Joanna Bieńkowska, "Entry on: God of War by SIE Santa Monica Studio ", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/421. Entry version as of November 19, 2026.

SIE Santa Monica Studio

God of War

United States (2005)

TAGS: Amphitrite Aphrodite Ares Artemis Athena Athens Barbarians Calliope Centaur(s) Cerberus Cronus / Kronos Cyclops / Cyclopes Gorgon(s) Hades Harpies Hydra Labyrinth Medusa Minotaur Olympus Oracles Pandora's Box Phoenix (Bird) Poseidon Satyr(s) Sirens Spartans Zeus

We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	God of War
Studio/Production Company	Sony Interactive Entertainment
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2005
First Edition Details	SIE Santa Monica Studio, *God of War*. PlayStation II. Directed by David Jaffe. San Mateo, California: Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2005 (March 22, 2005 in North America, July 8 in the United Kingdom, and November 17 in Japan).
Platform	PlayStation 2; PlayStation 3 [part of God of War Collection (2009) and God of War Saga (2012]; PlayStation Vita [God of War Collection (2014)]
Official Website	sms.playstation.com (accessed: August 20, 2018)
Available Onllne	Trailer: youtube.com (accessed: August 20, 2018)
Genre	Action and adventure video games*, Hack-and-slash*, Platform*
Target Audience	Age restriction 18+

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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Creators

The Santa Monica Studio team at the 2019 Game Developers Choice Awards. Retrieved from Wikipedia, licensed under CC BY 2.0 (accessed: December 30, 2021).

SIE Santa Monica Studio (Company)

SIE Santa Monica Studio (or Santa Monica Studio) is an American video game studio owned by Sony Interactive Entertainment, as part of SIE Worldwide Studios. It was established in 1999 in Santa Monica, California. Currently based in Playa Vista, Los Angeles.

Santa Monica Studio is widely known for the *God of War* series, its most popular title so far.

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Additional information

Adaptations	A novel covering the game's plot (2010), a comic book series (2010/2011), consisting of 6 parts, covering the main character's past and the events immediately after the end of the game.
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	Two main sequels, *God of War II* and *God of War III*. Also, *God of War: Chains of Olympus*, sequel to *God of War*. Two prequels, *God of War: Ascension* and *God of War: Ghost of Sparta*. The latest sequel to the trilogy is *God of War* (2018), bearing the original game's title.
Summary	*God of War* is a video game series created by Santa Monica Studio, an exclusive title for the PlayStation consoles (with the exception of *God of War: Betrayal*). Individual games have their separate entries, see under the name of each game It tells the story of a Spartan warrior – Kratos – and his adventures in the world of ancient Greece.* The series consists of the following games: • *God of War,* 2005 for PS2; • *God of War II*, 2007 for PS2; • *God of War: Betrayal*, 2007 for Mobiles (Java); • *God of War: Chains of Olympus*, 2008 for PlayStation Portable; • *God of War III*, 2010 for PS3, remastered for PS4 in 2015; • *God of War: Ghost of Sparta*, 2010 for PSP; • *God of War: Ascension*, 2013 for PS3; • *God of War*, 2018 (bears the same title as the first game in the series) for PS4. The following releases are compilations of previously published titles:

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- *God of War Collection*, 2009 for PS3, 2014 for PlayStation Vita (contains *God of War* and *God of War II*);
- *God of War: Origins Collection*, 2011 (in: *God of War: Chains of Olympus* and *God of War: Ghost of Sparta*);
- *God of War Saga*, 2012 (in: *God of War*, *God of War II*, *God of War III*, *Chains of Olympus*, and *Ghost of Sparta*).

The story revolves around Kratos, a Spartan general who pledged his soul to Ares, the god of war. In order to understand the process of reception of mythology in this game, a fairly detailed summary is required. It demonstrates how the creators of the *God of War* took the world of Greek mythology as the scenery for their game and invented a very involved and entirely different story but one still in keeping with the reality of this fantastic world.

