

The influence of myths and symbols on games' plot

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Resumo

By looking at video game's history we can realize notable evolution in graphics and gameplay. But as games began to evolve to a form of art, their plot became increasingly more complex and elaborated, being a serious subject to some players. It is easy to note this evolution by looking at the Metal Gear games or the Legend of Zelda franchise, both of which, became increasingly more rich in content. This, by extension, generates players' increasingly higher demands on reliability, immersion and playability. There are a lot of ways to overcome expectation of the public. The use of myths and it's symbols as a base for those plots is also crescent. They bring everlasting histories with a propositional level of identification with the player's life. Many games, as God of War or the Final Fantasy series, are highly embased on mythology, and this is one of the reasons of their success. This paper intends to show how myths that are behind these two games' plot makes them so much close to the player and makes them able to amount a legion of fans around the world.

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1 Introduction

Professionals who work at the creative industry, producing cultural goods, know the importance of having a good cultural repertoire. Besides, it is known that creative activity, like any other, requires dedication and study.

In the creation of game stories the situation is no different. The professional must have enough knowledge to develop narratives that are attractive to the public and for that, a great deal of study is necessary.

Myths have always been a sort of language, of telling stories [Brandão 2011a]. They were created with the purpose of giving a model to the human being. This was made possible by the means of a language that went beyond what was written, the symbols. These symbols, imperishable, were found in a set of different civilizations, with different shapes, but similar meaning.

The mythological knowledge can help into the construction of stories that catches the public's attention. With symbols, the myths form stories that men of all times can identify themselves with. This same symbolism, if applied to games, creates interesting, rich, immersive stories, filled of identifications between the situations of the game and real life.

Therefore, this article will address about how various authors discuss this theory. On the first and second chapters, it will be shown how, in seemingly distant fields, like narrative, psychology, symbolism and mythology, a common view arises. From this assumption,

the third and fourth chapters will show a case study in the form of a symbolic analysis of two games: God of War and Final Fantasy IX. The fifth chapter will be about the conclusion, enclosure and future works.

2 Myth's Universality

2.1 Myths

According to Azevedo [de Azevedo 2004], in his book *Myth and Psychoanalysis*, it is common to hear the affirmation that the myth is something false, associating myth to everything that is unreal, purely fantasy, and in opposition to everything that is true, rational or factual. Nevertheless, it is necessary to go beyond common sense and look more carefully to this question.

The first concern one must have in the study of myths is related to the myth's language. It is necessary to understand that a myth can be interpreted by many approaches. It is possible to see it as a tale of historical facts, as a way of telling the psychological growth of a person, like a way to guide the society's organization or as a way to speak of a metaphysic reality.

One notes then, as it will be seen hereafter, that myths speak to us about human life in various levels, from a material level to a more spiritual one, from an individual level until one more collective, social. They teach man how to live, being, according to Campbell [Campbell 2008], a kind of guide in this great mystery called life.

2.2 Universality of myths

There is a universal feature in the themes that are treated in myths. It is easy to perceive similarities between myths from different nations. Nations often separated geographically and temporally. According to Bulfinch [Bulfinch 2006], in his book *The Golden Age of Myth and Legend*, the Flood's myth, for example, appears in Greek, Christian and Hindu nations; Avatar, divine incarnations, that come to help men are also recurring themes, appearing in Christianity and Hinduism, for example. Still according to Bulfinch and also Brandão in the book *Greek Mythology* volume 1 and Williams [Williams 2003] in the book *Handbook of Hindu Mythology* the cosmogony with the creation of the world from the chaos or from the water exists in Greek, Hindu, Christian, Nordic, and other cultures, which means the similarities are very extensive.

A theory about this question says that the human psyche has the same basic structure in every single individual. Campbell quotes that the German anthropologist Adolf Bastian observed, in the XIX century, that there are ideas that are repeated in myths of various cultures. Although there are changes in the shape, the idea is the same. To this universal feature, Bastian named elementary idea (*Elementargedanken*). He named ethnic idea the way this feature appears in each culture.

Heracles, for example, killed the Nemean Lion and dressed in its skin. Sigurd killed the dragon Fafnir and bathed in its blood. These

are very similar symbols. The hero that wins dominates the enemy and then, incorporates it. Appropriating from its powers is the *Elementargedanken*; the dragon, the lion or any threat is an ethnic idea, a local method to present this universal symbol.

Campbell defines myth in this context in his book *Myth and Transformation* when he says:

"The "imaginary" of the myth is the language, a frank language that expresses the basic about our most innermost humanity. It assumes many accents in its various generations".

Therefore, myth consolidates itself, according to what was seen, as a method of speaking about the human nature. Assuming this, it is important to analyze how and why myths are symbols of universal feature.

Campbell discusses about two mechanisms that help in the understanding of this question: The innate releasing mechanism (IRM) or stereotyped reaction and the imprint.

