

### 3. CONCLUSION

This research shows the narrative design of *OMORI*. Employing the *play* schema, the fictional world in the role-playing game *OMORI* is able to convey meaningful narratives. This is done through notable gameplay and narrative techniques. These techniques potentially incite certain perceived emotional immersion in players. It is shown from the discussion that the game uses unpredictability and trauma-driven narrative as a guiding principle in the narrative design and that the techniques that underlie these principles may incite immersive horror and emotional connection respectively.

*OMORI* uses techniques that manifest unpredictability. Unpredictability lies in the ability to create a sense of uncertainty and surprise. From the analysis, the use of jump scares and unreliable narrators play a role in upholding unpredictability. Investigating these techniques give insight into how effective they are in rendering feelings of fear, tension, and emotional engagement in the player. The order and presentation of the jump scare shape its efficacy in rendering those feelings. The presentational structure includes visual, auditory, and textual means. The effectiveness of jump scares depends on diverting the audience's expectations.

The distorted photo jump scare upholds unpredictability as it renders suspense by diverting the player's expectation. Prior to the jump scare, the player explores the vibrant Headspace accompanied by its mellow and upbeat soundtrack. From this portrayal, the player may suspend their knowledge of playing a psychological horror game, thus unlikely to expect a jump scare. Ordering of events matter as they can be tools to generate psychological effects, such as creating suspense. In this case, the distorted photo jump scare shows that it instills suspense in the player. Furthermore, the presentation of the jump scare's build-up manifests unpredictability through exhibiting anxiety. This is shown through textual (shift from confusion to worry, warped dialogue); auditory (ringing); and visual form (Basil's expression and shadow formation).

Likewise, the Hellmari jump scare diverts the player's expectation from its order and presentation. Prior to the jump scare, the player meets Mari in Headspace. The game informs the player that Mari is safe by integrating her picnic basket with the save feature, subsequently conditioning the player to associate Mari's presence with safety. Furthermore, the presentation of the jump scare's build-up contributes to unpredictability through its presentation. This is shown through the framing of the sequence, the appearance of Mari's game sprite resembling

in Headspace, and her friendly dialogue. All of which results in the game establishing trust, which then lowers the player's guard during the Hellmari jump scare sequence.

The presence of unreliable narrators creates an unreliable recounting of the story. The narrators in the game, Sunny and Omori as well as the NPCs, prove to be unreliable narrators as they are capable of under-reporting, misreporting, and misregarding. Sunny and Omori underreport by hiding the truth of their role in Mari's death. Additionally, misreporting occurs in NPCs stating a misleading truth about Mari's death being caused by her own doing. Lastly, misregarding happens from Sunny ignoring Basil whenever possible. The presence of an alter ego in the form of Omori creates a dynamic where it may create confusion in the player regarding which information to believe in. Thus, Omori may be considered a "factual" unreliable narrator. Meaning, due to his recounting occurring in a dream sequence, rather than reality, there may be a distortion in his narrative due to the influence of trauma. As such, unreliable narrators contribute to unpredictability from creating a sense of uncertainty in the player.

*OMORI* also uses techniques that manifest a trauma-driven narrative. Trauma narratives provide space for readers to reflect on their fears of loss, death, and suffering. In games, trauma narratives impact the player by evoking empathy and critical thought. The concept of agency, non-chronological order, and repetition explains the principle that underlie trauma narratives in games. From the analysis, the use of metaphors in gameplay and segmented storyworlds play a role in manifesting a trauma-driven narrative.

Use of metaphors in gameplay mechanics allow a conveyance of trauma narrative. Metaphor allows for an imaginative approach to telling a trauma-driven narrative, thereby engaging the player. First, the Hangman mechanic in Omori's laptop contains a metaphor for trauma repression. This mechanic constitutes an embedded narrative, meaning it forms as an artifact that contains brief stories. The metaphor of trauma repression is shown through the hidden nature of collectible keypads, the non-chronological presentation of cutscenes post-interaction, and the repetition of information surrounding Sunny's trauma.

The photo album mechanic conveys a trauma narrative. With its unique presentation order, it leads to rendering an epistemic plot. This is characterized by a mixture of one story occurring in the past, and one that happens in the present through investigation of what had happened. The purple album presents the assumed status quo. Likewise, the second album presents the current day only with the information of Mari's death surfacing. While the final photo album shows the truth that challenges the player's understanding of the string of events

that occurred in the past. Thus, narrative tension occurs through the existence of an epistemic plot within the narrative, subsequently upholding a trauma narrative.

Fragmented storytelling happens from the existence of segmented storyworlds. Fragmented storytelling refers to conveying the fragmented nature of traumatic memories. It functions to reflect the psychological state of characters and convey the complexity of trauma. The occurrence of being forcibly returned to White Space from encounters of an entity that reminds Omori of his trauma, takes away the player's agency. This mirrors the loss of agency caused by a traumatic experience and the nature of traumatic memories being non-linear, thus contributing to a trauma-driven narrative.

