



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA  
CAMPUS TRINDADE  
CENTRO DE COMUNICAÇÃO E EXPRESSÃO  
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM INGLÊS

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**“THE WORLD COULD ALWAYS USE MORE HEROES”:**  
A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE GAME OVERWATCH

Florianópolis

2021

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Tese submetida ao Programa de Pós-graduação em Inglês:  
Estudos Linguísticos e Literários da Universidade Federal de  
Santa Catarina para a obtenção do título de Doutor em Inglês:  
Estudos Linguísticos e Literários  
Orientador: Profa. Dra. Viviane M. Heberle

Florianópolis

2021

Ficha de identificação da obra elaborada pelo autor,  
através do Programa de Geração Automática da Biblioteca Universitária da UFSC.

Souza, Felipe Antônio de  
"The World Could Always Use More Heroes" : A Social  
Semiotic Analysis of The Game Overwatch / Felipe Antônio de  
Souza ; orientador, Viviane M. Heberle, 2021.  
216 p.

Tese (doutorado) - Universidade Federal de Santa  
Catarina, Centro de Comunicação e Expressão, Programa de Pós  
Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários,  
Florianópolis, 2021.

Inclui referências.

1. Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários. 2.  
Multimodality. 3. Game Studies. 4. The Grammar of Visual  
Design. 5. Overwatch. I. Heberle, Viviane M.. II.  
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Programa de Pós  
Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários. III.  
Título.

Felipe Antônio de Souza  
“**The World Could Always Use More Heroes**”:  
A Social Semiotic Analysis of The Game Overwatch

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Florianópolis, 09 de Abril de 2021.

This is dedicated to humans and not-humans.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I thank the financial support from CAPES throughout these years which made it possible to conduct my studies and finish my thesis.

I thank my mother Norma Pires, who has always been there for me. She is my best friend and has been my anchor and safe point in life.

I thank my cousin Pedro Vinicius, who has been a great friend and supporter in many situations.

A huge thanks to my advisor Viviane Heberle who has been with me since my masters'. She's a hard-working, smart, precise and objective woman... but that everybody knows – What I admire in her the most is her sensibility. She is able to make a bunch of nerds believe in a better world through social change. If she was a transitivity process she would be 'feel'. She feels the world and, by that, the world is held, and for a moment is safe. I wish everybody had the chance of such exchange at least once in a lifetime. Thank you for all these years in and out academia.

I thank all the amazing professors I had during this journey, especially Celso Tumolo and Maria Ester, who, in addition to being great professionals, are empathetic big-hearted souls who have helped me several times.

Thanks to the people who work at PPGI, especially Valdete Bilotta and Rosane Silveira, who are both always efficient and kind.

Also, thanks to my colleague Mariana Terres, who is as brave as the women she studies about.

Lastly, Thank you UFSC for these 11 years, I'm a better person after you.

See you around...

*“[...] the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars...”*

— Jack Kerouac, 1957

## ABSTRACT

Considering the significant increase of the gaming industry in recent years and also the relevance of video games as powerful objects for investigation in academia, the present study aims at analyzing semiotic elements from the popular game *Overwatch* (2016). The relevance of the game, in addition to its impact on the entertainment industry receiving numerous ‘*game of the year*’ awards, relies on the fact that the game portrays a diverse selection of characters (known as heroes) from different parts of the world. Consequently, it also presents many cultural and intertextual references in order to create a rich representation through its semiotic elements. Grounded on theories and analytical frameworks of Multimodality, Critical Discourse Analysis, the Representation of Social Actors and Systemic Functional Linguistics, the analysis investigates several semiotic elements from the game with the focus on 20 characters. Each character is analyzed under the theories and analytical frameworks which are adapted and molded into an analytical table I developed (and propose), named *The Multimodal Pathway*. Results show that, even though the game was, indeed, positive in terms of representing several different cultures, ethnicities and sociocultural factors of the characters, it still reinforces stereotypes, gender bias and some problematic issues on the multimodal creation of their identities. With this, as a still relevant game nowadays that is in constant adaptation, a more effective and well-developed way to represent the diversity proposed by the game is still hope for a near future.

**Keywords:** Multimodality. Game Studies. The Grammar of Visual Design. Critical Discourse Analysis. Overwatch.



## RESUMO

Considerando o aumento significativo da indústria de vídeo games nos últimos anos e também a relevância de vídeo games como poderosos objetos para investigação na academia, o presente estudo visa analisar elementos semióticos do popular jogo *Overwatch* (2016). A relevância do jogo, além de seu impacto na indústria do entretenimento recebendo vários prêmios como jogo do ano, se dá ao fato de que o jogo retrata uma seleção diversa de personagens (chamados de heróis) de diferentes partes do mundo. Consequentemente, o jogo também apresenta várias referências culturais e intertextuais a fim de trazer uma rica representação através de seus elementos semióticos. Com base em teorias e arcabouços teóricos de Multimodalidade, Análise Crítica do Discurso, a Representação de Atores Sociais e a Gramática Sistêmica Funcional, a análise investiga vários elementos semióticos do jogo com o foco em 20 personagens. Cada personagem é analisado sob as teorias e arcabouços teóricos que são adaptados e moldados em um quadro analítico que desenvolvi (e proponho), nomeado de *The Multimodal Pathway (O Caminho Multimodal)*. Resultados mostram que apesar do jogo ser, certamente, positivo em termos de representação de diferentes culturas, etnias e fatores socioculturais dos personagens, ele ainda perpetua estereótipos, noções conservadoras de gênero, e algumas questões problemáticas na criação multimodal de suas identidades. Com isso, sendo ainda um jogo relevante hoje em dia que está em constante adaptação, uma maneira mais eficaz e bem desenvolvida de representar a diversidade proposta pelo jogo é esperança para um breve futuro.

**Palavras-chave:** Multimodalidade. Estudos em Jogos. Gramática do Design Visual. Análise Crítica do Discurso. Overwatch.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

*"Entertainment and art have power. Our culture is molded more so by entertainment than any other influence."*

Michael Landon, Jr.

### 1.1 INITIAL REMARKS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

First of all, I would like to explain the title of the study - *The World Could Always Use More Heroes* – a quote said by game character *Tracer* in many of the *ads* for the game, becoming its verbal trademark. Regarding the theoretical term *Social Semiotics*, it was introduced by Halliday in 1978 in the book *Language as a Social Semiotic*. The area of Social Semiotics was later expanded by Hodge & Kress in *Social Semiotics* (1988), in which the authors develop semiotic systems focused on social practices within critical perspectives. Lately in academia, social semiotics has been constantly related to multimodality studies, which investigates communication through several semiotic modes (visual, verbal, and spatial, for instance). Therefore, considering my object of study, I decided to entitle, and with that, categorize, my study as a 'social semiotic' analysis, since social semiotics carries an interdisciplinary nature of theories of discourse, while also highlighting the importance of different semiotic modes of meaning making.

Concerning the object of study, nowadays video games have become more than a popular hobby but a mass phenomenon entertainment. It can be said that the generations that grew up playing video games are still engaged with them. With the increase of gaming culture around the world, games are becoming more and more the object of study in several areas of knowledge. Therefore, “games, players and their interactive relationship have come to be subject of study of Human Sciences’ researchers specially with the popularity of computers” (SOUZA, 2010, p. 17). Thus, games and the gaming community can be a relevant object of investigation, since they represent a strong and complex cultural means of expression of modern society (VIDAL; HEBERLE, 2013). Studies on video games have been conducted through several different areas of study, such as computer science, design, sociology, pedagogy, among others. An example is the use of video games for airplane pilots’ job training with games known as simulation games

(ARSHAVSKIY, 2015). Such recognition has contributed to more in-depth studies in critical research in order to investigate meaning exchanged throughout the various forms that games may offer.

Taking into consideration the relevance of video games (or just ‘games’ in this study) in contemporary society, the object of the present study is the game *Overwatch* (2016). The multiplayer game is known for providing a list of several playable characters (denominated heroes) and several scenarios (denominated maps) that represent a rich material to be investigated. Developed by the gaming company *Blizzard*, the game became one of the most successful games in recent years winning over 100 *Game of the Year* awards<sup>1</sup>. In addition, one of the most popular trademarks of *Overwatch* is the cultural representation and diversity that the game portrays through the characters and the scenarios in which the action takes place. Several worldwide cultures as well as different places around the world are represented in the game.

Signs in modern mainstream media, such as the ones in video games, represent a relevant object of investigation within social semiotics, since social semiotics includes the study of how people design and interpret meanings and how semiotic systems are shaped by ideologies and adapted by society (HODGE; KRESS, 1988). Within socio-semiotics, the study is also guided by a critical discourse analysis perspective, which enabled me to conduct a critical investigation of the several different modes of meaning present in the game concerning its sociocultural elements, since mediatic objects, such as popular video games, have an exceptional impact on reinforcing stereotypes of gender, class, nationality, etc. The study, grounded on multimodality, then, investigates the meaning in visual and verbal modes, considering a video game a relevant multimodal object.

Concerning the game *Overwatch*, as a player of the game for the past few years, I could notice how the whole *Overwatch* community is growing and how much issues of representativity created for the game build an impact not only in the gaming community, but in the awareness of bringing diversity to mediatic representation. However, as in any other kind of representation, since each character or location in the game presents only a small cut of their local culture and reference, there is a need to explore how these semiotic elements are being represented in order to explore bias and/or stereotypes, setting the game as a relevant object to be explored, while also presenting and expanding the interdisciplinary area of multimodality studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Information retrieved from <https://us.shop.battle.net/pt-br/product/overwatch>

## 1.2 VIDEO GAMES AS OBJECT OF STUDY

The Oxford Online Dictionary defines video game as a “game played by electronically manipulating images produced by a computer program on a monitor or other display”. In addition, as one of the most significant features, videogames” are fundamentally interactive, relying on communication between the player and their character, the player and the content, and even players with one another” (COTE, A; RAZ, J. G., 2015, p. 93). Concerning the significance of studies of video games nowadays, games are seen as a tool to promote critical thinking concerning decision-makings throughout the game (FRASCA, 2001). In addition, games are often mentioned in academia in relation to the development of cognitive skills, more specifically the development of strategic and analytical skills (GEE, 2005). With the expansion of analytical frameworks specific for the analysis of games, Lankoski and Björk (2015) developed a formal analysis of gameplay, grounded on a qualitative approach of studies in games.

Games also represent a common object of study within educational contexts. Sykes (2013) explores this naive common notion that games are not just a playful hobby, and how its practice can be successful in language acquisition and learning. In addition, Reinhardt (2014) has developed several frameworks for research related to digital games within educational purposes. The author states that "in an effort to categorize this work, we have developed a framework for understanding L2<sup>2</sup> research and practice involving digital games" (2014, p. 2). Also, according to the author, "games and play dynamics are being increasingly applied in social, professional, and educational domains" (2014, p. 2). Therefore, analytical frameworks that deal with digital games in classrooms may be relevant considering nowadays’ technological development. In addition, Mark Griffiths (2002) on studying the benefits of video games as educational tools, claims some of the advantages and disadvantages of video games in our everyday lives:

Videogames can be used as research and/or measurement tools; They are fun and stimulating for participants, consequently, it is easier to achieve and maintain a person’s undivided attention for long periods of time; They allow participants to experience curiosity and challenge, this may stimulate learning; They equip children with state-of-the art technology; and, over time it may also help eliminate gender imbalance in IT use. (GRIFFITHS, 2002, p. 48).

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<sup>2</sup> L2 as the learning of a second language and games as a tool to aid.

Therefore, games represent a relevant semiotic resource for analysis since they provide several modes of interaction (visual, audio, movement, verbal interaction, among others). Also, another issue considering their relevance is how games may break common-sense and standard notions. For instance, considering the structure of narratives, narration in games “defies the conventional understanding of how stories are communicated because the story is told both by the player and the game system” (THABET, 2015, p. 1). The author also argues about decision making in games, since it is not only in relation to narrative choices:

Decision-making is not the only factor that qualifies a player to be a discourse producing narrator; also, through controlling the camera, the time, and the sequence, the player qualifies as a discourse producing narrator because he or she is able to organize, arrange, select, and give efficient, sufficient, and relevant information (p. 24).

Domsch’s (2013) study classifies video games as different from other mediatic products. According to the author, games are dynamic media, instead of passive media, that is, they require more interactivity with the person: different from a movie where the person usually just watches, in games the individual has multiple modes of interaction, as mentioned before. Nonetheless, the importance and relevance to study and investigate games have also derived from a capitalist point of view, since it has become not only a social practice but a technological challenge, a cultural phenomenon and an economic force within the entertainment industry:

Games are also as an art form which demanded serious aesthetic evaluation. Conferences on the art and culture of games were hosted at MIT, the University of Southern California, The University of Chicago, and the University of West England. As academics have confronted games, they have often found it easier to discuss them in social, economic, and cultural terms than through aesthetic categories (JENKINS, 2005, p. 3).

Ultimately, games and their interdisciplinary nature provide significant data for research among different areas of knowledge as they are increasingly being treated as a serious object of study in academia. Carr, Schott, Burn & Buckingham (2004), consider games as ‘texts’, since they investigate the ‘textuality of videogames’, because “texts have contexts, and speaking with games developers enabled us to frame our inquiry in relation to the complexities of game production” (p. 20). At the graduate program in English (PPGI: Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês), at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), where I am a student, several studies with focus on games were conducted, including those by Souza (2010), Souza (2016), and Fornazari (2014).

Likewise, at the graduate program in Translation Studies (PGET - Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos da Tradução), also at UFSC, games have become a common object of study, especially within the localization area (VIDAL, 2011; SILVA, 2016; LEIMONTAS, 2017; RODRIGUES, 2019). In addition, several studies and projects about video games have been carried out by the research group NUPdiscurso, (Núcleo de Pesquisa Texto, Discurso e Práticas Sociais), such as the Symposium on Research in Games (I SIMPÓSIO DE PESQUISAS EM GAMES DA UFSC, in 2012), *Games na UFSC* (2013) and *Games na UFSC* (2014).

### 1.3 WELCOME TO OVERWATCH!

In this section I contextualize and explain the basics of the game to be analyzed. Overwatch is a team-based multiplayer online first-person shooter (hence FPS) video game developed and published by the popular gaming company *Blizzard Entertainment*. The game was released in 2016 and has been acclaimed by critics and the gaming industry as one of the most successful games lately, winning over 30 awards in the last couple of years<sup>3</sup>. The game is developed for *Windows PC* and the consoles *Xbox One*, *PlayStation 4* and *Nintendo Switch*. Up to April 2020, the game presents 31 characters in which the player can choose from to form groups, while each group is composed of six players. Since the game is multiplayer, all characters of the teams are actual players. Players on a team work together online in order to achieve the goal, which may be: to secure and defend control points on a map or escort a payload across the map in a limited amount of time. Each character, known as *Hero*, belongs to specific role-playing tasks, such as *Damage*, *Tank*, and *Support*, as each role has its general focus and each hero has a unique style of play, skills and abilities.

Figure 1 - Overwatch Logo



<sup>3</sup> Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overwatch\\_\(video\\_game\)#Awards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overwatch_(video_game)#Awards)

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <https://logodownload.org/overwatch-logo>



The game is considerably interactive, since when they are part of the same team, the heroes automatically engage in dialogues with other heroes, while they also speak about the place, the game narrative or an external reference. In addition, each hero has a list of several cosmetic items, in which the player can customize such as *skins*, *voice lines*, *victory poses*<sup>5</sup>, *sprays*, among others. Different from the automatic lines the heroes say, the voice lines are auditory lines that the player has the control to use whenever s/he wants. The term *Skins* in the game refers to the cosmetic outfit that allow players to alter the appearance of the hero, as many skins are external references to cultures worldwide. Another relevant feature in the game is the rotation of annual events. Known as *Seasonal Events*, they typically coincide with worldwide events and holidays, providing new game modes along with new character's cosmetic items, such as cosmetic skins referencing a certain theme. The events usually take place for three weeks every year and follow a pattern: *Lunar New Year*, *Archives*, *Anniversary*, *Summer Games*, *Halloween Terror* and *Winter Wonderland*, and several other mini special events might happen in between. Hence, it shows a method to keep the ongoing interest in the game and update the cosmetic items with worldwide references.

Another cosmetic item is the spray, which are visual signs that players can place on surfaces within the game in order to leave a mark on that specific location<sup>6</sup>. The player can equip each hero with four sprays out of a list of many sprays available. Overwatch is also considered an inclusive game for portraying heroes from different nationalities, characters with disabilities, elderly characters and having the protagonist hero (appearing solo in the game cover) *Tracer* as a *LGBTQ+*<sup>7</sup> character. Also, as an aid, the game also carries the mechanical function of colorblind mode. Concerning its own and unique narrative, the game presents a transmedia storytelling, that is, the narrative is vast and described little by little through different mediatic modes, such as animated short movies, comic books, short stories, and, indeed, in the game, through the hero's descriptions and dialogues among the heroes within the game. In relation to the scenarios, named *Maps*, most of them are developed based on the idea of a future version of real locations distributed

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<sup>5</sup> Victory poses are cosmetic items in the game, they are the visual pose that the players of the winning team present with his character at the end of the match.

<sup>6</sup> Despite the fact the sprays will not be the main visual element for analysis, they might also appear in some section in the multimodal analysis of the heroes to present and/or support some idea from a character.

<sup>7</sup> LGBTQ+ is an initialism that means: (L)esbian, (G)ays, (B)isexual, (T)ransgenders, (Q)ueers or (Q)uestioning and (+) others varieties.

worldwide. Hence, the maps and the heroes are spread throughout the world as a way to represent different cultures in the game, while up to this date, there are 24 maps in the game.

The main plot of the narrative of the game is set in a future world, where in society humans live among *Omnics*, the name given to artificially intelligent robots. While some humans try to live in harmony, some groups are against the union of humans and Omnics. The world (planet earth) is the same as our real world, although several things have changed. Some countries have gained power, others have lost, wars have happened and technology has evolved the possibility for Lunar stations and human with DNA modifications. In order to help me to summarize the main plot, Purchase (2016) points out some topics of Overwatch's backstory:

Overwatch is set sixty years into the future of a fictionalized Earth, thirty years after the resolution of the "Omnac Crisis". Prior to the Omnic Crisis, humanity had been in a golden age of prosperity and technology development. Humans developed robots with artificial intelligence called "Omnics", which were produced worldwide in automated facilities and put to use to achieve economic equality. The Omnic Crisis began when the omniums started producing a series of lethal, hostile robots, which turned against humankind. The United Nations quickly formed Overwatch, an international task force to combat the Omnic threat and restore order. Overwatch maintained peace across the world for several decades in what was called the "Overwatch Generation," but the rift between Morrison (now named Soldier: 76) and Reyes (now named Reaper), former Overwatch leaders intensified. Several allegations of wrongdoing and failures were leveled at Overwatch, leading to a public outcry against the organization and in-fighting between its members, prompting the UN to investigate the situation. Without Overwatch, corporations have started to take over, fighting and terrorism have broken out in parts of the globe, and there are signs of a second Omnic Crisis occurring in Russia. Former members of Overwatch decide to reform Overwatch recruiting old friends and gaining new allies in their fight.

Locating the game into sociocultural practices, the game has gained popularity among eSports in the recent years, having its own events: The Overwatch World cup (OWWC) that occurs annually and the Overwatch League (OWL)<sup>8</sup>. In order to support the broadcast and popularity of the eSport, the game company *Blizzard* made several cosmetic skins for each team with a unique color scheme, carrying the team's name and logos. Overwatch has also been the inspiration for toys of popular brands like *Funko* and *Lego*. In addition, several sociocultural practices emerged and are derived from the game as several online communities, forums, memes, fanfics and fanarts<sup>9</sup>, cosplays, among many others forms of social expressions inspired by the game.

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<sup>8</sup> The Overwatch League (OWL) is a professional esports league for the video game Overwatch, produced by Blizzard Entertainment. It follows the model of city-based teams backed by separate ownership groups.

<sup>9</sup> Fanfic is the abbreviation of fanfiction, which concerns of literary works created by fans using the main narrative of the media (in this case the game) to create and expand the narrative as they want, while they are also usually available

Considering the popularity of *Overwatch*, the game has also been the object of study of academic research lately. Shur's (2017) study investigates the habits of fandom communities of *Overwatch* while the game was still new. Grothues' (2017) study aimed at the effects of video game play on performance in psychophysical tasks and cognitive abilities using *Overwatch* as the game object. Svensson (2017) explored the cultural aspect of *Overwatch* and how the game developers appropriated minority cultures for character design. Following a similar pattern, Belmonte's (2017) study explores how the game reproduces normative forms of understanding ethnicity and national difference. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, no studies, up to this date, investigate the game through the analytical frameworks I propose, or focus on its semiotics elements and its meanings from a social semiotic perspective, which would explain the academic gap for my research. Now, considering the game as this powerful resource of semiotic elements with a vast reach and audience, I present my main objectives with this study and my research questions.

#### 1.4 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With all being said, the present study aims at analyzing semiotic elements of the popular game *Overwatch*. After contextualizing the object of study and presenting the analytical frameworks and the method, I conduct a multimodal analysis considering several semiotic elements of the game such as: the game cover, the game menu screens and the characters selected. All the visual and verbal information were gathered mostly from the official game website and from the game itself. In the method chapter, I develop an analytical chart that I denominate *The Multimodal Pathway*, where each semiotic element under the categories (*General* and *Heroes*) has its specific 'pathway' to analysis. Then, all these semiotic elements are described, analyzed and discussed under the light of the theories (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006; FAIRCLOUGH, 2010, HALLIDAY, 1985). Besides, the method chapter explores how each element is analyzed and discussed. Although the data is made up of several elements of the game, the main focus of the multimodal analysis is primarily the visual elements (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006). Following, the analysis also has an in-depth discussion grounded on a critical perspective,

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for free. Fanart concerns the visual artwork created by fans inspired by the media, which can also develop a certain of visual narrative creating and/or expanding the original script.

investigation of intertextuality and the sociocultural elements (FAIRCLOUGH, 2010). Lastly, the verbal textual analysis (HALLIDAY, 1985) serves as a complement to establish a coherent discussion of the characters. Accordingly, these are the research questions that will guide the study:

1) Considering the overall multimodal analysis of the heroes, is the game effective in creating an identity for the characters through the semiotic elements? if so, how are these identities created? and which sociocultural factors are predominant in each hero's identity?

2) In relation to the multimodal analysis of the heroes focusing on the intertextuality aspect, how are the external references and worldwide cultural elements inserted in the game?

3) Concerning the verbal analysis of the heroes, what are the main ideologies<sup>10</sup> (as seen in *Critical Discourse Analysis*) behind their discourses? How are they mostly categorized (*Social Actors*) through their information? And how do their most used occurrences and processes (*Transitivity System*) create an identification for them through the verbal mode?

4) Lastly, considering the game as a very popular semiotic artefact with a big impact in the game industry, is the game a good example of inclusion and diversity regarding the representation of the heroes? Why or why not?

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<sup>10</sup> The investigation of 'ideologies' under the participants' discourse takes in consideration Fairclough's (1992) notion that ideologies are embedded and effective in discursive practices when they become naturized as common sense. Similar to Thompson's (1984, 1990), Fairclough understands ideologies as constructions of realities (the physical world, social relations, social identities) that coexist in society through several different forms of meanings, also related to discursive issues of power relations.

## 1.5 NOTES TO THE READER

*In this section I would like to explain the structure and issues of the study ahead.*

*I wanted to have this small section to talk in first person to the reader and prepare you to what is coming. This is like the first lines of a game you are about to play and yet you do not know much about, which I believe is the case of several of you. The architectural design of the study was purposefully focused on immersing you inside the research. I also must warn you that, even though I will analyze verbal data with analytical frameworks, the soul of the study relies on the visual analysis and the sociocultural and intertextual elements of the game.*

*Since I will be working and mentioning several different cultures worldwide, I must apologize in advance for anything that might feel disrespectful to any kind of belief, religion, culture, or anything. Even though I have spent years looking for the ‘right’ academic terms, we know how society is always evolving and changing. Another issue concerns that, when possible, I will also write the name of the object in question in its origin language, which often consists of a different writing system. As another concern, even though I will analyze the semiotic elements of each character through the same analytical method, some characters might produce a more extensive result due to the data provided, design details, external references and time in the game, since some characters have just been released and do not have the same number of items in the game as others.*

*Considering the references, while most references are anchored on theories of prestigious authors (theoretical background with all the analytical frameworks and critical perspectives), several pieces of information might come from other sources, such as official websites, statistics or anything that was not published or could not be part of any editorial piece of work, but still a valid source. In these cases, I will use the footnote tool to present the source. The footnote tool will also be used, as usual in academic works, as an extra piece of information about that specific word or expression. In addition, since my study presents mainly a visual analysis, I will also use the footnote tool to refer to all the images I take from websites, instead of building an extensive figure list, as I find this way more appealing, objective and modern.*

*I also felt the need to adapt parts of some of the analytical frameworks I use in order to fit the data, however preserving the essence of the framework, which will contribute to a more well-developed analysis concerning my object of study. The parts with adjustments or adaptations are*

*within the visual analysis of the heroes and the analysis of thematic skins with an adaptation of CDA's analytical framework, which will all be explained in the critical discourse analysis' section in the theoretical background chapter of the study. Adaptations and adjustments of analytical frameworks represent a historical mark on language studies, especially within multimodality where several modes of meaning are considered, hence, even though the critical essence of an analytical framework is preserved, some adjustments are necessary in respect to the object of the study. In summary, these adaptations and adjustments are natural when working with semiotic elements such as discourse, as common genres keep on evolving, so must our perspective towards them.*

*Now getting a little more personal, while in this study I explore a video game, lately, I believe, we all have questioned ourselves the importance of entertainment in our lives (the reason I bring a quotation about entertainment in the beginning of each chapter). There is so much people can learn from video games. This one in particular, in addition to presenting a diverse cast and being a good step on representation, it also carries several criticisms about living among diversity, from robots, freaks or any type of minority that ever felt a sense of not belonging. Following, this is also an invitation to a cultural trip around the world, since each character carries within him/herself a piece of reference that will refresh or improve our cultural knowledge. I hope you dive in in those characters and places and find joy in them as much as I did.*

*Also, to complement something I always say about the relevance of video games - I could talk about numbers and saying how the gaming industry has surpassed the movie and music industry in recent years becoming the most lucrative entertainment industry<sup>11</sup>, or I could talk about the hours a casual player spends playing video games. But what I cherish the most by studying games is the social sense of group belonging, the pedagogical and didactic function and the worldwide cultural exposition. All these elements add relevance to the importance of paying attention to games as powerful semiotic tools, as studies on games should be conducted to create a bridge between academia and community, parents and children, players and non-players. A generation who grew up with games will never stop playing, as we don't play games to escape our real lives - we play to bring it all together.*

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<sup>11</sup> Source: <https://www.ejinsight.com/eji/article/id/2280405/20191022-video-game-industry-silently-taking-over-entertainment-world>

*Another issue concerns how my academic journey has always been controversial, from the academic language, the consideration of different kind of sources to the amount of data for analysis. As I pay tribute to the great authors and follow their directions, I also take in consideration mediums that are not officially academic. Social networks, online communities, the voices unheard and unpublished. The unsung hero. Also, numbers, likes, hashtags and comments. While, even writing this section I am 'breaking the law'. Discourse changes the course of a nation, hence, blessed are those who know how to use it properly, or better, those who know what lies behind it. With this study, as part of my personal and academic development, I also hope to lessen the gap between academia and community. I hope the awareness we raise is open. I hope we look outside and consider the semiosis of identity guided by empathy.*

*Hope you enjoy my study.*

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

*“Entertainment is not politically neutral.”*

John Lahr

This chapter aims to locate the study within the academic field and to present the analytical frameworks, theories and perspectives that are the ground for the analysis, such as critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics, the representation of social actors and the grammar of visual design. Then, it explores issues of video game, such as the gaming genre FPS, communities and diversity in gaming representation.

### 2.1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary theory that sees language as a form of social practice. CDA has been applied to several areas such media studies, language teaching, legal discourse, multimodality and so on. The theory “is based upon a view of semiosis as an irreducible element of all material social processes. Social life is seen as interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts, such as economic, political, cultural, family, etc.” (FAIRCLOUGH, 2010, p. 264). With the analytical tools provided by CDA, it is possible to explore ideologies in texts, therefore, one of its main benefits is raising awareness of all the different dimensions existing in the world, since most of them happen through discourse.

Another relevant topic of investigation of CDA is power relations, as issues of power are commonly reinforced through language use. Accordingly, a crucial objective of CDA is to “make people aware of how language is used to dominate or reinforce social inequalities, such as those between people of different ethnic, economic, social or intellectual groups, and to analyze changes taking place in social organizations” (HEBERLE, 2000, p. 117). Therefore, “the central concern of a critical discourse analyst [must be] to relate the discourse process of text production and interpretation with social practice” (CALDAS-COULTHARD, 1997, p. 24). Based on Foucault (1981), Fairclough (2010) states that discourse has a significant role in the construction of power



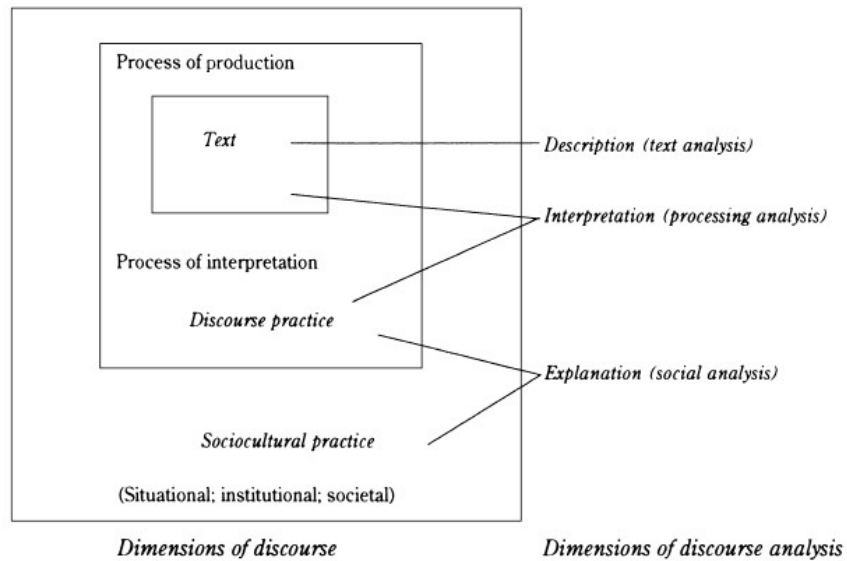
relations and authority since different discourses produce different kinds of truth. Fairclough defines CDA as:

Discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (2010, p. 93).

According to van Dijk (1998), CDA is a field that concerns the study of visual and verbal texts that may reveal discursive sources of power, inequality and bias. Accordingly, since CDA addresses social problems, one of its purpose to make people of aware of hidden and implicit ideologies on discourse. Fairclough (2003) defines ideologies as “representations which can be shown to contribute to social relations of power and domination” (p. 9). In addition, Fairclough (2001) also claims that “ideologies are closely linked to language, because using language is the commonest form of social behaviour, and the form of social behaviour where we rely most on ‘commonsense’ assumptions” (p. 2). With that in mind, Fairclough (2010) offers an analytical framework for the analysis of “communicative events”, focusing on three dimensions: the text, the discursive practice and the sociocultural practice. The dimension “text” refers to the product, that is, the instance of language in use. The discursive practice relates to the text production and consumption as well as the relationship among the participants and the intertextuality of genres. Ultimately, the sociocultural practice refers to the social and cultural goings-on where the communicative event is being part of. Fairclough (2010) explains the communicative events’ analytical framework:

The connection between text and social practice is seen as being mediated by discourse practice: on the one hand, processes of text production and interpretation are shaped by (and help shape) the nature of the social practice, and on the other hand the production process shapes (and leaves ‘traces’ in) the text, and the interpretative process operates upon ‘cues’ in the text (p. 94).

Figure 2 - Framework of a communicative event (CDA)



Source: Fairclough, 2010, p. 133

An important topic in this present study is the issue of intertextuality, which “points to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones” (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992, p. 270). In other words, the term intertextuality “can be used on the other hand to talk about shifting articulations of genres, discourses and styles in specific texts” (FAIRCLOUGH, 2010, p. 175). Also, the term can be defined as a form of recontextualization of texts (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003). Therefore, the pre-existing meaning of objects are in constant change due to new modes of communication, which I explore within the area of Multimodality. Intertextuality “offers a bridge or interface between the context of culture and the text” (WANG, p. 77). The elements of intertextuality are relevant in multimodal studies, especially when considering the several aspects of a text, as its social practice and sociocultural elements, as Fairclough (2010) claims:

It is through an analysis of intertextuality and interdiscursivity that the particular event becomes potentially interesting in macro-sociological terms. The analysis involves identifying the available social practices which people may repeatedly draw on, anticipate and respond to in particular kinds of events and interactions. It also involves exploring the ways in which these social practices can be included, excluded, juxtaposed, negotiated

and played out within the interactive events. This offers insight into the social practices as well as the particular chains of events (p. 421-422).

Accordingly, there is also an increasing concern among discourse scholars on expanding the elements of analysis to both visual and verbal elements of texts (FAIRCLOUGH, 2010; SOUZA, 2016). Concerning multimodal studies within a critical discourse analysis perspective, van Leeuwen (2008) emphasizes the importance of semiotic studies on representation, in both visual and verbal modes, commonly used in most contemporary texts:

The point is important for critical discourse analysis for, with the increasing use of visual representation in a wide range of contexts, it becomes more and more pressing to be able to ask the same critical questions with regard to both verbal and visual representations, indeed, with regard to representations in all of the “media” that form parts of contemporary “multimedia” texts (p. 25).

Mayr & Machin (2012) also emphasize the increasing interest among linguists and discourse analysts in the way “meaning is communicated not just through language, but through visual language (HODGE, 1988; KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, KRESS, 2010). Thus, it seems relevant to explore multimodality and its analytical frameworks to investigate how different semiotic resources are presented in the data, especially in this case, a video game which carries several different semiotic modes and elements. Therefore, the semiotic elements to be analyzed are impregnated with ideologies that may be investigated through CDA.

Concerning the issue of power relations in CDA, van Dijk (2015) discusses issues of power in relation to CDA and how power can be connected to force, money, status, fame, knowledge, and culture, as the author states:

Different types of power may be distinguished according to the various resources employed to exercise such power: the coercive power of the military and of violent men will rather be based on force, the rich will have power because of their money, whereas the more or less persuasive power of parents, professors, or journalists maybe based on knowledge, information, or authority (...) Moreover, dominated groups may more or less resist, accept, condone, comply with, or legitimate such power, and even find it “natural.” (p.355).

In addition, van Dijk (2015) also explores the matter of nationality and racism in CDA, by citing the book *The End of Racism* by Dinesh D’Souza (1995). In summary, the book shows what

kind of discursive structures, strategies and moves are deployed in exercising the power of the dominant (white, western, male) group, and how readers are manipulated to form or confirm the social representations that are consistent with a conservative, supremacist ideology. There is a constant construction of a discourse of US vs The Others, the oppressor and the oppressed (in this case determined by the color of skin) and the emphasis on the contrast between them as healthy vs sick, positive vs negative, etc. Since my object of study is also popular for presenting several (apparently half) of the characters as people of color, it is important to have notions of structural forms of racism impregnated in discourses in order to highlight it, expose it and fight it.

Fairclough and Wodak (1997) define the three principles of CDA: the first relates to social problems, the second concerns power relations, and the third refers to discourse, society and culture. Hence, the use of CDA contributes to carry out my objective in this study as it allows me to explore representations, relations, identity, society and culture, and it constitutes a relevant tool for investigation of discursive practices, intertextuality, sociocultural elements as well as a critical perspective guidance for the whole study.

In this study, CDA's analytical framework of communicative events are adapted with some adjustments to fit better with my data, enabling me to explore the multimodal objects in a more enhanced way, while still preserving its essence. Focusing on the three dimensions, I analyze the thematic skins of the heroes, related to cultural references, intertextuality and a visual text. Therefore, the sociocultural practice focuses on the references and the themes of the skin of the characters, their historical contextualization and cultural background, hence, this dimension is called (*Sociocultural features*). The discursive practice concerns with the production and consumption of the text, while it also refers to intertextuality and how a text is received and interpreted based on preexisting knowledge. Hence, in my adaptation this dimension focuses on and is called (*Intertextuality*).

The dimension of intertextuality is quite complex since its content may differ depending on the character and the theme. In times, I might explore the correlation of the reference with the character; it might also concern the impact of the thematic skin among the audience, which relates to how the visual text was received. Also, it might also concern the reference within popular culture and transformed in mediatic products, such as adaptations in literature, movies, video games, TV shows and other mediums, since the term intertextuality “can be used on the other hand to talk about shifting articulations of genres, discourses and styles” (FAIRCLOUGH, 2010, p. 175). The

third-dimension, which is the text, will be named (*Visual Text*), where I develop a more formal approach in a brief visual description of the thematic skin. The proper and explicit way that this and all the other analytical frameworks are carried out, will be explained in the method chapter. The next section follows the path of theories, presenting Systemic Functional Linguistics, and more specifically the transitivity system.

## 2.2 SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Michael Halliday, is a linguistic theory that investigates language and its functions in social settings. Thus, SFL investigates language as a social system of meanings constituting human experience (MOTTA-ROTH; HEBERLE, 1994). According to Unsworth (2001) following Halliday (1985, 2004), SFL regards the “complete interconnectedness between the grammatical structures people select in using language and key variables of the situation in which they are using the language” (p. 32). The systemic functional approach is recognized as “a very useful descriptive and interpretive framework for viewing language as a strategic, meaning-making resource” (EGGINS. 1994, p. 1). Consequently, SFL sees language as a meaning-making object within social systems. Considering language as a system, the systemic functional grammar deals with its several variations, as mentioned by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004):

We use language to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions, with other people. This means that the grammar has to interface, with what goes on outside language: with the happenings and conditions of the world, and with the social processes we engage in. But at the same time, it has to organize the construal of experience, and the enactment of social processes, so that they can be transformed into wording (p.24).

The register sphere of the SFL system strata deals with the context of situation. Halliday (1978), explains that “the context of situation is a theoretical construct for explaining how a text relates to the social processes within which it is located” (p. 10). The context of situation is divided into field, tenor and mode. Martin (1992) explains Halliday’s (1985) characterization as follows:

Field – the social action: ‘what is actually taking place’, refers to what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place; Tenor – the role structure: ‘who is taking part’, refers to who is taking part, to the nature of participants, their statuses and roles, and; Mode – the symbolic organization: ‘what role language is playing’, refers to what

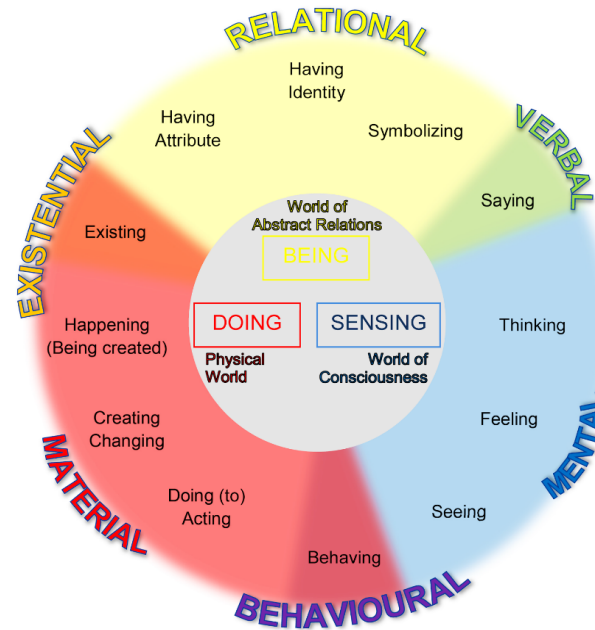
part language is playing, what is it that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in the situation” (p. 499 – 500).

The discourse semantic sphere of SFL strata investigates language and foremost it involves three generalized metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Such form of functional organization of language “determines the form taken by grammatical structure” (HALLIDAY, 1970, p. 166). The ideational metafunction is concerned with how reality is represented through language, focusing on the experience and exploring contexts. Therefore, this metafunction lies within the *field* category and has the clause as representation. Since the focus is on the experience, it concerns the meaning realized by the participants, processes and circumstances. In order to investigate the experience, within the ideational metafunction, the author developed the *transitivity system*. According to Halliday (1985), transitivity is a system that allows the investigation of the world of experience into a set of process types and participants involved in a social practice. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) explains how the ideational function work out:

Our most powerful impression of experience is that it consists of ‘goings-on’ – happening, doing, sensing, meaning, and being and becoming. All these goings-on are sorted out in the grammar of the clause. Thus, as well as being a mode of action, of giving and demanding goods-&-services and information, the clause is also a mode of reflection, of imposing order on the endless variation and flow of events. The grammatical system by which this is achieved is transitivity. The transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types (p. 106).

Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) mention that the use of language consists on the production of events that represents (through discourse) the experience of the participants in a social event. There are specific types of processes in which the significance of the experience may be revealed and explored. The transitivity processes (Figure 3) are categorized into several categories: material (processes that explore ‘doings’ and ‘happenings’), mental (processes related to perception, emotions and cognition), verbal (processes related to speaking or saying something to someone), relational (processes used to identify, categorize and connect elements), existential (processes that represent existence) and behavioral (processes that express physiological attitudes).

Figure 3 - Model of Process Types (Halliday, 1985) Adapted by Nicolas Moore



Source: Retrieved from this website<sup>12</sup>

Table 1 - Examples of transitivity processes

PROCESS	EXAMPLES
<b>Material</b>	To smash, to walk, to run, to play, to go, to attack
<b>Mental</b>	To think, to know, to clarify, to wonder, to like
<b>Verbal</b>	To say, to scream, to tell, to explain, to shout
<b>Relational</b>	To be, to have
<b>Existential</b>	There is, there are
<b>Behavioral</b>	To laugh, to stare, to wave, to blink

Source: Author (2020)

The interpersonal metafunction relates to the choices of words and grammatical structures that involve the participants creating the interpersonal relations. Therefore, this function refers to the relationship between who speaks and who listens. The interpersonal metafunction lies within the tenor and has the clause as exchange. Within this function, the grammatical system used to explore this function is mood, which consists basically of the subject (nominal groups) and the finite (verbal group). The mood system is responsible for the exchange in language and the act of

<sup>12</sup> <https://najmoore.blogspot.com/2013/11/process-types-graphic.html?m=1>

giving and demanding information or goods and services, while it also “has a clearly defined semantic function: it carries the burden of the clause as an interactive event” (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2014, p 150). Related to the Finite, there is Modality, which may be seen as a system for indicating judgements and evaluation. As stated by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) “what the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty the lies between ‘yes’ or ‘no’” (p. 176). Modality highlights in discourse probabilities and obligations and is usually represented by words that mark necessity, possibility or impossibility such as can, should, must, maybe, probably, etc.

The textual metafunction refers to how the organization of information is being distributed in the text (HALLIDAY, 1985). The textual metafunction lies within the mode and has the clause as message. Therefore, the thematic structure is the grammatical system responsible for managing the flow of discourse and the main analytical systems are *Theme* and *Rheme*. Theme is the point of departure, placed in initial position, while Rheme is the rest of the information. It also relates to Given and New, as Theme being the Given, an information a person already knows, and Rheme being a new piece of information. The textual metafunction also explores issues of cohesion analysis in texts, ellipsis, among others. Nonetheless, in this study I do not focus on any aspect within this metafunction, only this mode in visual images which will be explained soon.

In relation to the present study, the ideational metafunction with the transitivity system will help me explore the ideologies within the verbal texts produced by the heroes in relation to their experience in the game. In addition, if any other relevant text, such as nominal groups or word classes (adjectives, interjections, prepositions, etc.) shows relevance in the case, they will also be mentioned and investigated. Note that SFL is one of the analytical tools I am using for the verbal text (along with the representation of social actors, and CDA), being part of a multimodal analysis along with a visual analysis. With this, the next section presents the representation of social actors, as proposed by van Leeuwen.

## 2.3 THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL ACTORS

Before exploring the representation of social actors and multimodality, I briefly point out Hall’s (1997) definition of representation. According to the author, the “concept of representation has come to occupy a new and important place in the study of culture, representation connects



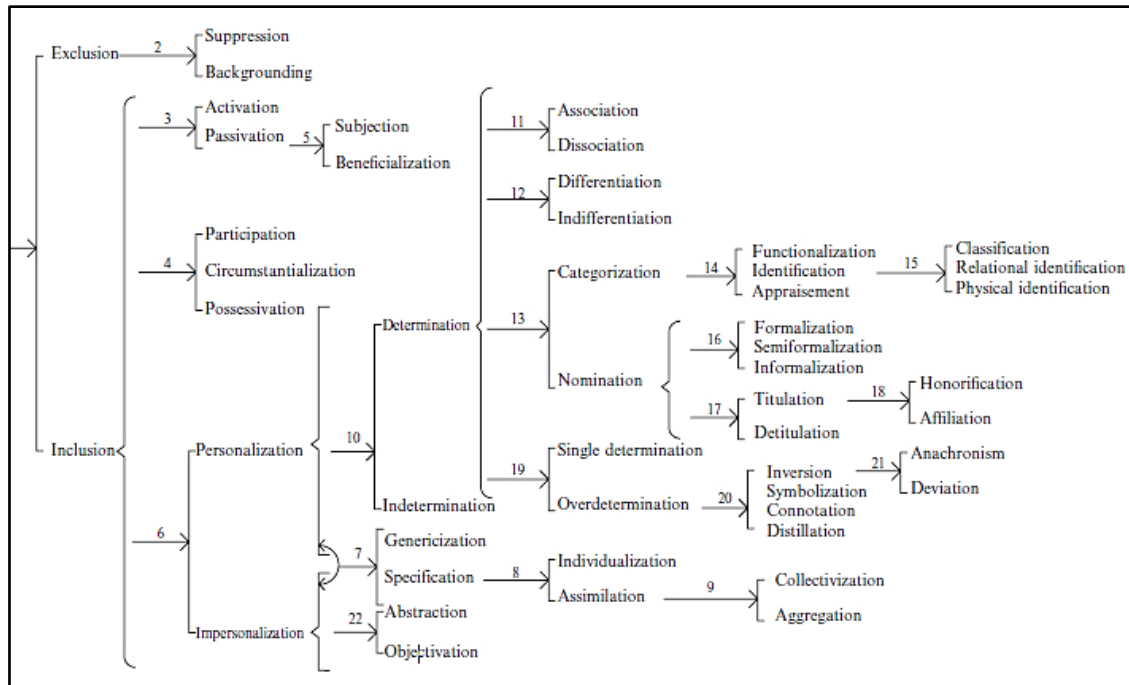
meaning and language to culture” (p. 15). Hall also emphasizes how in more recent years, a “preoccupation with meaning has taken a different turn, being more concerned, not with the detail of how 'language' works, but with the broader role of discourse in culture” (p. 6).

Inspired by Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (1985), van Leeuwen’s (2008) investigates the participants of a social practice and the way they are being represented and nominated in discourse. The author refers to it as “sociosemantic inventory of the ways in which social actors can be represented” (VAN LEEUWEN, 1996, p. 32). Accordingly, it presents an analytical network of possible classifications in order to raise awareness of how participants are categorized within a social practice. The framework starts by highlighting issues concerning the inclusion of exclusion of participants. From there, several different categories are used in order to try to define ideologically the role and the meaning of the participant(s) in a specific context. Such aspect is relevant within critical discourse analysis, since the way participants are represented is a remarkable tool to give power to some participants instead of others, according to the way they are being nominated and therefore, represented. Van Leeuwen (2008) points out that the boundaries of the categories sometimes may be blurred deliberately, which is the case of usual social events and people as social actors. The author claims:

The network brings together what linguists tend to keep separate: it involves a number of distinct lexicogrammatical and discourse-level linguistic systems, transitivity, reference, the nominal group, rhetorical figures, and so on, because all of these systems are involved in the realization of representations of social actors (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p.53).

Consequently, van Leeuwen’s framework is aligned present study and the interface of interdisciplinary theories, starting from CDA, SFL and now with the aid from perspectives of the representation of social actors. Davari (2016) sees social actors’ approach as “a discourse analytical category seen as the textual instantiations of models of the self and others, both individual and collective (p. 70). In my master’s thesis (SOUZA, 2014), one of the objects of study investigated was the game *Bayonetta* (2009), exploring the different social practices that derived from the game such as fanarts, fanfics and cosplays. As result, one of the conclusions was that much of the content created by the fans showed to be more popular than the content created by the game itself, as these fan-made social practices contributed to create communities online such as blogs, forums and several websites.

Figure 4 - Social Actors' Network



Source: from *Discourse and Practice*, van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 52

To represent social actors, seen as a “sociosemantic inventory”, van Leeuwen analyzes a newspaper article about immigration where all the categories become easily explained and identified. The author could establish a network of how participants can be categorized and nominated in discourse (Figure 4). The main categories are exclusion and inclusion - when excluded, participants can be completely suppressed or backgrounded to a position of less importance. However, when included, they become visible and have agency. In relation to the present study, I will focus on the *Categorization* stance which concerns representation in three aspects: functionalization, appraisalment and identification.

In functionalization, the participants are classified in relation to their occupations, usually referring to their jobs and their roles in society as functions. Relating to the game data, a functionalized actor would be a character whose occupation and/or role in the game is a present and explicit element in his verbal text. In appraisalment, the participants are being evaluated, that is, “social actors are appraised when they are referred to in terms which evaluate them as good or bad, loved or hated, admired or pitied” (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008, p. 45). Relating the appraisalment category to my data, an actor with appraisalment would be a character who in his official description is evaluated (positively or negatively) through the use of adjectives. The identification category,

on the other hand, is divided into three subcategories: classification, when participants are classified into major categories such as age, gender, class, among others; relational identification, when participants are identified as related to someone, for instance “her daughter”, “his son”; and, physical identification, where participants are identified due to their physical characteristics.

In relation to the game, each character carries several information about their biography, such as occupation, sex, real names, nationality, age, and further information such as if they have any disability, if they are family-related to another character, among others. This form of questionnaire was helpful since it allowed me to explore what grammatically is the focal point of representation and identity of each character (his/her nationality, occupation, class, role, etc.). Hence, the social actors’ categorization helped me to identify how representations are manifested in discourse and how the identity of the characters is created, while it was also an aid to add factual and statistical data for the study. The next section focuses on one of the main aspects of the analysis, which is the multimodality and the analytical framework of the grammar of visual design.

## 2.4 MULTIMODALITY AND THE GRAMMAR OF VISUAL DESIGN

From Hall’s view of representation (as pointed out in the previous section), but now connecting the term with multimodality, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 13) point out how representation “requires that sign-makers choose forms for the expression of what they have in mind, forms which they see as most apt and plausible in the given context”. With that in mind, it becomes important to pay attention to the many different modes that representations and communication can be embedded in our everyday lives.

Multimodality investigates the many different modes that people use to communicate. Kress (2010) emphasizes the everyday signs of contemporary society such as writings, images, colors, texts, and several different modes and how each of them has different potential of meanings. According to the author, to develop literacy in these semiotic modes is crucial for a successful communication (KRESS, 2010). Therefore, multimodality is an interdisciplinary approach that understands communication beyond verbal language and enables linguists to better understand meaning from multiple semiotic resources. Multimodal approaches have provided concepts, methods and analytical frameworks for the collection and analysis of visual, aural, embodied, and spatial aspects of interaction and environments and the relationships between them (JEWITT,

2009). Seeing social semiotics as a system of meanings, the basis of multimodality could also be derived from a functional point of view:

Visual social semiotics is functionalist in the sense that it sees visual resources as having been developed to do specific kinds of semiotic work. It follows Halliday (1978) in recognizing three main kinds of semiotic work, which are always performed simultaneously (VAN LEEUWEN; JEWITT, 2000, p. 140).

