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A TALE OF TWO FATHERS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
FATHERHOOD IN THE *WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT* (2015) AND *GOD OF WAR* (2018)

BA thesis

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Abstract

This thesis explores representations of hegemonic masculinity and fatherhood in *God of War* (2018) and *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015). Analyzing the father-child dynamics between Geralt and Ciri, and Kratos and Atreus, it examines how traditional masculine ideals of authority and emotional restraint are both reinforced and challenged. Drawing on Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and trauma-informed perspectives, the study reveals how these games critique patriarchal fatherhood and propose alternative models emphasizing empathy and cooperation. This research contributes to understanding evolving masculinity in video game narratives.

Keywords: video games, fatherhood, hegemonic masculinity

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
1. Fatherhood in video game narratives: Literature review	6
2. Representation of Fatherhood in <i>The Witcher 3</i>	10
2.1 The Bloody Baron	13
2.2 Crach an Craite	15
2.3 Emhyr var Emreis	17
2.4 The importance of player choice	18
3. Representation of Fatherhood in <i>God of War (2018)</i>	20
3.1 The father-son dynamic	21
3.2 The hegemonic masculinity of the father figure	23
3.3 “We must be better” - Kratos	24
3.4 Inherited hegemonic masculinity	27
3.4 Comparison	28
Conclusion	30
References	33
Resümee	37

Introduction

Over the past few decades, video games have emerged as a powerful medium for narrative expression, captivating millions of players worldwide with complex narratives and relatable themes. As Jan-Noël Thon argues, video games uniquely construct storyworlds that engage players through multimodal configurations, blending visual, auditory, and interactive elements to create immersive and emotionally resonant experiences (Thon 2016: 16-17). These storyworlds often operate as complex systems, a concept elaborated by Marie-Laure Ryan (2019: 29), who argues that narrative complexity arises from decentralized interactions between characters, environments, and player agency, yielding emergent behaviors that defy linear cause-and-effect structures. Within these systems, fatherhood has emerged as a recurring motif, reflecting broader cultural tensions over gender identity and representation in interactive media – a battleground where progressive and conservative ideologies clash.

Raewyn Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity, which explains how dominant forms of masculinity evolve to maintain power, offers a critical framework for analyzing this phenomenon. Hegemonic masculinity is “the currently most honored way of being a man”, a norm with which other masculinities are compared (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). At the core of this ideal is male dominance over women and subordinated masculinities. “Hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g., professional sports stars), symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 846). This is why the concept is also useful in the study of video games in which male characters have tended to be characterized by power and aggression (Gelunas 2023). Thus it is productive to look at the extent to which alternative masculinities are portrayed in video games.

This thesis will argue that the representation of fatherhood in these games aligns with Connell's observation that hegemonic masculinity absorbs new roles, such as changing the understanding of parenthood, to retain its dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 847). That is, while traditional views of hegemonic masculinity have not included caring among masculine characteristics, being the head of a family has been traditionally at the core of the ideal for a long time and this permits greater hybridity in the representations of fatherhood (Claflin 2022: 12). The thesis will look at whether there are signs of a broader cultural shift toward valuing emotional vulnerability in men, or whether physical dominance and protective violence underscores the persistence of hegemonic norms in the ways in which fatherhood is imagined within video games.

Both of the games that will be the focus of this study emerged in the aftermath of Gamergate, the loosely organized online harassment campaign in 2014 to 2015 targeting women and other marginalized groups in the gaming industry through coordinated attacks, including leaking personal addresses and death threats. The other relevant context is the rise of the manosphere, a network of antifeminist online communities such as men's rights activists (MRAs) and incels, which has propagated misogynistic ideologies and resisted shifts in gender norms, often framing feminism and inclusivity towards sexual and gender minorities as threats to traditional masculinity (Rothermel 2022: 4).

The Gamergate controversy, which weaponized misogyny under the guise of "ethics in gaming," exposed deep fractures in gaming culture. It reflected anxieties over the medium's evolving demographics, as 48% of players in 2014 identified as female (Entertainment Software Association 2014: 3), and the increasing visibility of feminist critiques of hypermasculine tropes such as aggression, emotional suppression, and sexual dominance (Connell 2005: 68-69). These tropes, often central to gaming narratives, glorify violence as a marker of male power, discourage vulnerability by equating emotional

expression with weakness, and frame women as objects of conquest. This backlash mirrored broader societal resistance to progressive gender representation, with Gamergate participants framing efforts for diversified narratives as threats to “traditional” gaming values. Against this backdrop, *The Witcher 3* and *God of War* entered a polarized landscape where depictions of paternal vulnerability risked alienating audiences invested in hyper masculine power fantasies.

The thesis examines these titles as examples of a cultural moment where calls for more inclusive storytelling clash with efforts to uphold traditional masculinity, creating narratives that both question and reinforce societal views on how men express emotions. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research question: How do *God of War* (2018) and *The Witcher 3* (2015) reflect or challenge contemporary societal attitudes towards emotional expression and vulnerability in men? Both games were chosen for their critical acclaim, cultural significance, and their central focus on father-child relationships. Through a comparative analysis informed by Connell’s framework on hegemonic masculinity, the analysis will examine how the narratives depict paternal growth, responsibility, and care. Major story arcs within both games will be analyzed to assess their thematic relevance to broader societal attitudes toward masculinity. By integrating theoretical insights with empirical observations from gameplay, this study seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions about the evolving representations of men in popular culture.

1. Fatherhood in video game narratives: Literature review

Video games often try to demonstrate how fatherhood narratives can reframe traditional masculine traits, such as stoicism and physical strength, within the context of paternal responsibility. However, these portrayals often oscillate between subverting and

reinforcing patriarchal norms, a tension that has been critically examined in previous research on gender and games. For example, Stang (2017: 164) critiques father-centered narratives in games like *BioShock 2* and *The Walking Dead* for constructing father figures as moral barometers and agents of redemption, often at the expense of their daughter figures' agency. Similarly, Claflin (2022: 47) argues that the prioritization of fatherhood as a thematic hook reflects a postfeminist media landscape responding to feminist critiques of hypermasculinity in video games. This "dadification" of gaming protagonists, first observed by Totilo (2010) and Groen (2012), represents an attempt to rebrand violent masculinity into a more acceptable form – violence enacted in the name of paternal protection (Claflin, 2022; Groen, 2012). While this shift allows for emotionally engaging storytelling, it risks valorizing violent mechanics under the guise of paternal care and does not address the deeper layers of hypermasculinity in games.