According to IRM, there are previous recorded memories, since birth, in the mind of all members of a species; however, in imprint, these memories occur apart in each individual and are consequences of their experience. They are, therefore, recorded memories in the mind of each individual due to strong experiences that occur in a very little time frame. There is no evidence that IRM occurs in human species, being dominant the occurrence of imprint. So, the question about how the symbol can have a universal feature appears, if there are not, in men, previous images that are shared across the entire species. Campbell points that the answer to this question is that it seems to exist a set of shared experiences across humanity. They are found in childhood: as in relationship with parents or the psychological transformations of the child. All these universal experiences bring to light the *Elementargedanken*, the unchanging element of culture.

Myth plays some universal functions. Campbell shows that in various cultures, traditions and societies, myth performs four basic functions, described hereafter: The first myth function is to explain the great mystery of life. There is, thus, a great concern with life's bigger questions, like, for example, why is there suffering or why to live. In this context, myths must give meaning to man's life.

The second mythological function is what may be called cosmological function. Here, myths must explain the world that the individual experiences. Thereby, it is possible for a civilization to have the notion of a universe created by a personal god, like the Christian Yahweh, or of a universe governed by a universal impersonal law, as the Hindu Dharma [Williams 2003].

The third function is the social, which is to establish laws that will govern society. Thus, if laws have divine origin, they are irrevocable; it is up to man to just follow it. It is what happens to the Jews, whose Laws were given to Moses by Yahweh, or with the Hindu Dharma and with other civilizations who believe in the impersonal law that rules the universe, where social laws are manifestations of this unchanging, impersonal law.

The fourth function, the pedagogic function, is the psychological growth of the individual, changing the child into an adult able to take responsibility, in order to integrate them into society.

In a society founded by myths, these functions are interdependent. The myth explains life and the universe. Society, on the other hand, is organized accordingly to these perspectives. Lastly, the individual, helped by the myth, is integrated in society under its laws. Thus, it is noted as how the myths makes sense in any dimension of man's life, giving him a kind of life formation, having a meaning in a social and individual dimension.

Actually, only the first and the fourth functions are relevant. The cosmological function was substituted by science and the social function is now controlled by the state and the citizens.

It is possible to verify that myths really talk about human life. However, to explore this question, it is important to quote the theory of the Monomyth, the hero's journey, from the researcher Campbell [Campbell 2007]. He was able to notice and show that myths

from several cultures follow the same basic structure. The symbols repeat themselves; changing their shape depending on the culture they are inserted. Thereby, Campbell identified some recurrent stages of the heroic myths. He elucidated these stages and presented them orderly, illustrating each one of them with examples from a rich mythological repertoire.

With the Monomyth's theory, examining the hero's journey, it is possible to see how the myths are a path of personal growth. The hero seeks plenitude in a spiritual journey; he always begins from a point where he is incomplete, through a journey, in order to return changed. Myth is structured, then, into three great parts, separation, initiation and return. In the hero's myth there is also, allied by a search for wholeness, a search for the overcoming of dualities. This, according to Campbell, is the central theme, also, of Jungian psychology.

According to Vogler (2011), Campbell's thought runs in parallel to swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung, who wrote about the archetypes; characters or energies that repeat constantly and end up in all people's dream and all culture's myth. Besides that, Campbell(2008) wrote a whole chapter about Jung's theory, summarizing it and also talking about myth and its process of individualization, besides relating archetypes to mythic figures like: the ego and the hero, the villain and the shadow, etc.

Jung shows, in his studies, that during life man makes choices that develops some aspects of his personality, and those become dominant, leaving aside the other aspects. Basically, the personal growth of a person will rest in his ability to work on these less developed aspects of his personality, lifelong, and instate them to the dominant aspects. When man is unable to do this harmonization, there appears a problem known as enantiodromia. In the myths, the hero will face dangers and win powers and allies, and will become stronger during the journey. This represents the journey of every single man to reach maturity. The hero's journey shows how the myths guide people through a path of human growth. Thereby, it is noticed that mythological symbols refers to man, and that mankind identify itself with these symbols universally. This identification may be applied into the production of many cultural goods. This will be explored hereafter.

2.3 Symbols in the construction of stories

As it was already exposed here, myths in several cultures presents many similarities. A possible explanation, presented in the paragraphs above, is that the mythological symbols have an universal feature. They arise from the human psyche, and it has the same basic structure in each individual of the human species.

The concept of symbols is based on Mircea Eliade [Eliade 1979]. According to this author, a symbol is a way to self-knowledge, to reveal the most deep realities of man. They defy any other way of knowledge, being a necessity to the human being, and not a option.

Some important concepts about the universality of the myths were presented above, like the IRM mechanisms, imprint mechanisms or like some experiences are universal, shared by all human beings (birth, relationship with parents, psychological maturation and etc.). Furthermore, it has been show that myths have various functions in society, and these have a social and an individual level.

Mythological symbols make reference to man and to human life in diverse levels. Many researchers discussed about this matter, among them, Campbell [Campbell 2007] in his book *The hero With a Thousand Faces*, showed how myths have the same basic structure, revealing the hero's journey as, among other things, a path of personal growth.

Stories' creators saw a great application by using the mythological knowledge into their creations. This knowledge gives more depth to the story, making it look more real, for it uses symbols that are deeply bound to man.