Studies on multimodality are relevant in current society in order to create critical readers considering literacy among several different modes of communication. Multimodality is also a relevant pedagogical tool to be used by teachers since the interdisciplinary nature of multimodal research “has attempted to develop an explicit discussion of meaning-making resources. This knowledge can be adapted to the classroom environment as way to discuss the ways language and images are articulated in order to promote apparent natural and acceptable ideologies” (BÖHLKE, 2008, p. 172). A visual grammar could never be universally understood, since it changes according to each culture. The ‘potentials’, as mentioned by Kress (2010), are determined by the resources available in a particular context. However, verbal and visual communication can both be realized under the same system:

In order to function as a full system of communication, the visual, like all semiotic modes, has to serve several representational and communicational requirements. We have adopted the theoretical notion of ‘metafunction’ from the work of Michael Halliday for this purpose. The three metafunctions which he posits are the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. In the form in which we gloss them here they apply to all semiotic modes and are not specific to speech or writing (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 41, 42).

With that in mind, based on Halliday’s (1985) systemic functional linguistic concepts and on O’Toole (1994), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) developed the grammar of visual design. Grounded on multimodality, discourse analysts are able to investigate relevant forms of how communication and ideologies are taking place nowadays, as stated by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006):

Like linguistic structures, visual structures point to particular interpretations of experience and forms of social interaction. To some degree these can also be expressed linguistically. Meanings belong to culture, rather than to specific semiotic modes. And the way meanings are mapped across different semiotic modes, the way some things can, for instance, be

‘said’ either visually or verbally, others only visually, again others only verbally, is also culturally and historically specific (p.2).

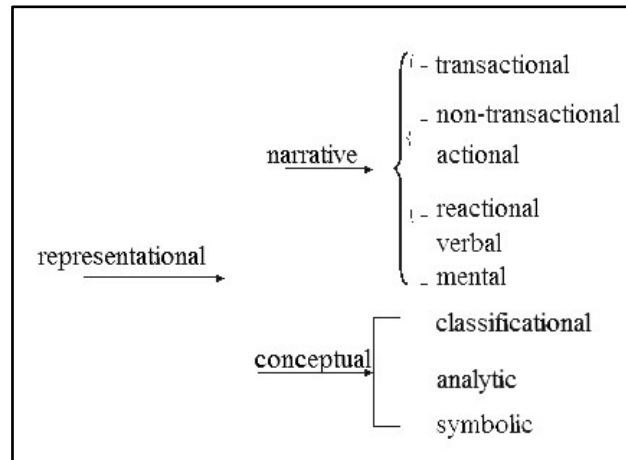
Inspired by Halliday’s (1985) SFL, the three metafunctions are adapted and fit into different modes for the analysis of images. The ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings in Halliday’s SFL become respectively: representational, interactive and composition. The ideational metafunction “has to be able to represent objects and their relations in a world outside the representational system” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 42). These authors also say that “that world may of course be, and most frequently is, already semiotically represented” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 42). Also, the representational meaning (Figure 5) explores the experience and what is happening in the image. Therefore, representational images are divided into narrative images and conceptual images. Narrative images are made up of participants realized by vectors who design a social action.

Taking from a semiotic perspective, visual and verbal communication have each particular means of realizing similar semantic relations, since “what in language is realized by words of the category ‘action verbs’ is visually realized by elements that can be formally defined as vectors” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 46). In relation to vectors, the authors explain that in the image the “actor” is “the participant from whom or which the vector departs” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, P. 59), while the goal is “the participant at which the vector is directed” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 74). Therefore, narrative images usually tell a story that may carry and present several processes, such as action, reactional, mental, and others, while each process has its own specificities. Another issue concerns the connection or realizations of the actors in the picture, that is, if an eyeline vector connects two participants, it is called transactional reaction, however, when an image has only one participant, it is called a non-transactional image.

Conceptual images represent participants of the image in generalized categories. They are conveyed by means of objects and their parts. These images “represent the world in terms of more or less permanent states of affairs or general truths, rather than in terms of actions or mental processes” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, P. 109). Within this meaning, there is an analytical subdivision of processes: classificational, analytic and symbolic. *Classificational* processes “relate participants to each other in terms of a ‘kind of’ relation, a taxonomy: at least one set of participants will play the role of Subordinates with respect to at least one other participant, the Superordinate” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 79). *Analytical* process is related to a part-to-whole

relationship in the image and “they involve two kinds of participants: one Carrier (the whole) and any number of Possessive Attributes (the parts)” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 87). *Symbolic* processes “are about what a participant means or is” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 105). This specific category is relevant to highlight attributes of identity and meaning of the carrier in visual images.

Figure 5 – Diagram of Representational Meanings



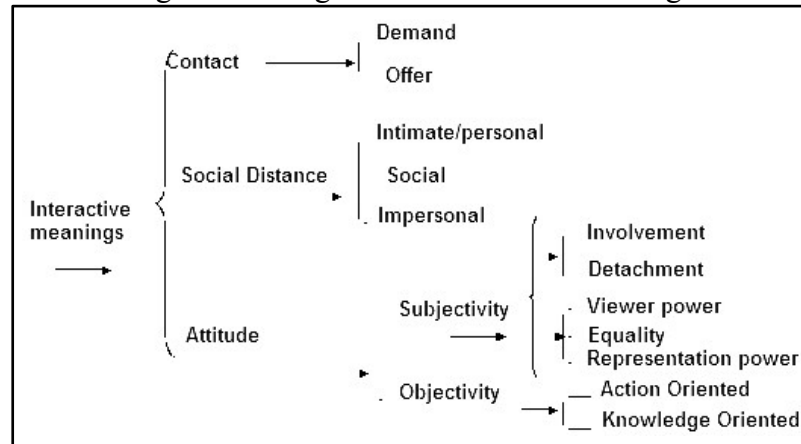
Source: Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996 Diagram by Prof. Len Unsworth.

The interactive meaning (Figure 6) concerns the relation that is established between the image and the viewer. The main analytical categories are: Contact, Social Distance and Attitude. Images presenting *contact* concerns specially the gaze of the participants in the picture in relation to the viewer: when it is a demand, the participant is looking at the viewer, while when it is an offer, there is not a direct gaze. Along with contact, there is social distance which refers “to the choice between close-up, medium shot and long shot, and so on” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p 124). Therefore, the *social distance* category analyzes how close or far the participant or object depicted may somehow establish proximity of distance in the relation between the image and the viewer. Lastly, the analytical category of *attitude* relates to the system of perspectives by taking in consideration the use of angles depicting the participants or objects portrayed in the image. Such issues raise questions of power according to the angle depicted, as stated by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006):

if a represented participant is seen from a high angle, then the relation between the interactive participants (the producer of the image, and hence also the viewer) and the

represented participants is depicted as one in which the interactive participant has power over the represented participant – the represented participant is seen from the point of view of power. If the represented participant is seen from a low angle, then the relation between the interactive and represented participants is depicted as one in which the represented participant has power over the interactive participant. If, finally, the picture is at eye level, then the point of view is one of equality and there is no power difference involved (p. 140).

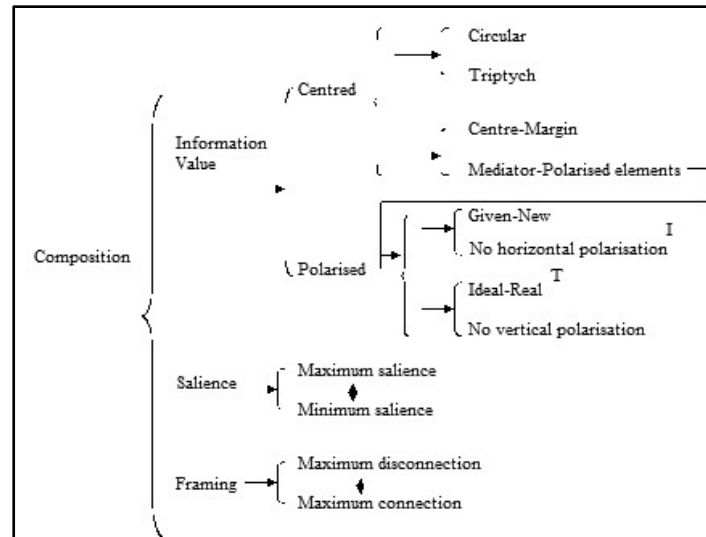
Figure 6 – Diagram of Interactive Meanings



Source: Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996 Diagram by Prof. Len Unsworth

The compositional meaning (Figure 7) concerns the way the information is distributed in the images, and it is related to the textual metafunction in SFL. In both frameworks it serves to highlight the coherence of the text (verbal or visual). In order to fully develop a critical perspective to analyze a visual image, “the third dimension creates an additional option in representation, a relation between the representational structure and the position of the viewer” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 246). Composition categorizes visual images with the following subdivisions: information value, salience and framing. *Information Value* relates to the informational value concerning the position of visual elements in the image (left/right, top/bottom, center/margin). In vertical images, the *Ideal* section is the top part while the *Real* section is the lower part. In horizontal images, all information in the left is considered the *Given*, while the information on the right side is the *New*.

Figure 7 – Diagram of Compositional Meanings



Source: Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996 Diagram by Prof. Len Unsworth.

*Saliency* refers to the size of the visual elements that predominate in the image and the “degree to which an element draws attention to itself” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 210). Lastly, *Framing* refers to how connected or disconnected the compositional elements are in its distribution. When the elements of the image are visually connected or interlaced, or without boundaries it creates connection. A disconnection occurs when “an element is visually separated from other elements through frame lines, pictorial framing devices, empty space between elements, discontinuities of colour and shape” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 210). While the three kinds of meaning are interdependent and co-occur, in my study, I use all the three meanings. For the representational meaning, I use Veloso’s (2006) adaptation of conceptual images in order to analyze the heroes. All additional information on how the visual data is analyzed can be found in the method chapter. The next section presents an overview on video games’ studies focusing on aspects of the genre FPS, the gaming communities and aspects of diversity and representation in games.



## 2.5 VIDEO GAMES: FPS GENRE, COMMUNITIES AND DIVERSITY

Some call them fans, geek, nerds and players, but for Newman (2008) the most useful term to understand video game players and video game culture is simply that of ‘gamer’. Concerning the analysis of video games, it is necessary to understand some aspects of game genres and how they are able to provide different responses from gamers. Video games are usually categorized by genres such as action, adventure, RPG, puzzle, first-person shooter (FPS), amongst others. Each of them has its own purposes and goals. However, it is the gameplay interaction that makes a game belong to a specific genre (ADAMS, 2009). FPS, in short, are games in which the player experiences the environment through the protagonist’s eyes. They are usually centered in weapon-based combat and a first-person perspective. Also, FPS are inspired by the shooters game genre, as Elias (2009) claims:

(...) The FPS, as shooting videogames, are characterized by a first-person perspective dependent gameplay. That is to say that whenever the player interacts with the FPS virtual environment, he observes all the action (ergon) as if he was contemplating all things through the character’s eyes. Images are seen through that point of view because there is simulation work which tries to be the most realistic as possible (p. 9).

One of the main characteristics of the FPS genre is the immersion the player experiences while engaging in a task or an activity in the game. Soulban and Orkin (2009) state that, even though several games let the player control and manipulate the environment, almost no other genre of video game drops the player closer to the action more than an FPS. Another usual aspect is that several FPS games nowadays are designed specifically for multiplayer gaming, that is, they allow players to play with other people online. Multiplayer FPSs “are very specific, less to do with character and story and more to do with creating the world and enhancing gameplay” (SOULBAN; ORKIN, 2009, p.65).

Concerning the themes, war-based thematic constitute one of the most common in FPS games. In these games, wars are reproduced and represented as a form to guide the narrative, while the players try to achieve the goals of the game. Accordingly, Elias (2009) mentions that “in the beginning, FPS games were very simple and as time went by, they became more complex, captivating and creative” (p. 12). The game to be analyzed in this study *Overwatch*, for instance, carries a lot of new semiotic elements to the genre that will be explored further in the analysis.

Another issue worth mentioning is that many FPS games are online. An online game is a game that is either partially or primarily played through the internet. As a consequence, there are many communities that share knowledge in and outside the game as in websites, forums, blogs etc. Other types of genres that are usually online, in addition to FPS, are: strategy games, that is, games that promote planning and strategic thinking to achieve specific goals; and massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), which are role-playing games within virtual worlds where people create avatars, level up their characters and live the storyline. Richard Bartle conceptualized players into ‘types’ of gamers. Bartle co-created *MUDI* (multi-user dungeon) in 1978 and is a genius in the area of games as a professor, writer and game researcher. According to Bartle (1996), when a gamer plays a game, they are in one of these profiles:

- ‘Achievement within the game context’ – this describes video gamers who are primarily interested in achieving certain game-related goals, such as amassing large quantities of game treasure or a certain number of kills.
- ‘Exploration of the game’ – Bartle identifies the pleasure a video gamer receives from finding out about the ‘virtual world’, such as mapping its geography or experimenting with its physics.
- ‘Socializing with others’ – this refers to the enjoyment video gamers get from utilizing the game’s communicative facilities, to connect with fellow gamers, and also the pleasures derived from role-playing within video games.
- ‘Imposition upon others’ – this refers to video gamers who, in the game, impose themselves on others, most commonly aggressively, by for example attacking or ‘griefing’ (causing deliberate annoyance) another player, but Bartle suggests that this can also refer to non-aggressive forms of imposition, such as helping other gamers (summarized by Crawford, 2012, p. 58).<sup>13</sup>

Taking in consideration the social aspects of these games, online games are commonly the games that most create communities and bonding among people over the internet, since nowadays technology provides several different modes of communication. Most communities are linked by the game genre or the game itself, for instance the game *League of Legends* (known as *LoL*), which is very popular by streamers and viewers on platforms such as *Twitch*<sup>14</sup>, shows that the category of eSport is growing rapidly in the recent years. Also, other virtual spaces (such as wiki forums, Facebook groups, and other platforms) represent a place where gamers can share their gameplays,

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<sup>13</sup> As a fan, a player, a gamer, a member and a researcher of it, I believe the player of *Overwatch* fills all the four types.

<sup>14</sup> *Twitch* is a live streaming platform for games: <https://www.twitch.tv>

ask for information, share tips, talk, know other players, share memes, and even show their fanfics and fanarts inspired by the game narrative elements.

As a member of the gaming community for decades, I can state that unfortunately the community tends to be toxic, misogynist and homophobic, reflecting our patriarchal society and the way video games were introduced as a boy's toy in the past. There are even restricted online groups aimed only for women and LGBTQ+ people, in order to make them feel safe to interact online. In a positive note, this hegemonic pattern has been changing lately, in a slow way, however bringing hope for less prejudice in future communities. The need to change such negative traits and raising awareness on prejudices among the community is extremely important for a better and positive environment for everyone (HAND; MOORE, 2006). The authors claim for the consideration of gamers as a community with extensive and complex patterns of social interaction, culture and norms. On the good side, there are several studies about learning with video games and even about socialization. Crawford's (2012) study refers to the responses of several players in relation to how they feel about playing games:

What separated his video gaming friends from other social groups was a shared culture and understanding, which those who did not play video games may not have fully understood. It is certainly evident that those who play video games will commonly share certain knowledges and practices. For instance, video gaming has its own language (...) (p 97).

Regarding representation and diversity in video games, Shaw's (2009) study suggests that the gaming industry culturally fears consumer resistance causing financial loss to the companies, which is the reason certain types of heteronormative gender expectations are still perpetuated. The author also suggests that the lack of cultural representation and the perpetuation of gendered notions rely on the fact that most game designers are male and heterosexual, which may somehow explain the lack of diversity regarding representativeness in games (SHAW, 2009). This factor also leads to a personal reason for me to choose Overwatch as my object of study, as mentioned before, in addition to its popularity and relevance, the fearlessness of bringing a diverse cast of characters was something positive from my perspective. However, whether the representation on Overwatch is effective and unbiased is still up to my investigation in this study, but as a starting point, and as a gamer for over twenty-five years, it was the first time I could see pre-made characters with such complexity and diversity in their personalities and representation.

Different from other games genres like RPG and MMORPGS where the player can customize the character and create his/her avatar (skin color, body type, hair, and other features), in Overwatch the characters are already pre-defined. Consequently, it decreases the chances of self-identification from the players, since they are not able to create a customized avatar. Games with pre-established characters represent another relevant point of discussion among hegemonic notions of representation in popular video games, since most of them have been portraying normative values, such as female characters over sexualized and feminine while male characters with muscular bodies, being most of them white, without any disability and young adults.

A concern relating gaming representation and diversity has to do with the ‘degree’ of realism that the game is set. Overwatch’s case is complex since it is set in the real world but in future years. Sometimes the player might be floating around fantasy inspired scenarios, while s/he may also be walking on the streets of Paris seeing places inspired by real-world objects. This likelihood helps to establish some kind of bonding between the player and the game, which may also raise questions about identification of the player with the character and the place being portrayed. As another issue that concerns identification and realism regards the main objective of the game. Overwatch, as an FPS war-theme game, is a little different from games from the same genre. However, the main objective still concerns split and killing the enemy team while escorting a car (payload), capturing targeting points or securing and maintain a common base.

King and Krzywinska (2006), investigated the controversial FPS game *Under Ash* (AFKAR MEDIA, 2001) in which the player plays as a Palestinian opposed to Israeli occupation. The authors create a connection between the realism of the gameplay and the narrative of the game with the factor of agency but questioning if the “impression of agency created within a game reinforce broader cultural/ideological notions of agency, or does the pleasure involved lie in some level of acknowledgement of the fact that such agency is, precisely, not available in the outside world? (2006, p. 207). On the other hand, as Shaw (2010) points out, it all goes back to a capital intention. She states that “if you want to get a particular group to buy your product, you represent them in the text, if a marketer wants to sell games to women, people of color, or LGBTQ+ persons, they will put women, people of color, or LGBTQ+ people in the game” (SHAW, 2010, p. 265). While it may be true that diversity in the representation of minority groups in advertisements, fashion, games and media in general has increased as major motif of a capital interest, it may also benefit minorities

by helping to break conservative stereotypes in gaming representation, thereby, enabling the possibility of people to feel more included and seen in the games.

### 3 METHOD

*“Entertainment has to come hand in hand with a little bit of medicine.”*

David Fincher

This chapter provides the explanation on how theories will interlace with the data. Taking the perspective from the theoretical background, following, I define the selection and criteria of the data that I gathered from inside and outside the game.

#### 3.1 DATA SELECTION AND CRITERIA FOR MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

First of all, the game has been translated and adapted to thirteen different languages. Hence, in this study I am working with the English version. Secondly, since the game from time to time inserts new heroes (an average of 7 months), I analyze all 31 heroes presented in the game up to April of 2020. However, due to words' limit, I discuss the whole multimodal analysis of 20 heroes, yet, the analysis of the other 11 heroes will be available in the appendix. The choice regarding the 20 heroes concerns the fact of being the most representative, from my perspective. All the analytical frameworks that are used for each section of analysis are described into **The Multimodal Pathway**, a style of table I developed in order to help to describe, investigate and analyze the data (Figure 8).

##### 3.1.1 Verbal Data - Heroes

All heroes of Overwatch have extensive narratives throughout several mediums, as their narratives are told through transmedia storytelling. For that reason, I decided to work with the information provided by the game itself and the official website<sup>15</sup>, in which each hero has a page containing several details about them. Since their biographies are usually long, I considered only some information, such as their real name, age, occupation and their role in the game, as well as

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<sup>15</sup> [www.overwatch.com](http://www.overwatch.com)

their official description from the page named ‘hero gallery’, and their ‘catchphrases’, that is, an auditory phrase the heroes say when they are picked up. Over the course of the study, I may refer to some information that comes from the transmedia storytelling with the term *game narrative*. My intention is not to explore the narrative of the game, but to describe, analyze and discuss the social semiotic and multimodal elements that are exposed to players and how the diversity of different cultures and issues of intertextuality are being represented in the game. However, some external information is crucial to the reader’s comprehension and also serve to contextualize some elements of a character.

To conduct a part of the verbal analysis, I have organized a form of questionnaire and answer according to the data provided by the narrative of the game, such as species (since humans are not the only ones), sex, nationality and if there is any hero family related to another. Besides, since the game became popular due to its socioculturally diverse cast, I raise issues of sociocultural aspects represented in the game. All these pieces of information have guided me to statistical information for the discussion of results. Another piece of verbal data that is part of the analysis of each hero concerns the thematic lines, that is, as mentioned before, each hero has several verbal lines that they speak during the game. While some of the lines are activated by the player and some are automatic as they engage in dialogues, some are just mumbled to themselves.

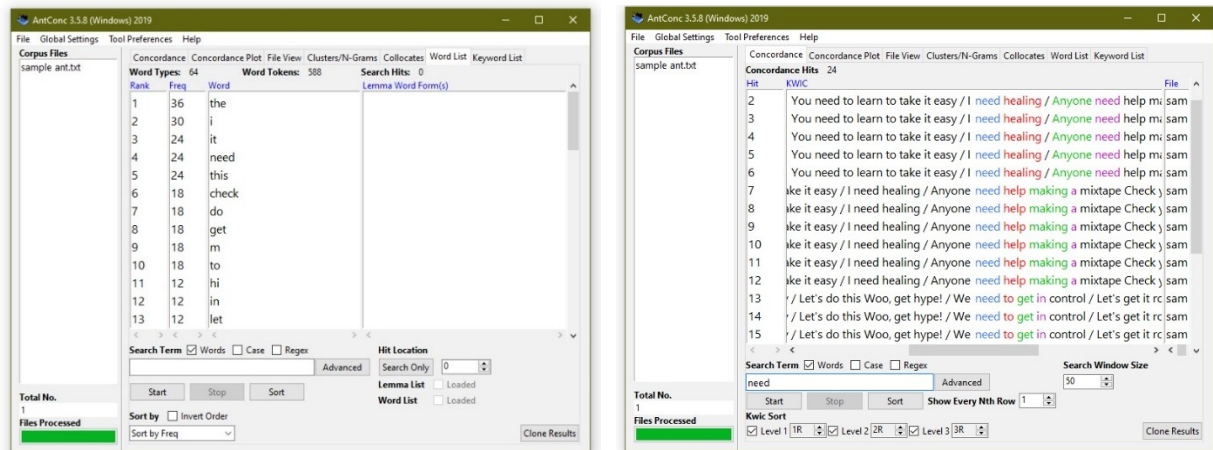
In a brief section, I gather at least one line and the maximum of two lines from each hero that carries an explicit external cultural reference, that is, that it does not refer to the game narrative but a cultural element of the world. Such items are usually very well-received by the fans and players since they can easily correlate to the external reference, such as a movie, a famous quote, or something out of popular culture, helping to create a bonding of the game with real life. Then, I will explain the reference’s origins and the correlation to the character. However, there might be cases of heroes without explicit external cultural verbal lines, in this case I use the theme of some of their lines as the criteria, such as their occupation, hobbies, or any other relevant issue that might help in the analysis. In these specific cases, more than two examples might be added.

### **3.1.2 Verbal Data - Software’s Based Corpus Linguistics**

Since all the selected verbal texts were based on specific features such as the heroes’ biographies, catchphrases, external reference lines, I decided to work with a software used in

corpus linguistics called *AntConc*<sup>16</sup>, a freeware toolkit for concordance and text analysis in order to provide additional relevant verbal data. This software enabled me to have access to the most frequent words used by each hero, so as to improve the verbal text selection of the heroes and to investigate the representation of their identities better. With that in mind, I excluded lexicogrammatical categories such as articles, conjunctions, pronouns, adjuncts and focused on verbs to identify the kind of process according to the transitivity system (HALLIDAY, 1985), and also the most frequent nouns to have a clearer view of the object of information the hero is referring to. Although the verbal text lines are in auditory mode in the game, as they are spoken by the heroes, there are website that transcribe them. Hence, I collected all the phrases in a popular website<sup>17</sup> used by the game community. For the data selection, I gathered all the verbal lines spoken by each hero in the game individually and saved them as different text files, as the software requires, and then uploaded in it. With this, the software provided a list of the most frequent words used from that data.

Figure 8 - *AntConc* Software (Windows 64-bit 3.5.8)



Source: Collage of screenshots of the software

In the software, by clicking in each word, it shows the concordance tab with how many times has the word appeared, and its use in different sentences (figure 8). The quotes of the heroes are divided into several categories, they are: *abilities*, *chatter*, *call-outs*, *mission specifics*,

<sup>16</sup> You can download it here: <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>

<sup>17</sup> Website: <https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/Category:Quotations>



*eliminations, communications* and *voice lines*. As criteria, I took the five most frequent verbs used, three occurrences in which the process is being most used and the five most frequent nouns.

### 3.1.3 Visual Data – General and Heroes

Concerning the **general** elements which are the first to be analyzed, I decided to explore the official game cover, since it has a tremendous impact commercially and it was when the protagonist character *Tracer* was introduced solo in the cover art. Following, from the game I took screenshots<sup>18</sup> from the screen menu of the game. Then, I have a screenshot of the hero gallery, a page in the game where all the heroes' faces appear and also the hero gallery page of one hero, to show what is like when the player enters there. Last but not least, I have a screenshot of the hero selection screen, that is where the player gets to decide the hero they want to play right before the actual match begins.

For the visual analysis of the **heroes**, I analyze the heroes in two different images. One image is taken from the official website, in which the hero is wearing its original skin and pose, and one image is a screenshot from the game of the hero in action, which will serve as support for the visual analysis showing the hero in a movement position. Following the example of the thematic lines but considering the skins, I also analyze one thematic skin from each hero when the skin is a clear cultural worldwide reference, being able to be classified in a thematic category such as World Culture, Popular Culture, Folklore, Mythology, Sports, Movies, Holidays, Festivals, Music, Literature and/or any other relevant cultural reference.

Concerning the criteria, I take a thematic skin that represents an external reference, where I explore their sociocultural aspects, as well as its intertextuality. However, some issues may narrow my choices, as some heroes are newer to the game, having fewer options. Another issue is that some heroes have several thematic skins related to the game narrative, not relating to external cultural reference, which is my focus. Although the thematic skins are visual elements, the investigation of their elements is grounded on the analytical framework of critical discourse analysis (FAIRCLOUGH, 2010), as explained in the critical discourse analysis section on the theoretical background.

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<sup>18</sup> Regarding all the screenshots from the game, I take them myself from the PlayStation 4 console platform.

### 3.2 PRESENTING: THE MULTIMODAL PATHWAY

After collecting all the data, I was able to create a method to simplify the multimodal analysis of the heroes and other elements in a form of a table containing all the data, questions, answers and analysis of the semiotic elements. I named this analytical chart as *The Multimodal Pathway* (TMP)<sup>19</sup>. Accordingly, there are three forms of *pathway*, while each serves its purpose to facilitate the multimodal analysis. In this section, I present only the sample, while in the analysis chapter (4) all information will be fulfilled and analyzed.

Following, the three models for analysis:

#### 3.2.1 TMP - General

The following set of tables presents the design of analysis of the general items, such as the game cover, game menu screen, hero gallery, hero gallery page and hero selection. After the visual analysis of each one of them, I carry out a general discussion on the findings.

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<sup>19</sup> The tables from the Multimodal Pathway are not numbered.

THE MULTIMODAL PATHWAY   GENERAL ©Version 1.0
<b>GAME COVER</b>
Figure x: Name [image] Source:
<b>VISUAL ANALYSIS</b>
<i>Visual analysis based on the grammar of visual design</i> <i>(KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006)</i> <i>Representational, Interactive and Composition</i>
<b>MENU SCREEN</b>
Figure x: Name [image] Source:
<b>VISUAL ANALYSIS</b>
<i>Visual analysis based on the grammar of visual design</i> <i>(KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006)</i> <i>Representational, Interactive and Composition</i>
<b>HERO GALLERY</b>
Figure x: Name [image] Source:
<b>VISUAL ANALYSIS</b>
<i>Visual analysis based on the grammar of visual design</i> <i>(KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006)</i> <i>Representational, Interactive and Composition</i>
<b>HERO GALLERY PAGE</b>
Figure x: Name [image] Source:
<b>VISUAL ANALYSIS</b>

<p><i>Visual analysis based on the grammar of visual design</i>  (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006)  <i>Representational, Interactive and Composition</i></p>
<b>HERO SELECTION</b>
<p>Figure x: Name  [image]  Source:</p>
<b>VISUAL ANALYSIS</b>
<p><i>Visual analysis based on the grammar of visual design</i>  (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006)  <i>Representational, Interactive and Composition</i></p>
<b>DISCUSSION</b>
<p><i>Discussion of the analysis taking in consideration all the elements of this first part, what was achieved and what was perceived after investigation under the light of the analytical framework.</i></p>

### 3.2.2 TMP - Heroes

The following set of tables concerns the design of analysis of the heroes. In the chart there is an explanation in each section of how the analysis is conducted.

THE MULTIMODAL PATHWAY   HEROES ©Version 1.0	
NAME OF THE HERO	
BIO IMAGE	FIGURE IN ACTION
Figure x: Name [image] (Source: Official website)	Figure x: Name [image] (Source: Game screenshot)
VISUAL ANALYSIS <sup>20</sup>	
<p><i>Visual analysis based on the grammar of visual design (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006).</i></p> <p><i>The Heroes are analyzed as conceptual images within <b>Analytical Processes</b> containing:</i></p> <p><i><b>Carrier</b>, representing the whole of an image, whose identity meaning is established and, in this case, focuses on the hero, his/her personality through: facial expression, body language (pose), hair or any other element worth mentioning.</i></p> <p><i><b>Possessive Attributes</b>, referring to the parts of the Carrier, in this case the possessions of the heroes: weapons, outfit, companions and the outfit's color scheme; and</i></p> <p><i><b>Symbolic Attributes</b>, which concerns the items that represent the meaning or identity of a Carrier, in this case I focus on visual sociocultural elements, such as: age marks, visible disability, nationality and ethnicity marks and any other symbolic element worth mentioning, according to one of the objectives of the study.</i></p>	
THEMATIC SKIN	
Figure x: <b>Name of the skin</b> [image] (Source: Game screenshot)	

<sup>20</sup> The reason I decided to start with a visual analysis instead of a verbal, has a lot to do with how entertainment products are commonly consumed. It also mimics a real-life situation where most of the time the first impression from something is visual, before getting the chance of an interaction or to get to know better the object in the case. Hence, I thought it would be coherent to first explore the visual elements. Then, the cultural references and verbal texts come later to complement.

<i>Explain the cultural reference, its connection to the hero, describe the visual image and classify them into a thematic category. The analysis is guided through CDA's analytical framework of communicative events (FAIRCLOUGH, 2010), taking in consideration the principles of Social Practice, Discursive Practice and Text, adapted to <b>Sociocultural features, Intertextuality and Visual Text</b><sup>21</sup>.</i>	
BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<b>Real Name:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Occupation:</b> <b>Role in the Game:</b>	<b>Species:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Nationality:</b> <b>Any Family Relation:</b> <b>Has Any Disability:</b>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<i>Description of the hero taken from the hero gallery page in the game.</i>	<i>“What the hero says when is selected as the players’ choice before a game.”</i>
THEMATIC LINE(S)	
<i>“Quote the verbal textual line said by the hero.”</i>	
Explain the cultural reference.	
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS	
VERBS	OCCURRENCE
xxx	<i>The three most frequent occurrences used by the verbs (processes)</i>
xxx	
xxx	
xxx	
xxx	
MOST FREQUENT NOUNS	
xxx – xxxx – xxx – xxxx – xxxxx	

<sup>21</sup> In addition, I will also add the ‘**Theme Category**’ in the analysis, in order to define a main thematic topic for the skin.

## VERBAL ANALYSIS

*The verbal analysis serves as a support for the overall analysis of the representation of each hero. Within the verbal analysis, I consider the heroes' codenames, the catchphrases and the bio and additional information. Then, I refer to the thematic lines attributed to the hero and its correlations. Then, through the corpus linguistics software, I provide the most frequent verbs, occurrences where the verbs are used and the most frequent nouns. With the verbs and occurrences, I conduct a brief analysis using the transitivity system (HALLIDAY, 1985). Considering the verbs as process, since they all share similar speech due to the game mechanics, I classify the main processes and relate them to the theme or topic of experience that the processes was being used for.*

*Then, I also check within the occurrences if there are verbal elements that correlate to a personality trait or a reference to the heroes' nationality, role, relationships, disability, among others. Later, I consider the most frequent nouns used in the hero speech as a feature to add up to investigate their verbal identities. The verbal text on the bio, description and on the additional information sections are used for statistical matters and also within the Representation of Social Actors' (VAN LEEUWEN, 2008) framework, in order to see how the game categorizes each character. With this, I will be able to come up with results on how the identity of a hero is created through its verbal text. After the analysis of each character, the main results are further explored on Chapter 5, where I provide a general discussion of the main findings from the multimodal analysis of the heroes.*

### 3.3 PREPARING FOR DISCUSSIONS

The analysis and discussion of the findings concern two chapters of the study. On chapter four, I carry the multimodal analysis of the semiotic items (**General** and **Heroes**). Even though each analysis carries within it a brief discussion in the end, I wanted to create this new space in order to better explore, organize and present the results. Therefore, the findings of chapter four are also discussed on chapter five. After conducting the multimodal analysis of the three main items, the multimodal discussion explores relevant themes that emerged throughout the analysis. The main themes are:

1) *Heroes' Representation: Statistical Information* - where I explore issues related to diversity and representation of the heroes in a more quantitative approach, as a starting point of discussion;

2) *Heroes' Representation: The Creation of Identities* – Where I explore how multimodality can help to create the identity of the heroes through visual and verbal modes;

3) *Heroes' Representation: Multimodal Intertextuality* – Where I explore, from a critical discourse analysis' perspective, the external cultural references inserted in the game through visual and verbal modes, and the way they are created and correlated to the characters;

4) *Heroes' Speech: War and Action* – where I explore the verbal discourse commonly used by the heroes. Also, I carry out a brief transitivity analysis to investigate how the experience of the heroes are represented in the verbal texts (HALLIDAY, 1985), as I also consider the power relations among the heroes inspired by Fairclough's (2010) views on power and war discourse.

With this, I carry out an investigation showing how multimodality through a critical perspective is effective to explore semiotic elements in different modes of meaning making.



## 4 OVERWATCH MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

*“Entertainment and art are not isolated.”*

Martin Kippenberger

The multimodal analysis is divided in four parts following the *Multimodal Pathway* filled with the data, starting with the elements of the following sections: General and Heroes<sup>22</sup>.

**Let's Play!**

### 4.1 GENERAL

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<sup>22</sup> The heroes are analyzed in alphabetic order.

## GAME COVER

Figure 9- Overwatch Game Cover art



Source: Retrieved from a website<sup>23</sup>

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

The image is the basic cover art of the Overwatch game. By basic I mean that it presents the art without the added visual symbols of platforms (PlayStation 4, Nintendo Switch, Xbox One, Microsoft Windows) and the content rating system<sup>24</sup> (which is different in several countries). It was released in 2016 and presents the character *Tracer* in the foreground. From my perspective, it represented a bold and risky choice presenting a single character in the cover while the casting of the game is so broad and diverse. As a starting point in a visual analysis, another significant factor is the lack of a contextualized background. Overwatch is a game that

<sup>23</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overwatch\\_\(video\\_game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overwatch_(video_game))

<sup>24</sup> Overwatch has an average rating system of suitable for ages 12 and up.

portrays several locations in the world and, despite a brief use of colors in the background, the cover art does not create a context, which would be somehow expected. According to visual grammar, such aspect refers to the modality of the image, that is, when a participant is 'decontextualized', shown in a void, represented participants become generic, a 'typical example', rather than particular, and connected with a particular location and a specific moment in time" (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p.161).

In western culture, a common feature in game covers presents the character(s) of the game in action and in an environment of the game, on the other hand, Eastern games tend to present more conceptual cover arts, with the use of symbols, no participants and decontextualized backgrounds. Kalata (2006) points out that such differences among Western and Eastern cover arts have become a common sense among gamers. Consequently, several video games have different cover arts for the American version and the Japanese version, which was not the case of Overwatch. Considering this, Overwatch cover art lies in the middle, since it shows a character in action presenting vectors as pointing guns at the viewers in a jumping position, setting an action in a form of battle. However, the lack of other participants and background seems to suggest a 'cleaner' cover, trying to embody a more conceptual art. Also, the lack of background might be intentional since the use of the colors blue and orange, which are opposite in the color chart, makes the characters visually pop up more in a white background, representing a tool to attract attention, especially for physical stores.

Also considering the representational aspects of the visual grammar, the image is a narrative due the action with a non-transactional representation since there is only one participant. Considering the interactive meaning, it presents a demand, that is, when represented participants "address the viewer directly with their gaze and want something from the viewer" (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p.250). Since the character is also pointing guns, the demand suggests the viewer is in a kind of battle with the participant depicted. Also, it may be considered close social distance since the whole figure is seen. In relation to attitude, from my perspective, there was an intention to represent the participant slightly higher above the viewer, depicting a jumping movement. That, in addition to the demand gaze, the high angle and the vectors pointing at the viewers, suggest that the participant is somehow taking the viewer by surprise as if in the middle of a combat.

Concerning the compositional meanings, the information value may be considered centered, or to be precise, elliptical in a -90 degrees shape. In relation to the salience, the character occupies most of the image, being the predominant visual element. Also, there is no framing among the participant and the other visual features, such as the title of the game above and the company logo below. Whether it could be better or not, this cover art put the game into the market and is still nowadays the official cover for the game. Engaging the viewer in a battle with the hero, the image sets *Tracer* as a mascot and one of the protagonists of the game while the cover art is one of the most memorable visual trademarks of Overwatch.

### MENU SCREEN

Figure 10 - Hero in the Back of Menu Screen



Source: Game screenshot

### VISUAL ANALYSIS

The image is the menu screen of the game. The character depicted in the middle (hero) and the background place (map) keep changing from time to time, unless there is a special event, then, this screenshot of *Hanzo* in *Hanamura* serves as an example. Concerning the information value within compositional meanings, from my perspective, the image is polarized in three sides of information, creating a triptych. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain about the modern triptychs: the “layouts are generally polarized, with a ‘Given’ left, a ‘New’ right, and a center

which bridges the two and acts as” (p. 198). Therefore, the character in the middle is the mediator, while the information on the left (Given) refers to the game options and the information on the right (New) is related to the player’s username and possessions in the game. The given information leads the players to the game match and/or other pages, while the new information presents the statistics of how many items the player has of that specific hero and their level in the game. With that in mind, the framework seems to be coherent with the data presented. Also, there is no use of any visual framing or border, suggesting a strong connection among the visual elements in the image, while the predominant and salient visual element is the participant in the middle.

Considering the representational meanings, the image presents a narrative due to the presence of vectors (the character’s hands managing a weapon) with a non-transactional representation. In relation to the interactive meanings, the degree of modality tends to be close to real, since there is a background for the characters and the colors and all the markers are inside a degree of reality mark presented in the game<sup>25</sup>. The character is depicted from the waist up, suggesting a social to personal distance. In addition, the character is depicted in the same eye level from the viewer, however from an oblique angle, which suggests a certain degree of detachment according to visual grammar (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006). Also, along with the oblique angle, there is a direct gaze to the viewer, creating a demand act. While menu screens in games are a form of waiting room, the personal distance, the demand gaze and the real degree of modality are visual tools that suggest that the participant depicted is a form of mediator of the triptych of information waiting for the player to decide what to do by staring at them.

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<sup>25</sup> Taking in consideration 'reality' as the video game reality (3d modes, graphic designs, colors, etc.), not comparing to our real world, otherwise all the information would be presented as modalized.

## HERO GALLERY

Figure 11 - Hero Gallery



Source: Game screenshot

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

The image is the hero gallery which is inside the menu screen, displaying all the characters of the game. The main focus of attention from a visual grammar perspective is the taxonomy that is built. Taxonomies are classification processes within a conceptual representation (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006). In this case there is no Superordinate and Subordinates since the table of taxonomy shows equivalence in relation to the symmetrical composition of the individual characters. Thereby, what determines the order from higher to lower is alphabetic, suggesting a sense of balancing among the characters as no one is more powerful than the other, since they have the same space and are organized alphabetically, which is an analytical form of organization that evokes neutrality concerning power relations.

With that being said, the whole image is conceptual, having a contextualized background from a map in the game (which also keeps changing as the hero in the menu screen) and the taxonomy chart in the foreground. For the game, it is important to observe the characters displayed with the same power level since they are supposed to be balanced and equivalent, as the gameplay depends on the abilities of the player and not the character. Kress and van Leeuwen

(2006) point out how this visual classification system helps to establish a sense of equality, “for participants to be put together in a syntagma which establishes the classification means that they were judged to be members of the same class, and to be read as such” (p. 79).

Concerning the interactive meaning, all characters are depicted from a close-up shot, creating an intimate relation with the viewer, which may contribute to the fact that by clicking or pressing on their faces, the player goes straight to their individual profile pages with their specific information. Consequently, the use of a close up with a demand gaze may serve as an invitation to know the character better, while also creating a bonding and sense of proximity with the player, since the character is going to represent the player in the match. Despite having a contextualized background depicting a map, different from the menu screen, the background is blurred, which lowers the modality degree of reality with a purpose of narrowing the focus to what is in the foreground: the heroes.

In relation to composition, the most relevant tool used here is the framing. Each character is clearly separated from the other through several visual modes, such as borders, background blank spaces and the use of different colors. According to visual grammar “the stronger the framing of an element, the more it is presented as a separate unit of information” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 203). It all adds up to one of the foundations of this study which was to study the representation and creation of identity of the characters in the game. The heroes will have their individual analysis explored later in the study, however it is a good starting point the sense that in the game, they are already semiotically presented with different identities and not as a whole, as stated by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) “the absence of framing stresses group identity, its presence signifies individuality and differentiation” (p.203).

## HERO GALLERY PAGE

Figure 12 - Hero Gallery Screen



Source: Game screenshot

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

The image is from the hero gallery page, that is, the individual page of each hero when the player clicks on his/her face in the previous menu screen, the hero gallery. Starting from composition, the image, just like the menu screen, is also a triptych. Once again, the participant in the middle is the mediator of both sides of information. The left side of the image carries all the number of cosmetic items related to that specific hero available to the player: in this case I used the hero *Symmetra* as the example. The right side shows the official description of the hero (which is a part of the verbal textual data for the analysis of the heroes). Also, the upper part shows the amount of gold (money in the game) the player has and the player's profile, icon and level. Another visual feature is the strong use of framing in the verbal parts to differentiate them from the other visual elements. Since this page has a function to give information, the strong frame works didactically to show the player where to go to do the action. Hence, a lack of framing in this page could cause confusion since the textual elements could blend in with the background color.



Considering the background, it is contextualized with a part of a map (in the example: *Route 66, USA*) which creates a degree of reality for the participant. The page serves as a kind of wardrobe to check on the hero's cosmetic items, such as the different skins (thematic outfits), victory poses, emotes, voice lines, among others. The participant is depicted with a certain distance because this is the time the player makes cosmetic decisions for the heroes. Therefore, more control over the visual depiction of the participant is necessary. Since the player plays with these characters in the game, there is almost always a constant gaze into the viewer, creating a demand, as a form of connection between the participant in the image and the player. In addition, the participants in the images are often in the same eye level, suggesting equality as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) point out "if the picture is at eye level, then the point of view is one of equality and there is no power difference involved" (p. 140). Such aspect is different from the case of the game cover, for instance, which due to the fact of having a different purpose, depicted the participant from a different angle.

Lastly, although the image could be read as a narrative for having a participant with a non-transactional representation, considering the whole function of the page the main message created for the meaning of the whole image makes it to be conceptual. The hero gallery page has a purpose of showing the hero and all the cosmetic items they have. Therefore, according to visual grammar, the hero in the middle can be read as the carrier and the items as their possessive attributes, classifying the image under the category of an analytical process. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) mention that images with participants, especially when they are posing, can be analytical, since they are serving a certain purpose. In this case, the participant is the carrier of the whole information, while the items are the parts, (the attributes), also considering the hero as the mediator of information in the middle of the image.

## HERO SELECTION

Figure 13 - Hero Selection Screen



Source: Game screenshot

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

The image is from the hero selection screen, the screen the player sees right before entering the game match, carrying the function of showing the characters to be chosen to form a team. As an initial observation, I believe this image falls under the same category as the previous one, since although there is a participant being depicted from the waist up, it only serves to show the choices the player is making in the taxonomy below. Then, the image presents a straight-line taxonomy where, in this case, the heroes are not categorized alphabetically, but according to their roles in the game (tank, damage and support). Before entering this screen, the player chooses a role, so the options vary only among the heroes of that specific role, in this case, as an example, the role chosen was support, and the hero selected as an example is *Baptiste*.

By providing a taxonomy with a function of selection, the image can be considered a classification process within a conceptual representation, since the participants are being divided by their roles. Also, when the player selects a hero below in the taxonomy, the hero appears above straight away, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) point out in classificational processes “the angle is frontal and objective, and frequently there are words inside the picture space” (p.

79). The words in this case are the name of the heroes. The background is slightly blurred; however, the player is still able to recognize the map, suggesting a contextualized image as it presents a part of the map where the battle takes place.

Regarding the interactive meanings, the participant depicted in the middle is in the same eye level with a constant demand gaze with the viewer, as mentioned before, which helps to create a connection with the player. There is also a strong use of framing to distinguish each hero from the others to avoid visual confusion, since in this page the player needs to be cautious due the existence of a time limit for the choice. Regarding salience, the hero selected becomes the predominant information in the image. Concerning information value, the image suggests more than one possibility of analysis: from my perspective, the image presents a vertical polarization of information within ideal and real settings. If imagining a line cutting a picture horizontally in half, the lower part with the taxonomy becomes the real part, since it has the information of the possible heroes the player has, representing a real choice to make. On the other hand, the upper part of the line, the ideal part, shows the hero selected and also presents more elements of the map.

When a hero is selected, s/he usually performs a sort of victory pose or gives a smile at the player as a form of saying 'let's win'. As s/he is positioned in the upper part of the image, the ideal side represents the game's goal at the moment. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that "for something to be ideal means that it is presented as the idealized or generalized essence of the information, hence also as its, ostensibly, most salient part, the Real is then opposed to this in that it presents more specific information (e.g., details), more 'down-to-earth' information" (p. 186-187). Therefore, such statement proved to be coherent with the composition analysis of the image, since the lower part is more detailed oriented, while the upper part is more salient. To conclude, the image carries several semiotic elements, such as the straight-line taxonomy, the front angle participant, the personal distance, the demand gaze and the background representing the map, but as main point, from my perspective, is the salient and optimistic hero in the upper part representing the player's idealization of winning the battle ahead.

## DISCUSSION

This first part of the multimodal analysis serves as an introduction to the game and its semiotic elements. The game cover and four screens of the game (menu, hero gallery, hero gallery page and hero selection) were analyzed. Since the strongest semiotic element present here is visual, I conducted a visual analysis leaning to specific results for each image. Grounded on the analytical framework of the grammar of visual design (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006) considering the three meanings: representational, interactive and composition, I could establish a coherence between what the images mean/represent for the viewers/players within the analytical framework.

The cover image calls attentions to the use of a decontextualized background, opposite colors (in the color wheel), as well as the angle and position of the participant depicted in relation to the viewer and the interaction established. After all, it represented a risky choice of portraying a single character, opting for a cleaner cover, in such a diversified game, which could also be interpreted as an attempt to innovate the arts of game covers, especially in the gaming genre of FPS. Concerning the other images, which are all screenshots from the game, the menu screen and the hero gallery page both have triptych polarized information, with the hero in the middle working as mediators and the verbal texts on the sides as additional information. However, in the menu, the proximity and vectors indicate a narrative, while in the hero gallery page, the section of possessive items guides the image as into an analytical process of a conceptual image.

Another relevant issue was the use of taxonomy in two images (hero gallery and hero selection), whereas in both images the participants depicted are presented in an equality way, since what classifies them is alphabetic order and roles in the game. Hence, the creation of this type of taxonomy shows a concern about the balance of power relations among the heroes. Another noticeable feature was the use of strong framing to separate heroes in the taxonomy and to highlight the verbal texts from the background, as the framing worked as a device to avoid visual confusion. In addition, the polarization of information was also relevant, being different in the images, as centre value, triptych, and the vertical polarization of real and ideal in the hero selection menu, which, from my perspective, is conducive to the analytical framework.

Lastly, there is a constant gaze of the heroes at the viewers, using the visual tool of demand as a way to establish a connection, as if the heroes are inviting the viewer to play the game, considering these screens appear before the battle. To conclude, the three meanings of the visual

grammar proved to be useful and coherent with the message conveyed in the images in this introductory part, which is meant to familiarize while also setting the player within the semiotic system of the game.

## 4.2 HEROES

### **Summary:**

Ana

Baptiste

Brigitte

D.Va

Doomfist

Genji

Hanzo

Junkrat

Lúcio

McCree

Mei

Mercy

Moira

Pharah

Soldier: 76

Sombra

Tracer

Widowmaker

Zarya

Zenyatta

## THE MULTIMODAL PATHWAY | HEROES ©Version 1.0

### ANA

#### ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 14 - Ana



Source: Official website

#### IN ACTION

Figure 15 - Ana in action



Source: Game screenshot

#### VISUAL ANALYSIS

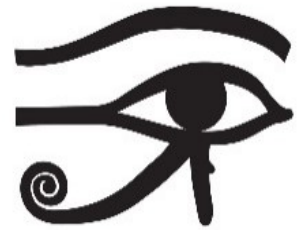
**Carrier:** Ana is a responsible and experienced character with a deep commitment for protection of her allies. Ana is depicted in her original skin in a slight oblique angle staring at the viewer, while her pose concerns the hero crossing arms with steady legs on the ground. From my perspective, the way Ana holds her weapon emulates a mother holding a baby. In addition, her facial semblance is serious. Her hair is white/silver and covers her left eye. Also, due to being a sniper<sup>26</sup>, her image in action shows her usual movements in the game, which tend to represent her in a slight hunchback figure.

<sup>26</sup> Within the context of the game, Snipers are heroes who attack from a distance, usually using a scope and a high-precision, long range rifle.

**Possessive Attributes:** Her weapon is a rifle firearm very salient compared to her size. Her outfit covers almost all of her body, while the holes in the cape presents a deconstruction of the fabric textiles, indicating a form of post-battle outfit. She also wears a hijab, while the predominant colors are blue and olive grey.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Ana is a character that carries several visual symbolic attributes in her figure. As a starting point, the hijab, in addition to being a possessive attribute, is also a symbolic attribute since it represents the Islam religion, being a traditional custom for Muslim women. She also has a tattoo on her right eye of an *Eye of Horus* (Figure 16<sup>27</sup>), a popular and powerful symbol intended to provide protection from harm and to ward off curses, not only for the dead in the afterlife but also for the living on Earth (LACE, 2012). Another visual symbolic attribute concerns her age, as Ana is one of the oldest heroes among the cast, her visible white/silver hair might suggest such correlation. Also, she is blind from one eye while such disability is explicit in her visual creation.