Traditionally, fathers in video games were predominantly portrayed as secondary characters utilized for player motivation. They were often portrayed as the player's dad requiring the player's assistance, either in need of rescue or locating, or as the antagonist pitted against the player, necessitating confrontation (Totilo 2010). Some of the earlier games featuring fathers as the main characters include *Bioshock* (2K Games 2007), *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* (Climax studios 2009) and *Heavy Rain* (Quantic Dream 2010) (Claflin 2022: 1-2).

While there is a broader trend of video game fathers becoming the playable character, the two major franchises that are the object of analysis here predate this trend and thus they have also had to adapt their protagonists to fit this mold, in order to tell a more compelling story relatable to contemporary players. Both *God of War* and *The Witcher* series were originally known for their protagonists being portrayed as brutal, womanizing, hypermasculine killers, but have since evolved to place fatherhood at the core of their

narratives. Both games have also been analyzed previously, although mostly within PhD theses and other student research.

Before the trend of "dadification," the protagonists of *God of War* and *The Witcher* were primarily defined by isolation and violence rather than family roles. Kratos, in the early *God of War* games, was a fierce Spartan demigod driven by revenge and rage, focused on destruction rather than relationships. Similarly, Geralt of Rivia in *The Witcher* series was a solitary monster hunter, emotionally reserved and detached from familial bonds. Both characters embodied lone, powerful figures shaped by their harsh worlds, with little emphasis on caregiving or fatherhood.

Lucat (2017: 2) introduces the concept of the anti-father in games featuring narratives centered around fatherhood. The anti-father, as defined by Lucat, embodies flawed hegemonic masculinity and paternity, ideals of male power and authority that are depicted as corrupt, dysfunctional, or morally compromised. This allows protagonist fathers to shape their own parenting style. In the case of *The Witcher 3*, this job is left to the player, while in *God of War*, the player can only observe how the father changes in contrast to the anti-father. In essence, this anti-father represents a type of masculinity that starkly differs from the protagonist's portrayed masculinity and is used as a warning to show what effects flawed masculinity might have in a parent-child relationship (Lucat, 2017: 2).

In such games, players are typically compelled to address and improve their relationship with their digital child to some extent. Failure to do so may result in locked quests, hindered progress or undesirable endings. In *The Witcher 3*, both the player and the protagonist are penalized for displaying inadequate fatherhood. *The Witcher 3*'s narrative is non-linear, meaning that the story unfolds based on the player's choices rather than following a single fixed path. As Rossbach (2019: 3) notes, players must navigate Geralt's

role as a father to Ciri while managing his existing relationships and societal expectations. This structure allows the player to shape how fatherhood is portrayed: through key decisions, the player influences whether Geralt supports, controls, or empowers Ciri. According to Lisee (2020: 10), the game presents a forgiving view of fatherhood, emphasizing that good fathers acknowledge their flaws and strive to make amends. Because *The Witcher 3* offers multiple endings, ranging from Ciri's survival and empowerment to her death, the quality of fatherhood depicted depends largely on the player's actions and choices. This contrasts with *God of War*, where the linear narrative guides players through a singular, predetermined paternal journey, allowing them only to observe Kratos' development rather than shape it.

Good fatherhood in general involves open communication with children about emotions and concerns, offering unwavering support even when there is disagreement or lack of understanding (Khan 2017: 3-5). Fathers also serve as teachers, imparting both practical skills and life lessons to their children, to help them have better lives without enduring the same hardships. Conversely, bad fathers avoid responsibility, lack communication, and fail to support their children, ultimately hindering their growth and independence (Lisee 2020: 10-11). Both games tackle fatherhood and sensitive masculinities, shedding light on issues like abuse, trauma, and mental health.

Previous analyses of *The Witcher 3* and *God of War* highlight their focus on fatherhood as a way to challenge traditional hyper masculine ideals. These games use their narratives to interrogate hegemonic masculinity, offering nuanced portrayals of paternal growth, responsibility, and care. However, there is no direct comparisons of how these themes are depicted across the two titles. There is a noticeable gap in comparative research that systematically analyzes how these themes are represented across both titles. By placing *The Witcher 3* and *God of War* in direct conversation, this study seeks to illuminate the similarities and differences in how each game constructs fatherhood as a means of

subverting conventional masculine ideals. In doing so, this research aims to contribute to understanding how video games as a medium engage with evolving societal norms around gender and parenting.

2. Representation of Fatherhood in *The Witcher 3*

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt is an interactive narrative that is derived from the literary works of Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski. *The Witcher* series is known for its fantasy setting, complex characters, and morally ambiguous narrative (Millard 2016).

CD Projekt RED, a Polish video game company and developer of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, secured the rights to adapt Sapkowski's literary universe into the gaming medium starting with the first *Witcher* game released in 2007. The games, building on the foundations laid by the books, notably the exploration of themes such as racism, political intricacies, and the repercussions of moral choices, take a substantial leap by embracing an expansive open-world design (CD Project Red 2015). This adaptation stands out for its success in translating Sapkowski's intricate narrative into an immersive interactive experience. *The Witcher 3* is also the first game from the series that takes place after the events of Sapkowski's original saga. The game series' success is attributed to its captivating storytelling, meticulous world-building, and the incorporation of morally nuanced decision-making, which adds layers of complexity to the player's engagement with the narrative. *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is an example of video game adaptations of literary works that successfully bridge the gap between traditional narrative forms and interactive storytelling (Jański 2016: 119).

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt tells a story centered around the character Geralt of Rivia, a non-human monster hunter known as a witcher. Geralt, one of the few remaining witchers, is skilled in the art of professional violence, operating within a guild-like structure akin to

tradesmen (Lucat 2017: 4). These monster hunters are specially trained and given certain superhuman traits acquired at the cost of empathy and the restriction of their emotional range. As explained by Matuszek (2017: 132), the witcher does not belong to the natural world, being a displaced supernatural figure. Subjected to bodily abuse as a child, he undergoes mutations, hormone treatments, and virus injections, transforming him into an emotionless killing machine through a series of experiments (Matuszek 2017: 132). However, the game emphasizes scenarios where violent approaches are either undesirable or unattainable. Even when violence is employed, Geralt typically uses it defensively, and the game offers a plethora of interactions with the world that do not rely on or cannot be resolved through violence (Lucat 2017: 4).