Vogler [Vogler 2006] adopts a simplified hero's journey from Campbell's work, a kind of adaptation applied to movies, showing that it is valid to analyze the plot of movies using the hero's journey as a tool. Furthermore, he points that a good story must make the

public identify themselves with it, making them believe they lived a true experience and that they learned something. A good story must be, therefore, psychologically true, even when fictional.

In this work will be conducted, as it was said in the introduction, a case study, analyzing the application of mythological symbols in two games, showing the symbolic meaning to show how people identify themselves with these cultural goods. Various examples of myths from diverse cultures will be used to illustrate the universal feature of these symbols. The exposure and analysis of the games will begin in the next session.

3 Game Analysis: God of War

The first analysis will be on the game "God of War". It is based on ancient greek mythology, and has great potencial as an example.

3.1 Plot

In the game God of War, various important themes like guilt, vengeance, justice and others are covered. Kratos, the main character of the game is an anti-hero, who follows a selfish journey only to forget the demons from the past that haunt him.



Figura 1: Kratos

Throughout the game, Kratos, requested by Athena, the Reasonable War Goddess, faces many challenges to obtain the Pandora's Box, an artifact able to grant a mortal the power of a god, in order to challenge Ares, the God of War, and by doing so, having his sins forgiven by the gods, as promised by Athena.

Along this journey, Kratos has the aid of several gods, like Poseidon, Zeus, Artemis, Aphrodite and Hades, who give him important abilities. He begins the adventure in Athens, going through the Pandora's Temple, located on the back of the titan Cronus, where he gets the Pandora's Box, but loses it when exiting the temple, because Ares kills him and claims this artifact. Kratos descends to the realm of Hades and only when he emerges from there the protagonist returns to Athens for the final fight against the God of War. During the game's story, Kratos' past is shown. In the past he was a bloodlust Spartan general, and during a battle, he sold his soul to Ares in order to not lose his life. However, what tortured him the most is that his bloodlust ends up accidentally killing his own family.

When Kratos defeats the God of War, he realizes his visions and nightmares were not gone. When he points this to Athena, she says that the promise was to forgive his sins and that no god was able to make him forget the monstrosities he had done. Thus, Kratos, without hope, decide to put an end to his miserable life, casting

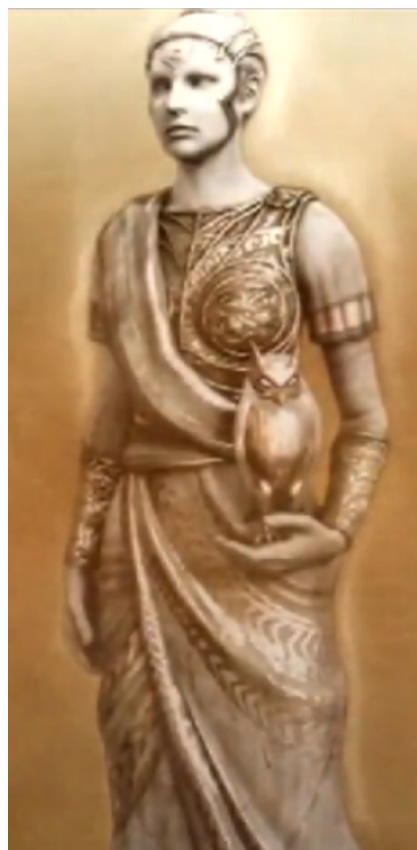


Figura 2: Athena

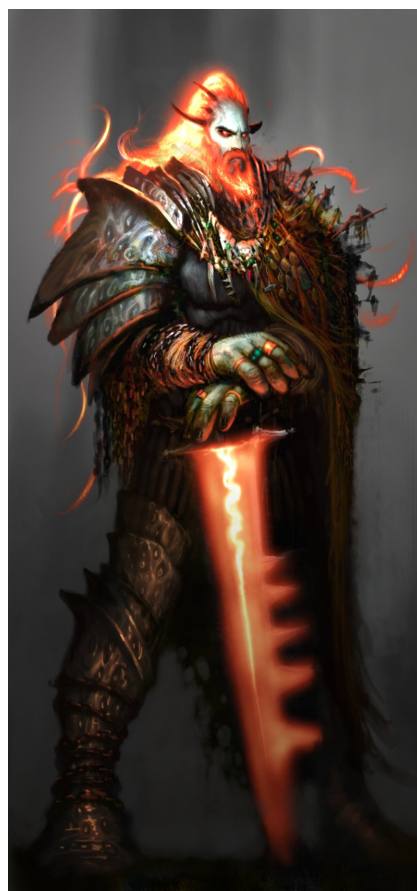


Figura 3: Ares

himself from the highest mountain in Greece. However, Athena resurrects him. With Ares dead, there is an empty place in Olympus

and the hero must claim it, becoming the new God of War.

3.2 Symbols

A fundamental aspect of the game is that the journey of the character is a way to forget his mistakes. Kratos is unable to deal with the consequences of his actions. The mistakes, however, always chased him. This is a symbol similar to that of Erinyes, the inquisitors. Thus, Kratos submits himself to Athena in a journey to forget his faults. The journey has the opposite effect than expected by the protagonist, because it causes him to have to confront his misconduct. This is justice, symbolized by the goddess Athena, acting in the life of the protagonist.