Figure 16 - Eye of Horus



#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 17 - Ana Skin: **Pharaoh**

<sup>27</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.ancient-symbols.com/eye-of-horus>





Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh was the common title of the monarchs (CLAYTON, 2012). For the ancient Egyptians, the Pharaoh was *Horus* personified (a god on Earth) and when a Pharaoh died, he would become *Osiris* as the next pharaoh would take his place (LACE, 2012). The ancient Egyptians used to have several funerary practices to ensure their immortality after death. Mummification, entombment and rituals were a way to ensure immortality to the dead body (LACE, 2012). Such practices were destined only for Egyptians with special roles in life, which included the Pharaohs. After the First Intermediate Period, the importance of the Pharaoh in Egyptian society declined. Therefore, the "pharaoh was no longer a god-king in the sense that only he was allowed in the next life due to his status here, now he was merely the ruler of the population who upon his death would be leveled down towards the plane of the mortals" (WILSON, 1965, p. 116).

**Intertextuality:** While Egyptian culture has influenced many other cultures, the Pharaoh's figure is one of the common related to Egyptian with has influence on popular culture. However, despite the name

Figure 18 - The Mummy from the Universal horrors' movie (1932)



of the skin, the visual elements correlate entirely to a Mummy figure, relating the mummification funerary practice of ancient Egyptians. Mummies have often been used in horror fiction, depicting undead creatures seeking revenge against those who defiled their tombs, being the inspiration for several books, movies, video games, TV specials and even children's cartoons. One of the main remarkable representation of Mummies that put them on the highlight was from the Universal Classic Monsters films franchise<sup>28</sup> (1920s to 1950s). The franchise's narratives evolved around six iconic monsters

Figure 19 - Depiction of a Pharaoh



in history: *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy* (Figure 18<sup>29</sup>), *The Bride of Frankenstein*, *The Wolf Man* and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. The mummy is still a popular and iconic figure nowadays. Considering the correlation to the character, Ana is from Egypt, hence, the thematic skin paid tribute to her nationality.

**Visual Text:** Ironically, there were several choices the game could make to create a 'Pharaoh' aesthetic (Figure 19<sup>30</sup>), but since the skin was part of a Halloween event, the mummifying version of them was chosen. Another element is the word play mummy with mommy, as Ana is a mother in the game narrative. The skin presents Ana as a form of mummy, all wrapped in bandages while her skin is turned blue suggesting an undead creature. The bandages are also functional as they work as a form to mimic her hair and also to cover her blind eye, the same way she does in her official skin.

**Theme Category:** World Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Ana Amari (عماري أنا)</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 60</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Bounty Hunter</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Support</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Female</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Egyptian</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> Mother of Pharah (Hero)</p>

<sup>28</sup> Source: <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/where-begin-universal-horror-cycle>

<sup>29</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.doublefeaturepreachers.com/davids-reviews/the-mummy-a>

<sup>30</sup> Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh>

	<b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes, she is blind in her left eye.
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CATCHPHRASE</b>
<i>Former second in command of Overwatch, Ana Amari uses her skill and expertise to defend her home and the people she cares for.</i>	<i>“Never stop fighting for what you believe in.”</i>
<b>THEMATIC LINES</b>	
<p><i>“Youth is wasted on the young.”</i> – Ana says the line when she kills an enemy by herself. The quote is from the Irish playwright <i>George Bernard Shaw</i>.</p> <p><i>“You know Nothing.”</i> – It is one of her main voice lines, referring to the TV Series <i>Game of Thrones</i> (2011 - 2019). The quote was said by the character <i>Ygritte</i> towards the character <i>Jon Snow</i>. The line has since become part of popular culture.</p>	
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>	
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Get	Get back / Get in here / Get in there
Need	Do you need adult supervision? / Do you need healing? / You need to relax
Know	It takes a woman to know / You know nothing / I don’t even know you anymore
Keep	Keep moving / Keep out of my way / I’ll keep you patched up
Are	Old soldiers are hard to kill / The adults are talking / What are you thinking?
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Enemy, Boost, Fight, Justice, Mother	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>Ana uses her first name as codename in the game. The hero has in her bio information her occupation described as a Bounty hunter, that is, a professional who captures fugitives or criminals for a reward. However, her official description uses her past occupation to describe her, mentioning her skills to defend people she cares about, which is a verbal mark that correlates to her role as a support hero. In her catchphrase, she uses her motto as a form of advice, using the time adverb <i>“Never”</i> followed by <i>“stop fighting for what you believe in”</i>. The statement also correlates to that fact that Ana is an elderly hero who does not stop fighting, as it concerns the fact that she keeps fighting because she has a cause and an ideology behind it. Her thematic lines show Ana's sense of humor and wordplay with her maturity and old</p>	

age, as a professional and experienced fighter she is, sometimes she mocks on youth and on younger heroes, while the line from the TV Series *Game of Thrones* is a coherent match for her personality.

Concerning the transitivity analysis, out of the five verbs Ana uses the most in her speech, two processes are material (*get* and *keep*), two processes are mental (*need* and *know*) and one process (*are*) is relational. Analysis show that the material processes found in her speech are mainly related to orders and requests (*Get back / Get in here / Get in there / Keep moving / Keep out of my way*). While in her mental processes Ana expresses more of her ideas and personal issues in the game, what also shows some relation to her experience and maturity (*Do you need adult supervision? / You need to relax / It takes a woman to know / You know nothing / I don't even know you anymore*). The relational process is used to create connections in occurrences (*Old soldiers are hard to kill / The adults are talking*), while they also show traits of Ana's personality and her background narrative. The main idea of Ana, seen in her occurrences, is somehow similar. Another aspect concerning her occurrences is that some topics are common such as the superiority of older people (*Do you need adult supervision? / Old soldiers are hard to kill / The adults are talking*). Also, she shows occurrences concerning her role as a support in the game (*Do you need healing?*) and the intellectual superiority of women (*It takes a woman to know*).

Considering the most frequent nouns, a focus on battle can be observed with the nouns *Enemy*, *Boost*, her ultimate ability, and *Fight*, making Ana being verbally built as a combat hero. *Justice* also appears as it concerns her ideology. It is known that Ana is Pharah's (another hero) mother, but nothing in her official description, catchphrase or biography state that information, since they focus on her occupation and skills. The only time her motherhood is mentioned on the corpus is as her fifth most frequent noun '*Mother*'. Also, in the corpus, there were no mentioning of her nationality or disability.

Comparing the data provided by her description, bio info, catchphrase and occurrences, from my perspective, they are coherent, since they build the image of a hero with lots of expertise who is ready to defend the ones she cares for. Also, her verbal lines are smart choices of representing elderly heroes based on their experience with intellect and a hint of sense of humor. With that, according to the social actors' approach, Ana's identity is mainly classified under her functionalization. She is verbally built into an experienced and professional character who uses her maturity and a well-articulated discourse, full of requests, commands, and constant references to her experience to set her identity, demand respect and also offer help to those in need.

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### BAPTISTE

#### ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 20 - Baptiste



Source: Official website

#### IN ACTION

Figure 21 - Baptiste in action



Source: Game screenshot

#### VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Baptiste is a versatile combat medic that uses his skills to help those in need. In his original skin, he is depicted from a frontal angle staring at the viewer while holding his weapon up. He has brown hair and displays a serious facial expression. Also, his movements tend to be more dynamic, while he usually walks, shoots and performs multiple actions at the same time in battle.

**Possessive Attributes:** Baptiste has a sort of grenade launcher as a weapon, which in the game is used to attack and to heal the teammates. His outfit is made of technology boots, special gloves and a cloak/cape. In addition, he also carries a visor and an antenna as part of his functional outfit, while the colors scheme is made mostly of black, teal and orange.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Baptiste's figure resembles a young adult character. Despite the fact that in the game he has a strong Haitian accent in his voice, since auditory elements are not part of the data, just by visually analyzing the original skin, the hero does not portray any mark of nationality trait. According to the Human Development Index (HDI), Haiti, his home country, is the poorest country on the America continent with the average, up to this date, of 0.498 according to Human Development Reports<sup>31</sup>, which is historically correlated to a high rate of crime and violence. Inspired by this, now taking in consideration the game narrative, the Haitian hero Baptiste experienced the horrors of war at a very young age, becoming one of thousand orphans of Haiti. Hence, he grew up and decided to help those who need and so others could avoid the suffering. Therefore, the main symbolic visual element concerns his whole visual character created representing his occupation as a combat medic, which thus might relate to his nationality, presenting his concern and awareness to help people in need.

#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 22 - Baptiste Skin: **Vampire**

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<sup>31</sup> Source: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>, access on November, 11, 2020

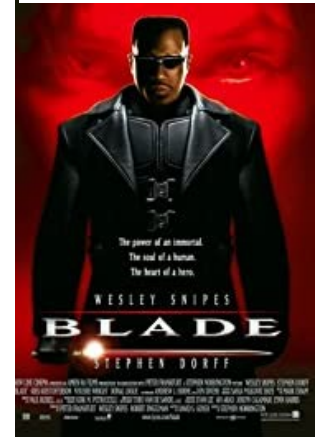


Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** Vampire is the skin Baptiste received in a Halloween event. Vampire is a folkloric creature existing in many cultures around the world, being represented in several different forms, such as literature and paintings, and later in movies, video games and so on. As part of mythology, there is not an official description, however, a vampire is usually described as an undead creature who feeds from humans through sucking their blood. Barber (1988) explains the many theories for the origins of vampire beliefs and the mass hysteria its figure provoked. The author claims that "everything ranging from premature burial to the early ignorance of the body's decomposition cycle after death has been cited as the cause for the belief in vampires" (BARBER, 1988, p. 2). Accordingly, Cohen (1989) states that during the 18th century the hysteria and fear of the vampire figure increased. "Despite being called the Age of Enlightenment, during which most folkloric legends were quelled, the belief in vampires increased dramatically, resulting in a mass hysteria throughout most of Europe" (COHEN, 1989, p. 273).

**Intertextuality:** The vampire became a figure in popular culture in the 18th century, what later would culminate in the creation of the popular vampire novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, published in 1897 (CHRISTOPHER, 1991). Therefore, for decades the vampire has become a dominant figure in the horror movies genre, while also invading other genres such as romantic, action, among others. In relation to the thematic skin, from my perspective, Baptiste’s vampire is a reference to the character *Eric Brooks/Blade* from Marvel Comics, especially in the movie adaptation *Blade* (1998) which depicts a half-vampire character with glasses (figure 23<sup>32</sup>), with the same hairstyle and a similar outfit. Despite the resemblance of the character *Blade* and the hero *Baptiste*, I believe the thematic skin was also given to *Baptiste* due to an ambiguous nature present in both characters. *Blade* is a vampire hunter who is half-human/half-vampire, while *Baptiste*, who now fights to help people, in the past joined evil forces against *Overwatch*.

Figure 23 - *Blade* (1998) movie cover



**Visual Text:** The thematic skin portrays *Baptiste* with glasses, a V-type Mohawk hairstyle, while the color scheme varies from grey, black and red, which visually correlates a lot to the Marvel Comics’ character *Blade*, in which I made the association.

**Theme Categories:** Mythology, Folklore, Popular Culture, Comics and Movies.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Jean-Baptiste Augustin</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 36</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Combat Medic</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Support</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Male</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Haitian</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>An Elite Combat medic and Ex-Talon Operative, Baptiste now uses his skills to help those whose lives have been impacted by war.</i></p>	<p><i>“No dying on my watch.”</i></p>
THEMATIC LINE	

<sup>32</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120611/>, access on November, 11, 2020



*"Come with me if you want to live."* – It is one of his main voice lines, the quote references the first (1984) and second (1991) "Terminator" franchise movies.

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Is	Someone's looking for me / Woo! It's not my time / Hehe now that is funny
Get	Get inside / Get in position / Get ready
Let	Let me buy you a drink / Let me show how it's done / Let us see a smile
Keep	Keep it going / This should keep you alive / Try to keep yourselves in one piece
Do	I don't do associates / Job well done / Buckle down, get it done

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Immortality, Field, Time, Objective, Alive

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Jean-Baptiste Augustin uses Baptiste as his codename, as his real name suggests being inspired by two saints: *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint Augustine of Hippo*. In his catchphrase "*No dying on my watch*", he reaffirms his occupation as a combat medic and his role in the game as a support hero, while his thematic line "*Come with me if you want to live*" is also coherent with his occupation and role, quoting a popular cultural reference.

Concerning the transitivity analysis, the hero has one relational process (*is*) and four material processes (*Get, Let, Keep* and *Do*), suggesting that his speech develops mostly around an experience of action. Some examples include the process 'get' that is used to give commands (*Get inside / Get in position / Get ready*), while the process 'let' is used as a way to ask for other heroes' attention, showing affection and being helpful (*Let me buy you a drink / Let me show how it's done / Let us see a smile*). The process 'keep' is also used to give orders and advices (*Keep it going / This should keep you alive / Try to keep yourselves in one piece*). However, the relational process 'is', which is the process with the most occurrences, is used in different contexts (*Someone's looking for me / Woo! It's not my time / Hehe now that is funny*), and it does not follow the previous pattern of advice, requests and orders. The relational process is being used as a tool to identify something and, in this case, to show traits of his personality.

In relation to the occurrences where the most frequent processes are found, a common theme is his concern about his teammates (*This should keep you alive / Try to keep yourselves in one piece*), which, as mentioned before, agrees with his occupation as medic and his role in the game as support. In his

description, the hero is also categorized by his occupation and affection for those in need, relating to his narrative. The most frequent nouns *Immortality* and *Field* refer to his main abilities in the battle, since he uses his speech to advise his teammates to protect themselves with his skills. The nouns *Time* and *Objective* are related to the objective of the game match<sup>33</sup>, while *Alive* concerns his function, which pretty much summarizes his overall verbal analysis.

Concerning social actors, Baptiste is mainly categorized through his occupation, being a functionalized actor. Therefore, all verbal elements, from his name inspiration of saints, occupation, official description, catchphrase, speech and his verbal analysis indicate the creation of a coherent hero. To conclude, Baptiste's verbal identity is created with a focus on a hero that is ready to help, often reaffirming his occupation, his role and position in the game, while also showing traits of affection and concern about others.

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<sup>33</sup> By the term 'game match', I am referring specifically to the match played by online players with two teams and an objective, as explained in the Overwatch section in the introduction. Hence, the term 'game match' refers specifically to the elements of the actual playable game and not the narrative.

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BRIGITTE

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 24 - Brigitte



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 25 - Brigitte in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Brigitte is a hard-working skilled mechanic. In her original skin, she is depicted in a slightly oblique angle with a frontal face and a direct gaze. She holds her weapon down in one hand while makes a fist with the other, suggesting an aggressive approach. The hero in movement is constantly holding a shield, which contributes to the defensive nature of her figure.

**Possessive Attributes:** Her outfit is mainly composed of a hard-defensive armor made of plate in the colors yellow (gold) and grey (silver), presenting several shapes gears. In relation to her possessive weapons, Brigitte is a versatile hero, carrying a barrier shield for protection and a flail to attack the enemies.

**Symbolic Attributes:** The fact that Brigitte is a hero related to two other older heroes in the game and also one of the youngest heroes among the cast of the game, creates for her character a constant attempt to prove that she is capable and brave like her father (Torbjörn) and godfather (Reinhardt)<sup>34</sup>. Such statement can be observed visually in her aggressive and defensive position to portray bravery and hard work, in addition to wearing the combat armor she made herself. A visual element that presents a correlation to the older heroes is the lion crest in the shield, which is the symbol of her Godfather, the hero Reinhardt, of whom she is an apprentice. The gears pictured throughout her outfit are also a visual element related to her occupation as a mechanical engineer. Another issue, although broad and generic, is the hero's physical appearance features such as the red hair and freckles, which may also contribute to show a nationality mark, since Northern European countries, like Sweden, are the regions with the most natural redheads in the world (MOFFAT, 2017). Lastly, from my perspective, one of the positive aspects of her visual creation regards her armor, as it is not sexualized as most of female armors in video games history.

#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 26 - Brigitte Skin: **Opera**

<sup>34</sup> Individual analysis of the hero on appendix a.



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin, part of the Lunar New Year event, paid tribute to Chinese culture with the skin Opera. In China, Opera numbers are called *Xiqu*, representing one of the main forms of entertainment for the residents during centuries. Chinese Opera combines several modes of entertainment, such as singing, dancing, mime, dialogues, acrobatics and even martial arts (KEFEN, 1985). The costumes and make-up represent a noticeable trademark of Chinese opera performers (Figure 27<sup>35</sup>). The use of exaggerated colors is a way to symbolize a character's role, fate, and illustrate its emotional state<sup>36</sup>. Cifuentes (2010) synthesizes the main principle that a set Chinese Opera is to aesthetically represent aspects of human life through a symbolic performance.

Figure 27 - Chinese Opera



<sup>35</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.ru/pin/80994493273171615>, access on November, 13, 2020

<sup>36</sup> Source: <https://skyhour.com/skylog/travel-culture/make-up-techniques-from-chinese-opera/16>

**Intertextuality:** Chinese Opera has also influenced Western culture and Theatre in many different ways. Sheila (2016) investigates the influence of Chinese opera in Western Classical music. While nowadays several theatres in China play Western productions, there is a certain mixture of elements, creating a third place, between the cultures. Giordano (2017) claims that "China is increasingly moving from the use of a dominant culture's elements by members of a locally-based culture (Western opera and Chinese traditional and modern opera), to a situation in which elements created by multiple cultures melt" (p. 41). Considering the correlation between the theme and the character, a common topic in the Operas regards the warrior's narratives concerning Chinese history, which might suggest a correlation to Brigitte's character since she shares a similar warrior background as being a squire.

**Visual Text:** The skin portrays Brigitte as a Chinese opera performer. However, the style and type of fabric is not necessarily related to the Chinese opera performers, since it still preserves a harshness of Brigitte's original skin. While the props in her head resembles a female Opera performer, the rest of the outfit has a mixture of both male and female influence and characteristics, mixed with Brigitte's own shape and style. The color scheme is mainly red, white and emerald green, while the heavy make-up is also another semiotic reference used to set straight the reference within the characterization.

**Theme Categories:** World Culture and Performances.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Brigitte Lindholm  <b>Age:</b> 23  <b>Occupation:</b> Mechanical Engineer, Adventurer  <b>Role in the Game:</b> Support</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human  <b>Sex:</b> Female  <b>Nationality:</b> Swedish  <b>Any Family Relation:</b> Daughter of Torbjörn (Hero) and Goddaughter of Reinhardt (Hero)  <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Brigitte Lindholm, squire to Reinhardt Wilhelm, is a former mechanical engineer, who has decided to take up arms and fight on the front lines to protect those in need.</i></p>	<p><i>"I will prove myself!"</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	

*"It's just a flesh wound."* – The voice line makes references to the 1975's British comedy movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The quote was said by the Black Knight character.

*"Dare to Lindholm."* - A voice line that plays and references Nike's *"Dare to Zlatan"* ad campaign, which featured Swedish football player *Zlatan Ibrahimović*.

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Is	My barrier is about to go! / The best offense is a good defense / This is all part of the learning process
Get	Get away from me / Get behind me / Don't get caught red-handed
Take	I'll take care of you / Take cover, behind you / My barrier can't take much more!
Need	This might need a few adjustments / I need a hand here / I need healing
Let	Let me patch you up / Let's stop the payload / Everyone ready? Let's do this!

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Shield, Defense, Armor, Enemy, Attack

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Brigitte Lindholm is another hero who uses her real name as codename in the game. She carries four relevant pieces of information in her bio stats, which is her occupation as mechanical engineer, her Swedish nationality, her role as a support hero and her family relation to two heroes in the game. The statement in her catchphrase *"I will prove myself!"*, could be related to her young age, lack of experience and the fact of being an apprentice of a respectful hero. An interesting issue is that, although she is Reinhardt's apprentice, she is not mentioned as daughter of Torbjörn, as such information was added as additional. In relation to her thematic lines, the first one *"It's just a flesh wound"* referring to *Monty Python* concerns her occupation, since it was said by a knight character, assimilating a lot with Brigitte's identity in the game. The second line, however, pays homage to her nationality with a wordplay changing the name of the athlete to her last name.

Concerning the transitivity system, one process is relational (*is*), one is mental (*need*), and three are material (*get*, *take* and *let*). The relational process is used to connect the verbal elements of the sentence, to give information and to claim statements (*My barrier is about to go! / The best offense is a good defense / This is all part of the learning process*), showing traits of her personality. The mental process 'need', although being a mental process in the occurrences, is used to demand an action from other players (*I need*

*a hand here / I need healing*). All the material process are mostly related to actions concerning the objective of the game, defending the point, the payload or presenting her skills to support her teammates (*Get away from me / Get behind me / Don't get caught red-handed / Let's stop the payload / Take cover, behind you / My barrier can't take much more!*).

Regarding the most frequent nouns, the first three relate to her abilities and skills in the game: *Shield, Defense* and *Armor*, while the other two: *Enemy* and *Attack*, shows her concerns with the game's match objective. The overall comparison of her speech with her bio and description seems to be coherent since they focus on the same aspects. Regarding the social actor's framework, although being mostly recognized by her function, the mentioning of being Reinhardt squire<sup>37</sup>, and also the constant need to prove herself as capable, as seen in her catchphrase, would also classify her as a relational identification actor. To conclude, her verbal identity creates a determined hero that even at a young age, has a well-established discourse to execute her function to protect people. Her verbal texts also show bits of her nationality and relationships, while presenting a focused hero who is in line to prove herself that she can be as good as the ones who came before.

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<sup>37</sup> Squire is a shield bearer or armor bearer of a knight. Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/squire>



## THE MULTIMODAL PATHWAY | HEROES ©Version 1.0

### D.VA

#### ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 28 - D.Va



Source: Official website

#### IN ACTION

Figure 29 - D.Va in action



Source: Game screenshot

### VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** D.Va is a former professional gamer and a current mech pilot in her country South Korea. In her original skin, she is depicted crossing arms leaning against her mech, while presenting a serious facial expression. D.Va in the game is usually inside her mech, as seen in the image in action, therefore, she positions herself to pilot the mech. However, when she loses her mech in battle she becomes herself.

**Possessive Attributes:** D.Va's outfit resembles a sort of uniform in a full bodysuit matching her most noticeable possessive item: The Meka. Meka is a mechanized armored drone unit developed by the South Korean government to protect urban environments in future, in which D.va is a mech pilot. In the image, it is also observed that the mech is equipped with a twin short-range rotating cannon as weapons.

The main colors are pink, white and blue. In addition, she also wears a headgear that resembles headphones.

**Symbolic Attributes:** D.Va's visual appearance depicts a young

Figure 30 - K-pop  
Group *Loona*



and slender Korean girl with long brown hair and brown eyes. As one of the youngest heroes among the cast at the age of 19, D.Va's overall appearance seems to be inspired by K-pop idols, a genre of pop music widely popular not only in South Korea, but around the world

(figure 30<sup>38</sup>). Also, the visual creation of D.Va suggests references to the anime<sup>39</sup> *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, in which the narrative also revolves around mechs

(figure 31<sup>40</sup>). In addition, D.va has pink face-paint in her face that looks like whiskers, which is a visual element very common in Japanese animations.

Figure 31 - Neon Genesis Evangelion



### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 32 - D.Va Skin: **Palanquin**

<sup>38</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.koreaboo.com/news/loonas-newest-member-next-k-pop-visual/>

<sup>39</sup> Anime is a word used by people living outside of Japan to describe cartoons or animation produced in Japan.

<sup>40</sup> Retrieved from [https://aminoapps.com/c/anime/page/item/neon-genesis-evangelion/rntq\\_ILGZgzVwBQ1a6nkWExqEB75zK](https://aminoapps.com/c/anime/page/item/neon-genesis-evangelion/rntq_ILGZgzVwBQ1a6nkWExqEB75zK)



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** In the thematic skin Palanquin, D.Va represents the *Seollal*, the Korean New Year. The holiday usually last for three days and the main activities of many Koreans during this time include visiting family and relatives, wearing hanbok (한복), eating traditional food and performing ancestral rites (KIM, 2010). The Seollal holiday usually occurs on January or February every year, on the second new moon after the winter solstice (CRUMP, 2014).

**Intertextuality:** The correlation of the theme and the character is explicit since D.Va is Korean; hence she portrays one of the most important celebration of Korean culture. The name of the skin refers to the mech customization as a

palanquin, a noble traditional transport in Ancient Korea, named Gama. This type of means of transport was fairly common for royalty all throughout Asia in the past, especially in traditional events. Besides, the palanquins did not roll on wheels and were powered by humans rather than animals (YEON-SIK, 2018).

Figure 33 - Korean women wearing hanbok



**Visual Text:** In the skin, D.Va is wearing a sort of hanbok (Figure 33<sup>41</sup>), the traditional Korean dress for semi-formal or formal events during traditional occasions such as the Seollal. However, the skirt traditionally goes all the way down to the floor, hence, it was adapted as a mini skirt, while her mech is transformed in a Gama, as mentioned before.

**Theme Categories:** World Culture and Holidays.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
<b>Real Name:</b> Hana Song (송하나) <b>Age:</b> 19 <b>Occupation:</b> Pro Gamer (formerly), Mech Pilot, Actress <b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank		<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Female <b>Nationality:</b> South Korean <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE	
<i>D.Va is a former professional gamer who now uses her skills to pilot a state-of-the-art mech in defense of her country.</i>		<i>"I play to win!"</i>	
THEMATIC LINES			
<p><i>"Ready, player one!"</i> - It is a line she says during the set-up of the game, that is, the seconds the teammates are locked together in a place before entering the map. The quote is a reference to classic video game arcade machines that displays this message in the screen<sup>42</sup>.</p> <p>In addition, not as a specific reference but as a whole theme, D.Va has several voice lines derived from the gaming culture. Some examples are: <i>"GG!"</i>, <i>"Level up!"</i>, <i>"Is this easy mode?"</i>, <i>"D.Va one, bad guys zero."</i>, <i>"Here comes a new challenger!"</i>, <i>"I'm #1!"</i>, among others.</p>			
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS			
VERB	OCCURRENCES		
Is	That is a star performance / That is cheating / That one's for my fans		
Get	Get away! Nice shot! / Don't get caught! / I can't wait to get into the fight		
Let	Let's all work together / Let's get it moving / Let's knock them back		

<sup>41</sup> Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean\\_New\\_Year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_New_Year)

<sup>42</sup> Coincidentally, *"Ready Player One"* is also the title of a movie released in 2018, in which has a cameo of the Overwatch character *Tracer*.

Have	Aww you shouldn't have / All we have to do is win this round / I'm gonna have to shoot you down
Play	When you play a game, you should win / Great team play! / I play to win, is this easy mode?
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Game, System, Point, Fight, Enemy	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>Hana Song changed her name to D.Va, not only for Overwatch but for her career, since, as mentioned, she is a former pro gamer, an actress and a current mech pilot. The name is a word play on Diva, a term for a female singer and/or a woman who behaves as very special and/or important<sup>43</sup>. Accordingly, one of her voice lines (<i>That one's for my fans</i>) adds up to such correlation. Her short catchphrase "<i>I play to win!</i>" sets her objective in the game and the tone and theme of most of her verbal text, which is related to video games. As already mentioned in her thematic lines, most of her voice lines are slang of the gaming community, correlating to her former occupation.</p> <p>Concerning the transitivity analysis, she has two relational processes (<i>is</i> and <i>have</i>), and three material processes (<i>get</i>, <i>let</i> and <i>play</i>). Her relational processes connect and identify elements in the sentence, while also showing traits of her personality (<i>That is a star performance / That one's for my fans / Aww you shouldn't have</i>). On the other hand, the material processes concern her actions in the game. However, some of D.Va's orders and requests are not imperatives, in an attempt to create a more empathetic character (<i>Let's all work together / Nice shot!!</i>), and as a contrast to her celebrity and competitive personality (<i>Let's knock them back / I can't wait to get into the fight / When you play a game, you should win</i>). With this, her experience through the transitivity system varies even inside the same process, which might be an intentional and smart way to use verbal texts to express her dynamic and energetic personality.</p> <p>The main thematic of her occurrences, besides the objective of the game match, rely on her fame and her gaming related vocabulary. Accordingly, all of her nouns (<i>Game, System, Point, Fight</i> and <i>Enemy</i>) concern the game Overwatch and also her gaming vocabulary, as D.Va promotes a sort of meta-game situation as a gamer talking about games - playing a game inside a game. In relation to the social actors' approach, D.Va is a classificational actor, since despite having her function mentioned, her private life as celebrity and her passion for video games are more present and explicit in her verbal lines. When an actor</p>	

<sup>43</sup> Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/diva>

is under classification on social actors, it means a general class, such as age, sex, nationality (VAN LEUWEEN, 2008), or in her case, her former job and now hobby as a gamer.

The correlation of her description with her verbal lines is coherent, as it mostly mentions her current job to protect her country. However, since my data is only a cut, in the game, D.Va has several lines in Korean language where she makes reference to her country. To conclude, D.Va's verbal identity is virtually created with a metalanguage of video games due to the several references. However, some relevant traits of her character, such as her role as a tank, are not much explored. Yet, D.Va's unpredictable personality makes her a charismatic character with a verbal text that may evoke nostalgia and familiarity among a lot of gamers.

## DOOMFIST

## ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 34 - Doomfist



Source: Official website

## IN ACTION

Figure 35 - Doomfist in action



Source: Game screenshot

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Doomfist has a passion for battle and martial arts. In his original skin, he is depicted in a slight oblique angle, while raising his right arm and making a fist with the left hand, as his figure displays a muscular build. In relation to his movement, as observed in the image in action, there is a focus on his special right arm and a punch. Hence, Doomfist's movements resemble the use of martial arts as a close-combat fighter instead of focusing on distance shooting weapons.

**Possessive Attributes:** The main possessive attribute related to the character is in his right prosthetic arm. According to the game narrative, Doomfist lost his right arm during a battle and later decided to wear a powerful prosthetic which gave him several powers. In terms of visual elements, his 'fist' is widely

noticeable due to its salience. His outfit is mostly made by a pair of white pants, some gear equipment and red fabrics tangled his waist and arm.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Doomfist is a character with a visible prosthetic arm due to a disability. The prosthetic arm became his main iconic element, giving him power and several abilities. Furthermore, although broad and generic, the bodypainting throughout his face and body suggests a visual cultural element that correlates to his nationality and heritage as Nigerian. According to the game narrative Doomfist is descended from Yoruba, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Yoruba constitute about 88 million people within Nigeria and over 120 million worldwide, as the majority of this population is from Nigeria, making up to 24% of the country's population, according to the CIA World Factbook <sup>44</sup>.

Figure 36 - Representation of Yoruba culture in body painting



Nowadays Yoruba's elements are becoming more visible in popular culture due to the works of Nigerian Painting Artists (Figure 36<sup>45</sup>) in partnership with companies like *Nike* and popstars like *Beyoncé*<sup>46</sup>.

#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 37 - Doomfist Skin: **Avatar** and **Spirit**

<sup>44</sup> Source: Nigeria at CIA World Factbook: Yoruba 24% (undated estimate) out of a Nigerian population of 214,028,302 (estimate for the year 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@EscoBlades/the-body-paint-and-the-spirit-5f5a574624e7>

<sup>46</sup> Source: [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/ypknbw/laolu-senbanjo-beyonce-nigerian-body-painting-artist](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ypknbw/laolu-senbanjo-beyonce-nigerian-body-painting-artist)





Source: Game screenshot Collage

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skins Avatar and Spirit are based on the same theme with only color changing adaptations. The skins suggest a reference to the Orishas, which are the Yoruba people deities<sup>47</sup>. Orishas are also often referred as spirits that reflect the gods of the Yoruba religion, having control over specific elements of nature, while also a form of intermediation between humankind and the supernatural (JOHNSON; OYINADE, 2004). In addition, Brandon (2018) sees an Orisha as a complex multidimensional unity linking people, objects and powers.

**Intertextuality:** During the 18th century, thousands of Yoruba people were enslaved and transported to the Americas. Spread mostly throughout South America, the slaves were able to reestablish the worship of the orishas and maintain it during slavery and after its abolition (BRANDON, 2018). In countries like Brazil, the Candomblé religion represents a strong mark of the Yoruba influence as Orishas are commonly

Figure 38 - illustration of Yoruba's Orisha *Shango*



<sup>47</sup> Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/orisha>

worshipped. Concerning the correlation to Doomfist' character, both skins present the hero paying homage to his ethnic history: while different from his original skin, the thematic skins represent explicit cultural references.

**Visual Text:** In both skins Doomfist is covered with soft textile fabrics and fur, while his iconic fist is adapted to create a sort of Yoruba mask. Also, the hero has painting marks throughout his face and body. Since the skins have similar appearance, what distinguishes them apart is the colors red and blue. The first skin named Avatar presents the hero with red skin, representing a red orisha, suggesting a relation to the orisha Shango (God of Fire, Lightning and Thunder) (Figure 38<sup>48</sup>), while the second skin named Spirit, presents the hero with blue skin, representing a blue orisha, which is probably a relation to Yemoja (Mother of Waters).

**Theme Categories:** World Culture and Religion.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Akande Ogundimu  <b>Age:</b> 45  <b>Occupation:</b> Mercenary  <b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human  <b>Sex:</b> Male  <b>Nationality:</b> Nigerian  <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No  <b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes / Lost an arm in battle and replaced with a prosthetic.</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>One of the leaders of Talon, Doomfist is determined to plunge the world into a new conflict that he believes will make humanity stronger.</i></p>	<p><i>"Only through conflict do we evolve."</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	
<p><i>"So mean, I make medicine sick"</i> – The voice line is a straight reference to a quote said by boxer <i>Muhammad Ali</i>, during an interview at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York leading up to the famous fight against <i>George Foreman</i> in 1974.</p> <p><i>"K.O."</i> – The voice line means the acronym for "knock out". The line in the game, considering Doomfist's abilities, is most likely a reference to the <i>"Street Fighter"</i> game franchise, as the iconic line</p>	

<sup>48</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/472737292115996884/>

(K.O.) shouted by the game narrator when a character wins the fighting match. The term nowadays has become an iconic part of gaming and popular culture.

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Is	One punch is all you need. / Our enemies defeat is at hand / My work is not done
Get	Get in position / You don't want to get in the way of this / Move or get run over
Take	Behind you, take cover / I take it on the chin / It'll take more than that to stop me
Have	I have something right here for you / I always have the last word / Didn't have enough?
Know	I know you can do better / You know my name / You know why

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Battle, Meteor, Enemy, Strike, Win

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Due to the power of his special prosthetic arm, Akande Ogundimu was named Doomfist. Described as a mercenary, Doomfist is part of the villains in the game narrative of Overwatch. In his catchphrase “*Only through conflict do we evolve*”, the hero claims his main perspective through an ideology that war might represent a positive action for the development of a society. His thematic lines refer mainly to his role in the game as damage and his skills. As mentioned, the hero's abilities resemble his identity as similar to fighting game characters, as both the external cultural correlation relates him to the late popular boxer Muhammad Ali and the expression K.O.

Concerning the transitivity analysis, the verbal text of the hero presents two relational processes (*is* and *have*), two material processes (*get* and *take*) and one mental process (*know*). The mental process is mainly used to show intimacy to another hero (*I know you can do better / You know my name*). The material processes are related to orders and requests to be performed in the game and also a way to threaten, since they represent a possible action the participant might do (*Behind you, take cover / Get in position / You don't want to get in the way of this / Move or get run over*). The relational processes are used to identify and attribute the verbal elements in the sentence, as they also show traits of his personality in a threatening way (*One punch is all you need / / I have something right here for you / I always have the last word / Didn't have enough?*).

In relation to the most frequent nouns seen in his speech, three of them relate to the game battle: *Battle*, *Enemy* and *Win*, while two of them relate to his abilities *Meteor* and *Strike*. Regarding social actors,

Doomfist is described as the leader of Talon and a mercenary, which in addition to being his function, mercenaries also represent a class. Hence, Doomfist can be categorized as a functionalized and classificational actor, since his role as mercenary makes him produce several specific correlated verbal texts, such as the threats. With that, the description and catchphrase are coherent with his voice lines and his role in the game as damage. Overall, Doomfist's verbal identity is created inspired by the classic characters of fighting games and also with several personal traits that marks his occupation as a villain with an explicit ideology in the game - a skilled mercenary character seeking conflict.

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GENJI

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 39 - Genji



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 40 - Genji in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Genji is a complex character within the narrative, as a cyborg ninja who follows Zenyatta's mentorship to wisdom. In his original skin, the hero is depicted in an almost frontal angle with both hands making a fist. Since he is a ninja, his moves are coherently quick, as his pose and movements are similar to ninja's common abilities, resembling a cautious figure who is ready for action.

**Possessive Attributes:** Genji's weapon, as seen in the image in action, is a katana (Figure 41<sup>49</sup>), a traditional Japanese sword, aided with additional advanced technology. Figure 41 - Japanese Katana Sword

He also uses shuriken, a Japanese concealed weapon, although not visible in the images due to being a hidden element. His outfit is basically his augmented cyborg body with a mask in grey colors and green hints.

**Symbolic Attributes:** In addition to being a possessive attribute, the katana sword also represents a mark of Japanese culture and history, since they were commonly used by the samurai in ancient and feudal Japan (KAPP, KAPP, YOSHIHARA, 2013).

Figure 42 - Gray Fox character from Metal Gear



Another issue relates to the visual identity created for the hero as a cyborg ninja, since it shares several similarities with the character *Gray Fox* (Figure 42<sup>50</sup>) from the popular video game *Metal Gear* (KONAMI, 1987). Hence, the game *Metal Gear* was one of the first to create a cybernetic-enhanced ninja character using a katana as weapon, which might suggest a source of inspiration for Genji's character.

According to the game narrative, Genji almost died in a battle with his brother, the hero Hanzo. He was rescued by Overwatch who offered to rebuild his body in exchange for his help. Hence, the character's identity lies within the story of his injuries and disabilities and his journey of acceptance of his new body and form. Therefore, the main symbolic element of the cyber ninja deeply concerns his visual identity and the sense of purpose and search for humanity of a character half man half machine.

### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 43 - Genji Skin: **Oni**

<sup>49</sup> Retrieved from <https://gspawn.com/1479-signed-bishu-osafune-sword-katana/>

<sup>50</sup> Retrieved from [https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Gray\\_Fox](https://metalgear.fandom.com/wiki/Gray_Fox)



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** Oni represents a complex and ubiquitous character in Japanese folklore, religion, and popular culture. The term can be translated in English as 'devil, 'demon' or 'ogre' (FOSTER, 2010). They are usually referred to as part, or a class, of yokai<sup>51</sup> within Japanese culture. Toriyama (2016) claims that Oni is “a ubiquitous presence in Japanese folklore and popular antagonists of children’s stories. They are generally portrayed as enormous, muscular humanoids with red or green skin, tiger-pelt togas or loincloths, and a pair of horns” (Figure 44<sup>52</sup>) (p. 88). In addition, Oni throughout the time has “eventually developed into a specific figure (a single type of yokai) characterized by a number of traits that appear again and again in visualizations and descriptions” (FOSTER, 2010, p. 119).

Figure 44 - Oni statue in Noboribetsu, Japan



<sup>51</sup> Yokai are supernatural monsters, spirits, and demons in Japanese folklore.

<sup>52</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/davegolden/8270894151>

**Intertextuality:** Oni represents one of the biggest figures of Japanese folklore, and “a lively presence in contemporary Japanese ritual and festival life” (FOSTER, 2010, p. 124). In addition, Foster (2010) also states that several “ceremonies involving humans wearing Oni costumes are enacted throughout Japan on *Setsubun*”. He adds that “This visualization - the transformation of the invisible vapors of pestilence, famine, and all sorts of bad fortune into a visible, embodied form - is critical to Oni’s

Figure 45 - Oni illustration by Shinonome Kijin in Foster (2010)



pervasiveness in Japan” (p. 125). Therefore, in one form or another, “Oni play a role in thousands of folktales, legends, festivals, and customs throughout Japan” (Figure 45<sup>53</sup>) (FOSTER, 2010, p. 127).

Outside Japan, several entertainment products have exported the image. The Comic Vault (2018) states that, in Western popular culture, due to several Japanese video games such as *Mortal Kombat*, and Japanese animation as *Dragon Ball Z*, the image of Oni has become familiar to Westerners. In addition, Oni figures have also been used as a fashion statement, since Oni is among the best recognized creatures within Japanese culture. It is amongst the most popular characters of Japanese folklore, taking part of Japanese art, literature, theatre and in modern popular culture, such as in video games. Concerning, the correlation to Genji’s character, it mostly relies on his Japanese heritage.

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin presents Genji wearing an Oni mask with horns, while the rest of the body is covered in black fabric with red horns spread throughout. Although thematic skins change the appearance of the hero, it might not affect its salience, height and other features to the game mechanics. Hence, I believe the use of an Oni mask represents a smart form to introduce the Japanese cultural figure into the game while still keeping Genji’s aesthetics, build and shape.

**Theme Categories:** Mythology, Folklore and World Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Genji Shimada (島田源氏)</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 35</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Adventurer</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Cyborg (half human / half robot)</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Male</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Japanese</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> Brother of Hanzo (Hero)</p>

<sup>53</sup> Retrieved from Foster, Michael, D. (2010) *The Book of Yokai: Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore*. University of California Press (p. 126).



	<b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes / Genji was injured in battle and almost killed.
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CATCHPHRASE</b>
<i>Genji Shimada has made peace with the cyborg body he once rejected, and in doing so, he has discovered a higher humanity.</i>	<p>“<i>Mi o sutete mo, myōri wa sutezu.</i>”</p> <p><i>Kanji:</i> 身を捨てても、名前は捨てず。</p> <p><i>English:</i> Even if I sacrifice my body, I will never sacrifice my honor.</p>
<b>THEMATIC LINES</b>	
<p><i>Rōmaji:</i> Senri no michi mo, hito ashi zutsu hakobunari. / <i>Kanji:</i> 千里の道も、一足ずつ運ぶなり</p> <p><i>English:</i> The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. – Genji says this line in Japanese when he gets a multikill, that is, when the player kills all the players from the enemy’s team. The line is a reference to the Eastern philosopher <i>Lao Tzu</i>, who was particularly well known as the founder of Taoism, the philosophy commonly related to the line concerning how great journeys begin with a single step.</p> <p><i>Hitoshirezu kami no yurushi o machi shima ni, kokora tsure naki yo o sugusu ka na.</i> / <i>Kanji:</i> 人知れず神の許しを待ちし間に ころつれなき世を過ごすかな / <i>English:</i> While I wait for God's forgiveness unnoticed, many are the years of pain I have endured. – It is a line Genji says during the game set-up. It is a reference to a poem composed by the fictional character <i>Hikaru Genji</i> from the twentieth chapter of <i>The Tale of Genji</i> (SHIKIBU, 1008).</p>	
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>	
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Is	My heart is a dragon’s heart / Time is against us / The sword is an elegant weapon
Let	Let’s fight fairly / Let’s go again / Let’s hope for a better round
Have	I still have much to learn / I have the upper hand this time / Angela, I have some chocolates for you.... not Swiss
Keep	We must keep it safe / Keep the payload in motion / Can you keep up?
Push	We are losing the objective, push them back / Push forward / Push the payload
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Blade, Skin, Dragon, Soul, Brother	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	

Genji Shimada uses his real name as his codename. According to the game narrative, the Japanese hero spent a long time in Nepal with his master Zenyatta (another hero). As previously mentioned, Genji is a cyborg ninja since he had to have his body rebuilt due to many injuries. In his catchphrase, translated to English, he mentions how body change will never affect his honor. The external thematic lines related to Genji are both spiritual guide messages, mentioning God's forgiveness and the religion Taoism. Hence, his catchphrase, thematic lines and information from his bio, creates Genji as a faithful character.

Concerning the transitivity analysis, the hero presents two relational processes (*is* and *have*), and three material processes (*let*, *keep* and *push*). The relational processes in his occurrences are used to identify elements (*My heart is a dragon's heart / The sword is an elegant weapon*) which also shows his personality through such statements, and also to attribute relations to things (*I have the upper hand this time / Angela, I have some chocolates for you.... not Swiss*), showing a bit of affection towards the hero Angela (Mercy). The material processes are used in different contexts: as a motivational discourse for the team (*Let's fight fairly / Let's go again / Let's hope for a better round*); as a piece of advice related to the objective of the game match (*We must keep it safe / Keep the payload in motion*); and as orders and requests (*We are losing the objective, push them back / Push forward / Push the payload*).

Regarding the most frequent nouns used in his speech, *Blade* and *Dragon* refer to his skills and abilities, while *Skin*, *soul* and *Brother* are personal intimate topics related to his inner issues, mentioning his brother, which represents a relevant part of his game's narrative. His character is described as a person with an already resolved conflict concerning his body being half made of machine, while also stating his acceptance on who he is now. With this, all elements are coherent to his base of operation being in a monastery, according to the game narrative, his thematic lines being spiritual quotes and his nouns being intimate topics and words that evoke a deeper connection as *Soul*. Also, his disability is mentioned as something he has already made peace with.

Under social actors' framework, his occupation as adventurer described in his bio, or his role as a damage hero is not explicit in his verbal text, therefore, Genji is not a functionalized hero. From my perspective, his relation with his brother is a key element in his narrative and verbal speech, which makes him a relational identification actor. Also, the cyborg ninja identity, which is more appealing in the visual elements, appears in his verbal text making him a classificational actor, taking in consideration the attitudes of a cyborg ninja as a class. With that, this pacification of Genji's identity is coherent with all elements presented by the game and produced by the hero's speech. Therefore, according to several verbal elements, his verbal identity is created as a character with a harsh past in search for a higher sense of humanity.

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### HANZO

#### ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 46 - Hanzo



Source: Official website

#### IN ACTION

Figure 47 - Hanzo in action



Source: Game screenshot

#### VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Hanzo is a hero with a confident personality and a strong sense and code of honor. In his original skin, he is depicted in an oblique/frontal angle with a direct gaze at the viewer and both hands (allegedly) in a fist. The hero (brother of the previous hero Genji) has black hair in a samurai hairstyle and a mustache. He also has a large tattoo (Figure 48<sup>54</sup>) from his left arm to his chest depicting an eastern design. Due to his weapon, a bow, Hanzo's movements in action tend to be precise and steady.

Figure 48 - Part of Hanzo's Tattoo



<sup>54</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.tattoodo.com/p/209081>

**Possessive Attributes:** Hanzo's weapon consists mainly of a bow and arrows. His outfit resembles traditional Japanese wear, such as samurai, but with some adaptations due to the cutting and fitting.

Figure 49 -  
Representation of  
Kyūdō



**Symbolic Attributes:** The tattoo represents a symbolic attribute since it correlates to his heritage and culture, depicting a tribal dragon among thunders in the sky. The symbol of the dragon has been part of Japanese cultural mythology for hundreds of years, representing balance, freedom, and good luck. Also, the hairstyle and mustache resemble the figure of a samurai. Suzuki (2014) states that from the medieval period to the beginning of Edo period, facial hair was a strong symbol for men, especially samurais, which created an identity mark. On the other hand, nowadays, the use of facial hair is not 'well seen' in Japan, which created general rule of employment stipulating that people must not have facial hair (SUZUKI, 2014). Last, but not least, the archery is also another visual element that correlates to his Japanese heritage, since the art of *Kyūdō* (弓道), a Japanese martial art of archery (Figure 49<sup>55</sup>), represents a traditional cultural item of Japanese society (HIDEHARU; DE PROSPERO; DE PROSPERO, 1993).

#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 50 - Hanzo skin: **Kubaki**

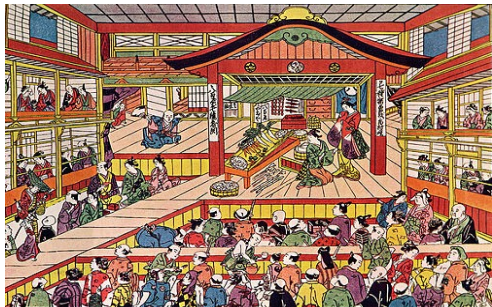
<sup>55</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.at/pin/559079741240216734>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** Kabuki (歌舞伎) is a classical Japanese drama that blends music, dance, mime, and spectacular staging and costuming (Figure 51<sup>56</sup>)

Figure 51 - Kabuki theater illustration



(CAVAYE, 1993). Kabuki dramas are ideally represented by the notion of *kanzen-chōaku*, that is, an ethical principle that promotes the virtue and rejects the vice. The drama is also known for its many dance performances and stylized acting (ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, 2019). Kincaid (1925) explains that the contexts of the plays are mostly related to major events in Japanese history and impossible romances leading to suicide. The customs and make up, called Kumadori, represent strong element in the creation of the characters (Figure 52<sup>57</sup>). Kumadori is one of the

<sup>56</sup> Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okumura\\_Masanobu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okumura_Masanobu)

<sup>57</sup> Retrieved from

<https://www.zimbio.com/photos/Shido+Nakamura/Kabuki+Superstar+Virtual+Diva+Bring+Traditional/6EtT7g0Vtuf>

most recognizable traits of Kabuki, and is applied upon a rice powder face. While the black color is used to exaggerate features, the colors red, blue and brown connotates different meanings (KINCAID, 1925). The Kabuki theatre was proclaimed by UNESCO as an intangible heritage possessing outstanding universal value in 2005, while in 2008, it became part of the UNESCO *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*, a programme to protect and preserve important and intangible cultural heritages worldwide and raising the awareness of their significance<sup>58</sup>.

Figure 52 - Kabuki actor



**Intertextuality:** Considering the influence of Kabuki in Western society, specialist in Japanese theater and culture, Professor Shozo Satō (2006) claims that Kabuki have influenced the Western theatre culture in the last decades, as one of the main relevant traits is the fusion of Eastern and Western aesthetics in some places. The correlation of the reference with Hanzo serves as a homage to the character’s Japanese nationality and heritage with the representation of the traditional art of Kabuki.

**Visual Text:** In the skin, Hanzo is depicted with red lines of Kumadori. According to the visual descriptions of colors (KINCAID, 1925), the kind of makeup used in Hanzo’s skin correlates to a powerful heroic role and values of virtue, courage and honor, due to the color red, which is a direct connection not only to his heritage but his specific identity within the game.

**Theme Categories:** World Culture and Performances.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Hanzo Shimada (島田半蔵)</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 38</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Mercenary, Assassin</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Male</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Japanese</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> Brother of Genji (Hero)</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Mastering his skills as a bowman and an assassin, Hanzo Shimada strives to prove himself as a warrior without peer.</i></p>	<p><i>“With every death, comes honor. With honor, redemption.”</i></p>

<sup>58</sup> Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kabuki-theatre-00163>

<b>THEMATIC LINES</b>	
<p><i>"From one thing, know ten thousand things"</i> – The voice line is a reference from the Kenjutsu<sup>59</sup> book - <i>The Book of Five Rings</i> written by the Japanese swordsman <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i>.</p> <p><i>"Strength does not come from physical capability, it comes from an indomitable will"</i> – It is a line Hanzo says during the set-up of the match, presenting a direct reference to a quote by <i>Mahatma Gandhi</i>.</p>	
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>	
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Is	See that which is unseen / My brother is dead / The enemy team is down
Need	I need healing / I need help / I need armor
Let	Let the dragon consume you! / Hold them, do not let them win / Time grows short, do not let it go to waste
Stop	We cannot stop now, move! / Stop the payload! / Stop them now!
Join	Join me, get the payload / Join me, my ultimate is charging / I am taking the objective, join me
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Dragon, Honor, Enemy, Time, Death	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>Hanzo Shimada uses his real first name as codename on Overwatch. The Japanese hero has his occupation described as Mercenary and Assassin. In his catchphrase, the hero is first described due to his skills and occupation, then, it is stated that he wants to prove how unique he is. The idea conveyed in his bio information and description suggests that, different from his brother Genji, Hanzo wants to prove he is a great warrior, and such need for uniqueness might be related to having a brother of a similar age. In his catchphrase, he justifies his occupation as an assassin stating that moral values such as honor can come from deaths and it can lead to redemption. In one of his thematic lines, he mentions Miyamoto Musashi, known as one of the biggest samurais of History, which serves as an inspiration to Hanzo to master his skills.</p> <p>Concerning the transitivity system, Hanzo presents one relational process (<i>is</i>), one mental process (<i>need</i>) and three material processes (<i>let</i>, <i>stop</i> and <i>join</i>). The material processes are mainly used to give orders and requests to the teammates (<i>Hold them, do not let them win / We cannot stop now, move! / Stop</i></p>	

<sup>59</sup> Kenjutsu is the Japanese art of the sword.