The game begins with a cutscene – i.e. a video sequence, stopping gameplay and player's agency for as long as it lasts – that shows Kratos, defeated by his own crimes and unable to live any longer, casting himself from the mount Olympus into the sea. Before he dies, the story rewinds to three weeks earlier, during Kratos' quest to free Athens from Ares, who attacked it with his minions. Because of Zeus' prohibition of divine intervention, Kratos is the one asked to save the city. He agrees on one condition – that he'll be granted redemption for his terrible deeds. As the player proceeds with the plot, Kratos' bloody past is revealed in retrospections. These, along with the rest of the story, are told by an omniscient narrator – in *God of War* revealed to be the Titan Gaia.

KRATOS' PAST

When Kratos and his army lost a battle to barbarians and the hero was about to get killed, he pledged his life to Ares in order to save himself from death. Eager to serve, he quickly became the god's top agent. He kept roaming Greece, massacring people with his Blades of Chaos, forged in Tartarus by Ares himself – until he fell for a trap set by the god to make him a perfect warrior without bounds and human limitations. As Kratos was about to destroy another village for the glory of Ares, he ignored the local oracle's warning not to enter her temple and slayed everyone inside it. When the fury that had blinded him faded, he discovered that among the victims were his wife and baby girl – the only people he had lived for, secretly transported to the village by Ares. As Kratos left the temple, the oracle cursed him with the ashes of his dead family, to be forever seen as a proof of his

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terrible deed – resulting in his pale-white skin. Since that day, he has been known as the ghost of Sparta, due to the ghostly color of his skin.

Soon after this event, Kratos left Ares' service and set out on his quest to redeem his humanity. He pledged his loyalty to the Olympic gods, hoping to be released from nightmares haunting him since that terrible night at the temple. His quest for Athena – to save her city – is to be the last one after 10 years of service, for which the gods promise him redemption.

GAME'S PLOT – A quest to save Athens

The player's first objective in the game is to kill Hydra – a powerful sea monster – on behalf of Poseidon. Then, the god of the sea grants Kratos his magic powers and the hero proceeds with his quest. During the game, the player can collect different types of items – phoenix feathers and gorgon eyes. After collecting a certain amount of these, Kratos' magical energy – also known as mana – and health increase. They are not relevant to the story in any way.

As Kratos arrives in the port, he fights through hordes of Ares' minions and mythical creatures, among which there are: Harpies, Minotaurs, Gorgons and Cyclops. After reaching the city, Athena points him to her oracle, who was in danger from Ares' servants. In return for her life, she would tell him how to kill a god.

Roaming the streets of Athens, people react to Kratos with fear and panic – they would rather die than be saved – or even talked to – by a monster such as him. He experiences distrust, unwillingness to cooperate and aggression. The player learns to see him as an anti-hero.

Kratos reaches the oracle's place, meeting a strange gravedigger on his way. The man seems to be mad, as he keeps digging a very deep grave, while everyone around him dies by the hands of Ares' undead soldiers. Kratos ignores him and proceeds further. Finally he finds the oracle of Athena and saves her from the minions of Ares. As she touches his cheek to sink into his memories, she quickly backs off, saying "Why would Athena send one such as you?" In reply, Kratos grabs her by the throat and pushes her away, scared to let anyone into his troubled mind.

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Bound to serve her goddess, the oracle reveals the truth about defeating Ares – Kratos has to find the Pandora's Box and consume the power lurking in it. Pandora's Temple – and Pandora's Box in it – is attached to the back of Cronos who roams the Desert of Lost Souls as an eternal punishment for his crimes against the Olympian gods. Kratos reaches Pandora's Temple and starts exploring it in order to find the infamous Pandora's Box. He fights different mythical beasts – Sirens, Satyrs, Centaurs, Cerberi and their offspring; he obtains different items – like Poseidon's Trident that allows him to breathe underwater and two Musa Keys that open the door to a secret room. He also completes minor quests for Aphrodite, Artemis, Hades, and Zeus and in return is granted their powers and weapons, e.g. Medusa's head and Zeus' bolts (Zeus' Fury). On his way he meets people on the same quest – to find Pandora's Box – and stumbles upon dead bodies of those who failed. In the Temple, he wanders into a room dedicated to Amphitrite and a labyrinth with a giant Minotaur in it.

After he retrieves the Pandora's Box, he gets it out of the temple and at this very moment, Ares throws a broken column in his direction. As the object reaches Kratos, it kills him instantly; impaled, in his last moments Kratos thinks of his family. Then, his soul falls into Hades.