According to Brandao [Brandão 2011b], the Erinyes were a sort of inquisitors that chased the guilty of a crime. They were three: Tisiphone (vengeful destruction), Megaera (grudging) and Alecto (unnameable). They are associated with instances of consciousness that chased the guilty person of an irreparable crime. According to this author, a crime against the family was a very grave crime. Bringing to the context of this analysis, Kratos' sins chase him forever, until the end of his story; the Erinyes do not let him forget what he did.

Kratos is also a character that has monstrous features, moral deformities; being selfish, violent and reckless. However, he accomplishes the great deed of saving the city of Athens.

Brandao [Brandão 2011c], in his book *Greek Mythology Volume III*, quotes that there is a frequent trait in myths of Greek heroes, called the *opositorum complex*, that is the coexistence of the opposite, of venerable traits among detestable ones into the hero. Furthermore, many heroes have some abnormalities. Heracles, for example, was unruly and moody, besides having three rows of teeth and was about three meters tall. However, he did marvelous and great deeds, being one of the most notable heroes from the Hellenas. Odysseus was clever and insightful, but ugly and too small of stature, Achilles had more than 5 meters and the list of anomalies goes on. There are also many moments of moral, ethical and social transgressions. Brandão highlights that among these transgressions, we can point the gluttony of many heroes, like Heracles, Idas and Odysseus, as each ate a cow. Their sexual appetite was also colossal; Heracles impregnates fifty Thespians in one night. The use of violence and thievery was also very common. Ajax abuses Cassandra, Sisyphus takes the virginity of Anticlea, Odysseus' mother, Heracles possess Auge, Telephus' mother, without her consent, Heracles, by madness, kills Megaera, Pelops for her envy kills Stymphalos and so on. Related to thievery, Heracles stole Iphitos' mare and even killed him treacherously, violating the principle of hospitality.

The difference is that Kratos, unlike the Greek heroes, does his deeds by a wrong motivation, which is to forget his sins; he is not looking for redemption. God of War is a game influenced by the Greek hero's myth, especially by the myth of Heracles. Between some similarities, one can note that Kratos, as Heracles, also kills his own family. Beyond that, the journey of both begins in an attempt to deal with the consequences of this act, both count with the help of many deities and both descend to the realm of Hades. The motivation of both is, however, different.

Still comparing these two myths, it can be noted that Heracles, in the end of his journey rises to Olympus, after a long path of redemption. The rise of Kratos to a godly level is much more of a penitence, as it will be discussed later.

Myths, as it was said here, speak of human life. Heracles' journey is one of a human being looking for personal growth. This is the symbol of becoming a god in myths; it is to train man in order to let his most precious nature blossom. This is why people identify themselves with these myths.

Kratos' path, despite its various references to the heroic myth and to Heracles' myth, marks another possible path to man, it being a flight road from the committed sins, a way of spiritual paralysis. The protagonist of the game always decides to flee from his past. This is the opposite alternative to the myths' path, where a person

is able to always run from his past and, by doing so, never grows up in his humanity.

Another relevant point is the confrontation with the strongest enemies of the game. Aside from Hades, there are two great challenges faced by Kratos: The Hydra, in the ship, in the beginning of the game and the Ox, in Hades' domain, in Pandora's temple.

Hydra was a terrible monster. It had many heads and each time one was cut off, another two would grow in its place. To defeat it, the hero had the aid of an ally, Iolaus, which cauterized the cut-off heads, while Heracles chopped them off with a sword.

Brandão points that the battles are symbols of the fight against vices, which are represented by the heads that always grow again. The sword is a symbol of spiritual combat, for only through this battle, one is able to conquer his own vices. The continuous growth of the heads is what happens to the vices if man cannot get rid of vanity, the fertile ground of the vices, because it does not allow man to contemplate himself without prejudice, generating, among other things, self-indulgence. Cauterized heads are symbols for the conscience, the reason, for it is the reason who can stop the growth of the vices, the fire appears as a conscience's symbol also in Prometheus' myth (see chained Prometheus' reference).

The Ox in Hades' domain is a reference to Crete's Ox. In the third volume of his *Greek Mythology* book, Brandao highlights that the Ox is a power symbol, of sexual energy. In this context of the Crete's Ox is also the Indra Ox and Çiva, in India. The ox is related to the impulse of the passions and the actions of mankind. According to Paul Del, Jason, when taming Hephaestus's oxen, tames his own passion, controls his own strength. Jung points that killing the ox is to desire a more spiritual life.

In the game, there is no change of character; there is not a single moral improvement in the protagonist from the death of the ox. Kratos, however, after killing it, receives a new magic power, Hades' army, an army of spirits, that he controls, it being a metaphor to spiritual powers.

One observes, however, that the mythological proposal differs from what happens to Kratos, which represents the other side of the coin. All men have vices, passions, flaws that must be faced; one cannot adopt a flight posture. Man must seek spirit, the conscience, to reach his true human potential. Therefore, people identify themselves with the myth, and they identify themselves also with Kratos' action, which is the opposed action considering the teachings from mythology.