The tension between subverting and reinforcing patriarchal norms presented in the literature review is very evident in *The Witcher 3*, where Geralt's protective role in the life of Ciri reflects both traditional masculine traits and moments of emotional vulnerability. As Lisee (2020) notes, Geralt's journey exemplifies complex masculinity by blending stoicism with care, yet his actions often rely on violence framed as necessary for survival – a recurring theme in fatherhood narratives across games like *Red Dead Redemption* and *Heavy Rain*. That is, fatherhood also acts as a justification of hyperviolence that video games often contain.

Geralt's surrogate fatherhood to Ciri in *The Witcher 3* subverts the “damsel in distress” trope common in earlier games, but his emotional restraint aligns with conservative norms that equate male vulnerability with weakness (Claflin, 2022). These depictions echo Mortazavi Brooks' (2021) analysis of father-daughter dynamics in *The Last of Us* and *The Walking Dead*, where paternal mentorship subverts traditional gender binaries but often reinforces heteropatriarchal messaging.

As Geralt navigates the war-torn and politically charged landscape of the Northern Realms, the narrative opens layers of political intrigue, moral complexities, and profound choices. These choices, reflecting the theme of fatherhood, play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of the story. The game's expansive open-world setting introduces a diverse array of characters, many of them contributing to the exploration of the father-daughter dynamic. Amidst the central quest to find Ciri, Geralt engages in monster-hunting contracts that reveal hidden truths about the world and its characters. Through these quests the player quickly learns that the world is not usually black and white, but instead shades of gray. The themes of war, racism, and the consequences of choices echo throughout the game, adding depth to the exploration of Geralt's role as a father figure to Ciri (Hyden 2019). According to Matuszek (2017) however, this often is not as much about Ciri needing Geralt as Geralt needing Ciri as she is represented as an independent and strong individual. Geralt invents the role of "step-daughter" for Ciri solely for its symbolic significance – a "daughter" legitimizes the role of "father", that is, it gives the character the opportunity to take on roles that are not in accordance with hypermasculine violent masculinity.

Through Geralt's relationship with Ciri, *The Witcher 3* can be understood as a critique of narrative games centered around paternalistic masculinity, a form of masculinity characterized by protective authority, control over dependents, and the assumption of superior knowledge or moral guidance (Matuszek, 2017, p. 142). This narrative framework allows the game to explore fatherhood not merely as dominance or control, but as a complex interplay of guidance, autonomy, and mutual respect. Importantly, the game's design encourages players to adopt a critical stance by fostering skepticism toward received information, presenting morally ambiguous choices, and prompting players to seek additional context beyond surface-level narratives. Through branching storylines and consequential decision-making, *The Witcher 3* actively engages players in questioning

traditional paternalistic roles, inviting them to reflect on the implications of authority, agency, and emotional responsibility within father-child relationships.

2.1 The Bloody Baron

The Witcher 3 stands out not only for its immersive gameplay but also for its mature and morally nuanced storytelling. One of the more prominent questlines exploring the theme of fatherhood, starting with quest “Bloody Baron” and ending with “Family Matters”, revolves around a series of main story quests involving a character known as the Bloody Baron. The Bloody Baron is the nickname given to Phillip Strenger, a self-proclaimed baron and warlord. The baron, having played host to Ciri, knows of Geralt's quest to find her and agrees to disclose information about her whereabouts on the condition that Geralt aids him in locating his own missing daughter and wife, Anna and Tamara, who he claims to have been kidnapped. The initial encounter with the Bloody Baron subverts typical expectations of a ruthless warlord. As Horn (2021, p. 240) describes,

Moving through the town of Crow’s Nest up to the stronghold of the bloody baron for the first time, the player may feel some trepidation about meeting the warlord. His guards, who Geralt meets earlier at a countryside tavern, are little more than crude thugs. The villagers in the town appear beaten down and depressed as the baron’s men swagger about, demanding protection money. Yet the baron does not quite meet expectations: he is found in a colorful flower garden conversing with a couple of staid Nilfgaardian representatives. The black of their uniforms is in stark contrast to the vibrant crimson of the baron’s own cloth. He is tall, and even sitting stoops down to talk to them. His beard is black and his nose is red and bulbous. The imperials have come about business, but the baron is having none of it. He jokes, he scolds, he dances with a maid – and eventually the Nilfgaardians leave in disgust.

Lucat (2017: 7) and Horn (2021: 239) argue that the player's engagements with Strenger are thus framed within a paternal dynamic right from the beginning. Using context clues, speaking to the baron’s guards and investigating the house from which the wife and daughter have been taken, the player is able to uncover the baron’s alcohol addiction and domestic abuse directed at his wife. The portrayal of the Bloody Baron reveals a complex person grappling with the challenges of fatherhood and masculinity. Strenger emerges as a figure fraught with flaws and moral ambiguity, haunted by his past mistakes. His abusive

behavior towards his family, particularly his wife, reflects the destructive consequences of his actions and choices.

Lucat (2017: 10) argues that the “entwining of the two paternal quests, Geralt’s and Strenger’s, results in the efficient deployment of the processes of abjection and identification that link and contrast the two characters’ fatherhood”. In this context, *abjection* refers to how fatherhood is framed in relation to moral failure, guilt, or the rejection of certain aspects of the self, particularly relevant to the figure of the Bloody Baron, whose violent and abusive behavior marks him as an “abject” father. The game invites the player to both recoil from and empathize with his character, creating a tension between rejection and identification. Lucat goes on to examine the Bloody Baron’s questline as having the unique opportunity for the anti-father figure to seek redemption. This opportunity revolves around the fate of the unborn child miscarried by the baron’s wife, which emerges as a pivotal element intertwining tragic family history and the supernatural realm inherent to the witcher profession. The stillborn child, left unburied and unnamed by her father, becomes a botchling, a malevolent supernatural entity. The player, through Geralt, can recognize the potential of the botchling to aid in locating Anna and Tamara, offering the Baron a chance at redemption through a ritual. This may only happen, when the player chooses the correct dialogue options for this outcome and can very easily be missed. The ritual involves the baron carrying the monstrous creature to the family home, naming it, and providing it with a proper burial. The scene depicting this ritual presents a poignant moment of emotional reckoning for the baron, as he acknowledges his role in the child's demise and seeks forgiveness. Although this act does not absolve the baron of his past violence, it allows him to confront the consequences of his actions and meet his wife again. However, if Geralt kills the vicious creature, the baron will fall deeper into depression and can later be found having committed suicide.