*the payload! / Stop them now! / Join me, get the payload*). With the exception of a piece of advice (*Time grows short, do not let it go to waste*) and a statement referring to his ability (*Let the dragon consume you!*). The relational process is used to give some information of different purposes - related to the objective of the game match (*The enemy team is down*), personal information (*My brother is dead*) or philosophical advice (*See that which is unseen*). The mental process is only used as a request ordering something (*I need healing / I need help / I need armor*). Regarding the most frequent nouns, *Dragon*, the most frequent, relates to his ultimate ability, while *Honor* and *Death* concern his ideology, and *Enemy* and *Time* relate to the game match objective.

According to social actors, despite the fact he has a brother in the game, different from Genji, Hanzo does not mention him, at least in my data selection cut. The focus on enemies' death and the mastering of his skills would make him a functionalized actor, since his role as assassin and his role in the game as damage are well constructed verbally. Moreover, he is a classificational actor since his interests in mastering his skills in Japanese martial arts would classify him into a class. With that, his speech is coherent with his description, being an intentional contrast from his brother Genji, gaining his own highlight as a mercenary assassin who follows his objective, while also mentioning some nationality marks.



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**JUNKRAT**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

Figure 53 - Junkrat



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 54 - Junkrat in action



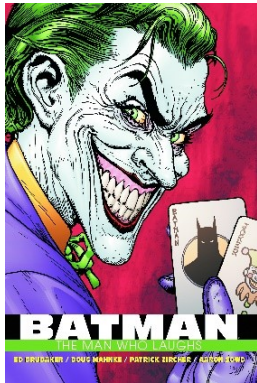
Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

**Carrier:** Junkrat is a lawless demolitionist and an international criminal with a trigger-happy nature. In his original skin, he is depicted in a full-frontal angle not looking straight into the viewer but to the side (which is a different visual trait comparing to all the heroes up to now). He has blond hair with black endings due to self-burnings. He presents a skinny figure and his pose is slightly declined, often hunched over, since he carries several objects on his back. Also, Junkrat presents a visible disability, hence, the use of a prosthetic leg makes his movements being steady and open in the lower part, as seen in the image in action. His facial expression presents a smiley hero, which is another visual feature that sets him apart from the other heroes up to now.

**Possessive Attributes:** Junkrat carries a sort of tire with spikes in his back, while his outfit is a combination of deconstructed yellow and green fabrics with grenades in the chest area. Also, in addition to his leg, Junkrat also lost his right arm, using another prosthetic. Therefore, on his left side he wears

Figure 55 - *Joker* from DC Comics



boots and gloves, while his right side is mostly made by the prosthetics. His weapon, as seen in the image in action, is a grenade Launcher that throws explosives.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Junkrat's prosthetics represent a symbol of his disability. Even though some heroes have prosthetics that are not easily identified, Junkrat is one of the few heroes with explicit disabilities due to the use of a peg leg. In the game narrative, the hero is a sort of anti-hero, as a criminal along with his partner - the hero Roadhog. However, Junkrat also represents the comic relief of the narrative. A visual symbolic element in his figure is the constant open smile and wide eyes, creating a sort of obsessive figure, suggesting a resemblance to the character *Joker*, the supervillain of DC Comics (Figure 55<sup>60</sup>).

Junkrat's visual identity is also supposed to represent the citizens of *Junkertown*, a fictional location in the game inspired by the Australian Outback. Thereby, the tanned body, blond hair, state of clothes, use of explosive gears and burned marks are supposedly to be symbolic marks deriving from his fictional place, according to the game narrative. In addition, such visual elements also suggest a relation to the 2015's movie *Mad Max* (Figure 56<sup>61</sup>), which presents a post-apocalyptic world across the Australian outback desert area with characters similar to Junkrat.

Figure 56 - *Mad Max Fury Road*



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 57 - Junkrat Skin: **Cricket**

<sup>60</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.denofgeek.com/comics/joker-dc-comics-reading-order-best-stories>

<sup>61</sup> Retrieved from [https://movieposters2.com/Mad-Max-Fury-Road-movie-poster\\_1255788.html](https://movieposters2.com/Mad-Max-Fury-Road-movie-poster_1255788.html)



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin represents the sport Cricket. Cambridge online dictionary defines Cricket as a "a sport in which two teams of eleven players try to score runs (points) by hitting a small, hard ball with a bat, and running between two sets of small wooden posts"<sup>62</sup>. Although it has its origin in England (BARCLAYS, 1986), nowadays, Australia is one of the countries where the sport is the most popular. The game has been played in Australia for over 210 years and is popular in its international, domestic and local levels (POLLARD, 1986).

**Intertextuality:** Throughout the world there are several adaptations of the cricket sport with different names and different rules. Considering the correlation to the character, the skin is part of the summer games event, in which skins are related to a sport. In this case, Junkrat received an outfit presenting

Figure 58 - Australia Cricket uniform



<sup>62</sup> Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/cricket>

the sport in the colors of the official Cricket Australian Cricket Team (Figure 58<sup>63</sup>), which may refer to his nationality.

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin is made of a usual Cricket uniform in the colors yellow and green. In addition to the sport's visual elements, the skin also changes Junkrat's leg peg for a cricket bat.

**Theme Category:** Sports.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
<b>Real Name:</b> Jamison Fawkes <b>Age:</b> 25 <b>Occupation:</b> Anarchist, Thief, Demolitionist, Mercenary, Scavenger <b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage		<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Male <b>Nationality:</b> Australian <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes / He wears two prosthetics: right leg and right arm.	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE	
<i>Junkrat is an explosives-obsessed freak who lives to cause chaos and destruction.</i>		<i>"It's a perfect day for some mayhem."</i>	
THEMATIC LINES			
<p><i>"Why so serious?"</i> – Junkrat says this line when he kills the hero Reaper. The line is a possible reference to a famous quote said by the <i>Joker</i> character played by late <i>Heath Ledger</i> in the 2008's movie <i>Batman: The Dark Knight</i>. The quote is another one that became iconic in popular culture.</p> <p><i>"Hooley dooley..."</i> – It is a line Junkrat says when he respawns<sup>64</sup> during a game match. The line refers to an old Australian exclamation of surprise, similar to <i>"holey moley"</i> in the United States, for instance.</p>			
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS			
VERBS	OCCURRENCES		
Is	This bomb is for you / My genius is finally recognized / Time is money friends		
Have	Have a nice day / We don't have all day /The point is mine, you can't have it		

<sup>63</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.cricket.com.au/news/champions-trophy-playing-uniforms-kit-clothes-australia-england-south-africa-pakistan-india/2017-06-01>

<sup>64</sup> Respawn in video games is a term usually referred when a character dies and then reappears moments later. In the case of Overwatch, when the player's hero dies, it takes around 10 seconds to 'born' again from the team base.

Got	I've got a leg up on the competition, really, just one / What a bunch of misfits and freaks we got here, I love it / We're gonna win this, we got this!
Blow	They're taking the point, time to blow it up / If at first you don't succeed, blow it up again! / Time to blow it up again
Give	Let's give them something to think about / I give it a ten / I give it a three

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Fire, Bomb, Mayhem, Enemy, Love

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Jamison Fawkes uses Junkrat as his codename, which accordingly matches his crazy behavior and personality. Also, the fact that he is an international criminal also contributes to the creation of a codename for the hero. In his catchphrase, he states that it is a perfect day for some mayhem, that is, acts of chaos and disorder. In one of his thematic lines, he refers to the character *Joker*, who in addition to sharing visual similarities, presents eccentric and twisted personalities. The second external reference concerns his nationality, referring to an old Australian idiom, which creates a sort of naivety since such line is said after he is killed in battle, while might also refer to his unprepared and disorganized behavior with his possessive attributes – the explosives and bombs.

Concerning the transitivity system, the hero presents two relational processes (*is, got and have*), and three material processes (*blow, got and give*). The material processes are used to describe different experiences - as in motivational discourse (*We're gonna win this, we got this! / If at first you don't succeed, blow it up again!*), advice to the group (*They're taking the point, time to blow it up / Let's give them something to think about*) and jokes (*I give it a ten / I give it a ... three*). The relational processes present concern (*Time is money friends / We don't have all day*), affection (*This bomb is for you / Have a nice day*) and a personal statement (*My genius is finally recognized*). Therefore, the main theme of the occurrences are discourses of motivation, affection, irony and advice. In addition, his disability is mentioned in one occurrence in an ironic way (*I've got a leg up on the competition, really, just one*), referring to his prosthetic leg.

Regarding the most frequent nouns used, the first three are coherent with his background information and abilities in the game *Fire, Bomb and Mayhem*, while *Enemy* refers to the game match objective and *Love*, which he sometimes uses to refer to other characters, shows his affection towards his teammates. According to his description, his personality is mostly summarized with the adjective *freak*

and the relation with explosives, bombs, chaos and destruction, which is also observed through the verbal analysis.

Under the social actors' framework, the fact that Junkrat presented an adjective in his official description makes him an actor with appraisal, since he is judged in the game description as freak, which already molds how his verbal identity is created. With several occupations, his constant mentioning of bombs and explosions relates to his job as a Demolitionist, making him also a functionalized actor. In addition, the fact that he carries an Australian idiom in his speech also correlates him to his nationality, which represents a class he is part of. Therefore, through his verbal text, Junkrat can be categorized by his function, identified by a class (nation) and also appraisal.

With that, although most of the verbal elements are coherent in creating a 'freaky' obsessed personality for Junkrat, from my perspective, his affectionate and emotional side is omitted in the information provided by the game, but present in his speech, as in - his catchphrase (*a perfect day...*), thematic line (*why so serious*) occurrences (*have a nice day*), jokes and one of the most frequent nouns being the word *Love*. To conclude, Junkrat's verbal identity creates this sort of anti-hero persona, having a dangerous taste, a criminal record, but an optimistic and charismatic personality.

## LÚCIO

## ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 59 - Lúcio



Source: Official website

## IN ACTION

Figure 60 - Lúcio in action



Source: Game screenshot

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Lúcio is a famous DJ and freedom fighter from Brazil. In his original skin, he is depicted in an oblique/frontal angle with his arms crossed and a direct gaze at the viewer. He has brown dreadlocks and portrays a closed mouth smile. His pose and movements in the game are quick and sliding as he is always wearing rollerblades. As seen in the image in action, his quick movements resemble a running position.

**Possessive Attributes:** Lúcio is a hero equipped with several gears throughout his outfit such as special gloves and glasses. However, the rollerblades represent the main possessive attribute since they also relate to his abilities in the game, as being able to share fast movements to his team members who are nearby. His outfit colors are mostly blue, green and

Figure 61 - Lucio's Sonic Amplifier



yellow, referring to the Brazilian flag. His weapon, as seen in the second image, is a sonic amplifier (Figure 61<sup>65</sup>), in which the visual design resembles an amplifier sound box, as a possible reference to his occupation as a DJ.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Several elements contribute to symbolic attributes in Lúcio's visual identity.

Figure 62 – Dreadlocks' hairstyle



The dreadlocks hairstyle (Figure 62<sup>66</sup>) is a visual element part of the Rastafarian religion in Jamaica, used to establish a closer connection between the people of the Rastafari movement (CHARET, 2010). The hairstyle is also common and present throughout several cities in different regions in Brazil, for instance in the city *São Luis do Maranhão*. His weapon, as mentioned, in addition to being used to damage the enemies, is also designed to look like an amplifier sound system, referring to his occupation as a famous Brazilian DJ. In recent years, Brazilian DJs have become well-known worldwide, gaining more and more popularity over the years<sup>67</sup>. The creation of an international famous DJ concerns his backstory, since, according to the game narrative, Lúcio's main objective is to promote positive social change through his music.

#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 63 - Lúcio Skin: **Capoeira**

<sup>65</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.deviantart.com/mistberg/art/Sonic-Amplifier-666166808>

<sup>66</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.dreadlocks.org/our-daily-dread/>

<sup>67</sup> Source: <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/dance/8546068/how-alok-became-south-americas-biggest-edm-star>





Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin represents Capoeira, a Brazilian martial art that combines elements from dance, acrobatics and music (GOGGERLY, 2011). Capoeira (Figure 64<sup>68</sup>) is one of the strongest Brazilian cultural mark, as it was developed by enslaved Africans at the beginning of the 16th century in Brazil. Throughout History, the martial art has been banned, prohibited and tolerated (ASSUNÇÃO, 2005). Nowadays, it represents an active exporter of Brazilian culture, as Capoeira was enlisted in the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* of UNESCO in 2014. According to the foundation, capoeira “promotes social integration and the memory of resistance to historical oppression”<sup>69</sup>.

Figure 64 - Capoeira circle



<sup>68</sup> Retrieved from <https://theculturetrip.com/south-america/brazil/articles/a-history-of-brazilian-capoeira>

<sup>69</sup> Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/capoeira-circle-00892>

**Intertextuality:** Capoeira has been portrayed in media in several films, TV series, comic books and video games. One of the trademarks of Brazilian characters in popular video games is the character *Eddy Gordo* (Figure 65<sup>70</sup>) from the fighting game *Tekken* (1997), who portrays a Brazilian capoeira fighter. Considering the correlation of the theme and Lúcio, the skin is a clear homage to Brazilian's martial art relating to Lúcio's nationality.

Figure 65 - Eddy Gordo from Tekken



**Visual Text:** The skin presents Lúcio in different shades of green and gold, featuring a bare chest and a striped yellow belt while his arms are clad with sports bandage-like sleeves.

**Theme Categories:** Sports and World Culture.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
<b>Real Name:</b> Lúcio Correia dos Santos <b>Age:</b> 26 <b>Occupation:</b> DJ, Freedom Fighter <b>Role in the Game:</b> Support		<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Male <b>Nationality:</b> Brazilian <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE	
<i>Lúcio is an international celebrity and musician who inspires social change through his music and actions.</i>		<i>"Come on, let's bring it together."</i>	
THEMATIC LINES			
<p>Lucio, just like in D.Va's case, has several external verbal references that are all correlated to a same theme, in his case music. Here are some examples:</p> <p><i>"Look out, sniper, check your head!"</i> reference to The Beastie Boys' rap album "Check Your Head".</p> <p><i>"I'm feeling some good vibrations!"</i> reference to The Beach Boys' song "Good Vibrations".</p> <p><i>"When the music hits, you feel no pain"</i> is a reference to a quote from musician Bob Marley - "One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain."</p>			
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS			
VERB	OCCURRENCES		

<sup>70</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.cl/pin/740490363708299365>

Am	I'm feeling it! / I'm in the groove / I'm on the top of the world
Get	Woo, get hype! / We need to get in control / Let's get it rolling
Do	We're gonna do this great / I could do this all day / Let's do this
Check	Check your head, here they come / Found them, check it! / Check this out, hit me
Need	You need to learn to take it easy / I need healing / Anyone need help making a mixtape

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Beat, Party, Sound, Rhythm, Time

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Lucio uses his real name as his codename on Overwatch. His occupations are described as DJ and Freedom Fighter. The Brazilian hero has the role of support in the game, which is coherent with his catchphrase “*Come on, let's bring it together*”, where the hero expresses an idea of motivation and union. His thematic lines are all external references related to popular songs, concerning his occupation as a DJ, while also expressing a sense of positive energy and vibration through verbal texts. Hence, there is a frequent connection to his occupation as DJ and his ideology of fighting for freedom, creating an optimistic and caring character.

Concerning the transitivity analysis, the hero presents one relational process (*am*), one mental process (*need*) and three material processes (*get*, *do* and *check*). The material processes mostly concern motivational discourses to cheer up his teammates (*We're gonna do this great / I could do this all day / Let's do this*) and advice for the teammates regarding the game match (*We need to get in control / Let's get it rolling / Check your head, here they come*). The relational process in first person is used to express how he is feeling (*I'm in the groove / I'm on the top of the world*), which also shows his optimistic and energetic personality. The mental process 'need' concerns – advice (*You need to learn to take it easy*), a common request used in the game (*I need healing*), and an offer for help (*Anyone need help making a mixtape?*). Therefore, the main topic in his occurrences relies on motivating his teammates, offering help, giving advices and sharing personal statements. Also, it is possible to notice some traits of his occupation as DJ in the occurrence “*I'm in the groove*”, and a reference to his abilities of climbing walls in the occurrence “*I'm on the top of the world.*”

Regarding the most frequent nouns, the four most frequent nouns found in his speech (*Beat*, *Party*, *Sound*, and *Rhythm*) all relate to the same theme: music and party, while the noun *Time* might refer to the game objective. In his description, Lúcio is described as an international celebrity and musician, instead

of a DJ, who inspires social change through his music and actions. Considering the social actors, Lúcio is a functionalized actor, since his music background and ideologies as a freedom fighter are deeply present in his verbal text. With that, from my perspective, the verbal description of the game and the verbal speech produced by the hero are coherent in the creation of his identity. Yet, as seen in the visual and in the thematic skin analysis, it seems that nationality traits were present only in his visual elements, while his verbal texts tend to focus on creating a hero within the thematic of music with an optimistic personality to inspire others and, as described by the game, with an awareness to promote social change.

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### MCCREE

#### ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 66 - McCree



Source: Official website

#### IN ACTION

Figure 67 - McCree in action



Source: Game screenshot

#### VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** McCree is an ex-outlaw and now an Overwatch ally. In his original skin he is depicted in an almost full-frontal angle with his right arm holding his weapon up while his left arm, which is a prosthetic, is pointing down. He has brown hair and presents a tanned body. His movements tend to be steady, relating to his weapon type, while his facial expression resembles a serious figure.

**Possessive Attributes:** The hero's outfit is mostly composed by a cowboy hat, a red wrap shawl - named Serape (Figure 68<sup>71</sup>), brown leather gloves, brown pants and

Figure 68 - Mexican Serape

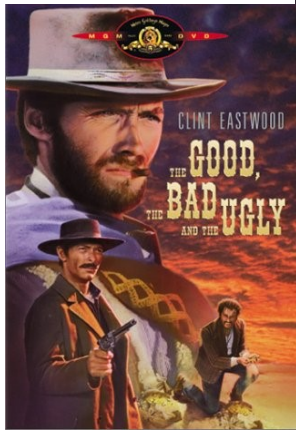


<sup>71</sup> Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mexican\\_Serape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mexican_Serape)

cowboy boots. As mentioned before, he has a prosthetic arm. He is also usually smoking a cigarette. His weapon is a precise revolver named *Peacekeeper*.

**Symbolic Attributes:** McCree's visual symbolic attributes are also symbolic concerning his visual identity. The Serape is a long blanket-like shawl, often brightly colored and fringed at the ends and is commonly worn by men in Mexico (CONKLING, 2009). According to the game narrative, McCree is from New Mexico, Santa Fé, USA. Therefore, since the region is known for a rich Mexican culture, the serape, which was a form of adaption of a poncho, might suggest a reference to his heritage.

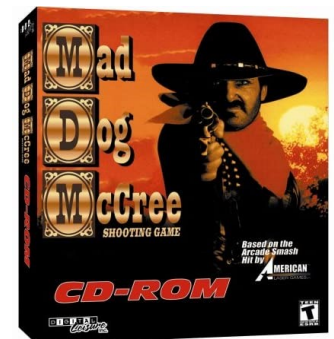
Figure 69 - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly movie cover



With that in mind, the main symbolic visual element of McCree's identity lies in the creation of a cowboy figure, which pays tribute to USA's Western culture. Such correlation is observed throughout his possessive attributes and personality. Western culture is deeply present in his visual identity and can be observed due to some popular Western references, for instance from movies and games. Concerning Western movies, his appearance, as his facial expressions, the use of cigarettes and body position suggest an inspiration from film star *Clint Eastwood* in Western classic movies such as *The Outlaw Josey Wales* and *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* (Figure 69<sup>72</sup>).

Regarding video games, another source of inspiration for the character seems to be the 1990's game *Mad Dog McCree*, which is basically a Western thematic arcade game (Figure 70<sup>73</sup>) that the player uses a light gun to shoot at the screen. Furthermore, there is a correlation not only to the game genre and title, but also the name of the gun (*Peacekeeper*) used by the 1990's game, which is the same as McCree's. With all being said, the hero is another character with a visible prosthetic as a result of a disability.

Figure 70 - Mad Dog McCree game cover



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 71 - McCree Skin: **Sherlock**

<sup>72</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060196/>

<sup>73</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Mad-Dog-McCree-PC/dp/B00006HCDN>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin, part of an Overwatch Anniversary event, portrays McCree dressed up as the popular character *Sherlock Holmes*. The character is part of several novels written by British author *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. Sherlock is a fictional private detective whose clients includes the Scotland Yard. Alongside his partner and friend Dr. Watson, they represent the most famous detective duo in popular fiction<sup>74</sup>. Sherlock's personality traits helped the creation of his strong figure in popular culture, such as his observation skills, deduction and logical reasoning (RENNISON, 2007). In addition, the character also presents Bohemian traits which are mentioned by Dr. Watson in some novels (KLINGER, 2005).

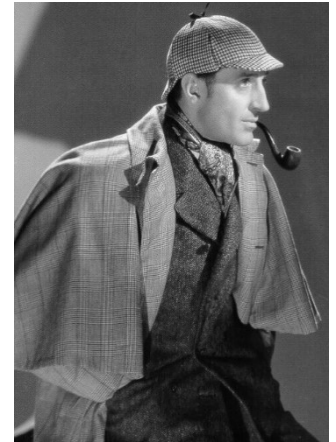
<sup>74</sup> Source: [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/the-definitive-ranking-of-detective-duos\\_uk\\_5746c1fce4b02163fae8648b](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/the-definitive-ranking-of-detective-duos_uk_5746c1fce4b02163fae8648b)

**Intertextuality:** Nowadays, Sherlock Holmes’s character has emerged to several different media from board games to movies, plays, TV series and even video games. Accordingly, the character holds a Guinness World Record as the most portrayed literary human character in film and television history<sup>75</sup>. To exemplify, Haigh (2008) states that before the 2000s there were already over 25,000 stage adaptations, films, television productions and publications featuring the character. The correlation to the hero relies on the similarities of their personalities, as both characters share a unique sense of deduction and justice, while also described as eccentrics and with Bohemian traits.

**Visual Text:** McCree’s Sherlock skin presents the hero in a brown overcoat with burgundy pants. His usual cigarette is changed to a pipe and his cowboy hat is adapted into a deerstalker hat. It is not easy to tell from which of all many different representations of Sherlock the game took inspiration from, but taking in consideration the visual elements, from my perspective it was inspired by the 1939 film series (Figure 72<sup>76</sup>) from 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, due to the outfit details and composition.

**Theme Categories:** Literature and Popular Culture.

Figure 72 - Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes (1939)



BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Jesse McCree</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 37</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Bounty Hunter</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Male</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> American</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes / McCree lost his left arm battling a mission, he had his left arm replaced by a prosthetic.</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Armed with his Peacekeeper revolver, the outlaw McCree doles out justice on his own terms.</i></p>	<p><i>“Justice ain’t gonna dispense itself.”</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	

<sup>75</sup> Source: <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2012/5/sherlock-holmes-awarded-title-for-most-portrayed-literary-human-character-in-film-tv-41743/>

<sup>76</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.basilrathbone.net/gallery/sherlockholmes>



*“Reach for the sky”* – The line is a reference to the 1995’s animated movie *Toy Story*, it is said by the cowboy toy character *“Woody”* when the string in his back is pulled.

*“I’m not good. Not bad. But I sure as hell ain’t ugly”* – The line is a reference to *Clint Eastwood’s* movie *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* from 1966.

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Is	This is reckoning / The point is mine, you’re welcome to join me / You know what time it is
Get	Get your head down / Get on the point / Let’s get a move on
Move	Move’em up, get’em out! / Move it out / Don’t move, stay right there
Need	Think I need a little hair of the dog / I need healing / I need a doctor
Learn	Watch and learn / That’ll learn ya / Where’d you learn to shoot like that?

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Dead, Man, Justice, Bullet, Time

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Jesse McCree uses his last name as his codename on *Overwatch*. Described as a Bounty Hunter in his occupation, the hero has the role of harming his enemies in the game. His catchphrase *“Justice ain’t gonna dispense itself”* might be a reference to his past as a criminal and now an ally and one of the *Overwatch* members whose objective is to help and save the world. Both of his thematic lines rely on the theme of Cowboys, one from the popular *Toy Story* movie and another from the *Clint Eastwood’s* movie *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, which as seen in the visual analysis, also contributed to the creation of his visual appearance. The thematic lines also represent a generational gap in cultural references, which could help the game to achieve a broader age range in terms of acknowledgement of the references.

Concerning the transitivity system, the hero presents one relational process (*is*), two mental processes (*need* and *learn*), and two material processes (*get* and *move*). The material processes mostly refer to a demand in form of an order (*Get your head down / Get on the point / Move it out / Don’t move, stay right there*). The mental processes represent his experience concerning different themes, such as - requests (*I need healing / I need a doctor*), a statement to empower himself (*Watch and learn / That’ll learn ya*), a question showing surprise (*Where’d you learn to shoot like that?*), and even the use of a controversial expression (*Think I need a little hair of the dog*), which means he needs an alcoholic drink

to cure a hangover. With that, his speech mainly revolves around requests, demands and statements concerning his personality and personal habits.

Regarding the most frequent nouns, *Dead*, *Man* and *Justice* concern his past as a criminal part of a gang, as *Dead* also refers to his role in the game, since he often mentions 'dead man' in his speech, something common in Western films, in which his character was heavily inspired. *Bullet* also relates to the same theme with the addition to represent his weapon, while *Time* might relate to the game objective and also to a personal statement when the character dies in the game and respawns.

In his description, there is a focus on his weapon the *Peacekeeper* revolver, referring McCree as an outlaw. The description is also coherent with his catchphrase and the frequent nouns with the word *Justice*. Under the social actor's framework, McCree has his role as damage vastly explicit in his verbal text, what makes him a functionalized actor. In addition, the creation of his cowboy identity also identifies him as an actor within a classification, taking in consideration the cowboys' identity as a class, that is, some social group with specific norms, language and attributes that the participant identifies with.

With this, it is suggested that the main idea was to create an ex-criminal character who still has traits of an outlaw. There was also no mentioning of his disability, while his nationality could be attributed to the North American thematic lines that are external verbal references of his cowboy's identity. His verbal speech is coherent with his role in the game as damage, as he has plenty of orders and commands, and his speech evokes the sense of someone who is there to fight the enemy. To conclude, McCree's verbal text suggests the creation of a fearless and over confident hero who makes justice with his own hands (literally).

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**MEI**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

Figure 73 - Mei



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 74 - Mei in action



Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

**Carrier:** Mei is an intelligent, compassionate and efficient climatologist. In her original skin, she is depicted in an almost full-frontal angle, with a direct gaze at the viewer and her legs crossed together. Her right arm is lifted while the left one is down. In relation to her position, she has one foot in front of the other, being a different position from all the other heroes analyzed up to here. Concerning her movements in the game, as seen in both images, they tend to be more closed, which correlates to her introvert personality. Also, Mei's facial expression presents a close-mouth smile suggesting a sympathetic and gentle figure.

Figure 75 - Mei with her group in Ecopoint Antarctica



a monitoring station for the study of Earth's changing climate (Figure 75<sup>77</sup>). Therefore, her visual attributes, as her outfit, technological gears and the use of colors concern her occupation as a climatologist instead of her heritage. Antarctica's population is made mostly of visiting researchers and tourism<sup>78</sup>. In spite of that, the character presents a symbolic visual trait that may be correlated to her heritage - the hair pin, known as *fa-zan* (in chinese 髮簪). The hairpins (Figure 76<sup>79</sup>) represent an important symbol in Chinese culture, as in ancient China they were used by all genders (SHERROW, 2006). In addition, other symbolic attributes such as the glasses may also help to create an intellectual figure that relates to her character's identity as a scientist and researcher.

**Possessive Attributes:** Main's outfit is composed of a white furry jacket, blue pants and furry boots with grey gears spread all over. She carries a pin in her hair and wears eyeglasses. She is one of the few heroes who carries a companion, a small drone named Snowball. Her weapon, named *Endothermic Blaster*, was hand-made and works as a Launcher of ice, freezing the enemies.

**Symbolic Attributes:** The Chinese hero Mei is a scientist who is member of *Watchpoint Antarctica*,

Figure 76 - Chinese Traditional Hairpin



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 77 - Mei Skin: **Jiangshi**

<sup>77</sup> Retrieved from <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1292998-overwatch>

<sup>78</sup> Source: [https://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/science/can\\_you\\_live\\_in\\_antarctica.php](https://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/science/can_you_live_in_antarctica.php)

<sup>79</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/517632550913092035>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin, part of a Halloween event, presents Mei as a Jiangshi. Jiangshi, also known as Chinese hopping vampire, are undead creatures who are part of Chinese folklore and mythology (LAM, 2009). Lam (2009) claims that they are usually described as corpses wearing Qing dynasty uniforms, the last imperial dynasty of China, with slow movements hopping ahead with their arms outstretched.

**Intertextuality:** Jiangshi legends inspired the creation of a genre of Jiangshi films and literature<sup>80</sup>. They are present in several movies (Figure 78<sup>81</sup>), books, animations and video games, among other types of media.

Comparing to cultural Western representations, Jiangshi is a combination of the imaginative figure of a

Figure 78 - Representation of Jiangshi in movies



<sup>80</sup> Source: [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Jiangshi\\_fiction](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Jiangshi_fiction)

<sup>81</sup> Retrieved from <https://chineseppl.blogspot.com/2011/10/chinese-vampires-happy-hoppers.html>

vampire and a zombie. Considering the correlation to the character, it relies on Mei's heritage, as the reference was heavily inserted in the game through visual and spatial mode, since in addition to the visual skin, Mei gained a cosmetic emote<sup>82</sup> in order to mimic a Jiangshi walk in the game.

**Visual Text:** In the thematic skin, Mei presents the usual characteristics of a Jiangshi, since a common description of Jiangshi in popular culture describes them as creatures with a paper talisman attached hanging off the forehead, wearing a uniform coat-like robe and round-top tall hat characteristic of a mandarin. Also, they are usually visually represented in the color purple while the trademark is the hopping movement (LAM, 2009).

**Theme Categories:** Folklore, Mythology and Popular Culture.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
<b>Real Name:</b> Mei-Ling Zhou <b>Age:</b> 31 <b>Occupation:</b> Climatologist, Adventurer <b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage		<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Female <b>Nationality:</b> Chinese <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE	
<i>Mei is a climatologist who has taken the fight to preserve the environment and protect the world into her own hands.</i>		<i>"Our world is worth fighting for."</i>	
THEMATIC LINES			
<p><i>"You have to let it go."</i> – The line is a straight reference to the song <i>"Let it go"</i> from 2013's Disney movie <i>Frozen</i>.</p> <p><i>"I'm going to have to science the heck out of this!"</i> – The line is likely a reference to the 2015's movie <i>The Martian</i>, in which the character <i>Mark Watney</i> says a similar line <i>"I'm going to have to science the shit outta this."</i></p>			
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS			
VERB	OCCURRENCES		
Get	It's good to get out of the lab / Let's see you get past this / I have to get back in the fight		

<sup>82</sup> Emotes are short spatial animations that each hero has in which the players can choose to perform in-game.

Have	You have to let it go / I'm going to have to science the heck out of this / May you have a prosperous new year
Come	Come join me / Come on everyone, attack! / Look out! Here I come
Let	Let's gather some valuable data on this mission / We can't let them win, come on everyone / They're moving the payload, let's stop them.
Was	That was going great... until the end / That was great, yay / I was only trying to help

#### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Freeze, Ice, Wall, Objective, Enemy

#### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Mei-Ling Zhou uses only half of her first name as codename, since there is no middle name convention in traditional Chinese names, hence, Mei-Ling is her actual first name. The hero is described as a climatologist and an adventurer with the role in the game of damage. Her motivational catchphrase “*Our world is worth fighting for*” shows her main objective and ideology towards what is happening in the current world of Overwatch. In relation to her external references in the thematic lines, one refers to the popular Disney's movie *Frozen*, referencing Mei's abilities and skills of ice and freezing. The other line refers to her occupation as a scientist and a researcher, quoting the sci-fi movie *The Martian*.

Concerning the transitivity system, Mei presents two relational processes (*have* and *was*), and three material processes (*get*, *come* and *let*) as the most frequent ones. The two thematic lines selected are within the relational processes used as modulation (*You have to let it go / I'm going to have to science the heck out of this*), as they present an idea of the character. The relational process ‘*was*’ was also used as a celebration (*That was great, yay*), and a justification (*I was only trying to help*). The material processes are mostly used to state something about the game objective (*Come on everyone, attack! / We can't let them win, come on everyone*), however, different from other heroes, Mei does not use an aggressive tone. In addition, the material process also appears related to her job as a scientist (*It's good to get out of the lab / Let's gather some valuable data on this mission*).

Regarding the most frequent nouns, *Freeze*, *Ice* and *Wall* refer specifically to her abilities and skills in the game, while *Objective* and *Enemy* refer to the game match and her role as damage. Also, the interjection *Sorry* is frequent in her speech, that is why I decided to mention here, even though it is not part of the selection. In several times, Mei apologizes to her teammates through different verbal lines. In relation to her description, she is first described by her occupation and then her objective, which is coherent

with her catchphrase and all verbal text produced by the game. However, what her speech adds up is her apologetic personality with a constant need to justify herself. As a social actor, Mei is described as a climatologist in her official description. Also, her verbal speech helps to reaffirm her occupation as a scientist, making her a functionalized actor. Her nationality is verbally referred in her voice lines in Chinese language. To conclude, her verbal text suggests that Mei's identity is of a hero who believes in a better world and fights in her own way to that, which is not in an aggressive manner, but a more intellectual and kinder one.



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MERCY

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 79 - Mercy



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 80 - Mercy in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Mercy is a brilliant scientist who cares about the wellbeing of the injured. In her original skin, she is depicted in an oblique/frontal angle with one foot in front of the other. Her position figure seems like a pose, since she has the chest open wide. The blonde hero has an ability named *Guardian Angel*, which provides her the skill of flying towards a targeted teammate in order to give assistance and healing. Therefore, as seen in the image in section, Mercy is often seen flying and floating around the scenario, while her movements tend to be soft as it suggests.

**Possessive Attributes:** The hero wears a headpiece in form of a halo, engineered-wings, white body armor, orange cloth on her pelvis and heels. Her main weapon is named *Caduceus Staff*, and is used to

heal or increase the damage of the teammates. She also carries a handgun, although not visible in the images.

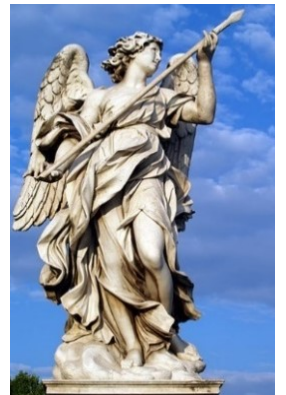
**Symbolic Attributes:** Mercy is a nanobiologist and a field medic with a PhD in Medicine from Switzerland. According to the game narrative, working with Overwatch, Mercy developed the Valkyrie

Figure 81 - Caduceus Staff Symbol



swift-response suit, so that the technology she created could be used in the battlefield. Therefore, her outfit is technologically functional to help people in battles by healing them. Mercy's main visual element are the wings, which when she floats/flyes over are salient and visible, a halo, and an armor shape, which suggests an angelic figure, correlating to her role as a support (healer) and her background story as a researcher and a combat medic.

Figure 82 - Angel statue in Sant'Angelo Bridge, Rome, Italy



Another visual symbolic attribute concerns her healing weapon, which is a direct reference to a Caduceus (Figure 81<sup>83</sup>), the symbolic staff of a herald, which carries a representation of two entwined snakes and two wings at the top of the staff<sup>84</sup>. The symbol is usually associated with messengers by the connection with the ancient Greek deity *Hermes* (ENGLE, 1929). However, the Caduceus staff is often mistakenly used as a symbol of medicine, instead of the Rod of Asclepius, which features only one snake (FRIEDLANDER, 1992). Concerning other symbolic traits, Mercy is a Swiss hero, however, there is not any explicit visual element correlating to her nationality. In the game, there are verbal elements that relate to her occupation as a doctor, however, as a visual analysis, her occupation and role are combined within an angelic aesthetic, which visually appeals to a baroque angel figure (Figure 82<sup>85</sup>).

## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 83 - Mercy Skin: **Valkyrie**

<sup>83</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caduceus>

<sup>84</sup> Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caduceus>

<sup>85</sup> Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponte\\_Sant%27Angelo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponte_Sant%27Angelo)



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin presents Mercy as the Norse mythologic figure *Valkyrie*. The idea makes reference between the name of Mercy's technology suit and the mythological figure. According to Norse mythology, Valkyrie is a female helping spirit of the god *Odin*. The story tells that Valkyries were sent to battlefields by the god *Odin*, in order to choose the ones who were worthy of a place in Valhalla, with the objective to choose those who would die in battle and those who would live (ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, 2020).

**Intertextuality:** Valkyries were often mentioned in several poems from the old Norse attestation (HOLLANDER, 1980). Also, they appear in stylized silver amulets from the Viking Age due to Archaeological excavations (ORCHARD, 1997). In modern culture, Valkyries have been the subject of works of art, comic books, paintings, illustrations (Figure 84<sup>86</sup>), poetry and video games. The thematic skin was not part of

Figure 84 - Brünnhilde Valkyrie from Arthur Rackham, 1910



<sup>86</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/193654852702594895>

any event since it came together with the game release as one of the possibilities of Mercy's cosmetics. From my perspective, the skin is a successful correlation to Mercy's character, since it presents a significant and cultural relation to her role in the game as a healer, to her occupation as a combat medic and also to her nationality, as Swiss folklore englobes bits of Norse mythology.

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin presents Mercy with a blonde long-braided hair and typical Viking clothing and breast-shaped armor, as her trademark halo is adapted into a winged helmet, a symbolic mark of Viking battle armor.

**Theme Categories:** Folklore and Mythology.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<b>Real Name:</b> Angela Ziegler <b>Age:</b> 37 <b>Occupation:</b> Field Medic, First Responder <b>Role in the Game:</b> Support	<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Female <b>Nationality:</b> Swiss <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE
<i>A guardian angel to those who come under her care, Mercy is a peerless healer, a brilliant scientist, and a staunch advocate for peace.</i>		<i>"I'll be watching over you."</i>
THEMATIC LINES		
<p>Mercy is the example of a character whose verbal lines do not refer external cultural references, but her occupation as a field doctor, having phrases used by medical practitioners. Following some examples: <i>"Need a second opinion?", "Always consult your doctor before engaging in strenuous activity", "Ahh... The wonders of modern medicine.", "My prognosis is excellent.", "On a scale of one to ten, how is your pain?",</i> among others.</p>		
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS		
VERB	OCCURRENCES	
Is	Your guardian angel is here / The doctor is in / My prognosis is excellent	
Need	Need a second opinion? / I need healing / We still need you	
Let	Let me get you patched up / Let's achieve our objectives / Let's get you back in the fight	
Watch	Watch behind us / Watch yourselves! / Watch the targets above you	

Call	Did someone call a doctor? / Take two and call me in the morning / Someone call the ambulance
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Healing, Care, Doctor, Damage, Health	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>After joining Overwatch and wearing the technological Valkyrie suit which she developed, Doctor Angela Ziegler started to be known as Mercy and became officially one of the main members of Overwatch. In her bio, she is described as a field medic and a first responder, which relates to her role as a support as one of the most popular healers of the game. In her catchphrase “<i>I’ll be watching over you</i>”, she reaffirms her position of taking care of her teammates in the battles. Her thematic lines, as mentioned before, lack external references, but are mostly correlated to the same theme which is her job, hence, most of her voice lines reinforce her role, current occupation as a field medic and her past occupation as a doctor and scientist.</p>	
<p>In relation to the transitivity system, Mercy presents one relational process (<i>is</i>), one mental process (<i>need</i>), one material process (<i>let</i>), one behavioral process (<i>watch</i>) and one verbal process (<i>call</i>), being the hero, up to now, with the most diverse range of processes’ types in her speech. The relational process is used to identify the verbal elements in the sentence and also to present traits of her role and job (<i>Your guardian angel is here / The doctor is in / My prognosis is excellent</i>). The mental process is used as an offer for help (<i>Need a second opinion?</i>), a request (<i>I need healing</i>) and a statement (<i>We still need you</i>). The material process is used to describe her action towards helping and supporting her teammates (<i>Let me get you patched up / Let’s get you back in the fight</i>). The behavioral process is used to give advice to teammates concerning what they should do, that is, their behavior (<i>Watch behind us / Watch yourselves! / Watch the targets above you</i>). Lastly, the verbal process is not related to the game objective, but specifically to her occupation, using common quotes from doctors to reaffirm her position (<i>Did someone call a doctor? / Take two and call me in the morning / Someone call the ambulance</i>). Nevertheless, even though the type of processes is diverse, the thematic of her speech is usually the same: her occupation as a doctor and her role as support.</p>	
<p>Regarding the most frequent nouns, apart from <i>Damage</i>, which relies on one of her abilities to amplify the damage of her teammates, all the others <i>Healing, Care, Doctor</i> and <i>Health</i> follow the same thematic pattern. According to social actors' framework, Mercy is a very functionalized actor as a combat</p>	

medic and a support hero, as seen explicitly through her verbal text several times. In addition, the fact that her description contains three adjectives - *peerless*, *brilliant* and *staunch*, means that she is already evaluated by the game, being also an actor with appraisalment.

Overall, the game description and bio information are coherent with her speech, since even the verb '*watch*' contained in her catchphrase, is one of her most frequent verbs in speech. Mercy's verbal text seems to create a well-structured character. Another issue concerns her real name Angela and the correlation to her angelic appearance, as seen in the visual analysis, and also present in some of her voice lines (*Your guardian angel is here*) and even in her official description (*A guardian angel to those who...*). To conclude, in addition to several verbal mentions of her occupations, Mercy's verbal text creates the identity of a professional, supportive and effective support in the game, in which the player does not forget she is there to help.

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**MOIRA**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

Figure 85 - Moira



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 86 - Moira in action



Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

**Carrier:** Moira is a fearless and unconventional scientist. In her original skin, she is depicted in a full-frontal angle with both her hands lift up while her fingers seem to be in movement. Her body position suggests steadiness with the exception of her arms and fingers. As a tall hero, she tends to bend the neck during a battle, while as she runs, she pulls her arms back, what many members of a community state is a reference to the *Naruto* run from the popular anime character from the same name. Also, Moira has red hair and presents a serious facial expression and a slender figure.

**Possessive Attributes:** Moira's outfit is a functional combined purple and black fabric with long loose sleeves and side tails with technological gears spread throughout, which she uses in battle. Her main

weapons are her both hands. Through her left hand, she uses the ability to heal teammates, while through her right hand, she uses the ability to cause damage to the enemy team.

**Symbolic Attributes:** As a geneticist, her visual identity is mostly created upon her scientific background, that is, through her outfit and the technology used in her weapon. Therefore, her possessive attributes are also a symbol of her occupation as a scientist.

Figure 87 - Leprechaun Illustration



Another topic concerns her red hair, which might suggest a relation to her heritage as Irish, as, although broad and generic, represents a common association to the country, since Ireland is the second place in the world with most redhead people<sup>87</sup>, also correlating to *St. Patrick's* traditional

Figure 88 - Moira's Close-up



image of the *leprechauns* (Figure 87<sup>88</sup>). Another possible reference regards her face shape, hair color and heterochromia, which is the condition of having two differently colored eyes (Figure 88<sup>89</sup>), leading to a visual resemblance to the late musician *David Bowie*.

### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 89 - Moira Skin: **Glam**

<sup>87</sup> Source: <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/beauty-hair/hair/a32357/redhead-facts>

<sup>88</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/398005685792210322>

<sup>89</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.mic.com/articles/185854/as-the-overwatch-moira-release-looms-some-fans-hope-for-a-transgender-hero>





Source: Game screenshot

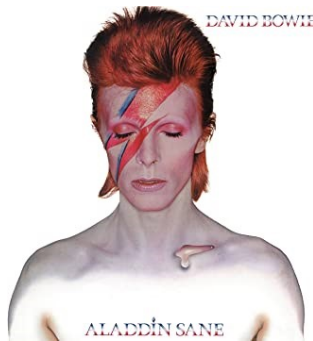
**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin Glam was not part of any event since it came along as one of the hero's cosmetic options. The name of the skin suggests a reference to the musical genre within rock n' roll, while it is also a possible reference to the Rockstar considered by many as the father of Glam rock - *David Bowie*. Several visual elements in the skin suggest a correlation with the musician, such as the painting on her face and the mystical colors of the outfit, which resembles *Ziggy Stardust* (Figure 90<sup>90</sup>), a glam alter ego of Bowie in the early 1970s (BOWIE; CRITCHLEY, 2014).

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<sup>90</sup> Retrieved from <https://bozzodiablo.wordpress.com/2010/05/06/glam-rock>

**Intertextuality:** Ever since Moira was introduced in the game, several members of the community stated some similarities between her appearance and the musician *David Bowie*, such as her heterochromia eyes, slender figure and orange hair, as previously mentioned. Concerning the Glam rock musical genre, nowadays, it is still an inspiration for fashion, movies, and several products of the entertainment industry. Therefore, not only this specific skin but Moira herself as a character represents an honorary interpretation to Bowie. Also, the essence of Glam rock might also be a correlation to Moira's

Figure 91 - David Bowie's Aladdin Sane cover (1973)



character, since the musical subgenre of Glam Rock, as stated by Reynolds (1995), presents androgynous figures, plays with normative gender roles, is aggressive in a clever way and is originally from UK. In addition, although Bowie was born in England, he was an Irish descendent just as Moira's character.

**Visual Text:** The skin presents Moira in symbolic outfits from the 1970s era within the Glam Rock style. The main colors of the outfit are purple and orange, while her hair is blue and her face make up presents a pink shape in the middle, which somehow mimics Bowie's signature ray symbol make up, which he presented in the cover of his 1973's album *Aladdin Sane* (Figure 91<sup>91</sup>). Her overall appearance is androgynous, colorful and even a bit circus-like.

**Theme Categories:** Music and Popular Culture.

Figure 90 - David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust



BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Moira O'Deorain</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 48</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Geneticist</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Support</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human with DNA Mutation</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Female</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Irish</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> Partially disabled / Her right hand is heavily scarred, it has been a result of experimentation or a genetic anomaly.</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE

<sup>91</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com.br/Aladdin-Sane-Remastered2013-David-Bowie/dp/B0106UFD4G>

<p><i>Equal parts brilliant and controversial, Talon scientist Moira O'Deorain is on the cutting edge of genetic engineering, searching for a way to rewrite the fundamental building blocks of life.</i></p>	<p><i>"Science will reveal the truth."</i></p>
<b>THEMATIC LINES</b>	
<p><i>"We are all in the gutter but some of us are looking at the stars" and "A dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world."</i>  – The lines are activated when Moira is in the map <i>Horizon Lunar Colony</i> and uses a <i>Telescope</i> to see the planet earth. Both lines are quotes by the remarkable Irish writer <i>Oscar Wilde</i>.</p> <p><i>"Despair has its own calms."</i> – The line refers to a quotation from <i>Bram Stoker's</i> novel <i>Dracula</i>.</p>	
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>	
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Is	Slowly they realize that failure is all that awaits them / Your involvement in my research is almost ready / The true struggle is for superiority
Need	I believe we need another healer / I need healing / No need to mess about
Allow	Allow me to repair the damage / I will allow none to stand in the way / Let's not allow this to become a habit
Claim	All evidence supports this claim I'm on fire / find their weakness and claim the objective / We must claim the objective!
Feel	Tell me how this feels / How are you feeling / I feel unstoppable!
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Science, Outcome, Research, Progress, Coalescence	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>Moira O'Deorain uses her first name as codename on Overwatch. She is referred in her bio as a Geneticist with the role of support in the game. Her catchphrase <i>"Science will reveal the truth"</i> already presents her position in relation to her ideologies, which is heavily relied on science. The use of the modal <i>'will'</i> is used to express certainty in her statement. Both of her external references in the thematic lines are from literary classics. The one from <i>Oscar Wilde</i>, in addition to showing her personality as feeling superior to others, also relates to her nationality since both the author and the character are Irish. The second line</p>	

from *Bram Stroker's* novel is more complex to analyze, what may suggest a possible ideology that despair or hopelessness could lead to peace.

Concerning the transitivity analysis, the hero presents one relational process (*is*), two mental processes (*need* and *feel*), one material process (*allow*), and one verbal process (*claim*), which also shows diversity among the process types. The relational process is used to present her personality and narrative (*Your involvement in my research is almost ready / The true struggle is for superiority*). The mental processes are used to present her opinion and advice (*I believe we need another healer / No need to mess about*), as a common request (*I need healing*) and as a statement of her inner-self (*I feel unstoppable!*). The material process concerns different themes, as a threatening statement (*I will allow none to stand in the way*), a group advice (*Let's not allow this to become a habit*), and a mention to her role as support (*Allow me to repair the damage*). Lastly, the verbal process is used to refer to the game objective (*Find their weakness and claim the objective!*) and to reaffirm her occupation as a scientist (*All evidence supports this claim I'm on fire*). In addition, the verbal process 'claim' is commonly associated with scientists and researchers, which is coherent with her verbal textual information. Hence, the main thematic in her speech is made of discourses in which she is able to show her superiority upon others, to give advice and to ask for requests.

While her occupation as geneticist and her Irish nationality are constantly present in her verbal text, her role in the game as a support is not much present in the data analyzed. Regarding the nouns she uses the most, four of them are related to science: *Science*, *Outcome*, *Research* and *Progress*, while *Coalescence* refers to one of her abilities. In her official description she is described as "*Equal parts brilliant and controversial*". Under the social actor's framework, Moira is a highly functionalized actor, since her occupation is what defines her the most in the verbal text. However, just as in Mercy's case, the use of evaluative adjectives - *brilliant* and *controversial* identify her as an actor with appraisal. To conclude, Moira's verbal identity is mostly coherent, however, from my perspective, with an exception of one line, her verbal text does not seem to resemble the role of a support character. The fact that she is the support hero from Talon (Overwatch rival) might be a reason for the constant air of superiority and her obsession over science, being unethical several times. Hence, the lack of supportive verbal elements might be intentional to create a persona to contrast Overwatch 'good' support heroes.