Falling down to the Underworld, Kratos has to tear through Hades' harsh environment, but finally finds a single rope hanging from the top – as he climbs up, he discovers himself in front of the oracle's temple, coming out of the same hole that the madman he's seen before was digging. After a few words, the gravedigger transforms into an eagle and flies away – which means that it was all along Zeus helping Kratos in his quest to save Athens.

THE LAST PART – Killing Ares

Kratos rushes towards Ares, standing before mount Olympus, threatening the gods. In his monologue, the god of war reveals his true motivation behind his attack on Athens – he's jealous that Zeus has granted Athena his trust and favour, while not doing the same for him.

Kratos throws Zeus' bolt at the chains that hold Pandora's Box and releases it from Ares' grasp. As he opens it, the power of the gods fills his body, making him able to fight Ares.

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During the duel, Ares throws him into a mysterious portal. To his surprise, Kratos finds himself in the same temple where he killed his family – and as he turns around, his wife and child are there, about to get killed by his own clones. He keeps defeating the copies of himself until he's the only one on the battlefield. Relieved to see his family saved, he's suddenly lifted into the air and the Blades of Chaos – carved into his skin all those years ago – are torn away from his arms and point to his wife and child. He watches them die once again.

When he's about to submit, he spots a fractured metal blade, which was formerly used as an ornamental bridge inside Athens. As he removes it from its post, he uses it to finally defeat Ares.

THE END – The reward

As Kratos defeats Ares, the gods fail to deliver his expectations – a monster such as him cannot be forgiven. In this moment, he understands that there's only one thing that he can do. He climbs (?) mount Olympus and with the words on his lips: "The gods have abandoned me, now there's no hope," he casts himself into the sea, in hope of ending his miserable life. To his despair, he survives. Athena lifts him all the way up and places him unharmed before the entrance to the gods' domain. She explains to him that now, when Ares is gone, there is a vacancy on Olympus – and that the gods agreed to make him the god of war, as a reward for saving Athens.

After all his labours, Kratos becomes the new god of war.

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* The newest title in the saga has introduced the world of far north and Norse mythology, presumably to replace the Greek environment.

Analysis

God of War was created as a typical hack and slash game, with the ancient world of Greece as the background for the story. It focuses on the brutality of Greek mythology and is often described as violent and bloody, which later became the game's trademark. This genre of video games uses a third person perspective to create a coherent narration revolving around protagonists, in this case one – Kratos. It enables the creators to build an immersive narration from the main hero's point of view, which engages the player by letting her control the protagonist.

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It's important to take into consideration the medium – video games – that serve mainly to entertain. Though *God of War* was meant for an older audience – it was marked PEGI +18 – it became popular among players of all ages. Thus, its educational values, as it popularizes Greek mythology and ancient Greek culture in general, have to be taken into account while analysing its reception in pop culture and its influence on young people.

In 2005, PlayStation 2 was a widely used console. Based on my experience and observation, I consider that choosing ancient mythological Greece familiar to players since childhood as background, is one of the crucial factors contributing to the title's success.

Its main theme – deicide – is a popular one in the video game industry. Many games that use mythology as their background depict mortals – or half-gods bearing a meaningful connection to the mortal world – killing the gods that often represent tyranny and harsh rule over their subjects, e.g. *Titan Quest*, *Apotheon*, *Okhlos*, *Age of Mythology* (both the original and the expansion), *Kid Icarus* – to name a few regarding Greek and Roman mythology.

The name of God of War's protagonist comes from Ancient Greek - Kratos (Κράτος) - "Power". The original Kratos appeared in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound and Libation Bearers*. It has to be stressed though that *God of War*'s Kratos is a completely different character and his genealogical tree looks different in the series than in Greek mythology. Instead of being a son of the Titan Pallas and the river-deity Styx, a brother to Nike (victory), Bia (Force) and Zelus (Glory), in the game, he's the son of Zeus and Callisto, i.e. a half-brother to Ares and many other Olympian gods and heroes.

He is married to Lysandra, and has a daughter, Calliope and is a brother to Deimos, another half-god. All four of them, along with Kratos, bear no resemblance to any mythological (or historical) character. It is a common practice among the creators of games to give their own characters somewhat familiar and well sounding names.