The descending to Hades' domain is a moment of climax in the initiation of the hero. It is a death and a symbolic resurrection, the hero goes to Hell to face his own unconscious, and enters in contact with his own deepest self. When he rises from there, he is a reborn man. According to Brandao, this occurs in many heroic myths, including Heracles' myth. Christ also descends into Hell when he died in the cross.

Hero's myth teach what every single man must do: descend to Hell. Which means to know every unknown aspect of this personality, bring them into conscience and learn how to deal with them, in order to incorporate them. Campbell [Campbell 2008] discuss about it when he quotes Jung and talks about *enantiodromia*.

Symbolic death and resurrection show us that is impossible to change while one maintains himself the same, and that the contact with unknown sides of the self is a transforming experience to man. This is the path to wholeness, to become a deity.

In the game *God of War*, there is no change in the values of the main character when he descends to Hades' domain. However, this is the last stage of the game, before the hero can have his final combat against the villain; it is like the last test before he can turn back to Athena and claims the powers within Pandora's Box. Thereby, in the game, this descent symbolizes the last test to enable the hero to face his final challenge. Once more, man identifies himself with the myth, for its personal and spiritual message and he identifies himself with the game, for its reference to the myth's message; the game, however, shows the opposite message related to the mythological proposition.

In the fight against Ares, Kratos must defeat him three times. During this fight, the god tries to destroy the body and the soul of the hero, in the second stage of this battle, Ares sends Kratos to an alternative reality, moments before the killing of this own family. Kratos must prevent the death of his kindly ones, fighting many clones of himself, who are trying to kill his family. When he defeats all of his clones, Ares takes the weapons from the character and kills his family again, saying there was no salvation for them. Kratos admits to himself he does not want to pay this price for his desire of power. Therefore, apparently defeated, the hero faces the God of War one last and third time and kills him. It is essential to notice that this battle is with the body and soul, representing the struggle of the hero with himself.

As it was said before, this does not have the desired effect in the hero, for Athena says she can not make Kratos forget his past faults. In the moment the hero commits suicide, Athena resurrects him and says he cannot do this. He must become the new God of War. One can find various interesting symbols here. First, the confrontation with past mistakes, the demons that haunts the hero, making him admit his guilt. Second is that Kratos kills Ares and becomes the new God of War, meaning he kills the threat and after he incorporates its power. This is what happens to Heracles when he kills the Nemean Lion, stars to use its skin as an armor, or Sigurd, when he kills Fafnir, bathes into its blood, having his skin become impenetrable. According to Brandao [Brandão 2011b], when Heracles appropriates himself of the lion's skin, Heracles possesses the lion's mana, its powers.

Kratos, however, only becomes a god after killing himself and being brought back by Athena. Brandao [Brandão 2011c], in his Greek Mythology volume III, points that in Greek myths, the hero only wields his power in wholeness, after death. Many heroes after death became cities' guardians, and were worshipped by its citizens. Heracles only rises to Olympus after his death and the same happens to Psyche. Even in Christianity, Christ returns in a much more glorious shape and rises to heaven only after his death in the cross.

The difference between Kratos and the heroes who rise to deity is that heroes are in search of redemption, growth, wholeness, representing man's search. Kratos is, on the other hand, the flight and decay.

Killing Ares in the game, or the Nemean Lion and the dragon Fafnir, in myths, and incorporate in them what human beings must do with their vices and faults, as it was said here, for it is necessary to know them and use them in a good manner. The protagonist's death is the symbol already mentioned here, it is dying to born again, and all men must do it to reach the human plenitude, to overcome a material life and reach a spiritual life. Campbell (2008) explains this idea when quoting Abraham Melo and says that men live towards some basic values: the survival, sex and power. However, to reach a fulfillment, men must overcome them and myths shows the path.

An important point is that the war between Ares and Athena is a recurring theme in Greek mythology. Ares represents violent war, which, in myths, always loses to Athena, the symbol of reasonable, intelligent war. Therefore, Kratos finds himself in the game serving this righteous war goddess. In Greece, there is the idea that everything is subjected to a divine order. According to Campbell (2008), this is a recurrent theme in various mythologies, where gods are only expressions of a great order. In India, this order is called Dharma; In China, it is called Tao; in Ancient Greece, it was called Moira; In Ancient Mesopotamia, Mi.

Associated to Dharma's idea in India, there is the Karma's idea. According to Williams [Williams 2003], Karma is the fruit of man's actions, it is a reaction to the actions of humans. In the game, Kratos must deal with the consequences of his actions, not even death can spare him from this law. So, when he becomes a god, he is obligated to live with his faults; he must deal with them. This law is the one that appears in the second function of myth and that explains the universe to man.

As Kratos, everyone must deal with his action, it is hard to always adopt a running position, at some point, a confrontation with faults

will occur, and myths intends to teach mankind this lesson.

The Karma Law teaches that every action generates a reaction. Man is responsible for dealing with these reactions to evolve and reach maturity. All these symbols from mythology still echo in stories of actual cultural goods, for these are born in human psyche, and men identify themselves with these. Knowing these symbols help, as it was shown here, in the construction of good stories.