The first ending to the questline offers players insight into a softer and more compassionate aspect of the Bloody Baron's character, challenging preconceptions of his violent and patriarchal nature. Furthermore, Geralt's role in guiding the baron through the uncomfortable process of the ritual demonstrates his capacity for resolving familial conflicts without resorting to violence, thereby challenging traditional notions of masculinity and patriarchal authority embodied by the baron. Later in the game the player can decide to find out what has happened to the baron's daughter Tamara. Having become estranged from her father, she is now found with a new "family" in a cult-like extremist group, underscoring the importance of Geralt's efforts to strengthen his father-daughter bond with Ciri and to ensure she will have a stable and loving environment to thrive in.

This dynamic interaction between the protagonist father and the anti-father adds depth to the exploration of fatherhood themes within the game. However, the questline also suggests that Geralt is not immune to the same flaws that the Bloody Baron possesses, as Geralt too has a tendency to act out of anger and suppress his emotions, which are typical traits of hegemonic masculinity and can often be the easier way to play the game. This story serves as a cautionary tale for Geralt and the player, highlighting how all fathers can struggle with their own personal problems and how that can negatively impact their familial relationships.

2.2 Crach an Craite

In contrast to the failed fatherhood portrayed in the storyline of the Bloody Baron, *The Witcher 3* introduces Crach an Craite as a model of paternal strength, wisdom, and devotion. When Geralt arrives on the Old Nordic-inspired Isle of Skellige, he encounters Crach, a well-respected and powerful chieftain of Clan an Craite, as well as two of his

children, Cerys and Hjalmar. With the recent passing of the king of the Skellige Isles, a power vacuum has emerged, leaving the throne vacant. Both of Crach's children are now candidates to fill that position, adding tension to the already complex succession crisis. In the traditional society of the Isle of Skellige, Cerys's encounters sexism from her peers and her candidacy for the throne is not taken seriously. Despite this, Cerys is determined to prove herself as a worthy leader. When Crach, one of the chieftains responsible for choosing the next king or queen, dismisses his daughter's desire to become queen by saying, "A king must be wise. A king must command respect. A king must have bollocks," it is evident that traditional gender roles are still deeply ingrained in Skelligan culture. However, Cerys refuses to be deterred by her father's skepticism. She is determined to compete with her brother, Hjalmar, and prove her worth as a leader. Throughout this questline Geralt, at the request of Crach, finds himself assisting both Hjalmar and Cerys in their respective journeys to prove themselves worthy of ruling Skellige. As Geralt aids them, it becomes the player's responsibility to analyze and consider both of their strengths and shortcomings, ultimately playing a pivotal role in choosing the new ruler of Skellige. While the game presents both candidates as viable leaders, it subtly nudges the player toward favoring Cerys by framing her approach as more measured and thoughtful. Her quest involves uncovering a conspiracy and resolving a conflict without bloodshed, highlighting her calculated decision-making and moral restraint, qualities that contrast sharply with Hjalmar's impulsive and violence-driven methods. Through narrative design and quest structure, the game encourages reflection on the costs of tradition and the benefits of progressive leadership.

Cerys's candidacy challenges the traditional notions of leadership and gender roles in video games. Despite the odds being stacked against her, she demonstrates intelligence, strategic thinking, and courage. Crach's initial skepticism of Cerys's candidacy serves to highlight the complexities of familial and societal expectations in Skellige. However, as the

questline progresses, and with the help of Geralt, Crach comes to recognize Cerys's leadership qualities, regardless of her gender. Like the Bloody Baron, Crach seeks Geralt's assistance in finding his missing children, but the similarities end there. While the Bloody Baron's failures as a father are evident throughout the game, Crach's portrayal emphasizes his commitment to his children. While he might have moments of leniency towards his son, Hjalmar, and initially underestimates his daughter, Cerys, Crach learns to appreciate and respect both of his children for their individual strengths and abilities. Through his interactions with Geralt and his children, players witness the complexity of Crach's character and the depth of his love for his family.

Crach's portrayal in "The Witcher 3" serves as a powerful example of positive fatherhood. His unwavering love, guidance, and devotion to his children provide a stark contrast to the previously depicted failed fatherhood. Through his character, players learn the importance of positive reinforcement and the impact of a father's love and support on his children's lives.

2.3 Emhyr var Emreis

Another anti-father of this story is Emhyr var Emreis, the biological father of Ciri. As the powerful Emperor of Nilfgaard, Emhyr's primary goals derive from his political ambitions, often at the expense of his familial responsibilities. Emhyr also has another goal, finding Ciri, for which he has hired Geralt. Emhyr's pursuit of Ciri is not rooted in genuine paternal love, but rather in his desire to secure her as his heir and consolidate his control over the Continent. This single-minded focus on power and succession overshadows any semblance of fatherly care or concern for Ciri's well-being and autonomy. Throughout the game, Ciri's interactions with Emhyr are marked by a profound sense of unease and distrust. She is very aware of her father's political aspirations and has no intention of simply fulfilling

her royal duties for the Nilfgaardian Empire. Ciri's desire to forge her own path stands in stark contrast to Emhyr's authoritarian and controlling tendencies as a father. As Geralt, the player gets to choose if they want to hand Ciri over to Emhyr or to let Ciri choose her own path. While this decision appears open-ended, the game subtly encourages the latter choice: the narrative and emotional tone of Ciri's story arc consistently valorize her independence and self-determination. Letting Ciri choose her path aligns with the themes of empowerment and resistance to patriarchal control, framing it as the more emotionally and morally fulfilling outcome.

For example, Hyden (2019) explains, how during the "Child of the Elder Blood" quest, Ciri will feel betrayed by someone she thought to be a close friend. As she wants to ransack that supposed friend's laboratory, the player gets a timed dialogue option: 1. "Calm down", or 2. "Go for it." If the player remembers not to be restrictive like Emhyr, and wants to help her validate her emotions, they will go for option 2, demonstrating a willingness to respect her autonomy and emotional needs – a stark contrast to Emhyr's restrictive and controlling approach. However, if the player chooses option 1, it can be perceived as a reflection of Emhyr's own tendency to suppress Ciri's agency, making her feel unsupported and further reinforcing the anti-father dynamic. This option is also one of the prerequisites for an undesirable ending.