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**PHARAH**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

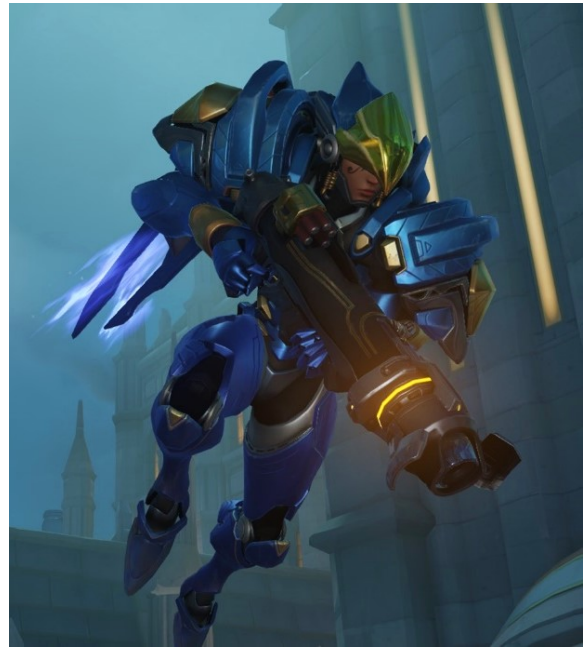
Figure 92 - Pharah



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 93 - Pharah in action



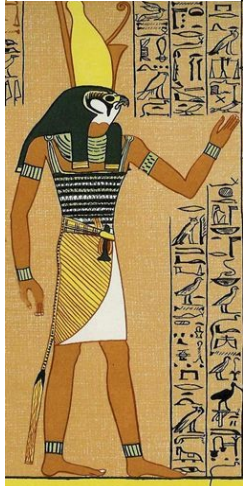
Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

**Carrier:** Pharah is an honorable character who puts her duty to protect people as her main objective in life. In her original skin, she is depicted in an almost frontal angle with one arm pointing down while the other holds her helmet. Her steady and firm position along with her serious facial expression resembles her army training and occupation as a Security Chief. Pharah is the only hero among the cast who can fly (with the exception of Mercy who can float over for some seconds) due to the technology built in her combat armor. Such aerial mobility can be observed in her image in action, as in battle she is usually seen in the air. Pharah has dark brown hair and a tattoo of the eye of Horus' symbol just like her Mother, the hero Ana, however on her right eye.

**Possessive Attributes:** Pharah's main outfit is a combat armor in the color blue with bits of yellow. The armor seems to be made from metal, plate and technological gears which are combined with her weapon, a rocket launcher, as seen in the image in action. When in battle, another visual attribute is the falcon-like helmet, as another armor tool for protection.

Figure 94 - Ancient Depiction of Horus



**Symbolic Attributes:** Pharah's character presents several symbolic elements built in her visual elements. At first, her bird-like figure highlights a clear reference when considering the tattoo of the *Eye of Horus* symbol. Therefore, in addition to the tattoo representing a connection to her mother Ana, Pharah has her whole figure inspired by the ancient Egyptian god *Horus* (Figure 94<sup>92</sup>). Horus is one of the most significant ancient deities in Egyptian religion displayed in the form of a falcon, representing power and healing (LACE, 2012). Horus' figure is also related to the sky, as his right eye is the sun, representing power, and his left eye is the moon, representing healing (PINCH, 2004). Such correlation creates a coherent aspect in the creation of the visual identities of both mother and daughter tattoos in the game, since Pharah in the game has the role of damage (power) and a tattoo on her right side (sun) and Ana has the role of support (healing) with the tattoo on her left eye (moon).

Figure 95 - Pharah and her military party in mission



Another issue concerning her symbolic visual attributes concerns her movements, resembling the military service, since, according to the game narrative, Pharah was part of Egyptian military (Figure 95<sup>93</sup>) and now works for *Helix Security International*, a replacement for Overwatch placed beneath the Giza Plateau on Egypt, in which is another element that correlates to her Egyptian nationality.

## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 96 - Pharah Skin: **Asp**

<sup>92</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/361836151307447444>

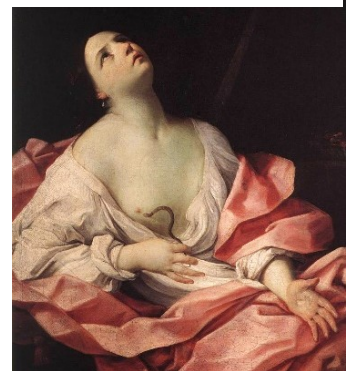
<sup>93</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Pharah\\_Party.png](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Pharah_Party.png)



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** Starting with the name of the skin, *Asp* is the modern anglicization of the word “aspis” which in antiquity referred to one of several poisonous snakes found in the Egypt around the Nile region<sup>94</sup>. The asp was also a symbol of royalty, since its poison was used as a means of execution for criminals (ZUG, 2015). The Greek philosopher and biographer Plutarch claimed that historical figure *Cleopatra* tested various deadly poisons on condemned people and concluded that the bite of the asp was the least terrible way to die (CRAWFORD, 2007). When Cleopatra killed herself, the popular imagery created for centuries, such as in paintings (Figure 97<sup>95</sup>), related to a suicide-by-asp (ZUG, 2015).

Figure 97 - ‘Cleopatra with the Asp’ Painting by Guido Reni, 1630



<sup>94</sup> Source: Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 2007. ISBN 978-0199206872.

<sup>95</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.rct.uk/collection/405338/cleopatra-with-the-asp>

**Intertextuality:** The thematic skin Asp was part of a cosmetic update of the game released in 2018. Judging by the overall appearance, the skin might be an easy interpretation of the historical Cleopatra figure. The symbol and the image of a suicide-by-asp was also immortalized in *Shakespeare's* tragedy *Antony and Cleopatra* (CRAWFORD, 2007), which connects the figure of Cleopatra with the name of the skin. Therefore, the correlation to Pharah's character concerns mostly Pharah's nationality.

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin presents her combat armor all in golden, while in the middle of the outfit, it presents a fabric with the symbol of the Ankh, an ancient Egyptian symbol most commonly used in writing and in Egyptian art to represent the word for "life". The skin also resembles Cleopatra with a similar hairstyle with props in the endings and blue make up in the eyes, suggesting a straight reference to *Elizabeth Taylor's* representation (Figure 98<sup>96</sup>) from the 1963's movie *Cleopatra*.

Figure 98 - Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra, 1963



**Theme Category:** World Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Fareeha Amari  <b>Age:</b> 32  <b>Occupation:</b> Security Chief  <b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human  <b>Sex:</b> Female  <b>Nationality:</b> Egyptian/ Native Canadian  <b>Any Family Relation:</b> Daughter of Ana (Hero)  <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Pharah's commitment to duty runs in her blood. She comes from a long line of highly decorated soldiers and burns with the desire to serve with honor.</i></p>	<p><i>"I will protect the innocent."</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	
<p><i>"You're going to come with me, dead or alive."</i> – The line is a possible reference to the 1987's movie <i>RoboCop</i>, in which the quote is said by the main character.</p>	

<sup>96</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/33284484717163817>



*"I am the Rocket Queen"* – The voice line is a possible reference to the song *Rocket Queen* by the band *Guns N' Roses*, since Pharah's character is a rock n' roll fan due to having a cosmetic dance emote mimicking an electric guitar.

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Get	Clearing the area, get back / Let's get it moving / Remember your training and we'll get through this just fine
Are	Mum, you are amazing / Now we're even / You're going to come with me, dead or alive
Need	I need healing / My teammates need me / Sorry, but I need to jet
Take	Don't take it personally / New year's resolution? Take some time off / Take cover!
Fly	Fly like an Egyptian / Flying the friendly skies / Fly casual

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Rocket, Skies, Systems, Justice, Barrage

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Fareeha Amari uses the name Pharah as her codename, which might be a reference to her Egyptian descent "Pharaoh". She is described as a Security Chief in Egypt and has the role of damage in the game. In her catchphrase "*I will protect the innocent*", Pharah uses the modal 'will' to give certainty to her main objective. One of her thematic lines is a reference to the *RoboCop* movie, which concerns Pharah's military's background and occupation, while the second thematic line concerns her personal taste, mentioning a song by the rock band *Gun n' Roses*, which also refers to her abilities, since her weapon shoots rockets.

Concerning the transitivity analysis, the hero presents one relational process (*are*), one mental process (*need*) and four material processes (*get*, *take*, *come* and *fly*). The relational process explores personal issues of her character (*Mum, you are amazing*), and a speech related to the battle (*Now we're even*). The mental process is used as a justification (*Sorry, but I need to jet*) and a common request (*I need healing*). The material processes are used in different situations but their actions are similarly related to a motivational discourse (*Remember your training and we'll get through this just fine*), commands (*Clearing the area, get back / Let's get it moving / Take cover!*), a reference to her ability to fly (*Fly like an Egyptian / Flying the friendly skies*), her thematic statement (*You're going to come with me, dead or alive*) and also

as a personal statement (*Don't take it personally / New year's resolution? Take some time off*), which also shows a bit justification, since Pharah's discourse tends to be objective and straight-forwarded.

Regarding her most frequent nouns, *Rocket* and *Barrage* are specifically concerned to her abilities in the game, while *Skies* and *Justice* vary since they are used in different situations. The noun *Systems* refers to her physical attributes as her armor and gears. In the occurrence "*Mum, you are amazing*" it is observed her admiration and relation to her mom, the hero Ana, while in the occurrence "*Fly like an Egyptian*", she refers to her nationality. In her official description, the game describes Pharah as a determined character committed to her duty. In addition, they correlate this characteristic of her personality to her family and state her objective to serve with honor.

Considering the social actor's framework, although Pharah is a relational character in the game, the relationship is not much explored. Therefore, under social actors, Pharah's main category is her function as a soldier and Security Chief, while also being a relational identification actor as in few times she is related to her mother through her speech in the game. With that, Pharah's verbal text basically fills all the information provided by the game and is deeply coherent, creating the identity of a determined soldier with a direct discourse and a clear goal in mind. Besides, the hero is usually serious in her statements, yet, presents her personal taste and opinions in some occurrences, as well as her relationship with her mother.

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**SOLDIER: 76**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

Figure 99 - Soldier: 76



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 100 - Soldier: 76 in action



Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

**Carrier:** Soldier: 76 is a former Overwatch command and now a serious loner vigilante. In his original skin, he is depicted in a frontal angle with both arms down in a fist and a steady position. As a soldier, his movements tend to be precise and tactical resembling military positionings. His appearance resembles a middle-aged to elderly man of average build. He also presents a scar near his right eye. In addition to his movements, the hero covers half of his face suggesting a serious and mysterious figure.

**Possessive Attributes:** In his official skin, the hero wears a sort of uniform in the colors white, black, blue and red. He also wears a red visor which covers his mouth, a blue and white jacket, red gloves, dark grey pants and silver boots. His weapon is a rifle, named Heavy Pulse Rifle in the game. The hero

has the ability of *sprint*, as seen in the image in action, in case he needs to evade the location quickly. His red visor is also a functional ability in the game which targets and locks his aim at the enemies.

**Symbolic Attributes:** To start off, Soldier: 76 is now the persona that in the past was *Jack Morrison*. According to the game narrative, the hero was commander of Overwatch for several years (Figure 101<sup>97</sup>). After the Omnic crisis and the downfall of Overwatch, Jack was presumed dead, and became a vigilante under the name "Soldier: 76". This explanation of the game narrative is important to correlate to the construction of his visual image as a mysterious figure, as he still fights for justice but in his own terms. Another issue concerns the color of his uniform resembling the colors of the USA flag, which relates to his nationality as a North American. Although there is no official confirmation on the meaning of the number 76, there is speculation that it relates to USA's founding year 1776, which would also be associated with the elements of the creation of his symbolic visual traits.

Figure 101 - Gabriel (Reaper), Ana, Fareeha (Pharah) and Jack (Soldier: 76) in an Overwatch Old Command poster



Soldier: 76 is considered one of the protagonists of the game, as in addition to being an Overwatch ex-commander, he is the playable character in the game tutorial, a mode to introduce the player to learn the basic moves, while also the chosen hero when accessing the mode Practice Range for the first time. Also, the hero appears in one of the first animated shorts. With that, his image is deeply associated with to the game universe.

### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 102 - Soldier: 76 Skin: **Slasher**

<sup>97</sup> Retrieved from <https://weheartit.com/entry/249362456>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin Slasher pays a tribute to the slashers horror films that were popular in the 1980s decade. The skin, part of a Halloween event, presents Soldier: 76 with visual elements that resemble the popular horror fictional character *Jason Voorhees* from the movie franchise *Friday the 13th*. The name of the skin, Slasher, refers to the subgenre of horror movies created in the 1980s. Slasher films are a sub-genre of horror movies in which the narrative typically involves a psychopathic killer who stalks and murders a series of adolescent victims in a typical way, killing many within a single day (CLAYTON, 2015).

Figure 103 - Jason Voorhees's character



**Intertextuality:** The Slasher horror movie subgenre started in the late 1970s and is still popular nowadays, since several films from the past are gaining remakes and reboots in order to present them to a new audience, with titles such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Halloween*,

*Friday the 13th*, among many others. Concerning *Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup>*, the franchise has, up to now, twelve films, and has inspired adaptations in TV series, novels, comic books and video games. The character *Jason Voorhees* (Figure 103<sup>98</sup>) is a mass murderer and the protagonist of the franchise, first appearing in the 1980's movie *Friday the 13th*.

Despite the fact that Jason's physical appearance has often been transformed throughout time, his hockey mask is a widely and iconic recognized image in popular culture. Regarding the correlation to the Slasher subgenre and the character Jason *Voorhees* with Soldier: 76, from my perspective, it concerns the fact that it was derived from a Halloween event. Also, both characters hide their faces and have a mysterious figure and both are American, since Jason is from New Jersey and Soldier is from Indiana. These correlations represent suppositions, since there is not any official confirmation, however the thematic skin fits soldier's aesthetics impeccably and also pays tribute to a popular figure of American horror movies, fitting the Halloween thematic.

**Visual Text:** Concerning the thematic skin, while the hero usually wears his Tactical Visor, in the skin it is adapted into a headgear with a hockey mask with red chevrons on it, similar to what is seen on Jason's mask from the *Friday the 13th* movies. In addition, his clothes are torn with claw marks, resembling a horror movie atmosphere.

**Theme Categories:** Movies and Popular Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Jack Morrison</p> <p><b>Age:</b> Unknown</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Overwatch commander (formerly), Vigilante</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Male</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> American</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> Unknown</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Currently the target of an international manhunt, the vigilante known as Soldier: 76 wages a personal war to expose the truth behind Overwatch's collapse.</i></p>	<p><i>"We're all soldiers now."</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	

<sup>98</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.looper.com/84638/every-friday-13th-movie-ranked-worst-best>

*"Old soldiers never die... And they don't fade away..."* - The line is an adaptation from a quote from U.S. General Douglas MacArthur in a farewell speech delivered April 19th, 1951. The original quote is *"Old soldiers never die; they just fade away"*.

*"This old dog's learned a few tricks."* – The line might be activated when the hero respawns in the game. It represents an ironic wordplay to the popular idiom *"You can't teach an old dog new tricks."*

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Get	Get off my lawn / Get on it, defend the point / Get out of my way
Is	No one else is going to do it for us / Objective is under attack / This mission is all the matters
Do	Someone has to do it / I could do this with my eyes closed / anyone else do their jobs today?
Need	I need healing / Anyone need some healing? / You need to learn to focus
Move	Move the payload / Quit screwing around and get ready to move / Payload's secure, move out!

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Soldier, Tactical, Visor, Mission, Healing

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

The former commander of Overwatch Jack Morrison, after years of leadership of Overwatch and the Omnic crisis, Jack was presumed dead and reappeared as a mysterious figure named Soldier: 76. His bio information describes him as a vigilante, that is, someone who exacts justice without legal authority. In his catchphrase *"We're all soldiers now"*, he expresses the idea of fighting together, as everyone has a role in the current state of the world. In both of his thematic lines, the external references concern mostly his age, also correlating to his nationality. The other line plays with a popular idiom, while in both there is an adaptation of words in order to express what he really wants. Although his age is unknown, he presents a frequent validation of how his age made him stronger and wiser. From my perspective, it represents a positive feature of representation of elderly as stronger, wiser and more experienced, which is also present in the hero Ana.

Concerning the transitivity system, the hero presents one mental process (*need*), one relational (*is*), and three material processes (*get*, *do* and *move*). The mental process is used as a common request (*I need healing*) and also as an offer to help (*Anyone need some healing?*) and to give advice (*You need to learn to focus*). The relational process concerns mostly the game objective (*Objective is under attack / This*

*mission is all the matters*), showing a few traits of his personality. The material processes are related to orders and commands (*Move the payload / Quit screwing around and get ready to move / Get on it, defend the point / Get out of my way*), personal statements to show his authority and experience (*Someone has to do it / I could do this with my eyes closed*) and ironic interrogatives (*Anyone else do their jobs today?*). The themes are mainly correlated to the game objective which shows a lot of his military background, with a bossy verbal speech, while intentionally not much of his personality is explored, which is coherent with his new persona that even uses a number to refer to himself.

Regarding his most frequent nouns, his former occupation is the most mentioned - *Soldier*, followed by *Tactical*, *Visor* and *Healing*, which relate to his abilities, while *Mission* concerns his focus on the game objective. His official description describes him as a wanted man who is ready to expose issues about Overwatch's past. Also, his nationality and age are mentioned in the thematic lines, his occupation is mentioned in his description, while his role in the game is present in his speech. Hence, under the social actors' framework, Soldier: 76 is categorized as a functionalized actor.

Concerning the verbal text that describes the hero, comparing with the hero's speech in the game, although most parts are coherent, it seems that the lack of information did not make him a mysterious character but a confused one. Since some verbal elements reinforce his attitudes of helping people, as his past-self Jack, while others create him as a villain. A controversial sociocultural topic can be observed when his character came out as gay in one of the short stories of Overwatch<sup>99</sup>, being the second openly gay character, however, it is not present in any of his speech. To conclude, Soldier: 76' verbal text creates this commanding character who turned his background and age into maturity and experience to deliver a good performance, claiming that he is back in the fight.

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<sup>99</sup> The shot story is available here:

<https://bnetcmsusa.akamaihd.net/cms/gallery/rk/RK25WEUAJIPO1546649730105.pdf>



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**SOMBRA**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

Figure 104 - Sombra



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 105 - Sombra in action



Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

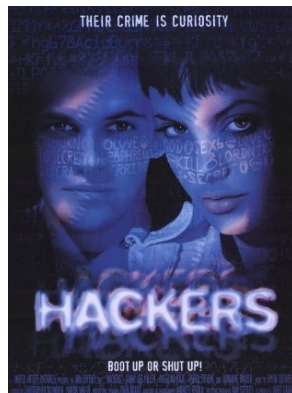
**Carrier:** Sombra is a clever and an international famous hacker. In her original skin, she is depicted from her sideview angle, crossing arms, while one hand holds her weapon and the other is up in the air. She uses her right hand to shoot enemies with her weapon and her left hand to 'hack' her enemies, that is why her character tends to show several majestic movements in her upper part, since she constantly uses both hands in battle. Sombra has brown hair with an undercut hairstyle with two purple line that are connected to her back. She is often seen with a half-smile and few words appearing behind people's backs, creating an ironic and sarcastic figure.

**Possessive Attributes:** Sombra's outfit seems like an overcoat with blouses with pants and boots, in the colors ranging from blue to purple. According to the game narrative, Sombra had her DNA modified

and adapted to be a Human-cyber hacker. Therefore, all the gears spread in her outfit have a correlation to her abilities. In addition to the hack ability, that disables the enemies' skills, she possesses a translocator, a stealth mode, and her main weapon, a machine pistol, as seen in the image in action.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Sombra's first notable visual symbolic element in the game is her occupation as the world most popular and dangerous hacker, therefore, her visual elements help to create and reinforce such identity. From the fluorescent colors to her possessive attributes, Sombra's character lies within her

Figure 106 - Hackers (1995) movie cover



hacking abilities. According to the game narrative, the hero also had to erase all her past traces and reemerge with a new identity. Coming back as “Sombra” with her DNA modified and augmented by hardware that integrated her talents into grafted cybernetics, she gained abilities to hack not only computers, systems and Omnic, but also humans. Among the several voice lines the heroes have, Sombra presents two that make reference to the classic 1995's movie *Hackers* (Figure 106<sup>100</sup>), which explore the life of a young hacker prodigy portrayed by *Angelina Jolie*.

Another issue relates to her nationality as a Mexican, which in the game and in the transmedia narrative is often mentioned, since the maps carry correlation to her character, and there were even animated shorts and comics books explaining her story.

In the game, Sombra is often related to a visual skull sign (Figure 107<sup>101</sup>), for instance, whenever she hacks something, a holograph skull appears, as such symbol represents a straight connection to the art used for skulls in Mexico's Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) festival. To conclude, several multimodal elements in her visual identity create this ironic and sarcastic character that also shows a playful and whimsical personality, representing a great addition on the diverse cast.

Figure 107 - Sombra's Skull icon sign



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 108 - Sombra Skin: **Los Muertos**

<sup>100</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.filmaffinity.com/us/film347629.html>

<sup>101</sup> Retrieved from <https://playoverwatch.com/pt-br/heroes/sombra>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** Sombra's thematic skin Los Muertos refers to the traditional *Mexican* celebration *Day of the Dead* (Figure 109<sup>102</sup>) (*Día de los Muertos* in Spanish). The Day of the Dead usually starts on October 31<sup>st</sup> and runs until November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The main objective of the holiday is to gather family and friends to pray and honor those who have died, helping support their spiritual journey, as in Mexico death is seen as a natural part of the human cycle (CARYL-SUE, 2012). The traditional festival was inscribed in the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* by UNESCO in 2008<sup>103</sup>.

Figure 109 - Day of the Dead Parade in Mexico



<sup>102</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.swedishnomad.com/day-of-the-dead>

<sup>103</sup> Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/indigenous-festivity-dedicated-to-the-dead-00054>

Nowadays, the festival is known as one of the most festive, colorful and lively in Mexico. A common symbol is the *calavera* (skull mask on Figure 110<sup>104</sup>), in which people garnish by designing, and the *calaca*, a figure of a skull or skeleton commonly used for decoration (Figure 111<sup>105</sup>) during the Day of the Dead festival parades (CARYL-SUE, 2012).

Figure 110 - Calaveras of the Day of the Dead in Mexico



**Intertextuality:** Outside Mexico, the holiday has different adaptations, while the idea of honoring the dead and the practice of visiting cemeteries perpetuate. An example is the *Finados* in Brazil, a public holiday occurring on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The correlation to Sombra's character becomes clear as she is representing her nationality with one of the most popular trademarks of Mexican culture and, as mentioned in the previous section, her usual skull symbol resembling an implicit reference to the festival.



Figure 111 - Calaca figures of the Day of the Dead in Mexico

skull symbol resembling an implicit reference to the festival.

**Visual Text:** In the thematic skin, Sombra wears a pair of black pedals pushers' pants with a black and pink overcoat. Also, the hero has neon green paint over her body which is supposedly to represent her bones as a reference to a *calaca* and wears a mask similar to a *calavera* used in the festivals, while her hair is changed to a pink and white colored Mohawk style.

**Theme Categories:** Festivals, Holidays and World Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Olivia Colomar</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 30</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Hacker</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human with DNA Mutation</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Female</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Mexican</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>One of the world's most notorious hackers, Sombra uses information to manipulate those in power.</i></p>	<p><i>"Everything can be hacked... and everyone."</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	

<sup>104</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.jansochor.com/photo-blog/day-of-the-dead-calavera-mexico>

<sup>105</sup> Retrieved from <https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/guide-mexico-day-of-the-dead-spectre-october-2016>

As seen in the visual analysis, the 1995's movie *Hackers* is related to Sombra not only visually, but also verbally due to two voice lines that are straight references from the movie: "*Hack the planet*" and "*Mess with the best and die like the rest.*"

In addition, Sombra makes another movie's reference: "*I'd love to stay and chat...but I'm not going to*" concerning the 1993's movie *Groundhog Day*.

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERBS	OCCURRENCES
Is	No one's going to stop me / Where's the fun in playing fair? / The enemy is here
Let	Let's clear it out / Let's do our best / Let's get this done
Get	Get out of my way! / Get to cover / Saves us time and don't get up
Need	I need healing / I might need this later / I need a drink
Have	You have good taste / Looks like I have to do some research / Guess they didn't have enough

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Hack<sup>106</sup>, Enemy, Beacon, Back, Time

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Olivia Colomar uses the name Sombra as her codename Sombra, meaning *Shadow* in Spanish, which is a well-structured wordplay due to her personality and abilities. In her bio information she is described as a hacker from Mexico with the role of damage in the game. Her occupation is reinforced by her catchphrase "*Everything can be hacked... and everyone.*" Her hacker's abilities also appear in her thematic lines, with verbal lines referencing the movie 1995's *Hackers*. Her other thematic line also refers to a film, and relates to one of her abilities to translocate herself in the game.

Concerning the transitivity system, Sombra presents two relational processes (*is* and *have*), one mental process (*need*) and two material processes (*let* and *get*). The relational processes are mostly used to connect elements and attributes in the sentence (*The enemy is here* / *You have good taste* / *Looks like I have to do some research*: here *have* is used as modulation). The mental process evokes an inner necessity (*I need healing* / *I might need this later* / *I need a drink*). The material process '*let*' is used as a motivational tool concerning the game objective (*Let's clear it out* / *Let's do our best* / *Let's get this done*), while the process '*get*' concerns orders and commands (*Get out of my way!* / *Get to cover* / *Saves us time and don't get up*).

<sup>106</sup> *Hack* used as a noun, not a verb.

Her most frequent nouns *Hack* and *Beacon* refers to her abilities, while *Enemy*, *Back* and *Time* rely on the game objective. In her official description, Sombra is described as one of the world's most notorious hackers, also mentioning the way she uses such ability to manipulate others. Hence, Sombra's discourse often shows her confidence (*No one's going to stop me*) and jokes related to her main ability (*Where's the fun in playing fair?*). Regarding the social actors' framework, Sombra is a highly functionalized character, and also an actor with appraisal, being evaluated as one of the *best* hackers of the word. Overall, due to several features used in her verbal text, such as threats (*Mess with the best and die like the rest*), ironic statements (*I'd love to stay and chat...but I'm not going to*) and affirmations (*You have good taste*), her verbal identity is created into a persuasive character. To conclude, Sombra's verbal text creates a coherent and clever character with an intriguing and agile discourse she uses in her favor, while also constantly reaffirming her occupation, showing bits of nationality marks in her speech.

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### TRACER

#### ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 112 - Tracer



Source: Official website

#### IN ACTION

Figure 113 - Tracer in action



Source: Game screenshot

#### VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Tracer is an energetic and determined hero who is often portrayed as the mascot of the game. In her original skin, she is depicted in a semi oblique angle, with curved arms and hands on her hips. Her face is slightly inclined staring at the viewer, suggesting a certain position of impatience. Tracer is one of the fastest heroes among the cast due to her abilities, therefore, her movements tend to be quick, as she is literally able to 'blink', that is, to jump to another location in the game. She uses both hands to shoot, hence, her poses show a form of precision combining with speed. Regarding her appearance, she has brown hair and a slender and tiny figure compared to the other heroes.

**Possessive Attributes:** Tracer's outfit consists of a brown jacket, waisted orange trousers and a pair of sneakers, technological gears in her forearms, orange glasses and black gloves. Her weapons, as seen in the image in action, are two short-range pistols. Tracer also has the ability to throw sticky bombs, despite not visible in the images. In addition, one of her symbols in the game and also a possessive attribute that relates to her abilities is the gear in the middle of her chest, the *chronal accelerator*. According to the game narrative, the device helps her to keep herself in the present time due to a past accident she suffered in a mission. The device gave Tracer the ability to control her own time, allowing her to speed it up and slow down whenever she wants.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Tracer is one of the youngest heroes among the cast, which can be visualized in her energetic and playful personality through her movements, abilities, positionings, among other semiotic elements within the game. Her momentary disability in the past caused in an accident was fixed and now used in her favor, like the case of several other heroes. Concerning her nationality as a British hero, in transmedia storytelling there are several correlations to her character and England. Although not part of the data as an auditory mode, she has a strong a British accent and also her chronal accelerator on her chest displays lights that are similar to the *London's Big Ben's* clock face, establishing a visual symbolic meaning and, somehow, correlating her nationality, disability, ability and occupation at once.

As a charismatic character, the game producers stated that Tracer was the first hero completed and implemented into the game, created as the combination of a fighter pilot and a track athlete<sup>107</sup>. Such combination may be visually seen in her outfit, as the upper part (jacket) suggesting a pilot and the lower part (tight pants) as an athlete sprinter. A huge mark on Overwatch's representation happened when Tracer's sexuality was directly addressed in one of the comic books (Figure 114<sup>108</sup>), claiming that Tracer is dating and living with a woman named Emily. One of Overwatch's lead writers, Michael Chu, later confirmed that Tracer identifies herself as a lesbian. However, for some time, her sexuality was only explored outside the game, in transmedia storytelling, until a cosmetic spray<sup>109</sup> of her girlfriend's face (Figure 115<sup>110</sup>) and two auditory lines were added to the

Figure 114 - Tracer kissing her girlfriend Emily in the Comic Book



<sup>107</sup> Source: <https://pp.userapi.com/c636023/v636023940/40563/ZAwXzE-hAmo.jpg>

<sup>108</sup> You can read the Comic Book for free here: <https://static.playoverwatch.com/media/comics/10/en-us/comic-overwatch-reflections.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, sprays are cosmetics items that displays a figure in which players can place on surfaces within the game.

<sup>110</sup> Retrieved from <https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/Emily>



game. One occurs when playing with Tracer in the map *King's Row (England)*, she says “*I wonder if I*

Figure 115 - Tracer's  
Spray of Emily



*have time to visit Emily? No, better stay focused*”. The game director *Jeff Kaplan* stated that the decision to announce Tracer as a lesbian was considered carefully by the Blizzard team, since they wanted to portray Tracer's sexuality in a realistic and non-pandering way that was respectful to the character and tied into her story; not just "checking a checkbox on a list" (FRANK, 2017). Kaplan also stated that the team was aware of the negative backlash that the announcement was bound to receive owing to Overwatch's global popularity, that the subject was difficult to talk

about, and that it could bring up legal troubles in some countries. In Russia, for instance, the comic book was banned from appearing on Overwatch's Russian website in accordance with its federal law (FRANK, 2017).

### THEMATIC SKIN

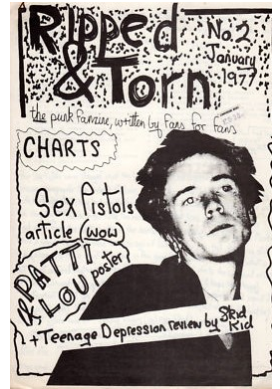
Figure 116 - Tracer Skin: **Punk**



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skin "Punk", which is a straight reference to the Punk movement, came along with the launch of cosmetic items of the character. Punk is commonly associated with a group of varied social and political beliefs including the punk subculture, as a form of expression, and the punk rock, as a music genre (O'HARA, 2001). The movement started in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia in the mid-1970s, and, since then, it has spread around the world. It has its origins based on ideologies of frustration about economic inequality, anger for society's hypocrisy and the neglecting of the working class's rights (HANNERZ, 2016). Punk rock, as a music genre, was inspired by the garage rock, and its lyrics commonly explore political stands against capitalism (SABIN, 1999).

Figure 117 - UK's Punk Fanzine 1977



Accordingly, Punk ideologies are inherently left-wing and anti-conservatism, treating themes as sexism, feminism, open homosexuality, environmental issues, among many others (O'HARA, 2001).

For decades, the movement was expressed through music, amateur literature as fanzines (Figure 117<sup>111</sup>) and visual aesthetics (HANNERZ, 2016). The aesthetics is a remarkable element for the Punks, generating the Punk fashion, including deconstructed pieces of fabric, T-shirts with verbal text statements, leather jackets, leather boots, hairstyles including brightly colored hair and spiked mohawks, tattoos, jewelry, heavy and colored make up, body modification as piercings, among other features (HUDSON, 2016). The aggressive form of aesthetics works as a form of transgression to social norms, especially in ideologically conservative places.

<sup>111</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.popsike.com/RIPPED-TORN-2-punk-fanzine-Sex-Pistols-Patti-Lou/330539308103.html>

**Intertextuality:** Concerning the use of the term Punk nowadays, it tends to be more related to fashion than to ideology. Nevertheless, the Punk movement is the ‘ancestor’ of several new subcultures that have emerged in the latter years with the objective to question the system and fight for justice and equality. As a result, much of the new generation freedom of expression was obtained due to Punk's

Figure 118 - Vivienne Westwood in 1977



rebellion in past decades. In addition, several Punk movements were and still are an ally to anti fascism movement. Concerning the correlation to Tracer's character, it mostly relies on her nationality, specifically her hometown London. The city was the place where most Punk artists became successful worldwide and the movement became stronger, including punk bands like *The Sex Pistols* and *The Clash* (SABIN, 1999) and the popular fashion

Figure 119 - London's Punk Scene Nowadays



designer *Vivienne Westwood* (Figure 118<sup>112</sup>), who was inspired by the punk subculture in her designs (KAWAMURA, 2005). Although the movement has been spread out comparing to past decades, in London the punk scene is still present (Figure 119<sup>113</sup>), as some places like *Camden Town* show the roots of the subculture.

**Visual Text:** In the thematic skin, Tracer's outfit is changed to leather pieces with ripped fabrics, neon pink colors in the pants and the hair, round glasses and spikes throughout her outfit, resembling the punk aesthetic.

**Theme Categories:** Subcultures, Popular Culture, Fashion and Music.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Lena Oxtan</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 26</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Adventurer</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Female</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> British</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> She suffered an accident causing her to be stuck in time. It was fixed due a</p>

<sup>112</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/168603579773503562>

<sup>113</sup> Retrieved from <https://londonist.com/london/features/where-to-be-punk-in-london>

	technological device she has to use in order to keep her body in present time.
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CATCHPHRASE</b>
<i>The former Overwatch agent known as Tracer is a time-jumping adventurer and an irrepressible force for good.</i>	<i>“Cheers, love! The cavalry’s here!”</i>
<b>THEMATIC LINES</b>	
<i>“Keep calm and Tracer on!”</i> – The line is a possible reference to the 1939 WWII-preparation British motivational poster: <i>Keep Calm and Carry On</i> , nowadays famous worldwide. In addition, Tracer also uses several British idioms and slangs such as <i>“Aw, rubbish!”</i> and <i>“Cheers, love!”</i> .	
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>	
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Is	And she’s back in the game / You got what is coming to ya / The cavalry’s here
Get	Ever get that feeling of I? / Let’s get this moving / Behind you! Get to cover!
Need	You need a time out / I need healing / Need help over here
Go	Here ya go! / New round, let’s go / On your marks, get set, go!
Take	Let’s take’em together / The objective is mine, taking the point / Take out this target
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Time, Bomb, Love, Target, Enemy	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>Lena Oxtan uses the codename Tracer on Overwatch, which might suggest a correlation to her abilities and background narrative (Tracer = T-Racer = Time Racer). The British hero has the occupation described as adventurer and the role of damage in the game, and, as mentioned before, is considered the mascot of the game, appearing solo in the game cover and owner of the popular game's catchphrase (which is also the title of this study). Her catchphrase <i>“Cheers, love! The cavalry’s here!”</i> concerns the game narrative and her introduction to Overwatch. In addition, the expression <i>Cheers love</i>, is a remarkable verbal trait of British oral communication, representing her nationality. Also, her thematic lines are full of British references, as the adaptation of a British motivational poster <i>“Keep calm and Tracer on”</i>.</p>	

Concerning the transitivity system, Tracer presents one relational process (*is*), one mental process (*need*) and three material processes (*get*, *go* and *take*). The material processes are mostly used to describe her experience in action towards the game objective, as in commands (*Let's get this moving*), advices (*Behind you! Get to cover!*), statements (*taking the point*), motivational discourse (*Let's take 'em together*), while also showing her energetic personality (*On your marks, get set, go!*). The mental process is used as a common request in the game (*I need healing / Need help over here*). Lastly, the relational process also describes her experience related to the game objective, which makes her a character very concerned about the goal of the game (*And she's back in the game / You got what is coming to ya / The cavalry's here! The objective is mine*).

Overall, her collections suggest the creation of a very energetic and spontaneous character, while her nationality is present in her verbal text. However, some basic topics are not explicit in her occurrences, such as her disability, her role as a damage hero and also her occupation as an adventurer. However, these topics are brought and mentioned through the nouns. The noun *Bomb* refers to her ultimate ability, *Love* is the way she calls her teammates in times, *Time* refers both to the game objective and also to her special skill acquired due to her disability and *Target* and *Enemy* refer to the enemies and her role as damage. Hence, all the lack of information stated in the previous paragraph in her occurrences and her processes is compensated with the use of nouns.

Another issue that was already brought in the visual analysis, is her character being a lesbian: while visually it is present in the game, it is not realized in the verbal text. Her short description refers to her as a former agent of Overwatch, then, it mentions her special skill, finishing with "*irrepressible force for good*", which clearly puts her as part of the 'good side' in the narrative. Such statement could be intentional since Tracer became a mascot for the game, having her image associated to goodness. Under the social actors' framework, she is a functionalized actor, since her role is present in her speech through the nouns. She is also evaluated by the game, being an actor with appraisal. To conclude, Tracer' verbal text creates the identity of an energetic and caring character, full of nationality marks, a focus on the game objective and a charismatic personality, representing the game worldwide.

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**WIDOWMAKER**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

Figure 120 - Widowmaker



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 121 - Widowmaker in action



Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

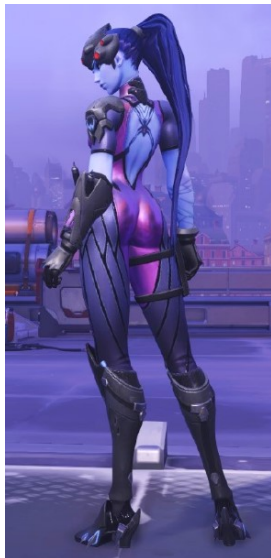
**Carrier:** Widowmaker is a French emotionless assassin. In her original skin, she is depicted in an oblique angle, as a form to visually distance herself from the viewer, according to visual grammar. Her left arm is down, while her right arm holds her weapon up against her shoulder. She presents a serious facial expression and a direct gaze to the viewer. She has a long blue hair in a ponytail and presents a blue skin color due to a DNA mutation. Her body position is inclined to a certain extent to expose her physical attributes. Since she is a sniper in the game, she usually goes to high places, as seen in the image in action, to shoot down the enemies, while her movements tend to be slow and steady due to her need of precision

to hit the enemies. In addition, she also has a tattoo in her forearm depicting words in a form of spider web.

**Possessive Attributes:** Widowmaker wears a purple and pink skin-tight suit with low cut and bare back with boots and gloves. She wears a functional headpiece that resembles a black widow spider that works as a visor, allowing her to see her enemies through walls and objects. Her main weapon is a sniper rifle with a scope to precisely shoot the enemies. Also, she also has a Grappling Hook, to obtain a better view to shoot and to quickly avoid close combat.

**Symbolic Attributes:** In a brief contextualization from the game narrative, Widowmaker used to be Amélie Guillard, a successful ballerina who was married to an agent of Overwatch. However, Talon, the terrorist organization, kidnapped her and submitted her to neural reconditioning and torture to turn her into a sleeper agent turning her into an

Figure 123 - Widowmaker in one of her Victory Poses



emotionless assassin, resulting in the act of killing her husband. Concerning the symbolic visual elements, her bluish skin concerns her heart rate that was lowered to give her a steadier aim, hence, the color of the skin is used to show the DNA mutation she suffered. Also, her mobility in the game may be classified as classy and refined resembling a ballerina's movements.

Another visual symbolic element, and maybe the most appealing, is her name and appearance built as a reference to the black widow spider (Figure 122<sup>114</sup>), while it is correlated to her personality, as a silent emotionless assassin due to her brainwash. The spider visual is also related to one of her abilities, the venom mine, which delivers a poison gas to enemies. In relation to her nationality, although her auditory lines are spoken in English with an explicit French accent, considering only the official skin, visually she does not present explicit correlations to her country. Lastly, Widowmaker is considered the most sexualized hero among the cast, due to her tight outfit (Figure 123<sup>115</sup>) that shows her physical attributes, position and body exposure.

Figure 122 - Black Widow spider



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 124 - Widowmaker Skins: **Odette & Odile**

<sup>114</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.sicb.org/students/feilichk.php>

<sup>115</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Widowmaker\\_VP\\_Over\\_the\\_Shoulder.png](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Widowmaker_VP_Over_the_Shoulder.png)



Source: Game screenshot Collage

Figure 125 - Bolshoi Ballet dancer at Swan Lake performance in London, England



**Sociocultural features:** The thematic skins Odette and Odile are direct references to the two characters of the Russian ballet *Swan Lake*. The use of two thematic skins is because they are related to the same theme, just like in the analysis of the hero *Doomfist*. The skins were launched along with the character. Concerning the theme, *Swan Lake* (Figure 125<sup>116</sup>) is one of the most popular ballets worldwide<sup>117</sup>. The ballet was composed by late Russian composer *Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky*. *Swan Lake* debuted in 1877 at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

The plot in four acts revolves around a love story that mixes elements of romance, magic and tragedy. The characters portrayed in the skins, are two girls who are physically very similar in the narrative. The ballet tells the story of the young prince Siegfried who refuses to choose a noble bride and falls madly in love with a beautiful maiden

<sup>116</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.artspreview.net/?p=914>

<sup>117</sup> Source: <https://www.ranker.com/list/best-ballets/bustermcdermott>



named Odette. Odette is victim of a spell cast by a sorcerer, who makes her live by day as a white swan, only regaining her human form at night. The spell can only be broken by a man who will make a promise to love her forever. However, Odile, the black swan, tricks the prince into promising his love to her at a ball, and, in doing so, the Prince betrays Odette<sup>118</sup>.

**Intertextuality:** While still relevant nowadays, the performance is one of the most remarkable ballets around the world, becoming part of popular culture. The ballet served as inspiration for several adaptations including movies, theatrical plays, characters of video games, musicals and books. One of the recent movie adaptations is the 2010 movie *Black Swan* (Figure 126<sup>119</sup>), which was awarded an Oscar for actress in a leading role for *Natalie Portman*<sup>120</sup> who plays the double role of the white and the black swan, while the movie also addressed issues of schizophrenia. The thematic skins refer to both characters: *Odette*, the white swan, and *Odile*, the black Swan. The correlation to Widowmaker's character has to do with her past as a professional ballerina. In addition, from my perspective, it also represents the duality of good and evil within Widowmaker's identity, since she was brainwashed into being an assassin.

Figure 126 - Black Swan movie cover (2010)



**Visual Text:** The outfit is inspired by the ballerinas' looks in the ballet, however they are portrayed in Widowmaker in a more aggressive way, with the use of more colors and with feathers spread all throughout. While both skins share similarities, the differences rely on the color of the outfits, as Odette wears white fabrics and has Widowmaker's usual bluish body skin tone with white make up on her face, and Odile wears a green and black outfit and has white skin and dark make up on her eyes, resembling a mask. The feathers, in addition to referring to the swam, also works as an aesthetic tool to mimic her hair.

**Theme Categories:** Performances, Movies and Popular Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Amélie Lacroix</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 33</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Ballet dancer (formerly), Assassin</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human with Mutation</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Female</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> French</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> Brainwashed into being evil.</p>

<sup>118</sup> I wrote the summary of the narrative based on this source: <https://www.francemusique.fr/en/swan-lake-everything-you-need-know-about-tchaikovsky-s-famous-ballet-21454>

<sup>119</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0947798>

<sup>120</sup> Source: <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/2011>

DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE
<i>Widowmaker is the perfect assassin: a patient, ruthlessly efficient killer who shows neither emotion nor remorse.</i>		<i>"One shot, one kill."</i>
THEMATIC LINES		
<p><i>"Step into my parlor,' said the spider to the fly."</i> – The line refers to the 1828's poem by <i>Mary Howitt</i> named <i>"The Spider and the Fly"</i>.</p> <p><i>"Let them eat cake."</i> – The line is the traditional translation of the popular French quote <i>"Qu'ils mangent de la brioche"</i>, usually associated and attributed to historical figure <i>Queen Marie Antoinette</i>.</p>		
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS		
VERB	OCCURRENCES	
Is	The performance is about to begin / The enemy team is down / Victory is so close	
Get	I don't get mad, I get even / Get into position / Get on the objective	
Need	We need a healer / We need to defend the objective / I needed that	
Let	Let's keep this moving / Let's try that again / Let them eat cake	
See	I see you / I think it's time for us to see other people / Do you see me?	
MOST FREQUENT NOUNS		
Sights, Death, Sniper, Attention, Enemy		
VERBAL ANALYSIS		
<p>Amélie Lacroix uses the codename of Widowmaker in the game, which has to do with the game narrative and the experiences conducted on her, correlating her to the black widow spider, as seen in the visual analysis. Her bio brings the information that she was once a Ballet dancer and now is an assassin, having the role of damage in the game. The French hero has the catchphrase <i>"One shot, one kill"</i> which basically relates to the way she battles in field. As a sniper with a scope, her character is known for headshots, that is, killing an enemy with one single shot at their heads. Her thematic lines concern external references that describe different aspects of her character. One relates to the poem <i>"The Spider and the Fly"</i> by <i>Mary Howitt</i>, which is a clear correlation to her figure. While the other quote, usually attributed to <i>Queen Marie Antoinette</i>, refers to her nationality, that, despite the fact that <i>Marie Antoinette</i> was not born in France, she was the last queen of France before the French Revolution.</p>		

Concerning the transitivity system, the hero presents one relational process (*is*), one mental process (*need*), one behavioral process (*see*), and two material processes (*get* and *let*). The relational process concerns statements specifically about the game match (*The performance is about to begin / The enemy team is down / Victory is so close*). The mental process relies on the common request of the game (*We need a healer / We need to defend the objective*). The behavioral process plays with irony to mention her ultimate ability that enables her to see the enemies through walls, while also showing humor (*I see you / I think it's time for us to see other people / Do you see me?*). The material processes relate to orders and commands (*Get into position / Get on the objective*), advice (*Let's try that again*), external references (*Let them eat cake*) and a statement to show a threat in form of a wordplay (*I don't get mad, I get even*).

As for her past occupation as ballet dancer was seen in the visual elements, it is also mentioned in one occurrence (*The performance is about to begin*). Therefore, with the exception of the external reference, most of the occurrences relate to her role as Damage, the game objective and her will to kill. Regarding her most frequent nouns, *Sights* concerns her ultimate ability and also, as already mentioned, the way she kills the enemies, which is also referred to in *Sniper*, as she uses scope and usually shoots the enemies from a distance. *Attention* regards her focus, since her abilities require it, while *Death* and *Enemy* reaffirm her occupation as an assassin and her role as damage.

In her official description, the hero is described as a "*perfect assassin: a patient, ruthlessly efficient killer*", which is coherent to both the information provided by the game and her verbal speech. According to social actors, Widowmaker is clearly a high functionalized actor, both for her occupation as assassin and also to her role in the game. The use of adjectives to evaluate her also categorizes her as an actor with appraisal. In conclusion, Widowmaker's verbal text is deeply coherent, creating the character of an assassin with the focus on killing the enemies, with verbal references that shows her confidence and lack of feelings.

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**ZARYA**
**ORIGINAL SKIN**

Figure 127 - Zarya



Source: Official website

**IN ACTION**

Figure 128 - Zarya in action



Source: Game screenshot

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

**Carrier:** Zarya is a confident and competitive hero that praises hard work and perseverance. In her original skin, she is depicted in a semi oblique angle with both hands on her waist. The Russian hero has a short pink hair, a scar on her forehead and a tattoo on her shoulder. Her face expression varies throughout the game, from serious and ironic to an angry expression, as seen in the image in action. Her movements tend to be steady, which relates to her role as a tank and her abilities.

**Possessive Attributes:** Zarya, as a soldier in the Russian Defense Forces, wears a uniform, which is a form of combat armor with mixed elements, mostly in the color blue, with red and black parts, while some body parts, as her upper arms are exposed. Her main weapon is the particle cannon, as seen in the

image in action, which is able to unleash a beam of destructive energy towards enemies. In addition, she can also protect herself and her teammates by using the ability of particle barriers, relating to her role as a Tank.

**Symbolic Attributes:** According to the game narrative, Zarya is known as one of the strongest

Figure 129 –  
Weightlifting Spray



women of the world and also a proud Russian soldier. The game director *Jeffrey Kaplan* stated in an interview<sup>121</sup> that Zarya's character, especially her visual identity, emerged from a demand for a greater diversity of genders, body types, and ethnicities in the game industry. Her character presents a serious semblance as a visual tool to relate to hard work, which can be seen in some cosmetic visual items, such as in emotes, sprays and in her muscular figure. In addition, the scar on her face might evoke, despite her young age, a certain background of battles in her life.

Figure 130 - Bear Spray



Considering specific visual elements, the tattoo on her shoulder is the number '512', which refers to her weightlifting record of 512 kg (1128.7 lbs.), according to the game narrative. She even has a cosmetic spray in the game concerning the topic (Figure 129<sup>122</sup>), as a way to present her athlete background through a visual element. Regarding her nationality, which is strongly present in auditory modes

Figure 132 - We Can Do  
it! Signature poster



through several lines, it is not explicit in her official skin. However, her cosmetic spray (Figure 130<sup>123</sup>) suggests a reference to her country, in which she is fighting against a brown bear, a common animal in Russia.

Figure 131 - Reference Spray



The pink hair, from my perspective, relies on her personal taste, as in some cosmetic skins Zarya shows interest into subcultures such as the Cybergoth (which I analyze below). Lastly, even though the sprays are not part of my main data selection, it appeared relevant to present in relation to Zarya. The spray on Figure 131<sup>124</sup> correlates to

<sup>121</sup> Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkbpIMwYwL4&list=UUuEugmTGRY-RNiyAhkKKNIA>

<sup>122</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray\\_Zarya\\_Lift.png](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray_Zarya_Lift.png)

<sup>123</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray\\_Zarya\\_Bear.png](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray_Zarya_Bear.png)

<sup>124</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray\\_Zarya\\_We\\_Can!.png](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray_Zarya_We_Can!.png)

the *We Can Do it!* signature poster (Figure 132<sup>125</sup>) produced by *J. Howard Miller* in 1943, used to support women and labor at the time. Later, the image became one of the symbols of the feminist movement, representing the embodiment of female empowerment (ENDRES, 2006).

### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 133 - Zarya Skin: **Cybergoth**



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural features:** Cybergoth is one of the thematic skins that was released with her character, and just like *Tracer's* Punk skin, it also refers to a subculture. The Cybergoth subculture derives from several other subcultures, such as the ravers, goths, and cyberpunks. This mixture of genres, coming originally from science fiction, is the main essence of the subculture. The Cybergoth aesthetics is considered too creepy for the ravers and too neon for the goths, hence, they occupied a new space (EWENS, 2016). Mayer (1998) states that the term 'Cybergoth' term appeared the first time in 1988 in the

<sup>125</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.in/Studio-We-Can-Do-Poster/dp/B00A45G6CC>

roleplaying game *Dark Future* by *Games Workshop*. However, it was in the middle of the 1990s decade that it started to become a subculture on its own. Ewens (2016) points out that one of the main reasons that

Figure 134 - Cyberdog store in London



helped the Cybergoth subculture to emerge was due to a store named *Cyberdog* (Figure 134<sup>126</sup>) in Camden Town in London, England. The store is still popular nowadays and one of the main attractions of Camden's Market in London. In addition, Cybergoth is not only an aesthetic movement since much of its identity relies on their attitudes towards the world (MAYER, 1998).

**Intertextuality:** If subcultures are inherently intertextual, cybergoth may be considered one of the most triggered by the influences of other subcultures, movies, literary genres, video games, among others. The Cybergoth is also inspired by the cyberpunk genre, which has produced many works in literature, music, and films, exploring the technological and scientific achievements of humans (MICHAUD, 2008). On the other hand, Cybergoth is also influenced by the Goth subculture, which is associated with music, aesthetics, and fashion with a darker approach. Thereby, Cybergoth mixes elements of both subcultures, creating a new way of expression, mostly inspired by technology and science fiction.

