take in the beauty of the game by showing a relatable connection between a father and son while also creating a fight that is quite literally off the ground. The strength the character portrays created a sense of excitement in me while playing it.

Before this assignment, I only saw it as merely a piece of entertainment with cutscenes only being a small interruption in the gameplay and the main boss as just another person we are supposed to fight, but after reading the frameworks and comparing it with my artifact, I realized how different elements play an important role in making something quite simple as even one event in a game an important part in the adherence to a genre. My knowledge of literacy

practices used to be limited to only written texts and spoken language, but now I have started to view the use of such conventions even in video games. With the addition of visuals along with the emotional aspects, the game affects how it is received.

The gamer groups online on platforms like Reddit all create a collection of people with shared experiences creating a community of people who are in a way closer together thanks to such games.

In conclusion. The evaluation of my artifact not only helped me understand narrative construction but also helped me increase my perception of how literacy can be seen as a social practice making me more aware of how literacy practices can shape the interactions in our world.

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