2.4 The importance of player choice

The last stage of *The Witcher 3* offers players a narrative complexity that is deeply intertwined with the decisions they make throughout the game. With three primary endings, the game provides a spectrum of outcomes depending upon the player's actions and interactions. At one end lies the unfavorable ending, attainable only through a series of choices that systematically erode Ciri's self-assurance, ultimately leading to her tragic

demise amidst the unforgiving forces of the White Frost. This ending not only marks a poignant loss but also propels Geralt into a vengeful quest, fueled by grief and a desire to avenge Ciri's death. According to Hyden (2019), the nuanced nature of these "bad" choices is notable, as they often arise from a player's inclination to assume a paternalistic, authoritative role over Ciri, thereby inadvertently undermining her sense of agency and self-worth. Conversely, a contrasting pathway emerges when players opt for a narrative trajectory characterized by support and faith in Ciri's capabilities and independence, remembering the positive aspects of Crach an Craite's fatherhood as well as the Bloody Baron's dismissal of his role as a father. By embracing this approach, Hyden (2019) explains how players can foster an environment in which Ciri flourishes, empowered by Geralt's belief in her potential. This supportive dynamic not only strengthens Ciri's resolve but also provides her with the confidence needed to confront and overcome the existential threat posed by her own magical abilities. In these alternative endings, Ciri emerges triumphant, her survival serving as a testament to both her resilience and the player's commitment to nurturing her growth (Hyden 2019).

The contrast between these divergent endings underscores the game's thematic exploration of agency, autonomy, and the consequences of one's choices. Through the lens of Geralt and Ciri's relationship, players are confronted with the weight of their decisions and the profound impact they wield on the narrative trajectory. Moreover, the game's nuanced portrayal of parenthood and mentorship invites players to reflect on the nature of guidance and support, challenging traditional notions of authority and control rooted in hegemonic masculinity. Both the Bloody Baron and Emperor Emhyr var Emreis exemplify the failures of fatherhood under this framework. Their inability to foster mutual communication, acknowledge personal flaws, or prioritize their children's emotional needs

over their own agendas reflects how hegemonic masculine ideals, (e.g., dominance, stoicism, and authoritarianism) can dismantle familial relationships.

3. Representation of Fatherhood in *God of War* (2018)

God of War (2018) presents a significant departure from Kratos' previous vengeful, god-murdering rampage in ancient Greece (Stanley 2022). The game stands out as both a reboot and sequel to the original series, paying homage to the original trilogy by reintroducing the character of Kratos, but doing so in a fresh setting and narrative. It acknowledges Kratos' history as the Ghost of Sparta and his dishonorable journey in ancient Greece by weaving in references to events and characters from the original trilogy. This approach provides longtime fans with a sense of nostalgia while simultaneously inviting new players into the world. As a reboot, *God of War* (2018) reinvents the character of Kratos, moving him away from his vengeful, one-dimensional portrayal in the original trilogy. The game introduces a more nuanced, troubled Kratos who grapples with the consequences of his past actions and strives to repent for his sins. The shift to Norse mythology and the addition of the son as a central character further distinguish this installment from its predecessors, offering players a fresh perspective on the world of *God of War*.

God of War portrays Kratos' transformation from a brutal warrior to a nurturing parent, yet his paternal role is still deeply intertwined with physical dominance and protective aggression (Lisee, 2020: 11; Groen, 2012). As Conway (2019) notes in his analysis of the franchise, this evolution reflects a broader cultural shift toward valuing emotional expression in men while still tethering paternal authority to physical dominance. The game's narrative also explores intergenerational trauma and the challenges of breaking cycles of violence and abuse, themes that resonate deeply within contemporary discussions about masculinity. The relationship between the father and son critiques the manosphere's

valorization of unyielding toughness, yet the narrative retains combat as a core mechanic, reflecting what Dietz (1998: 439) identifies as gaming's persistent reliance on "masculine-coded" violence.

It has been observed before that "2018's *God of War* rebooted the series and marked the beginning of a more serious take on the brutal anti-hero – one that's been met with near-universal acclaim for its portrayal of themes of fatherhood and redemption." (Stanley 2022). The narrative lead of the game, Matt Sophos, believes that this was a chance for the team to examine the parts of fatherhood they could not before in the original series, reinforcing that Kratos being a father and husband was what led him to the journey of revenge in the first place (Stanley 2022). As the reboot takes place an undetermined number of years after the tragic events of *God of War III* (2010), Kratos is reintroduced as a different man. He is now a freshly widowed father to a prepubescent son, Atreus. However, Kratos is not a good father. He is initially portrayed as a distant, emotionally unavailable father, haunted by his violent past and unsure about how to connect with his son. His self-doubt and neglect stem from his own traumatic upbringing and failed familial relationships. Kratos' emotional walls and unwillingness to open up to Atreus mirror the neglect he experienced from his own father, Zeus.

3.1 The father-son dynamic

In the game's opening scene, we are immediately introduced to the central father-son dynamic as Atreus mourns the loss of his mother, Faye. The scene sets the stage for the journey ahead, as Kratos and Atreus prepare to scatter Faye's ashes at the highest peak of Midgard, fulfilling her final wish. When Atreus expresses his readiness to undertake this task, Kratos bluntly responds, "You are not ready." As Hume (2020) points out, this assessment comes across as rather demeaning. Kratos' words highlight the emotional

distance between the father and son, as evidenced by Atreus' own admission: "I don't know him and he doesn't know me. Doesn't seem to want to." In a critical moment after a fight with a troll, Kratos reprimands Atreus, saying, "You lost control." Atreus retorts by pointing out that he had just witnessed his father succumb to rage during the battle. Kratos responds, "Anger can be a weapon... if you control it... You clearly cannot" (Hume, 2020). Kratos kneels and instructs Atreus to hit his hands. Each attempt is swatted away with Kratos' comments, "Too slow" and "Weak." Frustration consumes Atreus, leading him to charge at his father, only to fall when Kratos sidesteps. Kneeling beside his fallen son, Kratos grasps Atreus' arm and cautions, "The path ahead is difficult... And you, Atreus, are clearly not ready" (Hume, 2020).

Kratos' dismissive attitude towards Atreus' abilities and lack of compassion reflects his own insecurities as a parent. Having been an absent and emotionally unavailable father for much of Atreus' life, Kratos struggles to see his son as anything more than a child. His harsh words betray a deeper fear of failure and a desire to protect Atreus from the realities of the world. However, this opening exchange also sets the stage for the character growth and development that will occur throughout the game. Kratos' blunt assessment, while hurtful, prompts Atreus to prove his worth and encourages Kratos to confront his own shortcomings as a father. As they embark on their journey together, both characters will be forced to confront their fears, communicate openly, and forge a stronger bond.