Figure 135 - Cybergoth group



The hair and make up are also a remarkable visual trait among the members (Figure 135<sup>127</sup>), with the use neon and fluorescent bright colors and clothing with LED circuit boards, as other features like body modification and gas masks. The music style is usually industrial and postindustrial music. Concerning the correlation to Zarya's character, from my perspective, it relies more on her personality than any nationality trait. Her fearless and strong personality and also her age, 28, might suggest a correlation to such type of aggressive music style and shocking visual aesthetic.

**Visual Text:** In the skin, Zarya wears an outfit whose shape is similar to her usual soldier uniform, however, adapted to the Cybergoth concept. It may be seen in the leather boots, neon light blue, heavy colored eye makeup, and the two-colored hair and spikes all over the garment.

**Theme Categories:** Subcultures, Fashion and Music.

#### BIO INFO

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<sup>126</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/803329652259787367>

<sup>127</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/291959988336166440>

<b>Real Name:</b> Aleksandra Zaryanova <b>Age:</b> 28 <b>Occupation:</b> Soldier <b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank		<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Female <b>Nationality:</b> Russian <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>		<b>CATCHPHRASE</b>	
Zarya is one of the world's strongest women, a celebrated athlete who sacrificed personal glory to protect her family, friends, and country in a time of war.		"Together, we are strong"	
<b>THEMATIC LINES</b>			
<p><i>"In Russia, game plays you"</i> – The line refers to a as a popular joke named "In Soviet Russia..." made by Ukrainian-born American comedian <i>Yakov Smirnoff</i>. The phrase goes after "In Soviet Russia..." and the person is supposed to add a satire joke or a comment that contrasts the common sense.</p> <p><i>"From Russia, with love"</i> - The line is activated when Zarya kills an enemy. It is a possible reference to the 1963's James Bond film of the same name.</p>			
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>			
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>		
Is	That is for my people, a gold medal / Hard work is its own reward / Perseverance is the key		
Get	Without effort you cannot even get a fish out of a pond / Get down, give me twenty / Let's get physical		
Do	I know you can do better than that / I do it for my country / We all have our jobs to do		
Have	We all have our jobs to do / You have my thanks / It's only a game, why do you have to be mad?		
Give	Give me another shot / Give it your all! / We're out of time, give it everything you've got		
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>			
Game, Russia, Training, Gun, Graviton			
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>			
Aleksandra Zaryanova is a former athlete focused on weightlifting and bodybuilding. After joining the Russian Defense Forces, she started to use the codename Zarya. Her bio information tells us that Zarya			



is a Russian soldier and has the role of Tank in the game. Her catchphrase “*Together, we are strong*” evokes the sense of group and collectiveness, coherent with her occupation as a soldier. In both of her thematic lines, Zarya refers to her nationality, one as a wordplay and joke by inverting the words, while the other “*From Russia, with love*”, is one of the most popular quotes from James Bond's films that quotes the country.

Concerning the transitivity system, the hero presents two relational processes (*is* and *have*), and three material processes (*get*, *do* and *give*). The relational process ‘*is*’ is involved with personal statements that shows her personality traits and her athlete background (*That is for my people, a gold medal / Hard work is its own reward / Perseverance is the key/ We’re out of time*). While the relational process ‘*have*’ concerns verbal elements of possessiveness within different themes, such as a statement (*We all have our jobs to do*), acknowledgment (*You have my thanks*), and an ironic interrogative (*It's only a game, why do you have to be mad?*). The material processes mostly describe her experience in the game related to actions joining her background, her current occupation as a soldier with a motivational discourse (*Without effort you cannot even get a fish out of a pond / I know you can do better than that / Give it your all! / give it everything you’ve got*). Such thematical discourse is very common among athletes in competitions and within military services. Also, within the material processes she reaffirms her pride for her country (*I do it for my country*), as also referring to Russia in a subtle way (*Give me another shot*) and, lastly, an occurrence that summarizes her personality is also an external cultural reference to the 1980's popular song (*Let’s get physical*).

Regarding her most frequent nouns, *Game* is the most frequent, correlating to her former athlete past, while also presenting a metalanguage tool to talk about the game match. *Gun* and *Graviton* relate to her weapon and abilities in the game, *Training* refers to her hard work as something she is proud of and *Russia*, as already seen, is deeply present in her verbal text in several different ways, being, up to now, the most patriotic character. In her official description she is referred to as “*one of the world’s strongest women*” and “*a celebrated athlete who sacrificed personal glory to protect her family, friends, and country in a time of war*”. It all adds up to the creation of her identity, which correlates to her catchphrase alongside with her sense of union and collectivity and also her pride to fight for her country. However, despite her motivational discourse, and a coherent verbal text, her role as a Tank is not something explicit in her speech considering my data cut. Either way, regarding the social actors' framework, her occupation as a soldier is present in her speech making her a functionalized actor. Furthermore, the evaluation from the game as *one of the world’s strongest women* and a celebrated athlete categorizes her within appraisal.

To conclude, Zarya's verbal text is coherent and creates the identity of a powerful and noble woman who carries verbal traits of authority in her discourse, yet not in a pretentious way, but as a confident character who has a clear objective in mind and pride and discipline in herself.

THE MULTIMODAL PATHWAY | HEROES ©Version 1.0

ZENYATTA

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 136 - Zenyatta



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 137 - Zenyatta in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Zenyatta is a calm and wise Buddhist and a monk Omnic. In his original skin, he is depicted from an almost frontal angle in a sort of *Padmasana*<sup>128</sup> position, a cross-legged sitting meditation pose. However, his feet are pointing down, since he is able to hover, not touching the ground. His hands movements follow the *Gyana Mudra*, a hand position used in many yoga practices that symbolizes the acceptance of one's knowledge and wisdom (KUMAR, 2019). Zenyatta has the overall appearance of a usual Omnic, with the additional feature of his hovering ability. Hence his movements tend to be slow but faster in the upper part. When attacking, the hero uses his arms to throw orbs, as seen in the image in action. Overall, his visuals resemble a calm figure since the orbs and the levitation help to create a calm and supportive figure to the Omnic.

<sup>128</sup> Padmasana is also known as Lotus position.

**Possessive Attributes:** The nine orbs Zenyatta carries keep on constant movement turning around his neck. They are also his main abilities and weapon - as he can throw orbs at enemies individually to

Figure 138 - Zenyatta's Spray "Balance"



cause damage, named Orb of Destruction. He can throw an orb on a teammate to heal, named Orb of Harmony, and he can also throw an orb in an enemy which amplifies the amount of damage the enemy receives for some time, named Orb of Discord. His outfit is basically made out of yellow/mustard pants with red belts with a piece the fabric in the front part, suggesting an adaptive form of a *Kāṣāya*, the traditional clothing used by Buddhist monks.

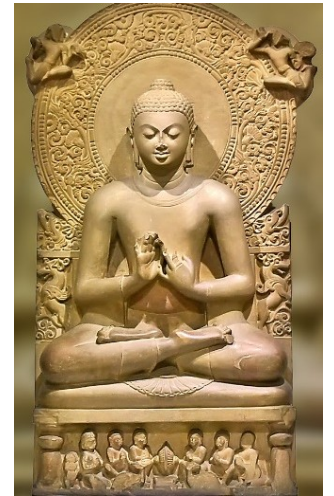
**Symbolic Attributes:** Zenyatta is concerned with the enlightenment of the self. Hence, his main symbolic visual elements are a correlation to his

Figure 140 - Shaolin Monk practice



spirituality and beliefs. The Orbs, besides being his main weapon, might also symbolize the nine chakras' system, originated in India (the tenth chakra is outside the body). The Orb of Harmony, used to heal, represents the Yin while the Orb of Discord, used to amplify damage to enemies, represents the Yang. The Yin and Yang, according to Chinese philosophy and religion are "two principles, one negative, dark, and feminine (yin), and one positive, bright, and masculine (yang), whose interaction influences the destinies of creatures and things<sup>129</sup>". The hero has even

Figure 139 - Statue of Gautama Buddha in Padmasana position in Uttar Pradesh, India



a cosmetic spray in the game that suggests the duality of the Yin-Yang (Figure 138<sup>130</sup>). In addition, his outfit resembles a *Kāṣāya*, which also adds to the creation of his identity and relate his image to the Buddhism religion, and his physical position already indicates a correlation to Buddhism. Several depictions of Indian Buddhist art depict the Buddha in human form in *Padmasana* position (Figure 139<sup>131</sup>), becoming an iconic representation of the Buddha worldwide (LEIDY, 2008).

Another topic concerns the overall creation of his visual appearance as a monk, which resembles the fighting monks (Figure 140<sup>132</sup>) of *Shaolin Monastery* in the Pagoda Forest on Song Mountain in China.

<sup>129</sup> Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/yin-and-yang>

<sup>130</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray\\_Zenyatta\\_Balance.png](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Spray_Zenyatta_Balance.png)

<sup>131</sup> Retrieved from

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama\\_Buddha#/media/File:Buddha\\_in\\_Sarnath\\_Museum\\_\(Dharmajak\\_Mutra\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha#/media/File:Buddha_in_Sarnath_Museum_(Dharmajak_Mutra).jpg)

<sup>132</sup> Retrieved from <https://buddhism.stackexchange.com/questions/9246/buddhist-shaolin-monks-and-their-practice>

Accordingly, in 2010, the Monastery and its Pagoda Forest were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the "*Historic Monuments of Dengfeng*"<sup>133</sup>. To conclude, although Zenyatta has several Buddhist references, the hero also presents Hinduism references throughout the game. It might suggest a correlation to his Nepalese nationality, since according to the Population Monograph of Nepal (2014), Hinduism and Buddhism are the religions with the majority of the population.

#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 141 - Zenyatta Skin: **Cultist**

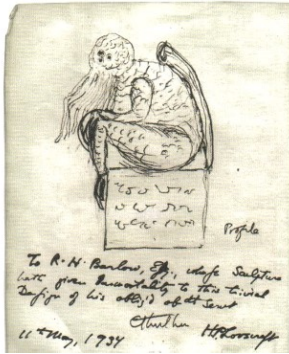


Source: Game screenshot

<sup>133</sup> Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1305>

**Sociocultural features:** Zenyatta's thematic skin Cultist was released in a Halloween event of the game. The skin portrays an adaptation of the figure of *Cthulhu*. Cthulhu is a fictional character created by

Figure 142 - A sketch of Cthulhu drawn by Lovecraft, 1934



the late American writer *H. P. Lovecraft* who first appeared in his best-known short story named "*The Call of Cthulhu*", published in 1928 by the American pulp magazine *Weird Tales*. The author H. P. Lovecraft, although unknown during his lifetime, is nowadays considered one of the most significant 20th-century writers of supernatural horror fiction (SCHWEITZER, 2012). The author created the *Cthulhu Mythos*, which is a fictional universe with its proper setting, character and storylines. In the short story "*The Call of Cthulhu*", the creature is described as a giant octopus, dragon creature with human features, while its head has several tentacles around his mouth, being a creature related to the sea (Figure

142<sup>134</sup>). In the narrative, the creature is worshipped by cultists, which might explain the name given for the thematic skin.

**Intertextuality:** Nowadays, the Cthulhu creature represents a remarkable and iconic symbol for the geek community. Therefore, the character has also inspired and is part of several games (Figure 143<sup>135</sup>), music, plays, TV series, movies, and books. Concerning the correlation to Zenyatta's character, although the skin is visually well-constructed within the reference, I could not find a straight correlation to Zenyatta's character, other than the fact that Cthulhu is a form of worshipped god and a myth, while Zenyatta is a strong believer, full of faith in the path for the true self. Hence, the worshipfulness may be a trait of correlation among them. Note that a thematic skin does not need to have a straight reference to the heroes' personality or nationality, as sometimes the skin serves to refer to icons of popular culture that fit into the specific thematic event.

Figure 143 - N'Raqi: a Cthulhu inspired creature in the game World of Warcraft



**Visual Text:** In the thematic skin, Zenyatta is quite changed from his original skin, having his head with tentacles in a form of octopus, while his orbs become a sort of dragon's eyes and his skin and most of his clothing are in the color purple. When Zenyatta uses the Cultist skin, some of his usual voice lines such

<sup>134</sup> Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cthulhu\\_Mythos#/media/File:Cthulhu\\_sketch\\_by\\_Lovecraft.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cthulhu_Mythos#/media/File:Cthulhu_sketch_by_Lovecraft.jpg)

<sup>135</sup> Retrieved from <https://pt.wowhead.com/npc=128946/erradicador-nraqi>

as “*Experience tranquility*” and “*Pass into the Iris*” are altered to “*Experience oblivion*” and “*Pass into the unknown*” respectively, in order to make the reference stronger.

**Theme Categories:** Literature and Popular Culture.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<b>Real Name:</b> Tekhartha Zenyatta <b>Age:</b> 20 <b>Occupation:</b> Wandering Guru, Adventurer <b>Role in the Game:</b> Support	<b>Species:</b> Omnic <b>Sex:</b> Male <b>Nationality:</b> Nepalese <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE
<i>Zenyatta is an Omnic monk who wanders the world in search of spiritual enlightenment. It is said that those who cross his path are never the same again.</i>		<i>“True self is without form.”</i>
THEMATIC LINES		
<p><i>“I dreamt I was a butterfly”</i> – The line is a possible reference to the story “<i>The Butterfly Dream</i>”, written by the Chinese Taoist philosopher, Zhuangzi.</p> <p><i>“I think, therefore I am”</i> – The line is a straight reference to the popular quote of French philosopher René Descartes: <i>Je pense, donc je suis. (I think, therefore I am).</i></p>		
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS		
VERB	OCCURRENCES	
Is	Time is an illusion / A closed mind is already defeated / Pain is an excellent teacher	
Learn	You have much to learn / You must learn from your mistakes / being eager to learn is not the same as learning	
Feel	I feel greatly empowered / I feel neither joy or remorse / I feel the warmth of the Iris flowing through me!	
Has	The master still has a few tricks / My path has converged with that of the payload / Destiny has drawn me to the objective	
Walk	Walk in harmony / If you wish to know someone, walk in their shoes / Walk along the path to enlightenment	

<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>
Path, Mind, Iris, Harmony, Peace
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>
<p>The Omnic monk Tekhartha Zenyatta uses his last name as codename in Overwatch, while ‘Zen’ is a common term in Buddhism. The name Zenyatta comes from an album by the British Rock band <i>The Police</i>. The correlation was considered since the album is entitled "<i>Zenyatta Mondatta</i>", while Mondatta, according to the game narrative, was Zenyatta’s former mentor, which grabs the references all together. The hero is described as a wanderer guru and adventurer in his bio, while having the role of support in the game. His catchphrase "<i>True self is without form</i>" is a reference to his enlightenment path, which might possibly refer to Buddhism and other spiritual traditions. Both of Zenyatta's thematic lines are external references that belong to an existential and philosophical thematic, as one refers to the philosophical tradition and religion Taoism, and the other refers to the popular philosophical quote from <i>Descartes</i>.</p> <p>Concerning the transitivity system, Zenyatta presents two relational processes (<i>is</i> and <i>has</i>), two mental processes (<i>learn</i> and <i>feel</i>) and one material process (<i>walk</i>). The relational process 'is' is used to share personal statements regarding his beliefs (<i>Time is an illusion / A closed mind is already defeated / Pain is an excellent teacher</i>), and the process ‘has’ is also used in personal statements (<i>The master still has a few tricks</i>) in which he refers to himself in third person. The mental process 'learn' concerns mainly the same thematic (<i>You have much to learn / You must learn from your mistakes / being eager to learn is not the same as learning</i>), as advice, suggestions and statements related to a learning process. The mental process 'feel' is used as a form to express his feelings (<i>I feel greatly empowered / I feel neither joy or remorse / I feel the warmth of the Iris flowing through me!</i>), which also correlates to his beliefs and ideologies. At last, the material process 'walk' is used to give an advice towards an action (<i>Walk in harmony / If you wish to know someone, walk in their shoes / Walk along the path to enlightenment</i>). Material processes are also used where the hero is the Actor in clauses which mostly relate to the game match (<i>My path has converged with that of the payload / Destiny has drawn me to the objective</i>)</p> <p>Regarding his most frequent nouns, the most used - <i>Path</i> refers to his way to enlightenment, while all the other nouns are coherent within the same theme: <i>Mind, Iris, Harmony</i> and <i>Peace</i>. In his official description, Zenyatta is described as an "<i>Omic monk who wanders the world in search of spiritual enlightenment</i>". It also describes the hero as a folkloric figure due to the narrative structure "<i>It is said that those who cross his path are never the same again</i>", which verbally creates a certain mystery around his character. While his occupation as a guru and classification as a monk is present in his speech through his</p>



advice and statements, Zenyatta's verbal text does not present a focus on the battle itself, neither his role as a support. However, under the social actors' framework, the hero would mostly be identified as an actor within a classification, as a monk, and a functionalization, since his occupation as a guru is also explicitly present in his speech as Zenyatta often guides and influences others with his words related to the path of enlightenment. His Nepalese background is not present in the verbal text analyzed; however, it is present through other modes of the games, such as in the *Nepal* map.

Ultimately, Zenyatta's verbal identity might be described as this spiritual guru with several guidance statements in search for harmony and peace. However, from my perspective, his character is complex, since, implicitly, it is quite impossible to define a character who is in constant development in search for enlightenment. Hence, the reason some verbal traits of the hero are contrastive and mysterious is an intentional tool to achieve the point of questioning its own existence. Thus, Zenyatta is a character who does not allow any final conclusion, as from my perspective, it is his actual purpose within the game's representation.

The present chapter provided a multimodal analysis of semiotic elements of the game with a focus on the characters. As seen, all the characters present through their elements strong cultural and identity marks. The next chapter proposes a discussion of several topics derived from the findings of this chapter.

## 5 OVERWATCH MULTIMODAL DISCUSSION

*“Reality is broken. Game designers can fix it.”*

Jane McGonigal

This chapter is aimed to carry a discussion of the analyses conducted in the previous chapter. In order to make it more organized, I divided the discussion into themes where I can discuss some issues that were brought during the multimodal analysis.

### 5.1 HEROES' REPRESENTATION: STATISTICAL INFORMATION

This section focuses on statistical information about the representation of the heroes discussed on Chapter 4. The following table considers the description of each hero and also some information obtained through the analysis of the heroes as social actors. It is divided into topics which characterize each hero. Then, each topic is briefly discussed.

Table 2 – List of Descriptive Items from the Heroes

Hero	Species	Country	Age	Occupation	Disability	Family Relation	Narrative Role	Game Role
Ana	Human	Egypt	60	Bounty Hunter	Yes	Yes	Overwatch	Support
Baptiste	Human	Haiti	36	Combat Medic	No	No	Other	Support
Brigitte	Human	Sweden	23	Mechanical Engineer	No	Yes	Overwatch	Support
D.Va	Human	South Korea	19	Mech Pilot, Actress	No	No	Other	Tank
Doomfist	Human	Nigeria	45	Mercenary	Yes	No	Talon	Damage
Genji	Cyborg	Japan	35	Adventurer	Yes	Yes	Overwatch	Damage
Hanzo	Human	Japan	38	Mercenary, Assassin	No	Yes	Other	Damage
Junkrat	Human	Australia	25	Thief, Demolitionist, Mercenary, Scavenger	Yes	No	Other	Damage
Lúcio	Human	Brazil	26	Freedom Fighter	No	No	Other	Support
McCree	Human	USA	37	Bounty Hunter	Yes	No	Overwatch	Damage
Mei	Human	China	31	Climatologist, Adventurer	No	No	Overwatch	Damage
Mercy	Human	Switzerland	37	Field Medic, First Responder	No	No	Overwatch	Support
Moira	Human	Ireland	48	Geneticist	No	No	Talon	Support
Pharah	Human	Egypt	32	Security Chief	No	Yes	Other	Damage
Soldier: 76	Human	USA	x	Vigilante	Unknown	Unknown	Other	Damage
Sombra	Human	Mexico	30	Hacker	No	Unknown	Talon	Damage
Tracer	Human	England	26	Adventurer	No	No	Overwatch	Damage
Widowmaker	Human	France	33	Assassin	No	No	Talon	Damage
Zarya	Human	Russia	28	Soldier	No	No	Other	Tank
Zenyatta	Omnig	Nepal	20	Wandering Guru, Adventurer	No	No	Other	Support

Source: Author (2021)

Concerning the first category regarding the species of the hero, out of the 20 characters, 18 of them are humans, 1 is a cyborg and 1 is an Omnic, making 90% of the character as humans. One of the reasons for the casting to be made mostly of humans might be concerned with the audience's identification. Going further into the category, as a matter of relevance, considering only the 18 humans in the game, 11 are female and 7 are male, which shows a superiority of female heroes, in terms of gender of the characters available. Another topic regards the fact that among these 18 humans, 4 of them have their DNA modified as a result of a disability or any other feature, which makes them having superior power in relation to usual humans.

Considering the countries, out of the 20 characters, 17 different nationalities emerge. The countries who have more than one character are: USA (2), Egypt (2) and Japan (2), Considering the 7 continents, Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. However, there is not any character from Antarctica, although this continent is explored in the game since the hero Mei works there. The continent with the most characters represented are Europe (5) and North America (3), while the least represented, in addition of Antarctica, is South America (1). From my perspective, the number of heroes from Europe somehow reinforces a sort of dominance of Eurocentric values, which are seen as the standard form of beauty and behavior patterns. Jackson-Lowman (2014) explains how Eurocentric's notions have molded society to create standards and prioritize a mode of beauty:

It is easy to see how Eurocentric assumptions and beliefs permeate conceptions of what is beautiful. The operation of a single standard of beauty which ascribes physical beauty to certain European characteristics, e.g., very fair skin, straight blonde hair, blue eyes, Nordic facial features, thin bodies, and ranks the beauty of other racial/ethnic groups against this standard reflects the belief in the superiority of Europeans. The belief that "white" is good, beautiful, attractive and "black" is evil, ugly, and undesirable is a reflection of either/or thinking which does not recognize the possibility that both whiteness and blackness can exhibit any of these characteristics (p.158).

With that, even though the game brought an attempt to show a diverse cast of several different countries and nationalities, there are still traces of a major perpetuation of values regarding beauty standards. In addition to this topic, a controversial issue concerns the characters' skin color. Since it is still in debate in academia, up to this date, the terms to refer to people of color, as the term POC, which was commonly used in academia for years, has now become not appropriate since it divides people into white and non-white. Nevertheless, the game was also noticeable to represent several different colors of skin. Concerning the age category, in order to present a categorization of chronological age ranges, I use psychologist Lachman's (2001) study that defines the period of adulthood into adulthood (approximately aged 20-39), middle adulthood (40-59), and old age, or elderly (60+). Therefore, people who are 19 and less are considered Young. Considering the characters of the game and their ages, the following table presents the categorization of the different age groups:

Table 3 – Age Range Chart

AGE RANGE CATEGORIES	
<b>Young (19 and less)</b>	01 hero
<b>Adulthood (20 – 39)</b>	15 heroes
<b>Middle-Adulthood (40 – 59)</b>	02 heroes
<b>Elderly (60 and more)</b>	02 heroes <sup>136</sup>

Source: Author (2021)

The table shows that the number of heroes represented as young and elderly are similar in the game, while most of them fit into Adulthood category. Although the fact that the number of elderly and even Middle-Adulthood characters could be higher, considering the common-sense in the gaming industry, it shows a positive feature, since most video games with pre-defined characters usually do not feature any elderly representation. Accordingly, in a study concerning a virtual census of representation of gender, race and age in video games (WILLIAMS; CONSALVO; MARTINS; IVORY, 2009), it was shown that elderly characters represent only an average of 12% of characters in games, which somehow correlates to the actual Overwatch game, as elderly characters represent 10% of the characters.

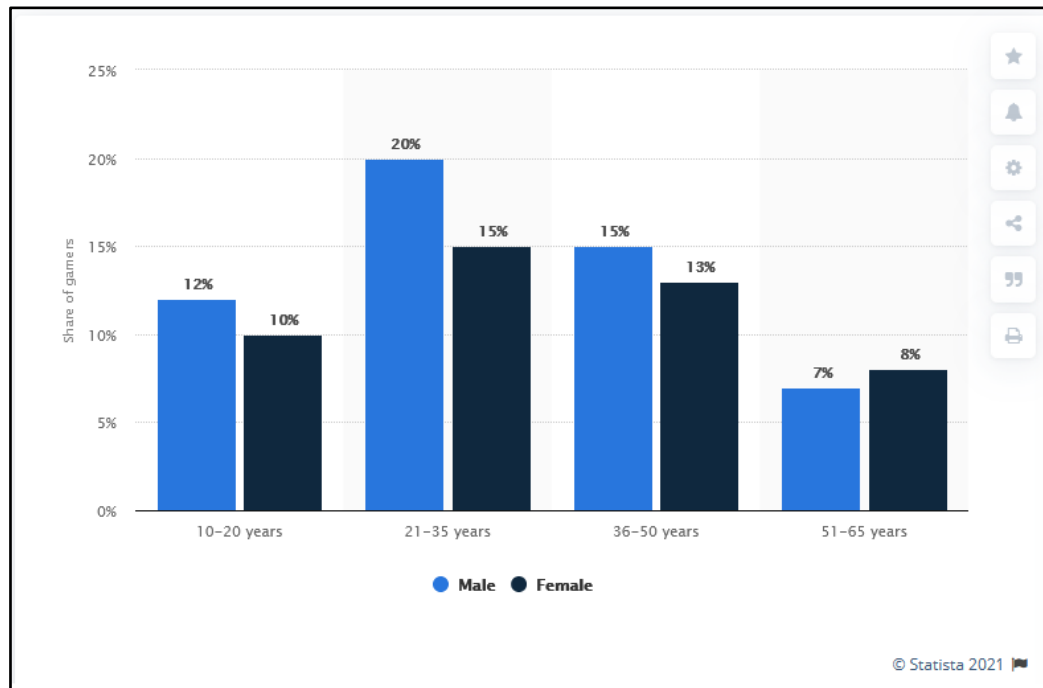
The popular statistical website *Statista*, known as the global number 1 Business Data Platform<sup>137</sup>, developed a research regarding the distribution of gamers worldwide by age and sex in 2017. According to the research (Figure 144<sup>138</sup>), male gamers correspond to 54% of the players, whereas female players 46%, which demonstrates the high number of female gamers in an industry that is commonly associated and molded for male users. Hence, the positive changes in representation of female characters prove to be a necessity considering their audience. Such positive changes include mostly the representation of female figures without over sexualization and the presence of negative stereotypes. Another interesting factor is the number of gamers above 51 years old, representing 15% of the total, which helps to break the common-sense notion of video games as child, teenager and youngster hobbies, followed by the fact that 38% of users are above 36 years old.

<sup>136</sup> Although in his official information Soldier: 76 has his age unknown, according to the game narrative he is an elderly character.

<sup>137</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/>

<sup>138</sup> Available on Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/722259/world-gamers-by-age-and-gender/>

Figure 144 - Distribution of Gamers Worldwide by Age and Sex



Source: Retrieved from the website in the footnote.

Concerning the category of the occupation of the heroes, which is related to the representation of social actors by van Leeuwen (2008), it is possible to notice how it is correlated to the game narrative, since several occupations are war-related, such as mercenaries, assassins, weapons' designer, soldiers, etc. Using the framework provided by van Leeuwen (2008) allows us to notice how the characters are mostly recognized based on their descriptions, which may be concerned with their occupations, as in most of the cases, or even other categories, such as family identification (Ana and Pharah) or physical attributes (Junkrat), trespassing their occupations, becoming their main sociocultural aspect of identity. Also, as a futuristic game, there are several scientists among the casting, specifically 3 of them, while, interestingly, all of them are female: Mercy, Moira and Mei. The occupations are also usually connected to the game narrative and the game role of the hero. In addition to intellectual occupations being relied on female characters, another interesting factor is that the game attempts to break gender stereotypes regarding professions. It can be seen as female characters with occupations such as Mechanical Engineer, Pilots, Soldiers, Professional Gamers, bodybuilders, among others. The characters D.Va and Lucio represent the celebrities of the cast, which, as seen in their analysis, their celebrity's persona were

created through several multimodal resources, such as their speech, visual elements and also the integration of visual elements in the physical space.

Regarding the category concerning characters' disabilities (mental or physical impairment), different from the results above, the analysis showed that out of the 18 human characters, 5 of them present an explicit disability (an average of 28%), mostly physical ones, whereas visual elements such as prosthetics are significant possessive attributes in the identity of these characters. In Hutchinson's (2017) study about race and disability in the popular game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (ROCKSTAR, 2004), the author explains how the disability of one of the main characters (blindness), in addition to be masked and implicit, does not impair the character's performance, since one is able to run fast, shoot guns and play sports. Similarly, in *Overwatch's* case, the characters with disability usually use such characteristic as a form to gain power, for instance, the hero Doomfist gained power by using a prosthetic arm, and Ana being one of the best snipers in the game having one eye blind, among others.

Regarding the category of family relation, out of the 18 human characters, 5 of them (an average of 28%) present explicit familiar relation in the game: Ana and Pharah (mother and daughter), Torbjörn (*appendix a*) and Brigitte (father and daughter) and Genji and Hanzo (brothers). In all of the cases, their familiar relationship was explicit in their multimodal texts, especially in the official verbal descriptions and in their speech. Concerning the representation of social actors, these characters are identified as relational identification, since their identities are built as correlated to another character. In the case of the two daughters (Pharah and Brigitte), there is a similar ideology behind their speech, since both characters carry a constant attempt to prove their value and significance to their parents in their speech, as seen in their verbal analysis. However, the case of the Japanese brothers, Genji and Hanzo, presents a different ideology, showing rivalry and a strong sense of psychological traumas behind the speech of both characters.

Concerning the last two categories - narrative role and game role, they show whether the characters are members of the official *Overwatch* team, who fight to save the world, as the official 'heroes' of the game, or members of the Talon, the enemy organization, or still by their own reasonings (Other). Out of all the 20 characters, 9 of them belong to Other, while 7 of them are official *Overwatch* members and 4 of them are Talon members. Among the *Overwatch* members, the game roles of the heroes are: (4) damages, and, (3) supports, while the Talon ones are (3) damage and (1) support. In addition, considering the game roles, out of all the characters, most of

them are damage (11), followed by (7) supports, and (2) tanks. As explained in the introductory chapter, the roles of the characters concern their objective in the actual gameplay, as supports, as the name suggests, help the ally team, tanks protect the team, and damages are focused on killing the enemies. Another common-sense concept in gaming representation is the perpetuation of female characters as support, as they are usually seen as divine (the hero Mercy for instance). Accordingly, out of the 7 support heroes, most of them are female (4). Such numbers, despite not provocative, shows that even though the game presents an attempt to break gendered stereotypes, there are still implicit homogenic notions perpetuated in terms of representation.

As a final topic in this section regards the fact that two of the most popular heroes are openly gay characters (Tracer and Soldier: 76). In addition to Tracer, which was explored in her individual analysis, Soldier: 76 is the second Overwatch hero whose sexuality has been directly addressed. According to an official short story<sup>139</sup>, Soldier: 76 was in a romantic relationship with a man named Vincent. The writer Michael Chu later confirmed in a statement<sup>140</sup> that Soldier: 76 sexually identifies as gay. The popularity of such characters relies on the fact the Tracer is present in several animated shorts, has the official catchphrase of the game and is in the official cover. While Soldier: 76 is the hero the player plays during the tutorial, he is also a remarkable character in the narrative of the game. The exploration of their sexuality was brought, as seen in their individual analysis, in the transmedia storytelling, through comic books and shorts stories, and only later introduced as multimodal elements in the game, such as cosmetic sprays and voice lines. The choice of making those characters part of LGBTQ+ community showed a bold decision from the game developers, since they suffered several backlashes from numerous companies, countries and part of the community.

## 5.2 HEROES' REPRESENTATION: THE CREATION OF IDENTITIES

A major point in the discussion of the study is how multimodality, that is, how all different modes of meaning presented in the game, are used in order to create an identity to each character. As already described, each character, among other sociocultural factors, has an explicit nationality, occupation and function in the game. With this, this section is divided into two parts - the visual

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<sup>139</sup> Available on <https://playoverwatch.com/en-us/media/stories/bastet/>

<sup>140</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.polygon.com/2019/1/7/18172470/overwatch-soldier-76-gay-bisexual>



analysis and the verbal analysis of the heroes. It was possible to notice that the creation of the visual elements in appearance of the heroes could help to identify their personalities and correlate them to their nationalities, occupations, game roles, among other sociocultural categories. Also, other verbal and visual elements such as the thematic skins, thematic lines and official descriptions and catchphrases added a mark on some of the heroes' identity. In a first moment, considering the visual analysis of their official skins with the three analytical categories of visual grammar (KRESS; VAN LEUWEEN, 2006) related to conceptual images: carrier, possessive attributes and symbolic attributes, I discuss briefly each character's results.

Starting with Ana, her visual identity relies mostly on her age, occupation and relational identification as a mother. However, the symbolic attributes present her religion and her nationality with explicit Egyptian symbols, creates a complex character with a narrative deeply presented in her visual form. With Baptiste, the categories of analysis focus mostly on his occupation, not carrying many references to his nationality itself, which mainly happens through his speech, not in visual elements. Brigitte, despite carrying hints of her nationality in her visual elements, most of her visual attributes concern her occupation and skills. D.Va is an example of a character that carries virtually all the identity marks presented in her narrative and background story, since her visual elements position her as a young South Korean girl, a gamer and a mech pilot. Besides, D.Va is one of the most popular and most played characters of the game, and the visual analysis may be correlated to such success.

Doomfist is a hero whose identity is created vastly focused on his religion and nationality, while also carrying elements of his occupation and function. Regarding the case of Genji, the hero is visually built into his ninja cyborg persona, which is correlated to his nationality, since it is a reference to Japanese games. Moreover, his possessive attributes are related to his nationality and heritage. The same happens with his brother Hanzo, whose visual elements are linked to his nationality through symbolic marks and his occupation due to his possessive attributes. Junkrat's identity, on the other hand, is visually marked as an intertextual reference to iconic characters, such as the *Joker*. However, there are still some elements, such as his tanned body, that are correlations to his nationality, while his occupation and 'crazy' personality are the identity marks prevalent in his visual construction.

Lúcio, the Brazilian hero, carries some visual elements that concern his nationality, such as the colors of his outfit, and his occupation as DJ, as his possessive attribute weapon. However, his

hobby as a skater is a visual element presented in his appearance, which may not be much related to his background story, but more as a form to create his abilities and skills in the game. The hero McCree is visually created with his heritage as the major factor, instead of nationality, followed by his 'grumpy' personality and role in the game. Also, his visual elements are deeply correlated to intertextual references to cinema and video games. The female character Mei is an example of a hero who has her occupation as the main focus on her visual creation. In addition to her hairpin and facial features, virtually all the visual elements are correlated to her occupation as a climatologist set in Antarctica and skill in the games, which somehow creates a form of double national identity for her.

Mercy is created visually based on a conceptual idea of an angel, which is related to her function in the game as a support hero. In addition, her appearance also resembles her nationality, while her skills and occupation as a field medic are the predominant topics observed in her visual creation. In the case of another female character, Moira, her visual elements are mostly focused on an androgynous figure, which might be related to an intertextual reference to musician *David Bowie*. Her role in the narrative as a villain is also visually present, in addition to traces of her nationality as Irish, and her occupation as a scientist. Pharah's visual identity, on the other hand, relies on a serious figure mostly correlated to her occupation as a soldier. However, several nationality and cultural marks, such as the shape of her armor and the tattoo under her eyes, correlate her to Egyptian culture, while they also relate her appearance to her mother, the hero Ana.

Soldier: 76 has his visual elements created as a form to evoke a middle-aged to elderly soldier. His nationality is implicitly correlated to the colors of his clothing, while his function and role in the game is an explicit aspect through the way he presents himself and his physical attributes, such as his weapon, which from my perspective, is a hero visually coherent with most of his backstory, narrative and sociocultural factors. Likewise, Sombra is a hero whose visual elements can be considered implicitly correlated to several sociocultural factors, such as her occupation as a hacker, through her technological gears, her function as a damage hero, and her Mexican nationality. Furthermore, her young age is also suggested by her appearance. Tracer evokes in her appearance an image of energy and youth, associated with her age and her skills in the game, as the hero has the ability to move fast compared to other heroes. Visually speaking, her official skin relates mostly to one of her hobbies as a runner. Another important issue brought was the fact that

the hero is openly part of the LGBTQ+ community, yet this aspect is shown only through some semiotic devices in the game, such as the cosmetic sprays.

Widowmaker presents a very unique appearance when compared to other female heroes of the cast. The character may be considered the most sexualized according to the exposure of her body. In addition, the oblique angle in her official image helps the creation of a 'sexy' woman, as mentioned in her individual analysis. Her blue skin is related to her narrative in the game, which also concerns her role as a villain and her occupation as an assassin. The correlation to the black widow spider agrees with the other visual elements, relating characteristics of the animal with her personality. Although her nationality is not visually explicit in her figure, there might be a certain correlation of French women to the concept of sex appeal. Zarya is a hero that carries through her visual identity several elements correlated to her description and narrative. Her armor may be related to her occupation as a soldier, while her strong and muscular physical appearance concerns her former occupation as a bodybuilder and weightlifter. Also, Zarya is the strongest woman in the world, which is an aspect present explicitly in her visual creation. However, some issues of her narrative and identity are present in cosmetic items such as sprays, not being explicit in her official image, as the same happens with her Russian nationality, which is present in her verbal speech through her lines and accent but not in her visual elements.

The last hero analyzed, Zenyatta, alongside with other heroes mentioned before, also represents a very ironic character since he is considered the most spiritualized hero considering his occupation as a guru. The irony is that the hero is an Omnic, related to a common sense both in the game narrative as in the real world that robots do not have a soul or spiritual awareness. All of his visual attributes help to create his identity of Guru, as his weapon evoking the chakras system and his pose evoking Yoga positions. Also, his nationality as a Nepalese might be implicit through his outfit, considered monks from Nepal, as explained in his individual analysis, while his function as a support hero is also implicit through his personality and Guru persona.

The aspect of irony in the creation of their visual identities is presented in several characters, in addition to Zenyatta, as mentioned. Ana is one of the best snipers in the narrative being blind from one eye; D.Va, a female character, is the best gamer in the world, something that in our society is more concerned with men. Such correlation also happens with Sombra, being the world's most notorious Hacker, among other examples where female characters occupy spaces that are hegemonically known as male, such as Brigitte as a determined engineer. After carrying this

discussion on the visual creation of identity of the characters, I discuss some of the verbal elements that also helped such creation. Since the focus of the study was the visual elements, in this case I mention general topics that gather the characters concerning their verbal text, which could be the information provided by the game (description and catchphrase) or the speech they produced (verbal lines and most frequent occurrences). Guided by the categories proposed in the table 2, it is possible to state some observations found during their verbal analysis.

Considering the species, the Omnic and non-human characters all have verbal texts that explicitly state their species as non-humans. The nationality of the characters is also present in most of the cases. While in some cases the characters have lines in their mother language (D.Va, Hanzo, Genji, Symmetra, etc.), some others are correlated to their nationality or heritage according to customs or even accents. The age of the characters is also an aspect observed in several cases, especially among the youngest heroes (D.Va and Brigitte), with lines expressing their youth, and the oldest heroes (Soldier:76 and Ana) with several lines that express experience and maturity. Also concerning this topic, from my perspective, the representation of elderly was created in a positive way, since their age is seen as maturity and confidence, similar to what happens with heroes with physical disabilities, who are represented as powerful heroes in which that disability did not impair their performance, on the contrary, it improved them.

Considering their occupations, all the analyzed heroes' verbal texts mention at least once what they do in society, which is also linked to their game role or narrative role. The aspect of belonging to a family is also present in the characters, categorized under family identification (VAN LEUWEEN, 2008). Another interesting aspect seen in the analysis is the fact that the two characters who are daughters of other characters, Pharah and Brigitte, carry a strong need of approval from their parents. Overall, it was possible to notice how the multimodal elements of the game are strong tools used to create a sense of identity and personality for the heroes, both in visual and verbal mode. Therefore, the use of Multimodality theories and analytical frameworks showed to be a relevant tool to investigate semiotic objects that carry a deep impact on issues of representation in contemporary society.

### 5.3 HEROES' REPRESENTATION: MULTIMODAL INTERTEXTUALITY

In this section, I discuss what I nominated as *Multimodal Intertextuality*, that is, the external and in-game references presented in the analysis of the heroes through visual and verbal modes. Intertextuality is present in the analysis through the investigation of one thematic skin (visual analysis) of two verbal lines (verbal analysis) of each hero. The data showed many worldwide cultural references that also helped the creation of identity for each character. I discuss the visual elements, (thematic skins), and then the verbal text (thematic lines). I use the categories of each thematic skin. The categories were created and filled according to my perspective, which may not present the full picture, but it is an attempt to organize the semiotic elements, since several categories are correlated. The following table presents a list with all the thematic categories and the number of skins, from the most to the least frequent<sup>141</sup>:

Table 4 – Thematic Categories

<b>THEMATIC SKINS' CATEGORIES</b>	
<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
<b>World Culture</b>	09
<b>Popular Culture</b>	08
<b>Folklore</b>	04
<b>Mythology</b>	04
<b>Performances</b>	03
<b>Movies</b>	03
<b>Music</b>	03
<b>Holidays</b>	02
<b>Literature</b>	02
<b>Sports</b>	02
<b>Subcultures</b>	02
<b>Fashion</b>	02
<b>Religion</b>	02

<sup>141</sup> Bearing in mind that the same thematic skin could be classified in more than one category.

<b>Festivals</b>	01
<b>Comics</b>	01

Source: Author (2021)

Most of the thematic skins analyzed in the study (09) present aspects of *World Culture*. The skins in this category usually are related to the nationality of the characters with the visual elements carrying local cultural references, such as in the cases of Ana and Pharah (Egypt), D.Va (South Korea), Genji and Hanzo (Japan), Sombra (Mexico), among others. It also happens through references to historical figures (Pharah as Cleopatra) and with the skins of seasonal events, such as in Brigitte's case referring to the Lunar Year event with Korean references. The second category with most frequent skins (08) is *Popular Culture*, which different from World Culture, carries more specific visual elements that referred to dominant and mainstream references in the skins. Some examples include Baptiste with a vampire skin, McCree as the famous characters *Sherlock Holmes*, Moira as a reference to late musician *David Bowie*, among others. The categories *Folklore* and *Mythology* are interconnected, since the 4 skins belong to the same characters (Baptiste, Genji, Mei and Mercy). The skins pay tribute to folkloric icons and myths usually deriving from the local place of each character.

The *Performances'* category is seen in 3 characters. While, as mentioned, one skin refers to a seasonal event, (Brigitte), the character Hanzo presents a local cultural performance with the classical Japanese performance Kabuki. In addition, in Widowmaker's case, despite the performance being a Russian ballet, her nationality as French is deeply correlated historically to ballet. The category *Movies* presents explicit references to popular movies, such as in Soldier:76 and Sombra's case. Concerning *Music*, the category presents, as mentioned, Moira as a reference to David Bowie and two musical genres that belong to subcultures - Tracer with Punk and Zarya with Cybergoth. The *Holidays'* category presents two characters with local cultural references such as D.Va with the South Korean festival Seollal, and Sombra with the Mexican holiday *Day of the Dead*. The *Literature* category presents two popular literary items with two novel characters: McCree as Sherlock Holmes written by British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Zenyatta as Cthulhu, created by American author H. P. Lovecraft.

The category *Sports* is related to the seasonal event Summer Games as it presents two characters in my study: Junkrat and Lucio. It is observed that in the two cases the sports depicted

to each hero are correlated to their personalities and identities in different levels. In Junkrat's case, despite Cricket not being originally from Australia, it is nowadays one of Australia's most popular sport, with correlations of the skin with the character's nationality. While Lúcio's case presents, from my perspective, the most coherent sport concerning his nationality and identity, as Capoeira is widely famous worldwide as a Brazilian martial art.

The following two categories also present two characters for each of them: Subcultures and Fashion, while such categories are interconnected with previous ones. The *Subculture* category relates to subcultural movements also correlated to *Fashion* - Punk (Tracer) and Zarya (Cybergoth). The *Religion* category concerns Doomfist's Yoruba and Zenyatta's references to Hinduism and Buddhism. The *Festivals* depicted is the Day of the Dead (Mexico) from Sombra, while the Comics refers to Baptiste with the reference from the Marvel comics' character *Blade*. Overall, all the themes could help to illustrate how the game was concerned with the depiction and representation of several cultures worldwide, whether from mediatic products or any other cultural item present in the game.

The second mode of intertextuality presented in each character is the use of thematic lines, that is, verbal speech spoken by the characters in the game that represent intertextual references. I analyzed one or two lines from each character, footnote. In a general classification, I could see that most of their lines are popular cultural references, referring to movies, novels, video games, TV series, among many other mediatic items. This could suggest that, different from the thematic visual skins that presented many world cultural aspects of different cultures, the verbal lines were more concerned with the establishment of a connection of the player with their background knowledge, since most of them are from popular cultural items, which, from my perspective, does not carry the same didactic weight as the visual themes.

I would also like to briefly refer to a topic which was not presented in this thesis, but which was also investigated, namely the visual integration of the characters in the virtual spaces of the game (maps). I could observe that most of the maps relied on items that are explicitly correlated to the identity of the character, while all of them are placed in the maps from their hometown (Genji, Sombra, D.Va, Junkrat, among others). However, the exception happens in the cases of D.Va and Lucio: since they are both celebrity, there are visual signs of the character spread throughout several maps, which is a visual aspect used to show their popularity in the narrative through the visual elements of the game. There are also several marks of in-game intertextuality, that is, references

from the game itself, as the airport in Numbani's map depicting other maps as possible locations to travel. To conclude this section, in accordance to the previous one, the creation of identity of the characters, I was able to understand how the multimodality in the game could not only create but add relevance and authenticity to the personality of each character. Therefore, the characters become complex semiotic objects since they carry cultural meanings through the several references both in visual and verbal mode, creating a positive aspect considering their representation in the game.

#### 5.4 HEROES' SPEECH: WAR AND ACTION

This section discusses the verbal textual analysis of the heroes conducted in the analysis' chapter. The discussion is divided into two main topics. First, I refer to the sociocultural factors, such as their nationality, age, occupation, mentioning of disability or familiar relation, present in one or more categories of their verbal text - description, catchphrases, occurrences, and most frequent nouns. Secondly, I refer to the results from the transitivity analysis which concern the action of the heroes through their speech, focusing on what each process is mostly used for and what is common among all the heroes. Considering the first topic, in order to facilitate the discussion, the following table is divided by the sociocultural categories and is filled with each hero that presents a verbal text concerning them.

Table 5 – Sociocultural Factors

<b>SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS PRESENT IN THE VERBAL TEXT OF THE HEROES</b>					
<b>HERO</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>Family Relation</b>
<b>Ana</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Baptiste</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Brigitte</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>D.Va</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Doomfist</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Genji</b>			<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Hanzo</b>			<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>



<b>Junkrat</b>			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Lúcio</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>McCree</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Mei</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Mercy</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Moira</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Pharah</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Soldier: 76</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Sombra</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Tracer</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Widowmaker</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Zarya</b>			<b>X</b>		
<b>Zenyatta</b>			<b>X</b>		

Source: Author (2021)

First of all, even though during the analysis in chapter four I brought some external information, I consider them as complementary as they are not used in this chapter for discussion. Concerning the table above, as it could be noticed, in all of the character's verbal text there is at least a mention about their occupations, which included their jobs and also their roles in the game or in the narrative. Considering their nationality, it is seen that it represents a topic not much explored in their verbal text, with the exception of some in their thematic lines discussed in the previous section. Their age is mentioned only by Ana due the use of several occurrences regarding her maturity and experience. Concerning the mention of a disability, results show that, despite the fact that out of the 18 human characters, 5 of them present explicit disability, yet, in only one of them (Junkrat), there is a verbal text implicitly mentioning it. Considering the family relation, with the exception of Brigitte, all the other characters with explicit familiar relations are mentioned in their verbal text. Therefore, considering the results, it can be noticed that most of the sociocultural factors of the game regarding the representation of the characters rely on visual modes, instead of verbal.

This second part of the verbal analysis considers the speech produced by each hero, which was analyzed in chapter four considering the most frequent occurrences of one of them. The following table intends to present a brief discussion investigating each transitivity process by exploring the content usually associated with them, with examples of how they were mostly used and the context.

Table 6 – Transitivity System

TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS	
PROCESS	CONTENT RELATED
<b>Material</b>	Material processes represent the majority of the process found in the verbal text produced by the heroes in the game. The process is usually related to the action of the gameplay, that is, it is often used to give orders and requests to teammates. There is a very common aspect among most of the material process, which concerns that they are used to talk about the action and the battle as a team effort, instead of showing traits of personality or identity of the characters. Some of the most frequent verbs include <i>get</i> , <i>let</i> , <i>do</i> and <i>take</i> .
<b>Mental</b>	The mental processes occur mostly in two situations. One of them regards the verb <i>need</i> , which appears in almost all the cases in the heroes' verbal text analysis, concerning a request in the gameplay. The second situation occurs when the mental verb is used to explore some inner thought or will of the character, therefore, showing their personality and traits of identity. Some examples are <i>know</i> , <i>learn</i> and <i>feel</i> .
<b>Verbal</b>	Verbal processes were found in the speech of two heroes - the scientists Mercy and Moira. In both of them they are used as a way to show their personalities and the backstory of each hero. In Mercy's case the verb <i>call</i> is referred to her occupation as a doctor, while in Moira's case the verb <i>claim</i> is used to refer to the scientific knowledge of the character.
<b>Relational</b>	Relational processes are the most frequent process after the material ones. They are mostly used in the occurrences as a way to connect the elements of the sentence and define and present personality traits of the characters ( <i>is</i> and <i>are</i> ). Also, they are

	often used to create a sense of belonging of the verbal elements in the occurrences ( <i>has</i> and <i>have</i> ).
<b>Existential</b>	There was no evidence of existential processes among the occurrences present in the selected data in my analysis.
<b>Behavioral</b>	The behavioral processes are present in some of the heroes' speech and are used in two different situations. They can be seen as a way to give advice, commands or question other teammates, as in <i>watch</i> and <i>hear</i> . In this case, the occurrences are related to the gameplay action that is taking place. In the second situation, they are used to describe an action involving a physical and psychological behavior as in the occurrences with the process <i>see</i> .

Source: Author (2021)

Despite the fact that each character presents a diverse personality from each other, as seen in the whole analysis, the verbal text they produce has many similarities as it shares common verbal aspects. One of the aspects is the constant orders, commands and advices to teammates related to the gameplay itself, that is, the battle that is happening in the game. In these situations, it was also observed the use of many imperatives in the orders and requests. However, their individual personality could be presented in the speech mostly through mental and relational processes. Overall, the discourse of the speech in the verbal text of the heroes can be categorized as related to a war discourse thematic, that is, a constant mentioning of the combat that is taking place, in addition to traits of personality and backstory of each character.

This chapter could provide a more detailed discussion from the results of the data concerning the multimodal analysis of the characters. The next chapter presents some conclusions from the study with an overview of the main findings by answering the research questions proposed.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This last chapter presents the conclusion of the study. It is divided into three sections in order to be explored effectively: Final Remarks and Research Questions Revisited, Pedagogical Implications and Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research.