4 Game Analysis: Final Fantasy IX

Final Fantasy IX is part of a game franchise that employ a lot of mythology and, therefore, symbolism in it's stories. Because of it, it's a very good example of how can symbolism help and improve the plot and characters of a game.

4.1 Plot

Final Fantasy IX does not follow a chronologic order, it's plot being revealed by a number of flashbacks. This synopsis will not approach the game's events in the order they are presented in, but in a logic and chronologic order. The intent is to ease the discernment and the comprehension of the events that unfold in the game's fictitious story. It broaches on subjects like: mortality, responsibilities, heroism, war and romance.

There is two worlds of note in Final Fantasy IX. They are called Terra and Gaia. The first, Terra, was home to a society that was advanced in both magic and technology. A civilization at its peak. Such advance, however, brought consequences to the planet. Terra began to decay, because of the exhaustion of the planet's resources. Therefore, the civilization began to search for a world, so it could save itself. They found Gaia, a young marble, ideal for life.

The planets of this universe do not work on a convetional manner. Each planet has a Crystal(a recurring visual theme in the Final Fantasy franchise) at its core. This Crystal generate souls, which will be incarnated in recipients on the surface. By dying, the souls, along with their memories, return to the Crystal, allowing it to create more complex beings. The Terrans' plan was to assimilate their world with Gaia.

Such process, however, proved itself a disaster. Gaia's surface was left completely devastated and Terra ended up shifting inside of Gaia, existing in the same place but in different planes. The people, then, decided to enter in a slumber, creating a sole being tasked with the job to orchestrate a new plan for the assimilation of the worlds.

This being was a cyborg called Garland. The new plan consisted in, slowly, depriving Gaia of its souls to ease the fusion process. To that end, Garland moved the magical Terran tree Iifa to Gaia. The Iifa Tree helped stabilize the planet's surface and also served as a gigantic soul filter: it pumped Terran souls and filtered Gaia's, which were expelled in the form of mist, by the Tree's roots. This mist had the added effect of inciting fighting among the planet's inhabitants. Garland also created beings called "Genomes" to serve as recipients to Terran souls. Two of these beings are of note.

The first is Kuja, the main villain of the game, a narcissist, elegant and cruel man. Kuja was created to incite the war in Gaia, speeding up the process of eliminating souls. In spite of accomplishing his function, he starts to resent Garland, who not only creates another genome to replace him(Kuja disposed of it by throwing the infant in Gaia), but also planned to get rid of him at the end of the process. Kuja is initially presented as the arms dealer of Queen Brahne, but later, however, he occupies a much larger role and has his own agenda.

The other notable genome is called Zidane Tribal, the main character of this story. Zidane is a young, womanizer, counsellor and adventurous man. Zidane is the genome that Kuja tried to get rid of, which makes him and Kuja brothers. After being thrown into Gaia, Zidane is adopted by Baku, a member of the Tantalus "thieving travelling artists"troupe. At the beginning of the game, the Tantalus are contracted to kidnap Princess Garnet because of the recent wars her mother has motivated. In the course of the game, Zidane and Garnet fall in love and their relationship is developed between steps



Figura 4: *Kuja*

and stumbles, because of the different personalities and lifestyles of the two. The thief also gives numerous advices to the other party members in the aspects of life, particularly to Vivi. In his journey to save the world, Zidane ends up finding his origins and learns to cope with them.



Figura 5: *Zidane*

Garnet Til Alexandros XVII is the Princess kidnapped by the Tantalus. At first, Garnet is shy and self-deprecating, but in her travels with Zidane and his friends, her personality matures. Garnet was born as a summoner, but is eventually adopted by the Queen to replace her daughter, who died as an infant. She plans to stop the wars caused by her mother, who is completely drunk and corrupted with power and greed. Later, Brahne dies and Garnet is crowned queen regent.



Figura 6: *Garnet*

Vivi Ornitier is a young black mage, a fabricated race. He is shy, insecure and very naïve. Because of his race's short lifespan, Vivi becomes one of the most melancholic characters of the game. A recurring theme in the story is the questioning of one's own existence. This theme is stronger in Vivi than any other character. The young wizard is forced to cope with the sorrow of his existence: a creature constructed for war. Friendship and mortality are other themes inherent to the character.



Figura 7: *Vivi*

There are other characters, but this article will only touch upon Zidane, Garnet, Vivi and Kuja. To name a few others, there follows a brief list of other characters. Adelbert Steiner, a goofy knight. Freya Crescent, a woman in search of her lost love. Quina Qu, a simplistic creature who only thinks about eating. Eiko Carol, a young summoner. Amarant Coral, a fighting addict mercenary. Queen Brahne, a greedy and erratic monarch. General Beatrix, loyal commander. Baku, Blank, Cinna, Marcus and Ruby, members of Tantalus.

4.2 Symbols

Final Fantasy IX's theme, in a nutshell, is "mortality". The characters are constantly facing it, whether real or symbolic. A case study

will be made, comparing the "figurative deaths" of Zidane and Garnet and the "actual deaths" of Kuja and Vivi.