Conway (2019) believes that Kratos' distant and emotionally unavailable behavior as a father could be attributed to the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to Ray's research (2009: 844), war veterans suffering from PTSD often avoid and undermine close relationships, displaying mistrust and alienation towards friends and family. Kratos' violent past as the Ghost of Sparta and his involvement in numerous bloody conflicts, including some within his own family, have left deep psychological scars. His

inability to connect with Atreus and his tendency to push people away could be a coping mechanism to protect himself from further emotional pain and trauma. Ray (2009: 841) also highlights how PTSD often leads the victim to fear that their presence will trigger painful memories or that they will be unable to protect their family from harm.

3.2 The hegemonic masculinity of the father figure

Morgan (2020: 38) discusses Kratos' internal struggle with masculinity in the game, highlighting how Kratos grapples with traditional masculine expectations while simultaneously trying to guide Atreus towards a more positive and empathetic path. This conflict is central to the narrative as Kratos navigates between conforming to hegemonic masculine norms and embracing qualities like compassion and empathy essential for fatherhood. Atreus, as an observer, interprets Kratos' journey, shaping their relationship based on his perceptions of his father's evolving masculinity. This battle of masculinities serves as a crucial element in the development of their father-son bond.

Throughout most of the game, Kratos treats Atreus in a manner that can be perceived as dismissive and authoritarian. Rather than addressing Atreus by his given name, Kratos consistently uses the generic term "boy" to communicate with his son. This choice is notably employed in situations where Atreus may have done something wrong or when Kratos issues commands to him, emphasizing a hierarchical and distant dynamic between them. According to Morgan (2020: 63), the consistent use of the term "boy" may be a deliberate or subconscious choice to maintain emotional distance and avoid forming a strong bond between the two. This allows Kratos to maintain a sense of control and detachment in their relationship, possibly stemming from Kratos' fear of repeating the mistakes of his own father or his belief that emotional attachment leads to pain and suffering. The first instance where Kratos finally calls his son by his name is when Atreus is ambushed and captured by the

undead warriors known as Hel-Walkers. In this intense scene, Kratos is visibly distressed and driven by a sense of urgency, acting impulsively to quickly rescue his son by any means necessary. The player witnesses Kratos' emotional turmoil and vulnerability as he confronts the threat to his son, showcasing a side of Kratos that is not seen before – paternal instinct and protective love. Research suggests that emotional and physiological stress are directly linked to the cognitive complexity of speech, indicating that under stressful situations, there is less mental filtering when choosing words (Saslow, 2013). This phenomenon is often referred to as "emotional leakage," where the individual's true feelings and emotions are more likely to be expressed without the usual filters of social norms and self-censorship. In the context of Kratos' character, this means that his first instinct as a father is to call his son by his name, Atreus, rather than the more distant "boy." This subtle yet significant shift in language usage reveals the genuine emotional connection Kratos feels towards his son, a connection that transcends his usual stoic demeanor. While this moment signifies a significant step in Kratos' character development, reassuring Atreus of his importance to his father, Kratos quickly reverts to his usual stoic facade.

3.3 “We must be better” - Kratos

A central theme in *God of War* (2018) related to fatherhood is change, mainly to be a better father than the fathers before. This narrative emphasizes the desire to break free from past patterns and to redefine what it means to be a father or man in a more positive light. Kratos, burdened by self-hatred for his past actions and the person he has become, falsely believes that distancing himself from Atreus is necessary for his son's well-being. Atreus, on the other hand, looks up to his father and aspires to emulate him, constantly seeking Kratos' approval and acceptance (Morgan 2020: 56-57). This disparity in their perspectives leads to a strained relationship where Atreus is repeatedly let down by Kratos' cold and distant reactions, unable to see the depth of his father's self-loathing and the reasons

behind his distant behavior. Despite Kratos' desire to break the cycle of poor fatherhood, his own internal struggles and inability to fully embrace his paternal role create a rift between father and son.

Kratos believes godhood to be a disease, a corrupting force that he seeks to protect Atreus from. This belief stems from Kratos' experiences, including those with his own father, Zeus. Power and divinity often seem to lead to violence, tragedy and personal torment. This fear of Kratos almost becomes true when Atreus inevitably learns of his inheritance at a later part in the story. At this point the father and son have built a strong foundation for an improving relationship, by Kratos opening up to Atreus bit by bit, but it is all about to become undone. Atreus' discovery of his godhood initially stirs a mix of emotions, ranging from curiosity to a sense of identity crisis. This newfound knowledge also impacts his relationship with Kratos. Atreus is corrupted with power and fueled with vengeance, mirroring his father from the past, and exactly what Kratos feared would happen. Now, Atreus is no longer scolded for falling short of Kratos, but for becoming too much like him. This sets the stage for Atreus' escalating defiance, echoing the age-old trope of the "rebellious son" (Morgan 2020: 59-60). In Atreus' case, his perception of godhood leads to a sense of entitlement, where he believes he is no longer bound by any rules.

Atreus' growing disobedience emerges as a central tension throughout the narrative, reflecting the complexities of his evolving relationship with Kratos. A notable example occurs during their encounter with Modi Odinson, one of the story's antagonists. Upon finding Modi weakened and nearly defeated, Atreus, driven by anger and a desire for vengeance, is eager to kill him. Kratos, however, intervenes, asserting, "He is not worth killing." Defying his father's command, Atreus kills Modi regardless. When Atreus justifies his actions by claiming that Kratos has taught him to kill, Kratos corrects him: "I've been teaching you to survive" (Morgan, 2020: 60). This exchange underscores a critical

philosophical distinction in Kratos' approach to violence, emphasizing its utilitarian role as a tool for survival rather than an end in itself. As Morgan (2020: 60) argues, this moment encapsulates Kratos' broader struggle to instill values of restraint and self-control in Atreus, challenging traditional conceptions of masculinity that valorize aggression and dominance (Connell, 2005: 77-80).

Atreus' defiance reaches a narrative climax during a confrontation with Baldur, another antagonist and son of Odin. Despite Kratos' repeated instructions, Atreus acts in direct disobedience by firing an arrow that accidentally incapacitates his father before engaging Baldur. This toxic dynamic is exploited by Baldur, who then renders Atreus unconscious and abducts him. Although Kratos eventually rescues Atreus, their relationship is only fully repaired through their collaborative effort in the final battle against Baldur. This reconciliation, grounded more in joint action than explicit verbal communication, signifies a pivotal shift in their relationship, with Kratos increasingly seeking and valuing Atreus' cooperation.