### 6.1 FINAL REMARKS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

The present study investigated several semiotic elements from the popular game Overwatch. Grounded on interdisciplinary theories of discourse and mostly focused on Multimodality, the research was carried out taking in consideration different aspects and contexts, which helped to achieve a macro and micro analysis of the items proposed. The object of study was chosen due to the diverse representation in terms of nationalities, ages, minorities, among others, brought into the gaming industry scene. The analysis of representation in media of popular semiotic items such as video games, is a relevant topic within discourse analysis' area, since it involves concerns with identities and ideologies.

In contemporary society, it is important to show people examples of diversity and the inclusion of social groups that have been omitted and marginalized for centuries and to understand that there are alternatives and possibilities to the self, to the identity and to social behavior. The study allowed me to dive deep into each semiotic element fulfilled with meanings. Last but not least, it enabled me to travel the world during a time nobody is allowed to. With all being said, the final message I can take from the game and the whole analysis is that, indeed, the world needs more heroes, as we all can be heroes.

Following, I present the answers from the research questions proposed in the beginning of the study.

1) Considering the overall multimodal analysis of the characters, is the game effective in creating an identity for them through the semiotic elements? if so, how are these identities created? and which sociocultural factors are predominant in the character's identity?

Yes, the game showed to be effective in creating and inserting identity for each character analyzed. Results of the analysis showed that the identity marks in *Overwatch* are mostly created through multimodality, that is, through the visual mode in the creation of the character's appearance and in verbal modes through their speech. As seen in the analysis and discussion, several sociocultural aspects are present and embedded in the characters. However, their social occupations are the most predominant factors, being present in all of them.

2) In relation to the multimodal analysis of the heroes focusing on the intertextuality aspect, how are the external references and worldwide cultural elements inserted in the game?

Similar to the creation of their identities, the creation of intertextuality is made through multimodality. In visual modes, the thematic skins are the elements in the game that showed to be a strong aspect in presenting cultural and worldwide references. In verbal modes, several thematic lines, that is, phrases spoken by the characters, also represent an intertextual tool used in the game in order to bring cultural references and to create bonding with the players, since most of the references are based on popular cultural items, such as movies, video games, among others.

3) Concerning the verbal analysis of the heroes, what are the main ideologies (*Critical Discourse Analysis*) behind their discourses? How are they mostly categorized (*Social Actors' Theory*) through their information? And do how their most frequent occurrences and processes (*Halliday's Transitivity System*) create an identification for them through the verbal mode?

The verbal analysis showed that most of the characters' speech is related to the combat in the gameplay, that is, it evokes a discourse of war. However, the verbal texts produced by the game to describe the characters tend to have a focus on the character's occupations and roles in the narrative of the game, a fact that contributes to the construal of the characters' personalities. With that being said, concerning the social actors' framework (VAN LEUWEEN, 2008) most of the characters are identified as functionalized actors, as they are verbally described according to their functions. Considering the transitivity analysis (HALLIDAY, 1985), most of the processes found in their frequent occurrences were material and relational processes, which indicate a constant

dialogue about the action that is taking place at the moment and also a way to show their personalities traits through the verbal mode.

4) Lastly, considering the game as a very popular semiotic item with a big impact in the game industry, is the game a good example of inclusion and diversity regarding the representation of the heroes or are the semiotic elements misrepresented? why?

Although several positive aspects could be observed, the data showed some problematic issues in terms of representation. The semiotic elements of the game analyzed in the study, as any other semiotic mediatic product, presents a complex set of meanings exchanged through discourse in its multimodal forms. With that being said, the game, indeed, presents a diverse cast of characters with several factors that were not common in video game until recent years, such as elderly characters, characters with disability, LGBTQ+ characters, among other factors. However, after the whole visual and verbal analysis of all these elements, I could investigate the game in a deeper level and see several problematic issues in terms of representation.

While still representing a positive change in terms of representation in video games and a visual and verbal coherence among the semiotic elements, some choices were stereotyped or not well-developed, showing that there was a concern on bringing such diversity to the screen but in several cases, it could not be developed in an effective way. Overall, the game's diversity in terms of representing different characters and locations marks a good starting point for a development of a better scenario of dealing with representation in video games. Nevertheless, different from my initial hypothesis, it still presents many flaws that hopefully will be adapted and better developed throughout the time, considering the game was released in 2016 and it is still relevant up to this date (2021).

## 6.2 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The object of study – a popular video game, is a relevant topic to investigate considering its vast and growing audience. Therefore, the research could promote insights on how to work with mediatic objects and specifically video games for pedagogical reasons. In addition, as the ground basis for the study, it can also help to expand the area of multimodality studies, as it brought several

adaptations of theories and even a proposed framework made by me to analyze semiotic elements (*The Multimodal Pathway*), which was made thinking about being a method that would gather several interdisciplinary theories of discourse in order to investigate mediatic semiotic elements.

Last but not least, critical awareness is always one of the main relevant points when dealing with analysis of representation. Therefore, the use of critical perspectives in the study could develop and highlight how social change can be used through analytical frameworks. Such analytical tools can be applied in classrooms or in any pedagogical environment in order to explore and raise awareness on different topics, such as the grammar of visual design, which represents a relevant tool to promote multiliteracy and critical thinking.

### 6.3 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The main limitation of the study was the word limit constrains. As it can be seen, the research takes many semiotic elements and put them into several analytical frameworks for analysis. Therefore, some ideas were edited off in order not to be too extended. As suggestion for further research, I would like to explore the sociocultural practices that are derived from the Overwatch game, that is, to explore how social activities and products created by the community are built and developed, such as the world of eSport, Internet Memes, Cosplays, fanfics, fanarts, among others. In addition, as suggestion for academia, several topics may be investigated, such as the use of language accents and auditory nationality marks in the game as well as issues concerning the online communities and the impact of the players in relation to the representation and diversity brought in the game.

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Overwatch (Blizzard Entertainment, 2016)

Portal 2 (2011)

Tekken (Namco Bandai Games, 1997)

Under Ash (Afkar Media, 2001)

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Cleopatra (1963)

Cloud Atlas (2012)

Crocodile Dundee II (1988)

Hackers (1995)

The Mummy (1932)

The Silence of the Lambs (1991)

**TV SERIES:**

Game of Thrones (2011 - 2019)

## APPENDIX A

The appendix section presents the analysis of the heroes that could not fit the study due to words' limit. Following, I present a summary and each individual multimodal analysis.<sup>142</sup>

### **Summary:**

Ashe

Bastion

Orisa

Reaper

Reinhardt

Roadhog

Sigma

Symmetra

Torbjörn

Winston

Wrecking Ball

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<sup>142</sup> The appendix also presents the cover art for the study that could not be displayed in the beginning, as intended, due to restrictions by the library document system (Biblioteca Universitária-UFSC).



**“THE WORLD COULD ALWAYS USE MORE HEROES”:  
A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE GAME OVERWATCH**

**FELIPE ANTÔNIO DE SOUZA**

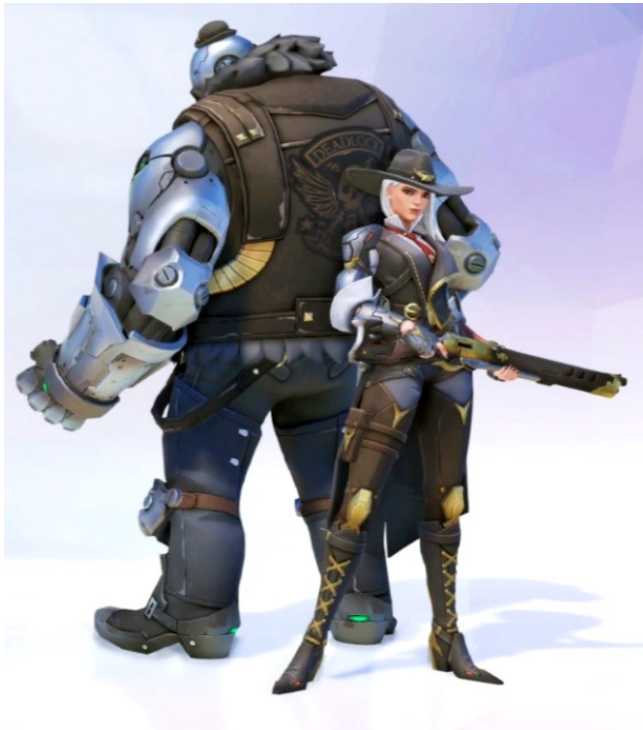
**PPGI**



ASHE

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 145 - Ashe



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 146 - Ashe in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Ashe is a confident rebellious leader of a gang. In her original skin she is depicted in an oblique angle staring at the viewer with her back to her bodyguard, while holding her gun pointing down. She has white hair suggesting to be a platinum blonde hair. In relation to her movement in the game, as it is observed in the image in action, she inclines down to focus on her weapon scope and to stay in a steady position, a common position for snipers.

**Possessive Attributes:** Ashe's weapon is a semi-automatic rifle with a scope, which may relate to her steadiness in movements as she has to be precise to shoot. Her outfit is a sort of social uniform and a red necktie with an American western touch of cowboy hat and leather boots (since she is from Arizona, USA). The main colors are brown, golden, white, black and red. However, the most notable possession is her companion B.O.B., her Omnic ally and bodyguard that helps her in battles.

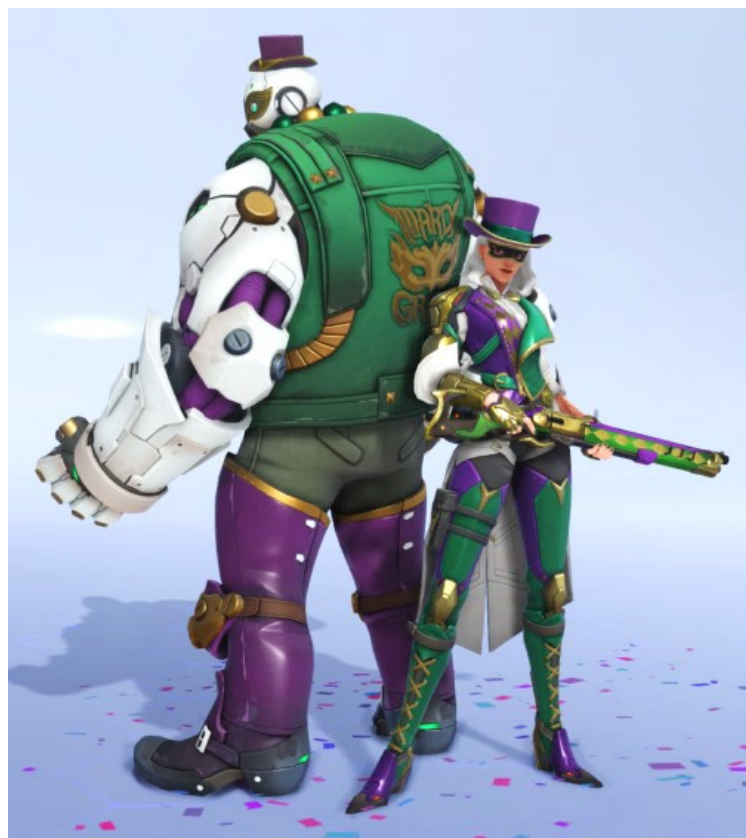
**Symbolic Attributes:** Ashe is a wealthy white American girl who became a thief and gang leader, according to the game narrative. Thus, the visual elements in her outfit, such as the hat and the necktie, try to build a leadership figure to her character. Although Ashe is a successful criminal, what gives her lots of confidence, much of her power concerns her companion figure, which might also suggest a certain ‘spoiled’ personality. Hence, in this context, her companion B.O.B. and its big salience could also evoke and mimic a situation of bodyguard and celebrity (Figure 147<sup>143</sup>), which adds up to her white blonde American girl identity along with her protector.

Figure 147 - Lady Gaga with her



### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 148 - Ashe Skin: **Mardi Gras**



Source: Game screenshot

<sup>143</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.flare.com/celebrity/hot-celeb-bodyguards/image/2>



**Sociocultural:** Mardi Gras (also known as Fat Tuesday) is a festival held the day before Ash Wednesday (Shrove Tuesday), signifying the end of the Carnival season and the start of Lent. According to the Cambridge dictionary, the festival is celebrated in some countries with a lot of music, colorful costumes, and dancing in the streets<sup>144</sup>. In the United States, New Orleans is one of the most famous cities for the event (Figure 149<sup>145</sup>). American Carnival celebration as the Mardi Gras represent "a seasonal cycle of demise and rebirth, the abandonment of normal life and daily obligations, culminating in a final outburst of overindulgence and finally resulting in a return to all that is familiar and sacred" (ADAMSON; SEGAN, 2008, p.354).

Figure 148 - Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans, USA



**Intertextuality:** Mardi Gras is commonly referred as Carnival, thereat, Carnival parades around the world are sometimes denominated as Mardi Gras even when it is not the case. Although being popular with such name in countries like Germany, Italy, Sweden and clearly, the United States. Places with a rich historical background for its Carnivals are sometimes translated in media as a Mardi Gras event, as this post from Washington post's website<sup>146</sup>, one of the most popular daily newspaper from the United States, describing manifestations against the current president of Brazil during what they called '*Brazilian's Mardi Gras*', meaning Rio de Janeiro's Carnival. Concerning the correlation to the character, Ashe was the only hero who gained a thematic skin for the *Mardi Gras Challenge* special event; however, it was not specified the reason her character was chosen. From my perspective, Ashe is one of the few American heroes that, despite being from the southwest, could represent a popular tradition from the south of USA. While another possible element is the word play that Mardi Gras happens before *Ash* Wednesday

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin portrays Ashe in a masquerade mask, which represents a common item in the characterization of costume for Mardi Gras since the festival is inspired by ancient ceremonies of masquerades (ADAMSON, SEGAN, 2008). Her companion B.O.B. wears a full set of beads as props, while both are mostly dressed in the colors emerald green and purple to represent the popular festival.

**Theme Categories:** World Culture and Festivals.

**BIO INFO**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

<sup>144</sup> Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/mardi-gras?q=Mardi+Gras>

<sup>145</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.superiorhonda.net/blogs/2373/new-orleans-life/mardi-gras-parade-road-closures/>

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/2020/02/24/politics-crashes-brazils-carnival>

<b>Real Name:</b> Elizabeth Caledonia Calamity Ashe <b>Age:</b> 39 <b>Occupation:</b> Thief, Gang Leader <b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage	<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Female <b>Nationality:</b> American <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CATCHPHRASE</b>
<i>Ashe is the leader of the Deadlock Gang, a group of bandits and criminals who menace the American southwest.</i>	<i>“My business, my rules.”</i>
<b>THEMATIC LINE</b>	
<p><i>"See ya, space cowboy"</i> – Ashe says this line when she kills the hero McCree. The quote is a reference to the end title card of the 1998 anime <i>Cowboy Bebop</i>.</p>	
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>	
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Get	Get in there B.O.B / Somebody get me some healing / I'm not afraid to get my hands dirty
Let	Let me handle it / Let me show ya how it's done / Let's clean up this mess
Do	Do I have to do everything myself? / Do something! / Do what I say and this'll go nice
Is	What is everyone doing? / That is rich / B.O.B. is almost ready
Need	I need healing / We need to move the payload / We need to take out the turret!
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
B.O.B., Enemy, Time, Way, Sniper	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<p>Ashe uses only her last name as her codename. In her catchphrase she repeats the possessive pronouns <i>my</i> (<i>My business, my rules</i>), suggesting an idea of an individualist character who follows her own law, which is coherent with her background narrative as a girl coming from a wealthy family and becoming a criminal and leader of a gang, also relating to a change in her name. Her thematic line is mainly correlated to her identity creation, since it carries cowboy references and is dedicated especially to the hero <i>McCree</i>, which she shares some history in the past.</p>	

Concerning the transitivity analysis, out of the five most frequent verbs, three are material (*Get*, *Let* and *Do*), one process is relational (*is*) and one process is mental (*need*). The material processes are correlated to orders and demands (*Get in there B.O.B / Somebody get me some healing / I'm not afraid to get my hands dirty / Do something! / Do what I say and this'll go nice*) while also shows an action to presenting a solution to some issue (*Let me handle it / Let me show ya how it's done*). Her relational process is mainly used as a comment on something (*That is rich / B.O.B. is almost ready*), while her mental process also represents orders and demands (*I need healing / We need to move the payload / We need to take out the turret!*). In her occurrences, it is possible to notice verbal characteristics of her occupation as a gang leader due mainly to the number of orders and demands, what also correlates to her catchphrase. Concerning the most frequent nouns, her companion *B.O.B* appears first, as she always asks him to help her in battle, followed by *Enemy*, showing a focus on the battle, *Time*, which relates to the game objective and in her specific case her lack of patience, and *Sniper*, the way she performs in the game with her weapon.

Overall, considering the official description and the lines produced by the hero in the game, her verbal lines are coherent and vastly focused on the game objective. Considering the social actors, Ashe is a functionalized hero, since her occupation as a gang leader and her role as damage are present in her verbal text. Therefore, her verbal identity is built as a confident woman, being coherent with her position as a leader, as she is verbally known for her function more than another any other aspect. However, maybe due her age and background, it is intentional that her leadership skills consist verbally mainly on orders and explicit demands of things on her own way. What apparently does not portray the image of an 'effective' leader, but rather, a sort of spoiled personality, somehow coherent with the visual analysis.

BASTION

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 150 - Bastion



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 151 - Bastion in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Bastion is an Omnic with two main forms - a default mode mobile bipedal and an immobile turret tank. Bastion in default mode presents a robotic humanoid figure who is able to walk and shoot. In tank mode, bastion becomes a war machine fire weapon.

**Possessive Attributes:** Since the character is a robot with weapons integrated in his body, Bastion's possessive attributes concern its possibility to retransform itself into a turret tank and the ability to mobility. Also, a noticeable feature is the bird in his shoulder. Bastion's companion bird is always present in its default mode and changes alongside according to each thematic skin. Bastion's main color scheme are green and light beige, while the weapon parts are in grey.

**Symbolic Attributes:** According to the game narrative, Bastion is a robot from a series collection created to combat during the Omnic Crisis. After the war was over, all Bastions units were destroyed, with the exception of this one, who was lost in a forest and woken up by a bird picking on his screen. Therefore, the main visual symbolic attribute of Bastion's identity concerns his past as a war machine. Then, the bird in his shoulder and their interplay gives Bastion a sense of 'humanity', the bird symbolizing his ability of emotion and connection to the nature and the environment. Another issue relates to his immobile turret tank mode, as the hero resembles a tank used in historical wars, more specifically during world War II (Figure 152<sup>147</sup>). Berndt (1994) investigates the American Tanks used in World War II, while several models were adapted and changed due to specific mission. Therefore, it is possible to establish a narrative correlation to Bastion as an abandoned war machine from the Omnic crisis war and the historical real-world war.

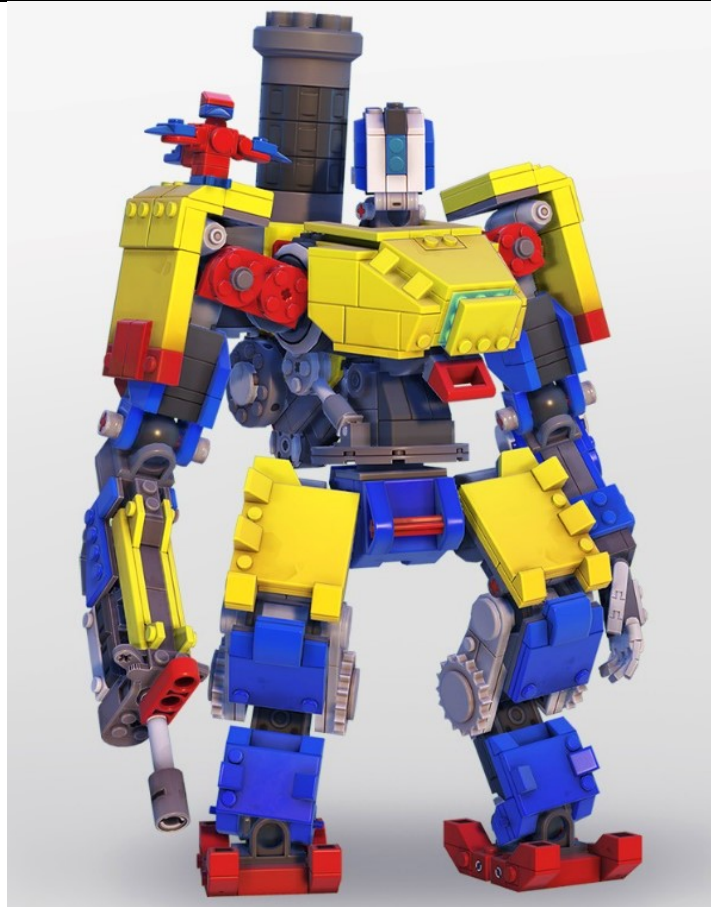
Figure 152 - Tank used on World War II



#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 153 - Bastion Skin: **Lego**

<sup>147</sup> Retrieved from <https://online.norwich.edu/academic-programs/resources/world-war-ii-tanks-used-in-battle>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** The skin was part of a special event called *Brick Bastion Challenge*, which presented the popular line of plastic construction toys Lego. The company, based in Denmark, is popular all around the world and became part of popular culture, while commonly used for children as an educational tool due its cognitive purposes. Lego pieces can be connected in many ways to construct objects, such as buildings, robots, vehicles, castles, among several things<sup>148</sup>. The brand is one of the most powerful brands in the world, at certain points, investing in Lego sets became more valuable than investing in gold<sup>149</sup>.

**Intertextuality:** In 2018, Blizzard, the game company owner of Overwatch, and Lego made a partnership<sup>150</sup> which produced several packages of toys, including parts of popular scenarios of the game



Figure 154 - Lego Overwatch Dorado Building Set

<sup>148</sup> Source: <https://www.lego.com/en-us/aboutus/lego-group/the-lego-group-history>

<sup>149</sup> Source: <https://www.fox10phoenix.com/news/report-claims-legos-are-better-investment-than-gold>

<sup>150</sup> Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hnewman/2018/12/03/how-blizzard-entertainments-new-overwatch-lego-models-snapped-together/#329705312459>

with the heroes (Figure 154<sup>151</sup>). With a successful number in sales, Bastion’s thematic skin was another way to promote the products of the partnership, as Bastion was of the first heroes to have a figure in Lego toy version.

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin presents the hero Bastion made up of Lego parts of the toy, while his companion bird is also made from Lego pieces. The color scheme is the primary colors: red, yellow and blue.

**Theme Categories:** Toys and Popular Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> SST Laboratories Siege Automaton E54</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 30</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Battle Automaton</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Omnic</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Neutral / Genderless / “it”</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Made in Germany</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Once a frontline combatant in the devastating Omnic Crisis, this curious Bastion unit now explores the world, fascinated by nature but wary of a fearful humanity.</i></p>	<p><i>“Bwee, hoo hoo, bwoo.”</i></p>
THEMATIC LINE	
<p><i>“Bwoo Bwoo Bwoo”</i> - The voice line, received in a Winter Wonderland event, is sung through beeps sounds in the melody of the first bar of the popular Christmas’ song Jingle Bells.</p>	
CORPUS ANALYSIS (NOT POSSIBLE)	
<p>Bastion is one of the two heroes in Overwatch who do not have human language. Instead, Bastion uses robot noises, signals and beeps. Therefore, it would not be possible to analyze this section, although through noise, gestures, and visuals the character produces a sense of identity.</p>	
VERBAL ANALYSIS	
<p>Bastion is the common name given for the model SST Laboratories Siege Automaton E54 of robots developed during the Omnic Crisis. As already mentioned, the hero does not produce verbal text, only</p>	

<sup>151</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Lego-Overwatch-Dorado-Showdown-Building-Set-75972-/372675226597>

noises, signals or melodic beeps. However, the beep sounds have melodies which can be interpreted due to the tune when it is sad, happy or even singing a song, as in the case of its thematic line where it sings *Jingle Bells* by 'beeping'. Nevertheless, it is not possible to analyze the speech produced by the hero, only the verbal text given by the game as his description and basic information. In its description, there is a bit exploration of its background and an appraisal adjective 'curious' to relate to its personality.

The description also gives the idea that Bastion is eager to explore nature but is afraid of humans, relating to its past as a war machine. With that, even though Bastion was created to serve the purpose of being a war weapon, the verbal text of description explores a more existential side of Bastion. According to social actors' theory, Bastion is an actor with appraisement, since the text shows traits of 'curiosity', 'fear' and 'fascination', rather than a functionalized actor, who would have a focus on its role and occupation. The lack of human verbal language but the ability to express itself through the tune of its beeps and signals represent semiotic elements that create a vulnerable identity to a character with a traumatic past.



ORISA

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 155 - Orisa



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 156 - Orisa in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Orisa is an Omnic character that works as a city guardian. She is also the youngest hero among the cast with only a month old. In her original skin, Orisa is depicted in an oblique/frontal angle with both arms in middle air, while one is a fist and the other is her weapon. Orisa is a quadruped Omnic, therefore her position is steady as visually suggested, while her face expression changes throughout the game.

**Possessive Attributes:** Orisa is a large dusty brown, lime and yellow robot with a mask with green horns, dressed in green fabrics. Her weapon, which is incorporated in her body, is sort of a cannon named Fusion Driver, while, despite not visible in the images, she is also able to use a protective barrier to protect her teammates from damage, relating to her role as a tank.

**Symbolic Attributes:** According to the game narrative, Orisa shares a similar backstory with Bastion, as both Omnic were created for specific purposes and later discontinued and executed. Efi, a genius child from Numbani, a fictional city near Nigeria, created Orisa from the resting pieces of the destroyed robots she found. Hence, Orisa is one-month old and inexperienced, however is grateful and willingly to learn, having as main mission to protect people from harm. As a visual symbolic element, her salient image is coherent with her role as a tank in the game, since she is usually ahead in the battle moments, however, the irony of the narrative was due to the fact of making her characters as the ‘baby’ of the cast with a naive personality. Despite the fact of being an Omnic used for defense, Orisa is a Nigerian hero. Also, the colors and accessories Orisa wears resemble a similarity with Efi’s (Figure 157<sup>152</sup>), which might also correlate to Efi’s heritage, since according to the game narrative Efi has Yoruba heritage, just like the hero Doomfist.

Figure 157 - Orisa's creator Efi



Although Orisa's visual identity relies on one of the OR15 defense bots, Efi was able to customize her with some symbols and props, such as her Djembe drum (Figure 158<sup>153</sup>), a type of West African drum played with the hands<sup>154</sup>. In her image in action, it is possible to see a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum that she carries in her back which is originated from West Africa like Efi. The Djembe drum is a symbolic visual element in Orisa’s character concerning her nationality, while in the game it has the function of being her ultimate superpower. Another controversial topic concerning Orisa's symbolic visual element is from which specific animal she is inspired from. While players suggest she is a mixture of a cow, a rhino and an elephant, the game lead writer Michael Shu (2017) stated that he wanted Orisa to represent not any particular animal but the entire animal kingdom<sup>155</sup>.



### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 159 - Orisa Skin: **Sanye**

<sup>152</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/Efi\\_Oladele](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/Efi_Oladele)

<sup>153</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/241294492524071763>

<sup>154</sup> Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/djembe>

<sup>155</sup> Source: <https://kotaku.com/blizzard-talks-about-how-they-came-up-with-overwatches-n-1792959994>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** Sanye is a thematic skin derived from the *Lunar New Year* event referring to the *Lion Dance*. The *Lion Dance* is a form of traditional dance in Chinese culture and other Asian countries, in which performers mimic a lion's movements in a lion costume in order to conduct a ritual to bring good luck and fortune (HULSBOSCH; BEDFORD; CHAIKLIN, 2010). The *Lion Dance* was recorded in the Korean historical work *Samguk Sagi* as "Sanye" (狻猊, old Chinese word for lion) (PRATT; RUTH; et al., 1999). Although the ritual was first popular in China, the thematic skin makes a direct reference to the Korean dance concerning the name of the skin and the visuals, which defers a bit from the other Asians countries' versions. The Korean Lion dance is fairly related to the use of masks

Figure 160 - Korean Lion Dance in a Lunar New Year Festival



and the symbolization behind it<sup>156</sup>. Nowadays, two main traditions of lion dance are still present: the *sajano-reum*, performed as an exorcism drama and the *sajach'um*, performed in association with masked dramas (PRATT; RUTH; et al., 1999). The Lion Dance in Korea is commonly performed in the *Lunar New Year* festivals and also part of other drama pieces such as the *t'alch'um*. Concerning its description, the eyes of mask of the lion in the costume are usually painted in gold (Figure 160<sup>157</sup>) in order to expel negative spirits, while usually carrying an aggressive facial expression to frighten demons away (PRATT; RUTH; et al., 1999).

**Intertextuality:** Since the thematic skin is part of the Lunar New Year event which concerns cultural elements Eastern culture, the correlation to Orisa's character does not relate to her heritage but her aesthetical figure. Orisa's physical build is perfectly adaptable to fit the theme of a Korean Lion dance performer, in addition, it also symbolizes the ward off bad luck and the pray for good fortune, which may also relate to Orisa's optimistic personality.

**Visual Text:** Concerning the thematic skin, Orisa's body is covered in white fur, while her face presents a mask with red skin and golden eyes. As already mentioned, the skin fits Orisa's physical salience and build, while still reproducing the main elements of the traditional Korean festival costume.

**Theme Categories:** Performances, Festivals and World Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Orisa  <b>Age:</b> 1 Month  <b>Occupation:</b> Guardian Robot  <b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Omnic  <b>Sex:</b> Female  <b>Nationality:</b> Made in Numbani (fictional city)  <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No  <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Built from parts of one of Numbani's short-lived OR15 defense robots, Orisa is the city's newest protector, though she still has much to learn.</i></p>	<p><i>"Your safety is my primary concern."</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	

<sup>156</sup> Source: [http://www.koreaherald.com/common\\_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20080202000005&dt=2](http://www.koreaherald.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20080202000005&dt=2)

<sup>157</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.svks.org/%EC%84%A4%EB%82%A0-%EC%9E%94%EC%B9%98>

*"Error 404: Sarcasm module not found."* – The line is a reference to the common website error message "Error 404" or "Not found" that appears on websites browsers when it cannot be found or does not exist.

*"I have a bad feeling about this."* – The line is a possible reference to the *Star Wars* 's movie franchise, as it represents an iconic verbal mark of the movies.

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Is	Your aid is appreciated, thank you / Victory is assured / Your safety is my primary concern
Have	I have a bad feeling about this / I still have a job to do / Thank you, But I still have much to learn
Move	You are advised to move behind my barrier / I will not move / Please move to safety
Need	I believe we need a healer / Do you need a hug? / I need healing
Get	You're not getting away / For your own safety, get behind the barrier / I'm still getting the hang of this

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Barrier, Performance, Analysis, Protection, System

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Orisa was created from pieces of OR15 defense robots and named by her creator Efi. As a recent created Omnic, her personality is still in development, being considered sometimes as a 'child'. According to her bio information, she is a Guardian Robot from the fictional city Numbani. Her catchphrase "*Your safety is my primary concern*" is a straight correlation to her occupation as a guardian and also her role as a tank, since tanks have the main role of protecting their teammates in battle. In one of her thematic lines, Orisa ironically mentions the Error 404, a popular verbal message in the internet, which may correlate to the fact she is a programmed robot. The other line refers to a popular and one of the most frequent quotes from the *Star Wars* franchise, which might also evoke a certain irony of a robot talking about feelings.

Concerning the transitivity system, Orisa presents two relational processes (*is* and *have*), one mental process (*need*), and two processes (*move* and *get*). The relational process '*is*' is used to identify the verbal elements in the sentence (*Your aid is appreciated, thank you / Victory is assured / Your safety is my primary concern*), which also show her optimistic and kind personality, while the other relational '*have*' is used to attribute the verbal elements in the sentence (*I still have a job to do / Thank you, But I still have much to*

*learn*), showing Orisa's personal concerns. The mental process is used to express an idea she is having (*I believe we need a healer*), to offer something (*Do you need a hug?*), which also shows her affectionate personality, and to create a common request (*I need healing*). The material processes are used to present an action (*I will not move / You're not getting away*), showing a side a bit more defensive and competitive of Orisa, while also to give advice concerning the game objective (*Please move to safety / For your own safety, get behind the barrier*).

Regarding her most frequent nouns found in her speech, *Barrier* relates to her ability to protect the teammates, *Performance*, *Analysis* and *System* concern the operation of her programming, while *Protection* relates to her main objective in game and her role. Her official description focuses on how she was created and her current job, yet not mentioning her objective, any personality trait or any form of evaluation. In addition, some occurrences reaffirm her young age, as described in the bio and in her description (*Thank you, But I still have much to learn / I'm still getting the hang of this*). Under the social actors' theory, Orisa's verbal text enables her to be categorized as a functionalized character, both for her occupation as a guardian as for her role as a tank. The correlation of the verbal text provided by the description and her speech from the game is somehow coherent. However, Orisa's affectionate side is omitted in her official descriptions, hence her more 'human' side is only observed within the game through her speech. Overall, the verbal text creates an affectionate and humble character who is ready to protect her teammates, while also caring about them.

REAPER

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 161 - Reaper



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 162 - Reaper in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Reaper is a black-robed terrorist who craves vengeance and one of the characters with the most aggressive visual elements among the cast. In his original skin, he is depicted in an almost frontal angle with his arms crossed up forming a X shape, while his head is slightly tilted down, suggesting a defensive position. Also, Reaper has the skill to translocate himself to another place to get his enemies by surprise. In addition, he uses both hands to shoot with his weapons, what may reaffirm his defensive figure.

**Possessive Attributes:** Reaper's outfit is mostly composed of a black overcoat with a hood, black pants, a shotgun shell belt and grey boots. As mentioned before, he has two weapons as he uses two shotguns, one in each hand, as seen in the image in action. Also, a remarkable visual element among his possessive attributes is his skull-like mask, which helps to create his mysterious persona.

**Symbolic Attributes:** According to the game narrative, Reaper was originally known as Gabriel Reyes, a military man who joined Overwatch many years ago and became the commander of Overwatch's

Figure 163 - Grim Reaper Statue



Blackwatch unit. Due to disagreements, several conflicts and internal fights, Gabriel was presumed dead in a battle and disappeared. He reappeared as a volatile mercenary known as Reaper. Therefore, the visual creation of his evil figure uses remarkable symbolic marks to represent a villain character who is looking for revenge, such as the overcoat, the mask and all the visual elements that sets him completely apart from all the other heroes of the cast.

One of the main visual symbolic elements from Reaper's character is his correlation and similarities to the mythological and folkloric creature *Grim Reaper*. Grim Reaper (Figure 163<sup>158</sup>), according to western mythology, is the personification of death itself, and is usually described as a human skeleton dressed in black robes carrying a scythe<sup>159</sup>. Another symbolic characteristic of Reaper concerns the fact that, although he was born in United States, it is stated in the game narrative that he is of Hispanic descent, hence, while his mask is commonly referred as a skull, it could also be a reference to a barn owl's features (Figure 164<sup>160</sup>), which in Mexican folklore is said to be related to death and messengers from the spiritual world (ROISIN, 2015). Such correlation is coherent with his movements in the game, which mimics owl-like positions, suggesting a possible relation to his heritage.

Figure 164 - Barn Owl Bird



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 165 - Reaper Skin: **Nevermore**

<sup>158</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/ShopForAllYou-Figurines-Skeleton-Flipping-Figurine/dp/B07N8D9G7M>

<sup>159</sup> Source: <https://mythology.wikia.org/wiki/Death>

<sup>160</sup> Retrieved from <https://randomdescent.wordpress.com/2015/02/25/birds-in-folklore-owls-and-ravens>





Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** The thematic skin Nevermore is a reference to the literary narrative poem *The Raven* from the American writer *Edgar Alan Poe*. The skin, that came along with the character, is entitled Nevermore due to constant repetition of the word during the poem. The poem, published in 1845, is considered the most popular piece of work of the author and one of the most famous poems ever written (SILVERMAN, 1991). The narrative revolves around a grieving man tormented by a raven, while the word "nevermore" became heavily associated with the poem as it is the only answer given by the raven in its interaction with the man.

**Intertextuality:** The poem is still relevant and present in popular culture as inspiration for plays, movies, songs, paintings and several forms of art (Figure

Figure 166 - Edgar Alan Poe's The Raven Print



166<sup>161</sup>). In several cultures and folklores, ravens are associated with death (WIGINGTON,2020). Although ravens do not kill or prey on humans, they do eat carrion, that is, they feed on dead bodies whenever they get the chance, while also being scavengers (SCHWAN, 1990). These habits helped to create a relation of the image of the animal raven to a death symbolism. Therefore, the correlation to Reaper’s character lies in the constant references of death in addition to his usual bird-like visual appearance.

**Visual Text:** The skin presents Reaper with his usual outfit adapted into a dark purple overcoat with feathers spread throughout, while his mask is changed to a raven beak, which also resembles a sort of plague doctor mask.

**Theme Category:** Literature.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
<b>Real Name:</b> Unknown <b>Age:</b> Unknown <b>Occupation:</b> Assassin <b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage		<b>Species:</b> Unknown <b>Sex:</b> Male <b>Nationality:</b> Unknown <b>Any Family Relation:</b> Unknown <b>Has Any Disability:</b> Unknown	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE	
<i>Some speak of a black-robed terrorist known only as the Reaper. His identity and motives are a mystery. What is known is that where he appears, death follows.</i>		<i>“Death walks among you.”</i>	
THEMATIC LINES			
<i>“I’m back in black”</i> –The voice line is a possible reference to the popular song <i>“Back in Black”</i> by the rock band AC/DC.  <i>“I’m not a psychopath. I’m a high-functioning psychopath”</i> – The voice line is likely a wordplay that refers to the famous Sherlock Holmes' line <i>“I’m not a psychopath. I’m a high-functioning sociopath”</i> from BBC’s <i>Sherlock</i> TV series.			
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS			
VERB	OCCURRENCES		

<sup>161</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.echo-lit.com/edgar-allan-poe-quot-the-raven-nevermore-literary-quote-vintage-style-print-fine-art-paper-laminated-or-framed-multiple-sizes>

Is	This is how it should have been / The objective is mine / This is my curse
Get	I will get my revenge / Get back in the fight / Let's just get the job done
Have	You always did have a high opinion of yourself / I have the devil's own luck / Actions have consequences
Kill	I'm ready for action, time to kill / If it lives, I can kill it / That which doesn't kill you, makes you stronger
Defend	Defend the objective / Defending here / Get over here and defend the objective

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Death, Enemy, Psychopath, Job, Revenge

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

As mentioned in the visual analysis, Reaper was the military Gabriel Reyes, the commander of Overwatch's Blackwatch unit. After several years and presumed dead, the figure known as Reaper appears proposing alliance to Overwatch's rival to seek revenge. Hence, Reaper is the codename of his new persona, a cruel assassin. Accordingly, not much information is given about Reaper. He is part of Talon and has the role of damage in the game. In his catchphrase he claims "*Death walks among you*", relating to his visual appearance and also his ability to walk in form of a shadow. One of his thematic lines refers the rock song by *AC/DC*, which is, from my perspective, an effective way to use an external reference, since it is a popular song, and also relates precisely to his background narrative as he is usually dressed in black color. The other line quoting *Sherlock Holmes*, presenting his personality as he describes himself as a psychopath.

Concerning the transitivity system, Reaper presents two relational processes (*is* and *have*), and three material processes (*get*, *kill* and *defend*). The material processes are mostly related to commands (*Defend the objective / Get over here and defend the objective / Get back in the fight*), and statements showing his personality and objective related to the game match (*Let's just get the job done / I'm ready for action, time to kill*). They also are used to show his personality concerning his background narrative (*I will get my revenge / If it lives, I can kill it / That which doesn't kill you, makes you stronger*). The relational processes, with the exception of an occurrence concerning the game match (*The objective is mine*), all show traits of his background narrative, identity and relationship with other characters (*This is my curse / You always did have a high opinion of yourself / I have the devil's own luck / Actions have consequences*).

As a mysterious character, Reaper is not much talkative, so his narrative in the game can be observed through the relational processes occurrences.

Regarding his most frequent nouns, *Death* comes first as it is present even in his catchphrase, *Psychopath* appears as a way for him to describe himself, and *Enemy*, *Job* and *Revenge* relate to his vengeance plan. His official description has a literary form of a thriller novel, talking about an unknown and mysterious killer, reaffirming the lack of official information and correlating his identity to symbolisms of death. Considering social actors' theory, Reapers is a highly functionalized actor, both for being an assassin and for the role in the game as damage. In addition, the description information "*Some speak of a black-robed terrorist...*" categorize him under a class (terrorist) and even present a physical identification (black-robed) since it refers to his outfit. Overall, despite the intentional lack of information, Reaper's identity is not a mystery. Even though Overwatch transmedia storytelling tells the story of his background, the actual hero Reaper has its verbal identity created as a scary psychopath character with a bloodthirst will for revenge, as explicitly present in his verbal text several times.

REINHARDT

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 167 - Reinhardt



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 168 - Reinhardt in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Reinhardt was an Overwatch's member in the past and now a wandering knight with a great sense of honor. In his original skin, he is depicted in a semi-oblique angle with his left leg forward leaning on his hammer while his right hand holds the hammer and his other arm has a fist. The hammer becomes a very salient figure in his imagery. The hero is all embodied in combat armor, hence, it is not possible to see his face, hair or any physical trait in his official skin. Regarding his movements, Reinhardt presents large and heavy steps as one of the most salient hero among the cast.

**Possessive Attributes:** As mentioned before, Reinhardt's outfit is his combat armor, which is inspired by medieval crusader's armors made mostly of metal and plate. In the game narrative, his armor is maintained in good condition by his engineer friend, the hero *Torbjörn*. Considering his role in the game as a tank, despite not visible in the images, Reinhardt possesses a protective barrier named *barrier field*,

in order to protect his teammates, while his attacking weapon, the rocker hammer, is able to deal punishing damage by doing a swinging movement.

**Symbolic Attributes:** The fact that his combat armor occupies his whole figure might confuse and even suggest that, in a first look, correlate Reinhardt as an Omnic. Instead, Reinhardt is an old German soldier who lives by the knightly codes of valor, justice, and courage according to his bio information. His combat armor resembles the ones from the Crusaders, which according to the game narrative, was a German paramilitary organization active during the Omnic Crisis. The Crusader organization in the game is based on the real historical event *Crusades* (Figure 169<sup>162</sup>).

Figure 169 - Medieval Crusader Knight Toy



The Crusades were a series of wars in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries between Christians from Europe and Muslims in the region around the eastern Mediterranean Sea<sup>163</sup>. The specific time reference that the game takes inspiration is from the knights from 1096, including the Byzantine Empire which main objective was to claim the Holy Land (ASBRIDGE, 2004).

Reinhardt has several marks, scars and traits in his appearance that represent symbolic visual elements. However, these attributes are on skins in which the hero is not totally covered by his armor, which is not the case of his original skin. However, the main concept and visual symbolic element concern his role in the game as a tank, since Reinhardt is currently the tallest character in the game (the last hero on Figure 170<sup>164</sup>), therefore his armor, salience and height helps to create and evoke a sense of protection. In addition, considering the different ages of the cast, Reinhardt is the second oldest but with no visual age marks or nationality marks since the armor covers it all up.

Figure 170 - Some of the heroes' heights in comparison



## THEMATIC SKIN

<sup>162</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.wayfair.com/decor-pillows/pdp/17-stories-paulk-anime-chibi-renaissance-medieval-knight-of-the-cross-templar-crusader-w002814071.html>

<sup>163</sup> Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/crusade>

<sup>164</sup> Retrieved from <https://segadores-y-soldados.tumblr.com/post/155854742625/trixbutt-overwatch-side-by-side-height>

Figure 171 - Reinhardt Skin: **Grinronhardt**



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** The thematic skin was part of a *Summer Games* event, which commonly relates a sport to a hero. Reinhardt received the skin named Grinronhardt, which is an invented word combining the Gridiron football sport and the hero's name Reinhardt. Gridiron football is commonly known as North American football. American football has its origins related to soccer and rugby (NELSON, 1993). The sport is played by two teams of eleven players on a field with goalposts at each end. The offense team, with possession of the oval-shaped football, attempts to advance down the field by running with the ball or passing it, while the defense team, try to stop the offense's advance and take control of the ball (NELSON, 1993).

Figure 172 - Germany national American football uniform



**Intertextuality:** The sport is also considered a heavy contact sport. Hence, this might be one of the correlations to Reinhardt, since one of hero's abilities in the game is named *Charge*, in which he charges

forth in a straight line, grabbing hold of enemies in his path, which is similar to some of the movements performed by the players of American football. Another correlation concerns the colors of the uniform (Figure 172<sup>165</sup>), which resembles the colors of the Germany national American football team. Ultimately, since American football players wear helmets and shoulder pads, such type of protection visually increases the players' build and size, what may represent another aspect that correlates to Reinhardt's big salience and protective figure.

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin presents Reinhardt wearing a typical American football uniform consisting of a helmet, shoulder pads, a jersey with the player's number, thigh pads, knee pads and cleats. The main color scheme is composed by red, white, grey and brown.

**Theme Category:** Sports.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
<b>Real Name:</b> Reinhardt Wilhelm <b>Age:</b> 61 <b>Occupation:</b> Adventurer <b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank		<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Male <b>Nationality:</b> German <b>Any Family Relation:</b> Godfather of Brigitte (Hero) <b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes / Lost his left eye in a battle.	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE	
<i>Reinhardt Wilhelm styles himself as a champion of a bygone age, who lives by the knightly codes of valor, justice, and courage.</i>		<i>"Justice will be done."</i>	
THEMATIC LINES			
Reinhardt's lines fall within the ones related to themes instead of external cultural references. Reinhardt remarks his pride of German technology and his participation in its scientific development, which is possible to notice in the lines: <i>"German Engineering"</i> and <i>"100% German Power"</i> . Another constant theme concerns his age, as in the lines: <i>"Respect your elders"</i> and <i>"Ah, this old dog still knows a few tricks!"</i> .			
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS			
VERB	OCCURRENCES		

<sup>165</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.efaf.info/text.php?Inhalt=newsmeldung&ID=1709>



Have	We don't have much time / Do I have your attention yet? / What do we have here?
Is	Barrier is failing, it won't hold forever / Is that the best you can do? / This is not over
Do	Justice will be done / I'm not even close to done! / Well done, my friend!
Feel	Ah I feel like a new man / Here I come, I feel powerful! / Got you, feel my power
Join	More armor, join me / Join me if you will / Join me in glory

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Barrier, Glory, Friend, Honor, Justice

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Reinhardt Wilhelm, the respectable member of Overwatch, uses his first name as codename in the game. His bio information concerns his current occupation as an adventurer and his role as a Tank. In his catchphrase he claims “*Justice will be done*”, presenting his main moral value. Reinhardt, just like Mercy, lacks of external cultural references, instead, his lines may be categorized by theme, which are mostly related to his pride for his country's technology and his age, as Reinhardt is one of the oldest characters among the cast.

Concerning the transitivity system, the hero presents two relational processes (*have* and *is*), one mental process (*feel*) and two material processes (*do* and *join*). The relational processes concerning the verb 'have' are related to the game objective (*We don't have much time / Do I have your attention yet? / What do we have here?*). While the relational process 'is' is used to identify attributes (*Barrier is failing, it won't hold forever / This is not over*). The mental process is used to express his perception on things and feelings (*Ah I feel like a new man / Here I come, I feel powerful! / Got you, feel my power*), as also a way to state his power to other heroes. In relation to the material processes, the verb 'do' is used in the participle form 'done', and presents an action that will happen (*Justice will be done*), an informative statement (*I'm not even close to done!*) and a compliment regarding a teammate's action (*Well done, my friend!*). While the material process 'join' is used as a request referring to the game match objective (*More armor, join me / Join me if you will / Join me in glory*).

In relation to the most frequent nouns present in his speech, *Barrier* refers to the ability regarding his physical shield, while *Friend* refers to the way he usually calls his teammates. *Glory*, *Honor* and *Justice* refer his principals and moral values, which are deeply present in his verbal text. In his official description, the hero is first described as someone who 'styles' himself as if he was living in the middle ages, which might refer to his combat armor. Then, it mentions his personal issues stated as 'knightly codes' of valor,

justice and courage. Hence, in addition to his visual appearance, the '*bygone age*' might also refer to his age and customs, suggesting a character with a nostalgic personality.

Under the social actor's theory, while his current occupation as adventurer is not something explicit verbally, his role as a Tank is deeply present in his speech, making him a functionalized actor. Hence, the starting sentence in his description "*Reinhardt Wilhelm styles himself as a champion of a bygone age...*" concerns his physical appearance, which also makes him an actor with physical identification, as a coherent aspect with the visual analysis, since he is one of the tallest and most salient heroes among the cast. Also, his age and nationality are present in his verbal text, while his disability is omitted. To conclude, Reinhardt's verbal's text creates the identity of a gentle and affectionate character with a remarkable strong sense of honor and justice and a rich experience in battle due to his maturity.

ROADHOG

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 173 - Roadhog



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 174 - Roadhog in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Roadhog is an observant international criminal alongside with partner Junkrat. In his original skin, he is depicted from a frontal angle, while one hand holds his weapon - the hook. The hero wears a mask in his official skin and in all his other skins, being the only hero in the game who never shows his face. He presents a thick figure with a tattoo on his belly and silver hair. His movements tend to be slowly and steady with heavy steps, since his abilities in the game are commonly related to pushing and pulling enemies.

**Possessive Attributes:** Roadhog wears a mask which resembles the animal pig. In relation to his outfit, just like Junkrat, Roadhog has a lot of his body exposed due to the weather of his country (Australia). His clothes also reference a motorcyclist's style, with tires as shoulder pads, leather fabrics and several visual symbols. His main weapon is his chain hook, which enables him to target an enemy and bring them closer to a close combat.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Roadhog is a criminal character who is quiet most of the time. Also, Roadhog is fascinated by motorcycles (Figure 175<sup>166</sup>), hence, motorcycle enthusiasts are usually referred as a "hog", due to the acronym for *Harley Owners Group*<sup>167</sup>, a membership for people who own Harley Davidson's motorcycles. In addition, the acronym hog also relates to the animal pig. With that, Roadhog's character uses the pig's shaped mask and has a pig's face tattoo on his belly as a thematic reference to his motorcycle appreciation and lifestyle. Last, but not least, a discussion among the gaming community concerns Roadhog's heritage, since although he is Australian according to the game narrative, the character presents several cultural marks from *New Zealand*. Accordingly, the hero has a thematic skin who presents explicit *Maori* heritage references, in which I explore below.

Figure 175 - Roadhog's Motorcycle on Junkertown's Map



### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 176 - Roadhog Skin: Toa



<sup>166</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/139795462@N06/36101436214>

<sup>167</sup> Source: <https://www.harley-davidson.com/us/en/owners/hog.html>

Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** Toa is part of the cosmetic skins of Roadhog that came along with the game. The thematic skin raises a controversial topic about Roadhog's real heritage, since the transmedia storytelling says he is Australian, however, several visual elements from the character are based from cultural items of New Zealand. However, the main symbolic elements from the thematic establish the hero within the Māori people (Figure 177<sup>168</sup>), the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand, which suggests such background heritage for the character. Concerning the skin name, "Toa" means "Warrior" in Maori dialect.

Figure 177 - New Zealand's Maori performance



**Intertextuality:** The Maori people and culture have influenced several movies and TV series throughout the time<sup>169</sup>, as for representing its culture, such as in 2012's movie *Cloud Atlas*, or as part of the narrative, as the popular 1988's movie *Crocodile Dundee II*. Maori is also popular for their tattoo's designs since the art of tattoo is a significant tradition of Maori culture for centuries (HUGHMAN, 2019). Hughman (2019) states that the Maori tattoo (or permanent mark) is known as *Ta Moko*, and is common for Maori people to place them over the face (Figure 178<sup>170</sup>) and all-over other parts of the body. This style of tattoo became popular in several countries such as the in the United States, Mexico and Brazil, which are more commonly known as *Polynesian tribal* tattoos. Concerning the correlation to the character, as mentioned before, it might represent Roadhog's background heritage, giving visibility to this specific culture of the world.