There is more than one way to treat the dual symbol that represents the masculine and feminine. According to Jung [Jung 2006], everyone has an anima(feminine) and animus(masculine) side. Jung proposes that the journey of a person to find individualism includes connecting with the opposite side of their gender. Therefore, anima for men and animus for women.

A very common representation of the anima is of note, the "damsel in distress". This recurring theme consists in a hero rescuing a princess and marrying her. For example, Perseus saved Andromeda from a sea monster and later, they wed.

Another valid interpretation is the lady as the soul of the hero, as proposed by Brandão [Brandão 2011c]. This is portrayed in several myths. In King Arthur, the king and the land start to decay when he is torn apart from his soul by his perfect knight, Sir Lancelot du Lac. The same theme is present in Phantom of the Opera, with the Phantom, Christine and Raoul. It is also portrayed in Romeo and Juliet. In mythology, Theseus has Ariadne(who is abandoned in the beach, and only she is allowed to the Olympus by marrying Dionysus). Medieval knights freed maidens locked inside towers, protected by dragons. All of these are symbols of the woman as the soul of the hero.

Zidane sees in Garnet his damsel in distress, his soul. However, Garnet goes in the direction of danger, and runs away from Zidane: this is a symbol of the hero in search of his wandering soul. This aspect of the hero in search of his other half that runs away is also an inconscient aspect of the character. Zidane is a bit of a skirt-chaser and flirts openly with any woman he finds in the course of the game, creating some problems in his relationship with the Princess. This is an aspect that Zidane has a certain reluctance to change, and because of it, he cannot connect with his anima.

This jungian reference shows how much this pattern is repeated by the human beings as a whole. Therefore, is a strong point between the player, the characters and the plot.

This change can only be made present when the hero needs to face his origins as a Genome, in Terra. This works as his dark cave(a part of the hero's journey), according to Vogler [Vogler 2006]. This confrontation faced by Zidane is only won thanks to his friends, Garnet in particular. Which means that Zidane is his own damsel in distress, who is rescued by the woman that could help him reconnect with the more sensible side of his psyche, Garnet.

After this point, the actions of the young thief are more heroic in nature if compared to the start of the game. Before, his main motivation were to find and save his princess. Now, he fights to save the world. This connection with the most sensible side of his self allows him to go after Kuja, risking his own life. Zidane sees in Kuja a possible destiny for himself. According to Campbell, in the journeys of a man hero, is frequent the appearance of a feminine monster, which represents the anima being ignored, like the Sphinx for Oedipus and the Sirens for Orpheus and Odysseus. Kuja has a very feminine appearance and speech, but is a man, which in some way makes Zidane confront with his anima. Still according to Jung, one of the aspects that is born of the distance from the anima, is the repulse of men.

Garnet, on the other hand, is a spoiled and timid princess. This princess is forced to, suddenly, abandon her home to put an end to her mother's belic advances. This denotes bravery or, at least, a search for it, which is a typical characteristic of the animus. The personality of the princess changes slowly. Once, shy and naïve, Garnet blames herself for events that are out of her control. In the time spent with Zidane, her animus, her behavior changes. Her speech, once extremely formal, becomes more casual and natural. She becomes braver and decided, wanting to control her powers to protect her kingdom.

The speech and behavior are not the only things to change in Garnet. She adopts the name "Dagger", a masculine weapon(that is used by Zidane), to blend in as a plebeian. In a certain part of the

game, she cuts her hair with a dagger, changing an old trait of herself. This scene is remarkable, because the recent-crowned Queen just got over a trauma(which left her without voice), her symbolically materialized dark cave, finding inner strength to fight for her destiny. And she finds that strenght in "dagger", a way to escape from her weak archetype.

At the beginning of the game, Zidane heads into trouble, while with Garnet, it's trouble that finds her. Later, the situation is inverted, meaning a complete contact with this other "self". Finally, we can conclude that by facing his past and by cutting her hair after a trauma, Zidane and Garnet, respectively, are killing their initial archetypes and reborn as a new and more complete one.

These changes in behavior and evolution, confrontation and victory over the challenges, are also connecting points between the player and the characters. The psychological branch of having a happy ending, learning from mistakes and facing one's own ghosts, is entertaining to the human psyche. Besides that, it's recurring to the mythic heroes these overcoming of trials. Thus, strenghtening the bond with the player.

Another parallel can be traced in the in-game play I Want to Be Your Canary. The play is very similar to Romeo and Juliet, and it also represents the "death and rebirth" of the protagonists. Also, in some point of the game, Zidane plays the male lead, and Garnet plays the female lead, though not at the same time.

While Zidane and Garnet are related to more "figurative" deaths, the drama that Vivi and Kuja faces is clearer and more direct. We can interpretate the way these two deal with death as examples of the first(mysteries of life) and the fourth(pedagogic) function of the myth, according to Campbell.

Vivi is a black mage, an artificial race. Black mages have a very short lifespan, around one year. Vivi is an exception, living, at least, ten years. After finding a village of fugitive black mages, he is informed that some mages simply "stopped". Without sickness or accidents. From this point on, Vivi starts to question himself about death.