The culmination of this transformation is poignantly depicted when Atreus hands Kratos the ashes of his deceased wife, Faye. Kratos responds by placing his hand on Atreus' shoulder, refraining from addressing him as "boy," and affirming, "No, we do it together, son." This simple yet profound statement symbolizes Kratos' acceptance of his role as a father and the maturation of their bond. The emotional resonance of this moment is heightened by their shared grief, as honoring Faye's memory becomes a means of mutual solace and connection. As they confront and overcome adversity together, their relationship evolves beyond traditional patriarchal models of authority toward a more collaborative and empathetic father-son dynamic. This climactic scene thus encapsulates the narrative's broader themes of growth, cooperation, and the redefinition of masculinity within the context of fatherhood.

The game's narrative emphasizes the importance of facing one's trauma, as Kratos gradually learns to open up emotionally and to embrace his paternal instincts. Through his experiences with Atreus, Kratos is able to replace the negative memories of his past with new, positive ones, slowly mending the regrets and pain he has carried for so long. As they navigate their relationship, Kratos learns to embrace the role of the father and the healing it can bring, through their shared experiences and challenges. During the climax, as Kratos and Atreus scatter Faye's ashes together, by confronting their grief side by side, they are finally able to grow and move forward.

3.4 Inherited hegemonic masculinity

The anti-father of *God of war* (2018) is Baldur, whose role as a father is not directly explored in the game. Baldur serves as a prime example of flawed hegemonic masculinity, contrasting sharply with Kratos' masculine identity. Baldur is a god and one of many Odin's sons, a terrible father whose many flaws are inherited by his offspring. Morgan (2020: 72-78) delves into the contrasting masculinities of Baldur and Kratos, emphasizing their shared embodiment of flawed hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell (2005), refers to the dominant form of masculinity that is culturally idealized and privileged within a given context. Both Baldur's and Kratos's masculine identities contain imperfections, but Baldur consistently embodies a toxic masculinity characterized by violence, aggressiveness and emotional detachment. This contrasts sharply with Kratos' journey of redemption and growth, as he is actively seeking to become better for the sake of his son. Baldur's representation as the anti-father greatly contrasts protagonist's masculinity, allowing players to critically examine the consequences of toxic masculinity and the importance of redefining traditional gender roles. By presenting a stark contrast between Baldur's flawed masculinity and Kratos' evolving understanding of fatherhood, *God of War*

(2018) encourages players to reflect on the complexities of masculinity and the potential for personal growth and redemption.

3.4 Comparison

The Witcher 3 (2015) and *God of War* (2018) present both similar and contrasting portrayals of fatherhood and masculinity. While the protagonists in both games share certain characteristics, such as being big, stoic, muscular men raised from early childhood to become emotionless warriors, their approaches to fatherhood and masculinity diverge significantly. In *The Witcher 3*, Geralt of Rivia is presented as a protective and nurturing foster parent to Ciri. The game places the responsibility on the player to make choices that demonstrate Geralt's growth as a father, allowing him or her to learn from various portrayals of fatherhood throughout the narrative. Even when Geralt makes choices that result in flawed parenting, it serves as a lesson for both the player and Geralt to give Ciri more room to breathe and develop her own agency. The game allows players to influence Geralt's interactions with Ciri, highlighting the importance of parental decisions in shaping their bond. Since Geralt and Ciri already have a strong bond from before the events of the third game, the narrative focuses more on maintaining and strengthening their relationship rather than starting from scratch. In contrast, *God of War* (2018) introduces Kratos as a flawed parent who has no idea how to be a good father and must learn it the hard way. Kratos' journey of redemption and growth unfolds against a backdrop of emotional turmoil and strained father-son dynamics with Atreus. The game delves into themes of loss, resilience, and the complexities of fatherhood, portraying Kratos as a flawed yet evolving character who must confront his past mistakes and learn to communicate openly with his son.

These games illustrate the consequences of both great and poor parenting, as well as the impact of parental mistakes on children, offering players a nuanced understanding of

fatherhood and its complexities. As Lisee (2020: 9) states, they also explore more personal questions, such as how to best move past prior trauma, how to break the cycle of abuse, how to prevent one's children from replicating their fathers' mistakes, how to safeguard them effectively, and how to express fatherly love in the best way possible.

Both characters predating the “dadification” trend set the stage for an interesting narrative, where they must confront their past and evolve into nurturing, responsible parents, learning to care for someone beyond themselves. In both *God of War* and *The Witcher 3*, male protagonists grappling with trauma are portrayed with depth and empathy, showcasing their struggles to come to terms with their histories and behaviors. At times, they may exhibit negative or self-destructive tendencies as they navigate their inner turmoil (Smith 2020: 56). Their loved ones may call attention to their negative tendencies, but still continue to support them. This dynamic not only adds layers of nuance to the characters but also reinforces their heroism in the face of adversity. This internal conflict is portrayed as a tragic yet essential aspect of their growth, emphasizing the complexity of their experiences and the weight of their past actions. There are no effortless or perfect recovery stories; protagonists must consistently make positive choices to benefit from their efforts (Lisee 2020: 13).

In the *Witcher 3*, masculinity and fatherhood are explored through many multifaceted characters, including Geralt, Phillip Strenger, Emhyr var Emreis, Craich an Craite and others. While the game delves into the dynamics of multiple fathers, this aspect is less prominent in *God of War*, which focuses more on the direct relationship between a father and a child. *The Witcher 3* encourages players to learn from the contrasting father figures and apply these lessons in interactions with characters like Ciri, whereas *God of War* emphasizes the father's journey of learning through his own mistakes. In terms of the lessons, the ones both games convey are quite similar, particularly regarding neglect and its impact on family relationships. The narrative explores how neglect can distance family members,

highlighting the potential consequences of ignoring important lessons. For instance, if Kratos continued to neglect Atreus without the catalyst of Faye's death, he might have mirrored the destructive path of the Bloody Baron. Similarly, if Kratos failed to learn the importance of expressing approval to his son, as Geralt was taught by the parenting of Crach an Craite, Atreus might have forever sought validation from his father, unable to break free from that cycle. Together, these stories show a clear shift toward allowing emotional vulnerability in video game fathers.