The techniques in *OMORI* that manifest as unpredictability incites immersive horror. Horror games elicit feelings of fear, tension, and disgust in the player. Certain techniques such as visual elements, in-game audio, and the narrative can evoke horror. While immersion refers to a state of being absorbed into an action, which encompasses experience with unique thought and emotional process.

The jump scares in *OMORI* may incite immersive horror by creating a sense of uncertainty. This is achieved through narrative tension, in which the story's interpreter anticipates an outcome. It starts with the distorted photo jump scare triggering curiosity. The brief appearance of the jump scare may incite experience of interrogation, uncertainty, and incomprehension. It is, respectively, marked by the player questioning the implication of the jump scare, pondering the unpredictable nature of it and, subsequently, reaching thoughts of confusion. By triggering curiosity, suspense and surprise follows, thus captivating the player into the story.

Furthermore, the Hellmari jump scare incites immersive horror by potentially influencing the player's decision. After the Hellmari jump scare, a sequence similar to it occurs later in the same location and with similar presentation. This sequence, involving the character Kel, puts the player in the same situation where they need to make a choice. Unbeknownst to the player, this choice diverges the narrative into either Hikikomori or True route. Due to the similarity of the Kel sequence in terms of its visual, auditory, and textual structure to the Hellmari jump scare sequence, it may influence the player to be cautious and thus potentially refuse to open the door for Kel. Although perhaps only realized in retrospect, the Hellmari jump scare still could incite immersive horror covertly. From which, the player primarily engages in diagnosis to figure out what is happening and why, then retrospection to understand what has happened in the story.

Unreliable narrator can incite immersive horror by creating a sense of uncertainty by influencing the way players understand the story. The inaccuracy and insufficiency through under-reporting, misreporting, and misregarding throughout the narrative undoubtedly creates narrative tension in the player. Initially, the player may be curious regarding the reason and in what manner Mari passed away, thus inciting curiosity in the player. An incongruence occurs between discussions of Mari in Faraway Town and the lack thereof in Headspace, thus may lead to the player questioning whether it is Sunny or Omori who informs the truth. Furthermore, the presence of nightmares as a recurring theme in the narrative from the presence of a “factual” unreliable narrator through Omori, could incite even further uncertainty in the player. In the end, when the truth is revealed that Sunny and Basil played a role in Mari’s death, the seemingly unending uncertainty throughout the narrative may make the plot twist all the more horrifically shocking. Thus, it could incite immersive horror in the player.

The techniques that manifest a trauma-driven narrative develops a sense of emotional connection by creating attachment to characters. This is done through transportation, where the player gets absorbed into the narrative as well as attachment to game characters. The Hangman mechanic makes the player feel sympathetic to the characters through the existence of a sympathetic alter ego in Sunny. Furthermore, the presentation of the nature of trauma and grief in the character’s psyche allows the player to directly experience the after-effects of trauma. Specifically, the nature of traumatic memories that linger in the psyche. This may allow the player to feel understood with their own traumatic memories that linger within their own psyche.

The photo album deepens the player’s knowledge of the characters. Through the first and second album, the player receives information that pertains to the status quo and the present-day events. Upon receiving the final album in Black Space, it recontextualizes the supposed truth shown in the previous albums. The combination of these presentations may result in the player feeling sympathetic towards the characters from shared experience as grief is a universal experience.

The segmented storyworld affects the player’s belief and attitude by taking away the player’s agency. The recurring act of stabbing to escape White Space and return to Faraway Town may condition the player to be accustomed to it. During the Mewo sequence, where the player seemingly has no choice but to cut open Mewo, it takes away their agency. When realizing that the player can leave by stabbing Omori, they may feel relief. Upon realizing that it is preferable to take one’s own life than the life of others, it may point to increased transportation

in the narrative and shift the player's belief surrounding the sensitive issue of suicide. Despite the fictional event, the player may still feel strongly about it. This is further elevated by the presence of characters, because if the same event were to occur without a character, it may not be as impactful as one with characters.

This study specifically addresses an observable gap in the current research on narrative structure in the game *OMORI*. Academic research on *OMORI* thus far covers the game's environmental design (Younis & Fedtke, 2024). Therefore, by analyzing the notable techniques in *OMORI*'s narrative structure and the potential emotional immersion the player experiences, this study could potentially add new insights to the field of game studies.

Moreover, this research expands the understanding of multimodal narratives by bringing together the fields of game studies and literature studies. To my knowledge, the English for Creative Industry program has not yet conducted any studies on the narrative structure in video games. As a result, this study serves as a novel attempt to explore video games as a means of storytelling, inspiring future studies and encouraging a more extensive exploration of games alongside traditional literary and cinematic forms.