Figure 178 - Representation of a Maori face tattoo



<sup>168</sup> Retrieved from <https://media.newzealand.com/en/story-ideas/aotearoa-new-zealands-unique-maori-culture>

<sup>169</sup> Source: <https://www.imdb.com/search/keyword/?keywords=maori>

<sup>170</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/781233866586638903>

**Visual Text:** Traditionally, Māori people made their clothes and adornments from native plants,

Figure 179 - A hei matau necklace



birds and other animal skins (TAMARAPA; WALLACE, 2013). Hence, the thematic skin presents Roadhog wearing a

Figure 132 - Representation of a Ta Moko tattoo

typical Maori outfit. The hero also wears a mask with animal feather on top, since one of Roadhog's trademarks is always wears a mask. The drawing and lines in the mask symbolize a common representation of *Ta Moko* tattoos, which are also represented in his belly, changing from the usual pig's head and modified into a *Ta Moko* tattoo. Also, his trademark weapon chain hook is changed into a *hei matau* (Figure 179<sup>171</sup>), a bone or greenstone carving in the shape of a highly stylized fish hook (PAULIN, 2012), which represents a cultural treasure for the Maori culture.

**Theme Category:** World Culture.

BIO INFO		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
<b>Real Name:</b> Mako Rutledge <b>Age:</b> 48 <b>Occupation:</b> Enforcer (formerly), Bodyguard <b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank		<b>Species:</b> Human <b>Sex:</b> Male <b>Nationality:</b> Australian <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No	
DESCRIPTION		CATCHPHRASE	
<i>Roadhog is a ruthless killer with a well-earned reputation for cruelty and wanton destruction.</i>		<i>"I'm a one-man apocalypse."</i>	
THEMATIC LINES			
<p><i>"Come 'ere!"</i> – The line is said when Roadhog uses his ability Chain Hook to grab an enemy. The quote is pronounced in a very similar way as the same quote of the character <i>Scorpion</i> from the <i>Mortal Kombat</i> game series when Scorpion uses a similar ability, his hand spear.</p> <p><i>"She'll Be Right"</i> – The voice line represents a common saying in New Zealand slang and culture that means "All is well" and/or "It will be okay".</p>			
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS			
VERB	OCCURRENCES		

<sup>171</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.earthboundkiwi.com/fish-hook-necklaces/hawaiian-fish-hook-necklace-koa-wood-spike-with-inlay>

Am	I'm a one-man apocalypse / I'm a prime specimen / Yeah! I'm burning rubber
Get	Get down / Get on the attack / Get out! They're taking the point
Need	I need healing / I need my space / I need shields, group up
Attack	Get on attack now! / We're losing, attack! / Out of time, attack!
Come	Come here, get down / come on, ready to go / come over here!

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Apocalypse, Time, Hook, Pain, Man

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

The international criminal Mako Rutledge uses the codename Roadhog, which also relates to his personal taste and physical appearance, as seen in the visual analysis. Roadhog's bio information describes his occupation as a bodyguard from the fictional city of *Junkertown* set in Australia. In his catchphrase "*I'm a one-man apocalypse*", the hero gives a taste of his destructive and savage personality. One of his thematic lines refers one of the most popular video game characters *Scorpion* and his ability to push an enemy towards him, paying homage to the classic fighting game. The other line refers to an idiom commonly used in New Zealand, showing possible traits of his heritage. As partner and best friends with Junkrat, the thematic lines of both heroes have a similar pattern of an external geek cultural reference and an idiom referring to a nationality or heritage.

Concerning the transitivity system, Roadhog presents one relational process (*am*), one mental process (*need*) and three material processes (*get*, *attack* and *come*). The relational process is used to identify himself, as in first person, to something (*I'm a one-man apocalypse / I'm a prime specimen*). The mental process is used specifically concerning the game mechanics and objective (*I need healing / I need my space / I need shields, group up*). All the material processes concern requests, commands and orders related to the objective of the game (*Get on the attack / Get out! They're taking the point / Get on attack now! / We're losing, attack! / Out of time, attack! / come over here!*). With the exception of the two relational processes where he defines himself, all of their topics concern the game's objective. It may be justified as an intentional verbal tool, since he is a character created to be quiet and introvert, in contrast to his partner in crime Junkrat.

Regarding the most frequent nouns in his speech, *Apocalypse* and *Man* refer to his verbal metaphor, *Hook* concerns his ability, *Time* refers mainly to the game objective and *Pain* appears as a statement that he correlates to other elements. In his official description, Roadhog is evaluated with the adjective *ruthless*.

According to social actor's theory, Roadhog is not categorized as a functionalized actor, as many of the other heroes, since his role as a tank and his occupation as a bodyguard are not verbally explicit or even present. However, his personal taste for motorcycle, as also seen in his visual analysis, makes him an actor within a classification, belonging to a social group. The verbal elements that agree with this are the use of 'hog' in his name as a reference to his lifestyle and the occurrence (*Yeah! I'm burning rubber*) as an expression used for motorcycle bikers meaning driving fast. Also, due to the use of an adjective to evaluate the character he is an actor with appraisal as well. With that, different from the intentional attempt on Reaper, Roadhog is effectively created as a mysterious character, as his verbal text is subtle and questions the reasons for his behavior and criminal state. Also, the hero is a perfect contrast to his partner in crime Junkrat, in addition to present in his speech traits of his heritage and cultural references.



SIGMA

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 180 - Sigma



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 181 - Sigma in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Sigma is an eccentric and intelligent astrophysicist. In his original skin, he is depicted in an oblique angle, with his left arm down holding a fist, while in her right arm he holds floating spheres. The hero has an intriguing characteristic which is the fact he is able to float in the air, not touching the ground. Hence, his movements tend to be light and tender. He presents a serious facial expression and a body language that suggests a figure who is ready to attack, however it is soften due to her levitate ability.

**Possessive Attributes:** Sigma has the role of a Tank in the game, thereat, his garment presents a more protective combat armor, such as his shoulders, arms, legs and several other gears around his body, mostly in the colors white and green. His main weapon are the two gravity charges in which he targets to damage enemies, named Hyperspheres and also his Experimental Barrier, a functional ability related to

his role in the game, since it provides a barrier to protect the teammates up to certain damages from the enemy's team, as seen in the image in action.

**Symbolic Attributes:** One of the main symbolic references to Sigma's character refers to the late astronomer and planetary scientist *Gerard Kuiper* (1905-1973), since both share the same last name and Dutch nationality. Gerard Kuiper (Figure 182<sup>172</sup>) is known by many as the father of modern planetary science, being the dissertation advisor of the future popular scientist *Carl Sagan* (WILLIAMS, 2015). Hence, Sigma's character suggests a direct reference and homage to such honorable scientist. Sigma is, up to now, the oldest hero among the cast at the age of 62. Also, according to the game narrative, his disability due to injuries of being exposed to a black hole, made him gain power as the levitation which is his remarkable visual symbolic element. Hence, his occupation as an astrophysicist is visually correlated to the accident in his experiment and the way he uses his abilities, such as the floating spheres relating to the law of gravity.

Figure 182 - Astronomer Gerard Kuiper



#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 183 - Sigma Skin: **Asylum**

<sup>172</sup> Retrieved from <http://photoarchive.lib.uchicago.edu/db.xqy?one=apf6-01179.xml>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** The thematic skin named "Asylum" is part of Sigma's original skins' set. The skin caused several controversies by the time it was released. The visual elements in the skin and its name suggest it was inspired by the fictional popular character *Hannibal Lecter*, created by the American writer *Thomas Harris* through his novels. The character, who works as a forensic psychiatrist and is also a cannibalistic serial killer, has gained many movie adaptations. From my perspective, Sigma's skin is a reference to the 1991's movie *The Silence of the Lambs*, with Hannibal portrayed by *Anthony Hopkins*, especially in the scenes where the actor used a face restrainer and a mask (Figure 184<sup>173</sup>).

Figure 184 - Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)



<sup>173</sup> Retrieved <https://www.bigbadtoystore.com/Product/VariationDetails/58428>

**Intertextuality:** As already mentioned, the character Hannibal Lecter inspired many adaptations as movies and TV series. Concerning the controversy of the skin, it relates the fact the people assumed Sigma’s character to have a mental illness, therefore, the correlation to mental health to the figure of the serial killer was aggressive and problematic. Michael Chu, who is a senior designer for the lore and story in Overwatch, explained to the community about Sigma’s story stating that the idea of the character was never intended to be an example of someone who is going through mental health issues, but the injury suffered from the exposure to the black hole (GRAYSON, 2019).

**Visual Text:** The thematic skin presents Sigma in an outfit similar to his original skin, however the fabrics, props, gadgets and colors are changed. The fabric stripes resemble a form of straightjacket, while the mask, as mentioned, resembles the popular fictional character.

**Theme Category:** Movies.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Siebren de Kuiper  <b>Age:</b> 62  <b>Occupation:</b> Astrophysicist  <b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human  <b>Sex:</b> Male  <b>Nationality:</b> Dutch  <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No  <b>Has Any Disability:</b> Mentally damaged / He had his brain damaged in a lab experience</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Brilliant astrophysicist Siebren De Kuiper gained the ability to control gravity when an experiment went terribly wrong. Now, Talon manipulates him to their own ends.</i></p>	<p><i>“There is no obligation for the universe to make sense to you.”</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	
<p><i>“There is no obligation for the universe to make sense to you”</i> – The voice line, which is also his catchphrase, is said when the player picks the hero. The quote is adapted from the American astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson’s quote: <i>“The universe is under no obligation to make sense to you”</i>.</p> <p><i>“Like Newton and the apple”</i> – The line is activated when Sigma kills an enemy. It is a direct reference to Newton’s law of universal gravitation.</p>	
CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS	

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Is	The universe is a fascinating place, isn't it? / Everything is falling into place / The experiment is ready
Let	Let's recover it / Let's test these hypotheses / Don't let them touch the objective
Move	It will move? I will / How to make the payload move again? / The payload must move
See	Always nice to see a colleague at work / Soon we will see if the hypotheses are correct / Oh! I see, double, triple, quadruple...
Give	Give Dr. Winston my regards / Give me a moment! One moment! / Give me a moment to think!
MOST FREQUENT NOUNS	
Barrier, Experiment, Melody, Universe, Equation	
VERBAL ANALYSIS	
<p>Sigma is currently the oldest character among the cast and has the role of Tank in the game. In his catchphrase he claims “<i>There is no obligation for the universe to make sense to you</i>”, referencing to the American astrophysicist <i>Neil deGrasse Tyson</i>'s quote, while his other thematic line refers <i>Isaac Newton</i> and the law of universal gravitation, as they all add up to the creation of his scientist's identity through his verbal text.</p> <p>Concerning the transitivity system, Sigma presents in his speech one relational process (<i>is</i>), one behavioral process (<i>see</i>), and three material processes (<i>let</i>, <i>move</i> and <i>give</i>). The relational process is used to give personal statement and opinions, showing traits of his personality (<i>The universe is a fascinating place, isn't it? / Everything is falling into place / The experiment is ready</i>). The behavioral process is used to describe an action involving a physical and psychological behavior (<i>Always nice to see a colleague at work / Oh! I see, double, triple, quadruple...</i>), while the main theme relies on his occupation as a scientist. The material processes concern his experience regarding different types of action in the game, such as: giving order in a demanding form (<i>Don't let them touch the objective / The payload must move</i>), an interrogative (<i>How to make the payload move again?</i>) and also favors and requests (<i>Give Dr. Winston my regards / Give me a moment to think!</i>).</p> <p>Throughout his occurrences, it is possible to observe some traits of his mental impairment (<i>Oh! I see, double, triple, quadruple... / Everything is falling into place</i>) and his occupation is often referred, while sometimes more explicit, sometimes subtler (<i>The experiment is ready / Soon we will see if the</i></p>	

*hypotheses are correct*). On the other hand, his nationality and age are not explicit or present in the data. Regarding his most frequent nouns, the first one *Barrier* concerns his ability in the game to protect his teammates which is the first time he refers to his role as a Tank explicitly in his speech. The nouns *Experiment*, *Universe* and *Equation* concern his background as an astrophysicist as present in several personal statements, while *Melody* refers to a specific personality trait where the hero can hear a music playing, which is probably a tool to reinforce his mental impairment and disability.

His official description describes him as a brilliant astrophysicist, then, it mentions how he gained his ability to control gravity. Under the social actor's theory, Sigma is a highly functionalized actor regarding his occupation as Astrophysicist, but not much to his role as a Tank. The use of the adjective *brilliant* also categorizes him as an actor with appraisal since he is evaluated by the game description. Overall, Sigma's official description from the game and his speech in the game are coherent, creating a scientist who often mentions and refers to his topics of interest, making a good use of external verbal references to the creation of his identity, which adds up to a well-structured character with an eccentric and controversial personality.

SYMMETRA

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 185 - Symmetra



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 186 - Symmetra in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Symmetra is a perfectionist architect with a deep interest in creating a better world. In her original skin, she is depicted in a sideview oblique angle with her arms pointing toward each other creating a 3D triangle shape figure. Her face is slightly inclined over the viewer, suggesting an air of superiority. She has black long hair with a serious facial expression.

**Possessive Attributes:** Symmetra has several gears throughout his outfit, while the main garment is a light blue fabric dress with tweaks and borders in gold, and what seems to be a grey boot. Hence, her outfit suggest an inspiration from female heroines from fighting games. Her technological gears, weapon and her prosthetic arm are white. She also has a functional headgear as a visor that helps with her abilities.

Her main weapon, as seen in the image in action, is a photon projector that deals damage that increases with time. In addition, the hero has several abilities, such as sentry turrets, teleporter and photon barrier.

**Symbolic Attributes:** The first visual symbolic element concerns her abilities and gameplay in the game which is a direct correlation to her occupation as an Architect. Thereat, Symmetra carries a perspective of balance and perfectionism that can be observed through several multimodal elements in the game. Another issue, relates with the fact that since Symmetra was introduced in the game, people speculated that her character portrayed several autistic characteristics, due to her dialogues reflecting a desire for order, perfection and aversion for overstimulation. With the topic being speculated for a long time by the community, it was only after a letter from Overwatch director *Jeff Kaplan* answering a fan that the proposition was confirmed. The case happened when in a comic book<sup>174</sup>

Figure 187 - The scene Symmetra mentions the Spectrum on Overwatch's Comic Book #4



focusing on Symmetra's character, she describes herself as always being seen as different (Figure 187, which was retrieved from the comic book), while also mentioning the term spectrum<sup>175</sup>. As a response to the fan, the director said that “*Symmetra is autistic. She is one of our most beloved heroes and we think*

Figure 188 - Wheatley from Portal 2



*she does a great job of representing just how awesome someone with autism can be*”<sup>176</sup>. This issue is being explored in the visual analysis, since it was first mentioned visually in the comic book.

Another symbolic attribute concerns a reference to the game series Portal, a puzzle-platform developed and published by Valve, in which several elements from Symmetra's visual character seem to be inspired. One of correlations concerns the character *Wheatley* (Figure 188<sup>177</sup>), an Intelligence Dampening Sphere from the game *Portal 2* (2011), which resembles a lot the sentry turrets that Symmetra can deploy on places to cause damage to enemies.

<sup>174</sup> The Comic Book is available here: <https://static.playoverwatch.com/media/comics/4/en-us/comic-overwatch-a-better-world.pdf>

<sup>175</sup> Spectrum is a range of mental disorders related to autism or Asperger syndrome. Individuals on the autistic spectrum often experience difficulties with social communication and interaction and may exhibit restricted repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities.

<sup>176</sup> Source: <https://www.polygon.com/2017/3/9/14873308/overwatch-symmetra-autistic>

<sup>177</sup> Retrieved from <https://bleedingcool.com/games/portal-2-writer-returned-valve-sequel-speculation>



In addition, Symmetra is an amputee, missing her left arm, in which she uses a prosthetic. As an Indian character, her heritage is visible through remarkable facial features that resembles Indian women. To conclude, Symmetra was a well-thought-out character that represents several identities and considered one of the smartest heroes among the cast and an elemental piece in the game narrative.

#### THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 189 - Symmetra Skin: **Devi**



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** The thematic skin named "Devi" was included as a cosmetic skin option for Symmetra since the character's release, not making part of any event. The skin references a deity in Hinduism, since Devi, is the Sanskrit<sup>178</sup> word for "Goddess". Devi is the supreme being in the Shakta tradition of Hinduism (FLOOD, 2018). The skin, just like the ones from the hero Doomfist, pays homage

<sup>178</sup> Sanskrit is the Indo-Aryan language of the ancient Indian.

to a traditional and respectable figure of the Indian religion. Flood (2018) explains that in Hinduism "the majority of deities are male (*Deva*) though there are a few goddesses (*Devi*)" (p. 45). Some *Devi* Goddess include *Aditi*, *Usas*, *Nirrti*, *Kali*, among others.

**Intertextuality:** This section will explore the reception of the thematic skin, since it represents a religious figure and was involved in a controversy. It happened when Religious statesman and President of the Universal Society of Hinduism *Rajan Zed* released a statement urging the game company Blizzard to remove the Overwatch skin. He stated that the skin trivialized Hinduism's highly revered goddesses. According to *Rajan Zed*, the cosmetic skin is not offensive only because of the depiction and reference to the goddess, but also because players could control her character, what is an offense to devotees to Hinduism. *Zed* also stated that the game company, as one of the world's leading game companies, is committed to ethical decisions to not cause and perpetuate misrepresentations<sup>179</sup>. However, there was not an official response from Blizzard, while the skin is still present in the game, as so many other thematic skins that are inspired by religions using symbols to reference. The correlation to Symmetra's character concerns her heritage and nationality as Indian, since her character was the ideal chance the game developers had to reference the world's third-largest religion<sup>180</sup> within the game.

Figure 190 - Illustration of Hindu goddess Kali



**Visual Text:** In the thematic skin, due to the changes of Symmetra's body color of her body and the addition of the red garments and props, such as the skulls in the skirt, it suggests an adaptation of Kali's representation (Figure 190<sup>181</sup>), a Hindu goddess that represents time, change, power, creation, preservation, and destruction (MCDERMOTT, 2003).

**Theme Category:** Religion.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Satya Vaswani</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 28</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Architect</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Female</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Indian</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p>

<sup>179</sup> Source: <https://kotaku.com/hindu-leader-wants-blizzard-to-drop-symmetras-devi-skin-1783782164>

<sup>180</sup> Source: <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec>

<sup>181</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.thehinduportal.com/2016/03/12-aspects-of-kali-of-light.html>

	<b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes / Symmetra is an amputee, missing her left arm.
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CATCHPHRASE</b>
<i>Symmetra literally bends reality. By manipulating hard-light constructs, she crafts the world as she wishes it to be, in hopes of engineering a perfect society.</i>	<i>“The true enemy of humanity is disorder.”</i>
<b>THEMATIC LINES</b>	
Her voice lines <i>"The cake is a lie.... or is it?"</i> and <i>"Hmph, the cake is not a lie!"</i> are references to the famous quote <i>"The Cake Is a Lie!"</i> from the Portal game series. Since even her visual design seems to relate the Portal game series, as seen in her visual analysis. In addition, as a theme, her obsession for order may be seen in some lines as: <i>"I will shape order from chaos."</i> and <i>"Order will be restored."</i>	
<b>CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS</b>	
<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Is	Death is an illusion / The true enemy of humanity is disorder / Victory is everything
Get	We must get it moving / We must get out plan back on track / Hm, get back, know you place
Take	This is the path we should take / I am taking the objective, all is going according to plan / We must take it quickly
Need	I need healing / I need armor / We need a tank
Move	We move swiftly / Moving the payload, fall in behind me / The payload has stopped, we must get it moving
<b>MOST FREQUENT NOUNS</b>	
Performance, Plan, Turret, Order, Defenses	
<b>VERBAL ANALYSIS</b>	
Satya Vaswani uses the codename Symmetra in the game, which is similar to the noun symmetry and refers a lot to her personality due to her obsession for order. She is referred as an Architect in her bio with the role of damage in the game. A curiosity is that writing her codename from backwards it becomes <i>Artemmys</i> , the Greek daughter of Zeus. Her catchphrase <i>“The true enemy of humanity is disorder”</i> contemplate her ideology stating that chaos and disorder are what hams society. Her thematic lines, mainly refers to the theme of order and control and the repudiation of chaos. While the other thematic line concerns	

an external cultural object, referencing the game Portal, in which several of her visual elements were inspired and also the game itself works in a very controlled and systematic way, correlating to her personality.

Concerning the transitivity system, Symmetra has one relational process (*is*), one mental process (*need*), and three material processes (*get*, *take* and *move*). The relational process refers to personal statements which shows her personality traits and ideologies (*Death is an illusion / The true enemy of humanity is disorder / Victory is everything*). The mental process concerns mainly to requests (*I need healing / I need armor / We need a tank*). The material processes are mainly related to commands and order, usually with the modal 'must' expressing obligation (*We must get it moving / Hm, get back, know your place / We must take it quickly / Moving the payload, fall in behind me / The payload has stopped, we must get it moving*), while in one occurrence she shows a satisfaction since her plan is working, what correlates to her personality traits (*I am taking the objective; all is going according to plan*).

As seen in the visual analysis, Symmetra is an autistic, hence, her fascination for order and balance is a way the game producers used to show such traits. However, it also contributes to her occupation as an Architect, since it is a job requiring precision and symmetry. Therefore, the same occurrences who express her autism traits could also be related to her occupation, such as "*The true enemy of humanity is disorder*" and "*We must get our plan back on track*". Her physical disability is not mentioned in her verbal text, since she uses a prosthetic arm. Despite not being in the data, in her ultimate ability she uses the quote in Hindi language "*Yahi param vaastavikta hai!*" (*in English: This is the ultimate reality!*), which is the predominant language spoken in India, which relates to her nationality. Regarding her most frequent nouns, *Turret* and *Defenses* concern her abilities in the game, while *Performance*, *Plan* and *Order* rely more on her ideology and personality traits, which has been coherent throughout the analysis.

In her description, she is described in relation to what she can do, that is, how her knowledge and discipline lead her to develop abilities to achieve her main objective which is engineering a perfect society. Under social actor's theory she is a highly functionalized actor, since even when mentioning her objective, the use of '*engineering a perfect society*' suggests she is doing it with her hands. In addition, her skills are constantly present in the verbal text. In addition, the autism characteristic added by the game director also contributes to her identity, making her a hero within a classification. This classification in particular has the intention to be inclusive, showing that her autistic characteristics worked on her advantage, as Symmetra is seen as one of the most intelligent heroes among the cast. To conclude, Symmetra's verbal text is well-structured and coherent, presenting a confident and intelligent character who shows authority

in her speech through the use of obligation modals, while also portraying a character with several singular personality traits, correlating to her job as architect and her autistic characteristics.

TORBJÖRN

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 191 - Torbjörn



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 192 - Torbjörn in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Torbjörn is a Swedish engineer who is really devoted to his occupation as weapon engineering and designing. In his original skin, he is depicted in an almost/frontal angle, with one hand holding his hammer while her left hand is a functional prosthetic, since he lost it in an old Overwatch operation. Hence, according to the game narrative, the prosthetic is shaped as a workman's claw instead of a regular arm by his choice. The hero has blond hair and a blond long braided beard, tattoos of engineering gears on his right shoulder and presents a serious face expression. Torbjörn position tends to be steady and relied on his equipment. He is the shortest hero among the cast, however, despite speculation, there is not information concerning he has dwarfism.

**Possessive Attributes:** Torbjörn's main outfit is mainly made of his combat armor with and pieces of fabrics, in the colors red and black. He possesses a hammer in a hand and a workman's claw as the other's hand prosthetic, relating to his occupation as engineering. He also has a rivet gun, to shoot enemies, as seen in the image in action. Despite not appearing in the images above, one of Torbjörn main possessive attributes is his turret. The hero deploys a self-building turret which automatically tracks and attacks

enemies. It is common to listen Torbjörn refer to his turret (Figure 193<sup>182</sup>) as his "baby" when it is destroyed in battle, what reinforces his passion for weapons and engineering.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Concerning the symbolic visual traits, the main element of his character concerns his occupation, since his outfit, possessive attributes and even additional aesthetic features such

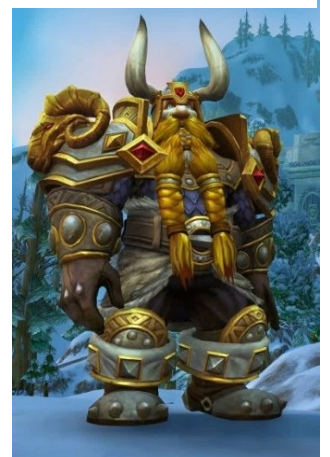
Figure 193 - Torbjörn's Turret



as the gears tattoos relate to his passion for his job, representing a clear priority to the hero. His nationality appears in some features of the game, such as some skins and voice lines, however is not the main topic of his representation.

His height is another issue that was, somehow, controversial, since many fans linked the image of Torbjörn to Dwarfs mythology in video games, especially the ones from *World of Warcraft*, which is a game from Blizzard, the same company of *Overwatch*. This similarity was confirmed by Blizzard through several cosmetic items that relate Torbjörn's character to the Dwarf class character (Figure 194<sup>183</sup>) of the game *World of Warcraft* (2004). Lastly, his appearance as a blond hero with braided beard resembles a reference to the imagery of Vikings and dwarf kings of ancient times, which I will explore in the section below since the hero gained a specific skin for such theme.

Figure 194 - A male Dwarf character from the game World of Warcraft



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 195 - Torbjörn Skin: **Viking**

<sup>182</sup> Retrieved from <https://playoverwatch.com/pt-br/heroes/torbjorn>

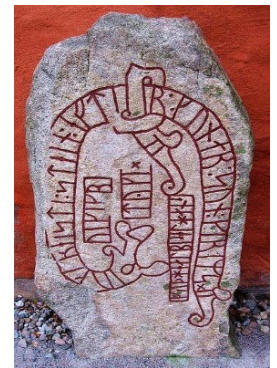
<sup>183</sup> Retrieved from [https://wow.gamepedia.com/Dwarf\\_\(playable\)](https://wow.gamepedia.com/Dwarf_(playable))



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** Viking is the thematic skin Torbjörn received in a Halloween event of the game. The Cambridge Online dictionary describes Viking as "a person belonging to a race of Scandinavian people who travelled by sea and attacked parts of northern and southern Europe between the 8th and the 11th centuries, often staying to live in places they travelled to"<sup>184</sup>. It is known as the Viking Age, the historical period during Middle Ages, who lasted more than two centuries, where the Vikings were spreading and colonizing territories through raiding, until reaching the North America (MAWER, 1913). With a rich culture, several elements represented their culture, although they were generally a non-literate culture that produced no literary legacy, they had an alphabet and described themselves and their world on runestones (Figure 196<sup>185</sup>) (HALL, 2007).

Figure 196 - A Viking Runestone



<sup>184</sup> Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/viking>

<sup>185</sup> Retrieved from <https://br.pinterest.com/pin/81627811970677711>



**Intertextuality:** Nowadays, the representation of the Vikings in mass media became popular due to their depiction in several movies, TV series (Figure 197<sup>186</sup>), video games, literary works, among others.

Figure 197 - TV series Vikings season 2 cover (2013)



Concerning the thematic skin, since it was part of a Halloween event, from my perspective, some elements relied more on a costume aesthetic of a Viking figure than a realistic historical representation. However, it presents symbolic visual elements that correlate to the Vikings and also correlates to Torbjörn’s heritage.

Figure 198 - Drawing of a Mjolnir Hammer



**Visual Text:** Considering the building of the thematic skin, Torbjörn is wearing a garment with several protection gears, in the colors red and brown. The outfit also presents a headpiece with horns and fur. In addition, his usual hammer is adapted to be designed after the *Mjolnir* (Figure

198<sup>187</sup>), the legendary hammer utilized by of the thunder god *Thor*, due to some similar shapes and use of runes, since Torbjörn’s name itself is already a reference to the mythology’s god *Thor*.

**Theme Category:** World Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Torbjörn Lindholm</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 57</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Weapons Designer</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Damage</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Human</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Male</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> Swedish</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> Father of Brigitte (Hero)</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> Yes / Lost his left arm and his right eye in a battle. He wears a prosthetic arm and an eye patch.</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>At its height, Overwatch possessed one of the most advanced armaments on the planet, which could be traced to the workshop of an ingenious engineer named Torbjörn Lindholm.</i></p>	<p><i>“Build ‘em up, break ‘em down.”</i></p>
THEMATIC LINES	

<sup>186</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Vikings-Season-2-DVD/dp/B00J4JZR6A>

<sup>187</sup> Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mj%C3%B6lnir>

*"I'm giving it all I've got!"* - It is one of his main voice lines and may be a reference to the Scotty's catchphrase "I'm giving it all she's got!" from the original Star Trek series, as both Torbjörn and Scotty are engineers. Also, several of Torbjörn's voice lines are old Swedish proverbs translated directly into English, such as *"Du gör en höna av en fjäder"* (*You're making a chicken out of a feather*) and *"Fastna inte med skägget i brevlådan."* (*Don't get caught with your beard in the letter box*).

### CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS

VERB	OCCURRENCES
Is	It's better to be the hammer than the nail / My turret's being destroyed / It is not quitting time yet
Get	Don't get caught with your beard in the letter box / Time to get my hands dirty / Everyone, get on the point!
Let	Let's do this! / Let's get started heheh! / Let's not buy the pig while it's still in the bag
Hear	Hear me baby? Hold together / Let's hear those guns / Thank you, I hear ya!
Need	I need healing / No need to thank me / We need to attack or we're going to lose

### MOST FREQUENT NOUNS

Turret, Molten, Core, Baby, Objective

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Torbjörn Lindholm uses his first name in the Overwatch. In his bio he is described as a Weapons Designer and has the role of damage in the game. His catchphrase *"Build 'em up, break 'em down"* refers to his occupation as he works with engineering and weapon design. One of Torbjörn's thematic line refers to an engineer character from the *Star Trek's* franchise, reaffirming his occupation. The other lines concern a theme, which are old Swedish proverbs, which relates to his nationality and also his age, since they are all old proverbs.

Concerning the transitivity system, the hero has one relational process (*is*), one mental process (*need*), one behavioral process (*hear*) and two material processes (*get* and *let*). The relational process is mainly used to state a notification (*My turret is being destroyed / It is not quitting time yet*). The mental process is used as common requests (*I need healing*), and an advice with consequences to the teammates (*We need to attack or we're going to lose*). The behavioral process is used in a question (*Hear me baby? Hold together*), a command (*Let's hear those guns*) and a form to state he noticed some action (*Thank you, I hear ya!*), while all of them use the verb 'hear' as a sense of the character in relation to the action

performed. The material processes concern his experience related to actions, as giving orders and commands (*Everyone, get on the point! / Let's do this! / Let's get started heheh!*), while they also appear in the translated old Swedish proverbs (*Don't get caught with your beard in the letter box / Let's not buy the pig while it's still in the bag*), since it describes a small narrative.

Regarding his most frequent nouns, *Turret*, *Molten* and *Core* are specifically related to his abilities in the game, while *Objective* refers to the game match objective and *Baby* is the name he uses to refer to his Turret weapon sometimes. Hence, as mentioned before, there are several verbal elements in his speech that correlates his character to his nationality and also his occupation, while his disabilities (left arm and right eyes), are not mentioned in his speech. In addition, as the father of the hero Brigitte, there is not any verbal element that mention his relation with his daughter in the data. Curiously, he often mentions 'my baby', but referring to his turret weapon and not his daughter.

His official description starts with "*At its height...*" which in addition to being a language expression is also a wordplay to refers to his small height. The description then states the hero has one of the most advanced armaments on the planet and evaluates him with the adjective '*ingenious*' followed by his occupation as engineer. With all this information, Torbjörn is surely a functionalized actor, under social actor's theory, since his occupation is very present in the verbal text by the game as in the description, bio information, and also in his speech through the lines. In addition, the wordplay with his height would identify him as actor with physical identification, since his appearance is mentioned verbally. Also, the adjective *ingenious* makes him an actor with appraisalment, since he is judge by the game in his official description.

Therefore, some traits of his bio information are present, as nationality and occupation, while some are not present in the data, as his disabilities and his relationship with his daughter. Overall, the verbal text creates for Torbjörn a character who presents several nationality elements in his speech as in the proverbs, while his main identity lies in this workaholic engineering persona who rely loves what he does, showing affection towards his creations.

WINSTON

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 199 - Winston



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 200 - Winston in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Winston is an intelligent, genetically engineered gorilla. In his original skin, he is depicted in an oblique angle with his feet and hands on the ground, resembling a primate figure. He has dark blue skin and a serious facial expression. His movements are quite steady as he is a knuckle-walking<sup>188</sup>. In the image in action, it is possible to observe Winston in a very aggressive position and expression which relates to her ultimate ability, the primal rage.

**Possessive Attributes:** Winston's outfit mainly consist of a combat technological armor in the colors white, dark grey and yellow. He wears a headset for communication purposes along with several technological gears spread throughout. The garment within an aerospace's thematic resembles an astronaut, since Winston was created and raised on the moon. He carries a jump pack in the back, allowing him to jump high in the air. His mains weapon is named *Tesla Cannon*, which spreads electric barrage to

<sup>188</sup> knuckle-walking is a form of quadrupedal walking in which the forelimbs hold the fingers in a flexed posture that allows body weight to press down on the ground through the knuckles.

close enemies. The hero also has the ability of put up a barrier projector to protect the teammates against the enemies, which concerns to his role in the game as a Tank.

Figure 201 - A Mountain Gorilla



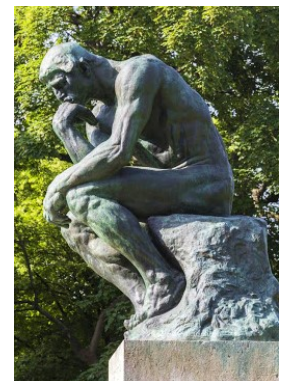
**Symbolic Attributes:** There are several symbolic visual elements to be correlated to Winston's character. First of all, as he was born and raised in the moon, he carries a symbol of the moon of the *Horizon Lunar Colony*, which according to the game narrative, is a moon base constructed by scientists, which in his case would be his 'nationality'. Accordingly, his garment and equipment build his visual image resembling an astronaut figure. Concerning his animalistic figure, among the four types of Gorillas on earth, Winston's appearance seems to be inspired by the subspecies of the *Mountain Gorilla* (Figure 201<sup>189</sup>).

Figure 202 - Winston's The Thinker Victory Pose



Another relevant semiotic tool used in the game is his high intellect. In a visual mode this issue appears in one of Winston's victory poses in the game named "*The Thinker*" (Figure 202<sup>190</sup>) that references the bronze sculpture "*Le Penseur*" by *Auguste Rodin* (Figure 203<sup>191</sup>), which is a visual symbol of intellect, philosophy and reflection (RACOMA, 2012), fitting perfectly with Winston's construction of identity. To conclude, although not a human hero, Winston's is a remarkable character in the game with several visual topics related to him, such as science, animal world, outer space, art and intellect.

Figure 203 - The Thinker statue on Musée Rodin in Paris



## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 204 - Winston Skin: **Yeti**

<sup>189</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.wwf.org.uk/learn/wildlife/mountain-gorillas>

<sup>190</sup> Retrieved from [https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Winston\\_VP\\_The\\_Thinker.png](https://overwatch.gamepedia.com/File:Winston_VP_The_Thinker.png)

<sup>191</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/collections/sculptures/thinker-0>

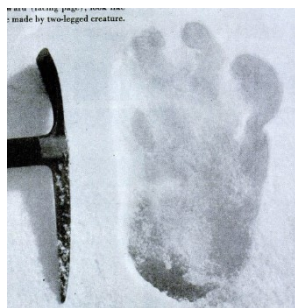


Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** Yeti is the skin Winston received in one of the game’s Winter Wonderland events.

The thematic skin is a direct reference to the folkloric ape-like creature Yeti. The monstrous creature has its origins on Himalayan folklore (FISHER, 1978), however in western popular culture it is known as the *Abominable Snowman*. The Himalayas is “a mountain range extending about 2400 km along the border between India and Tibet<sup>192</sup>”.

Figure 205 - Alleged Yeti footprint



From my perspective, the game wanted to explore more of the mythological creature's origins by naming *Yeti* instead of the popular name the *Abominable Snowman*. The figure of the Yeti was for centuries the reason many people to climb the Himalayas in order to prove the creature’s existence (WELLS, 2008).

Among the experiences, several allegedly “Yeti footprints” were found (Figure 205<sup>193</sup>), especially by the regions of Nepal, however its existence has never been confirmed (WELLS, 2008). Recent research

<sup>192</sup> Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/himalayas>

<sup>193</sup> Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eric\\_Shipton\\_yeti\\_footprint.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eric_Shipton_yeti_footprint.png)

(TAYLOR, 2017) has scientifically proved the several of the traits, symbols and marks that were linked to the creature were made by other animals or even the environment, showing that the creature represents a folkloric and mythological figure.

**Intertextuality:** In popular culture the figure of Yeti has gained over thirty adaptation of films and TV series. In addition, the creature also appears as a character in books, theme's parks and video games (Figure 206<sup>194</sup>). The correlation to Winston's character mainly relies on his primate nature and figure, also considering the theme of a winter holiday skin. Yeti has been represented in media through several different types of creatures, from evil monsters to friendly buddies, and in different genres, from horror movies to animated kid's movie. One example is the lovely and friendly creature from 2019's Universal Pictures movie *Abominable* (Figure 207<sup>195</sup>). This duality of different representations somehow also correlates to Winston's identity, since although the hero is almost always polite and clever, he also presents some anger issues.

Figure 206 - Yeti in the game World of Warcraft



Figure 207 - Abominable (2019) movie cover



lovely and friendly creature from 2019's Universal Pictures movie *Abominable* (Figure 207<sup>195</sup>). This duality of different representations somehow also correlates to Winston's identity, since although the hero is almost always polite and clever, he also presents some anger issues.

**Visual Text:** In the skin, Winston has his usual blue skin covered with white fur. Also, he has tied ropes throughout his body, which might refer to the practice of climbing the Himalayas, and a brown leather vest with skulls and bones. The lower teeth are also something commonly referred and described as a usual description of the imaginable figure of the Yeti.

**Theme Categories:** Mythology, Folklore, and Popular Culture.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Winston</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 29</p> <p><b>Occupation:</b> Scientist, Adventurer</p> <p><b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Animal (Genetically Engineered Gorilla)</p> <p><b>Sex:</b> Male</p> <p><b>Nationality:</b> He was born and genetically engineered in a laboratory in the moon.</p> <p><b>Any Family Relation:</b> No</p> <p><b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE

<sup>194</sup> Retrieved from <http://ilovetheyeti.blogspot.com/2013/02/world-of-warcraft-yeti.html>

<sup>195</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6324278>

*A super-intelligent, genetically engineered gorilla, Winston is a brilliant scientist and champion for humanity's potential.*

*"Imagination is the essence of discovery."*

**THEMATIC LINES**

*"Snow cone? They're lemon."* – The line might be activated when Winston is in the skin of Yeti (as analyzed above). The quote is a reference to the Abominable Snowman from the 2001's animated film *Monsters Inc.*, in where the character of Yeti offers the main characters lemon snow cones by saying the same line.

*"Houston, uhh, we have a problem."* - It is one of his main voice lines and is a direct reference to the phrase *"Houston, we've had a problem here."*, which refers to the quote said in the 1995's movie *Apollo 13*, based on a true story.

**CORPUS ANALYSIS – MOST FREQUENT VERBS**

<b>VERB</b>	<b>OCCURRENCES</b>
Is	It's my time to shine / It's only physics / Playtime is over
Need	I need a hand here / I need healing / We need to get the odds back in our favor
Have	Houston, uh, we have a problem / I have the right stuff / I have everything arranged just the way I like it
Let	Let's get in there / Let's coordinate our efforts / By my calculations, oh forget it, let's move
Get	Don't get me angry / I get that a lot / We have to get this thing moving

**MOST FREQUENT NOUNS**

Barrier, Science, Feeling, Physics, Analysis

**VERBAL ANALYSIS**

The genetically engineered gorilla took the name Winston from one of his human caretakers. Described as a scientist and an adventurer, Winston has the role of Tank in the game. In his catchphrase *"Imagination is the essence of discovery"*, it is possible to observe the intellects and philosophical traits that guides his personality. In one of his thematic lines, he makes a clear reference to the popular quote *"Houston, we've had a problem here"*, which correlates to his background narrative, since he was born in a moon colony as a test subject. The other thematic line relates when he is wearing the *Yeti* thematic skin, analyzed in the thematic skin section, in which the hero says quotes from the movies to resemble the Yeti



character. Hence, two thematic lines are external cultural references that present a generational gap among the audience.

Concerning the transitivity system, Winston has two relational processes (*is* and *have*), one mental process (*need*) and two material processes (*let* and *get*). The relational processes are both used to identify and attribute elements in the occurrence, while also they enable him to show traits of his personality (*It's my time to shine / It's only physics / Playtime is over / I have the right stuff / I have everything arranged just the way I like it*). The mental process refers to requests related to the game match (*I need a hand here / I need healing / We need to get the odds back in our favor*). The material process is mainly concerned on commands and orders about the game objective (*Let's get in there / We have to get this thing moving again / Let's coordinate our efforts*), while different from some heroes, Winston is able to give order in a politer way. Also, the material process sometimes shows his confusion (*By my calculations, oh forget it, let's move*) and even a threat (*Don't get me angry*), which concerns to his ultimate ability.

In addition to the thematic line, that refers to the thematic of spacecraft. Through his occurrences it is possible to see verbal elements correlated to his occupation as a scientist (*It's only physics / We need to get the odds back in our favor / By my calculations, oh forget it, let's move*). Regarding his most frequent nouns, the most used in his speech, *Barrier* relates to his ability to project a physical barrier to protect his teammates, which is a direct relation to his role as a Tank. *Science*, *Physics* and *Analysis* are nouns related to his occupation and his frequent philosophically existential statements as an observer character due to being a researcher. While *Feeling* is mainly used to him describe his sensations, from my perspective, is an intentional tool to make the character relates also to his emotional side in addition to his rational side which is explicit present in the verbal text.

The official description, describes him as a "*super-intelligent, genetically engineered gorilla*" and a "*brilliant scientist*" and "*champion for humanity's potential*". Out of all these evaluations, under the social actors' categories, Winston is an actor with a very positive appraisal. Also, his role as Tank and his occupation as a scientist are explicit in the verbal text, making him a functionalized actor as well. In addition, the fact that considering the cast is mostly made by humans, Winston being an animal would also categorize him in a different class, being a classification actor too.

Ultimately, Winston alongside *Tracer* and *Soldier: 76*, is also one of the protagonists of the game, since he is part of the trailer that appears when playing the game. Also, according to the narrative, Winston is the one responsible to recruit all the old and new members to start Overwatch again, which is the exact point the game narrative is presented to the player. Overall, his verbal text creates this very rational and

intellectual character with some angry issues, that seems prepared to fight due to a vast knowledge he has acquired throughout the years, independent if he is an animal, a robot or a human, he has the objective to protect people and save the world.

WRECKING BALL

ORIGINAL SKIN

Figure 208 - Wrecking Ball



Source: Official website

IN ACTION

Figure 209 - Wrecking Ball in action



Source: Game screenshot

VISUAL ANALYSIS

**Carrier:** Wrecking Ball, just like *Winston*, was born and soon passed through an experiment carried out at *Horizon Lunar Colony*, becoming a Genetically Engineered Hamster. In his original skin, he is depicted in an oblique angle, while since he is inside his mech, it is only possible to see half his body. The beige hamster stays on top of its mech and use it to fight, a seen in the image in action. He also has the option to get inside his mech, turning his mech into a powerful mech ball to push and bounce enemies. From close-up distance (Figure 210<sup>196</sup>) it is possible to see his facial structure and expression, which resembles a character from a kid's animated cartoon.

Figure 210 - Wrecking Ball Close-up



**Possessive Attributes:** Wrecking ball wears basically a sort of safety belt around his body to keep him from falling from his mech. His mech is a round shaped with the possibilities of walking in four legs, resembling claws, and also to roll as a ball. His main weapons are integrated within

<sup>196</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.redbull.com/nz-en/overwatch-hero-wrecking-ball-play-guide>

his mech: the quad cannons to shoot enemies, and his ultimate ability: the minefield, as seen in the image in action, which deploys several bombs in a field that explode with contact with enemies. In addition, he possesses a grabbing claw to anchor to places and strikes enemies. The overall color set is mainly orange,

Figure 211 - Wrecking Ball Demolition Tool



yellow, grey and blue used throughout his possessive attributes.

**Symbolic Attributes:** Concerning the visual symbolic attributes, his codename as Wrecking ball is also a notorious element, since the hero's real name Hammond. However, his codename comes from the fact that his mech can turn into a ball and along with the grabbing claw, the hero becomes visually and literally a heavy steel ball as the tool used for building demolition (Figure 211<sup>197</sup>). According to the game narrative, although born

Figure 212 - Hamtaro



and raised on the moon, Wrecking Ball moved to Junkertown, his new home, therefore, its symbolic visual elements as the mech, bombs, and even the colors resemble the atmosphere of characters and places from the Australian Outback, such as the hero *Junkrat*, which, by the way, is a fan of Wrecking Ball.

Another topic concerns the construction of his animalistic figure. The artists from Blizzard claimed they wanted to create the character as a 'cute' figure of a hamster, however, they wanted to create his visual features leaning on a more Eastern art style, instead of using a western style cartoon<sup>198</sup>. An example of inspiration was the Japanese manga and anime's character *Hamtaro* (Figure 212<sup>199</sup>), since it is noticeable that Wrecking Ball has almost any naturalistic inspiration from the real animal in his visual design, consisting more of a cartoonish caricature figure.

## THEMATIC SKIN

Figure 213 - Wrecking Ball Skin: **Jack-O'-Lantern**

<sup>197</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.indiamart.com/proddetail/wrecking-ball-demolition-service-10541791433.html>

<sup>198</sup> Source: <https://www.heroesneverdie.com/2018/7/12/17566064/overwatch-hammond-wrecking-ball-legendary-skin-reveals-horizon>

<sup>199</sup> Retrieved from <https://hamtaro.fandom.com/wiki/Hamtaro>



Source: Game screenshot

**Sociocultural:** Jack-O'-Lantern is the thematic skin Wrecking Ball received in a Halloween event of the game. The skin refers to the popular form of decoration of Halloween's celebration, especially in the United States, consisting of a carved pumpkin with a candle (Figure 214<sup>200</sup>) or some type of light<sup>201</sup>. The Jack-O'-lanterns are also referred as Halloween Pumpkins, although being popular worldwide and existing in several countries, they represent a tradition in the United States, originated from their Irish immigrants<sup>202</sup>. Accordingly, the origins of the symbol of Jack-O'-Lantern relates to the tale of the *Stingy Jack*, a figure from Irish mythology (DREILING, 2019). The Halloween celebration happens in many countries on October 31, while the celebration is described and known as the act of "dressing up in disguise, trick-or-treating, and displaying jack-o'-lanterns during the evening<sup>203</sup>".

Figure 214 - Halloween decoration made of Jack-O'-Lanterns



<sup>200</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/news/the-halloween-pumpkin-an-american-history>

<sup>201</sup> Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/the-history-of-jack-o-lantern>

<sup>202</sup> Source: <https://www.history.com/news/history-of-the-jack-o-lantern-irish-origins>

<sup>203</sup> Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Halloween>

**Intertextuality:** The image of the Jack-O'-Lantern is certainly well-known on media and popular culture, being portrayed in children's textbooks, cartoons, movies, among others. The correlation to Wrecking Ball's character might rely to his round shape, and thereby, the theme of Halloween represented the perfect chance to use the round shaped hero as a Jack-O'-Lantern, a popular symbol of Halloween in several countries.

**Visual Text:** In the thematic skin, Hammond is changed from his cute looking figure into a creepy creature with pointed ears and pointed teeth, while his mech becomes a big pumpkin with a light inside with the leaves all around in the remarkable colors of orange, green and yellow.

**Theme Categories:** Holidays, Popular Culture and Folklore.

BIO INFO	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p><b>Real Name:</b> Hammond  <b>Age:</b> 14  <b>Occupation:</b> Mech Pilot, Mechanic  <b>Role in the Game:</b> Tank</p>	<p><b>Species:</b> Animal (Genetically Engineered Hamster)  <b>Sex:</b> Male  <b>Nationality:</b> He was genetically engineered in a laboratory in the moon.  <b>Any Family Relation:</b> No  <b>Has Any Disability:</b> No</p>
DESCRIPTION	CATCHPHRASE
<p><i>Wrecking Ball is piloted by an intelligent, genetically engineered hamster named Hammond, who explores the world, searching for adventure.</i></p>	<p><i>*Beeps in hamster language*</i>  <i>Translation: "Control link established."</i></p>
THEMATIC LINE	
<p><i>"The hamster sends his regards"</i> – Although Hammond, the hamster, cannot speak, his mech is able to verbalize some sentences. This line, in specific, is activated when Wrecking Ball kills an enemy. The quote suggests to be a reference to the George R. R. Martin's book <i>A Song of Ice and Fire</i> ("<i>Jaime Lannister sends his regards</i>") or from the TV series adaptation <i>Game of Thrones</i> ("<i>The Lannisters send their regards</i>").</p>	
CORPUS ANALYSIS (NOT POSSIBLE)	
<p>Wrecking Ball, after Bastion, is the second playable hero that doesn't verbally speak. In spite of being able to communicate due to his Mech, which translates some messages to human language, the</p>	

hero's verbal text is not enough for a corpus analysis based on frequency, since the vocabulary is short. However, as mentioned before, it is still possible to analyze his verbal identity due to the other verbal elements.

### VERBAL ANALYSIS

Hammond shares a similar background with Winston, both being subjects to experiences realized in the Horizon Lunar Colony at the moon. According to the game narrative, Hammond escaped to Earth, falling into the Australian Outback, near *Junkertown* (hometown of the heroes *Junkrat* and *Roadhog*). He modified his escape pod transforming in a mech to compete in *Junkertown's* combat arena, giving himself the name of Wrecking Ball. The hero is a tank in the game and has the role of mechanic and mech pilot.

His catchphrase is uses noises as a hamster, but the mech translate to “*Control link established*”, referring to his mechanical attributes. His only thematic line that explore an external cultural element, refers to *George R. R. Martin's* universe, as for the books of the TV adaptation, which concern of a very popular cultural item among people worldwide. His official description describes him Wrecking Ball are two separate entities, being wrecking ball the mech and Hammond, the hamster, which is somehow a new information since following the pattern of other heroes, it was assumed his mech would not be an entity itself, for instance the hero D.Va who is also a mech pilot. The description also states Hammond's objectives to explore the world and search for adventure.

Considering the social actor's theory, despite not being able to analyze his speech, his occupation as a pilot is mentioned being a functionalized actor. Also, the use of the adjective *intelligent* makes him under appraisal and, as Winston, as being an animal, he is identified inside a class, being also a classificational actor. Overall, it is quite hard to distinguish each entity to investigate and give a possible result about the hero's personality. From my perspective, since the mech only translates what Hammond says, I believe that Hammonds or Wrecking ball identity is the same regarding the verbal text: a curious adventurer and intelligent pilot who wants to explore the world with his mechanical creation.

*End of appendix.*