At the same time, both games retain classic masculine tropes. Geralt still solves most problems by fighting monsters and will fiercely defend Ciri with sword and magic whenever she is threatened. Kratos likewise remains physically dominant and stoic, he teaches Atreus how to fight and often suppresses his emotions. *The Witcher 3* and *God of War* portray fatherhood as a blend of the new and the old: their heroes show care, pride, and regret for past mistakes, yet they still prize strength and protection. Masculinity here is complex, these characters are more sensitive than in earlier games, but they also remain defined by courage, violence, and stoicism. The result is a nuanced image of manhood that holds both empathy and toughness in tension.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine whether contemporary video game portrayals of fatherhood reflect a broader cultural shift toward valuing emotional vulnerability in men, or whether they continue to underscore hegemonic norms through physical dominance and protective violence. By examining the portrayal of fatherhood in video games *God of War* (2018) and *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015), it was found that both games feature complex father figures, with Geralt of Rivia in *The Witcher 3* becoming a nurturing foster parent to Ciri, and Kratos in *God of War* evolving from a stern father to a nurturing one through his

journey with Atreus. The literature review chapter of this thesis found that the portrayal of fathers in video games has undergone a significant transformation over time, with the shift moving from fathers in video games being relegated to supporting roles towards fathers becoming playable characters and exploring their masculinities.

Both games offer players a nuanced understanding of fatherhood by exploring personal and individualistic questions, such as how to move past prior trauma, break the cycle of abuse, prevent children from replicating their fathers' mistakes, and express fatherly love effectively within the complex systems of their storyworlds. As Marie-Laure Ryan (2019: 29) emphasizes, these narrative systems thrive on decentralized interactions between characters, environments, and player agency, generating emergent behaviors that resist linear cause-and-effect structures. *The Witcher 3* and *God of War* leverage this complexity to portray fatherhood not as a static role but as a dynamic process shaped by cultural tensions over gender identity and representation. By portraying the protagonists' struggles to reconcile vulnerability and authority, the games critique conservative ideals of paternal dominance while advocating for progressive, emotionally attuned models of masculinity. Through their storytelling techniques, which emphasize legacy, accountability, and intergenerational healing both games reveal how a father's actions profoundly shape his child's identity, encouraging players to consider the complex connections between trauma, personal agency, and emotional growth.

The concept of the anti-father was also explored in both games. The presence of negative father figures serves as a crucial element in shaping the protagonists' parenting styles by providing a contrast for them to define their own approaches. Both *The Witcher 3* and *God of War* portray good fatherhood as involving open communication, support, and imparting practical skills and life lessons to children. Bad fathers, on the other hand, avoid responsibility, lack communication, and fail to support their children, hindering their growth

and independence. The analysis of both games highlights how video games can create narratives with profound depth and impact, engaging players in decisions related to fatherhood and exploring themes of vulnerability, redemption, and unconditional love.

Although the games both fit into the same genre, both approach it differently. In *The Witcher 3*, Geralt of Rivia is represented as a protective and nurturing foster parent to Ciri. The game places the responsibility on the player to make choices that demonstrate Geralt's growth as a father, allowing him to learn from various portrayals of fatherhood throughout the narrative. Even when Geralt makes choices that result in imperfect parenting, it serves as a lesson for both the player and Geralt to give Ciri more room to breathe and develop her own agency. In contrast, *God of War* (2018) introduces Kratos as a flawed parent who has no idea about how to be a good father and must learn from the ground up. Kratos' journey of redemption and growth takes place amidst tough emotional struggles and strained father-son dynamics with Atreus. The game explores themes of loss, therapy, and the complexities of fatherhood, portraying Kratos as a flawed yet evolving character who must confront his past mistakes and learn to communicate openly with his son.

In conclusion, both *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and *God of War* present complex portrayals of fatherhood and hegemonic masculinity, emphasizing the significance of responsible parenting, effective communication, and personal development. Through their narratives, these games provide players with a profound exploration of the complexities and challenges inherent in father-child relationships, while critically engaging with traditional and evolving models of masculinity.

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Resümees

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Patrick Kudak

A Tale of Two Fathers: A Comparative Analysis of Fatherhood in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015) and *God of War* (2018)

Lugu kahest isast: Isarolli võrdlev analüüs videomängudes *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015) ja *God of War* (2018)

(bakalaureusetöö)

2025

Lehekülgede arv: 36

Annotatsioon:

Käesolev bakalaureusetöö uurib hegemoonilise maskuliinsuse ja isarolli kujutamist kahes populaarses videomängus: *God of War* (2018) ja *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015). Keskendudes Kratosse ja Atreuse ning Geralt ja Ciri arenevatele isa-lapse suhetele, analüüsib uurimus, kuidas need narratiivid käsitlevad traditsioonilise maskuliinsusega seotud ideid nagu autoriteet, emotsioonitus ja füüsiline domineerimine, samal ajal neid norme kahtluse alla seades läbi haavatavuse, empaatia ja koostöö teemade. Tuginedes R.W. Connelli hegemoonilise maskuliinsuse teooriale, paigutab uurimus need mängud laiemasse soolise ja võimuhete sotsiaalkultuurilisse konteksti.

Analüüs keskendub hetkedele, kus peategelased lükkavad ümber või muudavad hegemoonilise maskuliinsuse käitumismustreid, pakkudes alternatiivseid maskuliinsuse mudeleid, mis rõhutavad emotsionaalset vastuvõttu, vastastikust austust ja isikuvabadust. *God of War* puhul peegeldab Kratosse teekond vägivaldsest ja emotsionaalselt distantseeritud sõdalasest hoolivama ja koostööaldi isani, mis omakorda näitab laiemat kultuurilist muutust, mis väärtustab meeste julgust ennast emotsionaalselt väljendada. Sarnaselt kritiseerib *The Witcher 3* autoritaarseid isafiguure, kõrvutades neid toetavama ja empaatiavõimelisema maskuliinsuse näidetega.

Nende narratiivide analüüsiga annab töö panuse sugude kujutamise teemalistesse aruteludesse videomängudes ning avab interaktiivse meedia potentsiaali traditsiooniliste soonormide problematiseerimiseks ja ümberkujundamiseks. Lõppkokkuvõttes näitab BA töö, et need mängud pakuvad nüansirikkaid ja arenevaid maskuliinsuse ja isarolli kujutisi, mis peegeldavad ja mõjutavad kaasaegseid arusaamu mehelikust identiteedist.

Märksõnad: hegemooniline maskuliinsus, isaroll, sugude kujutamine, patriarhaalsed normid, trauma, isa ja lapse suhted
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