When it comes to representing the gods, *God of War* offers rather stereotypical views.

Kratos, created to be the anti-hero kind of protagonist, connected

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directly to Ares, is muscular beyond human anatomy – it tends to be a feature of many male protagonists years before and after *God of War* was released - and has other attributes that underline his villainy, i.e. frowning eyebrows, baldness, a goatee, white skin and tattoos that would rather suit a barbarian than a typical Greek hero.

Ares is also very muscular; his fiery long hair and beard serve as a trade mark, to differentiate him among other villains from various video games. He has deep, masculine voice (that belongs to Steven Blum, a widely popular voice actor) and wears dark iron armor with ornaments of origin visually different than Greek. During fight with Kratos, he unsheathes spidery claws from his back that is also hardly a reference to the Greek aesthetics and usual depiction of the gods.

Athena talks to Kratos only through various statues representing her. They are all marble-white, showing her standing straight with a spear in her hand, with pinned hair and blind eyes. She's mysterious, ethereal, out of Kratos' reach. Whenever she speaks through a statue, its frame shines with bright light.

In case of Poseidon, Aphrodite, Artemis and Hades, only their faces are presented - and with the exception of Artemis (that appears only in the original *God of War*), all of them are remodeled later in the trilogy. Yet it has to be said that the first depictions are also stereotypical – Poseidon is old and wise, Aphrodite has a very feminine voice, Artemis has small, undeveloped antlers (a reference to satyrs?) and her face is covered in leaves (goddess of hunt = forest = leaves), Hades' face is that of a monster with a gaping mouth and horns (ugly like of a dead, burned body?).

In the whole *God of War* series, women tend to be objectified and humiliated. At the game's beginning, Kratos can have sexual intercourse with two bare-chested women and later in *God of War II*, two naked women relax in the Rhodian baths, while the city is under siege – similar scenes appear in every title, offering "sex mini games." The same kind of objectification face: the Oracle of Athena, wearing see-through clothes that hardly cover her body, even though she's a servant of the goddess of wisdom, not love; Eos in *God of War: Chains of Olympus*; both Lahkesis and Erinys in the *God of War II* and *God of War: Ghost of Sparta* wear clothes that do not cover their breasts; Poseidon's Princess in *God of War*, whom Kratos kills brutally to free himself from a maze. Aphrodite is also depicted in a feminine, seductive way, with long, dark brown braid instead of typical blonde

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	hair, yet the only thing she seeks during the end of the world is sexual gratification, not escape. She doesn't seem to care that Kratos aims to destroy her brethren and she nonetheless engages in a sexual relationship with him. In *God of War: Ascension* the Furies try to trick Kratos into submitting by clothing themselves in the bodies of attractive, completely naked women. Even female in-game monsters, irrelevant to the story, are depicted with bare breasts, e.g. Medusa. On the other hand, Kratos' wife, Lysandra, wears a long blue gown which covers her body and is usually shown hugging their little daughter, Calliope, making her a mother rather than a sexual object. This trend seems to have its roots in the classic video games, where the protagonist was often a strong, fearless warrior and his love interest - a damsel in distress. It allowed the male player to live a different life, an answer to his need of an adventure and contact with women. The same characteristics can be found in movies, TV series and other media, e.g. James Bond. The complex narrative is a fantasy version of Greek mythology adapted to the pace and diversity required of a hugely successful video game.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Amphitrite Aphrodite Ares Artemis Athena Athens Barbarians Calliope Centaur(s) Cerberus Cronus / Kronos Cyclops / Cyclopes Gorgon(s) Hades Harpies Hydra Labyrinth Medusa Minotaur Olympus Oracles Pandora's Box Phoenix (Bird) Poseidon Satyr(s) Sirens Spartans Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Appearances Character traits Religious beliefs Society Violence War
Addenda	Commercial Success: The sixth best-selling game of 2005 by GameSpot (July 2005): see here (accessed: August 20, 2018).

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The God of War series has sold over 21 million copies worldwide (2012), i.e. not counting *God of War: Ascension* (see here, accessed: August 20, 2018) – *God of War*: 4,6 million games sold worldwide.

Genre: An action, adventure, hack and slash, story-driven video game.

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