The revelation brings a cloud of uneasiness on the young man's heart. He does not comprehend how can someone die without sickness or accidents. Judging by his lines, he also does not understand that old age can be a probable cause of death. The naïveness of the boy while facing such delicate issues, are one of the main aspects of the game.

On occasion, Vivi takes advice from Zidane, which helps him face his own mortality. These advices take roots so deep in the mage, that they become a sort of a moral compass, a reason for living. The good-natured actions of the thief inspires Vivi, who has a very strong moral distinction. Much more important to note that these actions are not necessarily connected to his death, but to his way of living, which ends up being a moral lesson.

In the Epic of Gilgamesh according do Franchinni [Franchini and Segnfredo 2008], the warrior has to face his own mortality. He goes on a journey to find immortality, but fails. At the end of the quest, however, he ends up accepting his mortal condition, realizing that the achievements of his civilization is the closest to immortality that a human can reach. According to Brandão, Achilles meets a similar end, choosing a short and glorious life in Troy over a long and tedious one, his name being sungd for generations of bards. To Vivi, his living experiences themselves are the way he faces his imminent death.

At the end of the game, a monologue by Vivi is played. In this scene, he digresses about what he learned with Zidane, the importance of friendship, life and death. At the end of this text, is implied that he died, leaving several children. According to Fitzpatrick [Blahuta et al. 2009], in his article of the book Final Fantasy And Philosophy, this can be interpreted as a happy ending. The black mage succeeded in reaching an immortality similar to those of Gilgamesh and Achilles, his essence remained alive with his earthly legacy.

Different from Vivi, Kuja is not so happy in facing his death. Like Vivi, Kuja is an artificial being, in his case, a Genome created by

Garland. Having to face his mortality, Kuja does not try to accept it. He tries to destroy everything surrounding him, deeming it unfair that the world should exist without him. The inability of the villain in accepting his fate, can be related to the start of Gilgamesh's journey, who is incapable of facing his death, entering into a trauma because of the passing away of his friend Enkidu. Contrary to the mythic hero, though, he does not look for immortality, but the destruction of everything that is mortal like him. Which is a path many times more misleading than the one chosen by Gilgamesh.

The immense sorrow that Kuja feels is justified by the huge narcissism that the character has. Because he is too attached to himself, Kuja cannot comprehend and not even considers the hypothesis of an immortality in essence, like Vivi. Kuja's omen is so great that it actually summons, unwittingly, an entity that reigns through death to face the heroes. Bringing back briefly the comparison between Kuja and Zidane, here we can see how Kuja takes the mantle of "damsel in distress". After Necron, the deity, is defeated, Kuja saves Zidane and his friends. We can assume that Kuja's soul was "saved" in this event, since he regrets his mistakes.

We can also interpretate this salvation acquired by Kuja as a symbol. After finally having someone who fought for him, the villain redeems and his soul ascends (though, only in the moral sense, not spiritual). This symbol is similar to the end of Psyche's journey, in which she is saved by the one she searched so much for, for regret and love. Again, seeing that it is not confirmed that Kuja does purify himself, only regretting his actions, he does not meet the same end as Psyche, that ascends to Olympus.

The search for immortality is recurrent in many myths, as mentioned. Men tends to search for it in their life constantly, either by acts or ideas. Today, we remember the great men from the past because of what they left to the future generations. Every man wants to perpetuate himself, learning the meaning of life and of one's own mortality. That way, we can affirm the creation of one more connection between the plot and the player.

These are not the only symbols of mortality approached in Final Fantasy IX. There's also facing mortality of others and the mortality of the planet, bringing the subject to a more cosmic sense. But these were the most common and recurrent.

We can trace Zidane, Garnet, Vivi and Kuja's life stories as moral lessons. By their eyes, we can see two themes: a search for a complete human being and a way to face one's own mortality. Along the game, we can see various interesting symbols, but these two are more apparent and strong in the context, besides being more meaningful to human life. These themes are atemporal, because we are always searching for the solution of these dilemmas, being present in ancient mythologies and modern games.

5 Conclusion and Future Work

The games' field is extremely wide. Mythology, symbolism and psychology, too profound. The intersection of these two areas is too rich for one simple text to describe. This is a nearly unexplored area of study, bearing a potential of study as limitless as the human being.

The interpretation of myths, and it's convergence to our lives is intrinsically attached to life. Games, as demonstrated by the two examples given, do apply to the same rule. As much as they are bound to human behaviour, personality and spirit, it is pretty possible that interaction, reliability and playability grows.

The comparisons proved how much the two games, God of War and Final Fantasy IX, are embased on myths. The same myths these games use holds a much deeper human reality. This reality is brought to the player, that lives it, identifies with it, and consequently, likes it. It is a way for the players to live that reality, that they would never live it, possibly, otherwise.

It is possible to use myths, symbols and psychology in games. Not only possible, there are countless examples of games that use them and are successful. The point in this article is open that view. Even

if not proved here, new dialogues and study areas must come from this possibility.

That study can go further. A series of researches, comparisons and graphics may be drawn on the same pool that this text drinks from. The books on bibliography are just the base of this study, insipient, but already proved by Jung, Campbell, Brandão, among others researchers.

Acknowledgements

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