



Bakalářská práce

Representing Norse Mythology in Video Games

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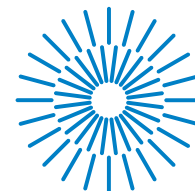
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Representing Norse Mythology in Video Games

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Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá porovnáním Severských bohů a mytologických stvoření v konkrétních videohrách, se svým teologickým zobrazením ve vybraných literárních dílech a umění. Dále se soustředí na jejich sdílené videoherní podobnosti, které tyto ztvárnění sdílejí, a také na způsob, kterým videohry používají a znovu ztvárňují znalosti Severské mytologie. Rovněž se zabývá způsobem, jakým tyto videohry používají různé formy gamifikace, aby mohli znovu použít kulturní a historické znalosti ohledně některých symbolických postav Severské mytologie. V této bakalářské práci se bude pracovat se čtyřmi hrami – *Smite* (Hi Rez Studio, 2014), *God of War* (SIE Santa Monica Studio, 2018), *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* (Ubisoft, 2020), a *Hellblade – Senua's Sacrifice* (Ninja Theory, 2017) a dalším z cílů je najít jejich znázornění v různých příkladech umění, které sloužili jako inspirace pro ztvárnění Severské mytologie v konkrétních videohrách.

This bachelor thesis will offer a comparison of Norse gods and mythological creatures in specific video games, and their theological representation in selected instances of literary fiction and visual art. This thesis is going to focus on their shared video games iconography which these renditions draw on, and on the ways, video games recycle and rehash popular knowledge of Nordic mythologies. This work is also focusing on how these video games use forms of 'gamification' to repurpose and circulate cultural and historical knowledge about these emblematic characters of Nordic mythology. In this bachelor thesis, four video games are worked with – *Smite* (Hi Rez Studio, 2014), *God of War* (SIE Santa Monica Studio, 2018), *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* (Ubisoft, 2020), and *Hellblade – Senua's Sacrifice* (Ninja Theory, 2017) and finding their representation in various examples of art that serve as an inspiration of their respective renditions in the games.

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media.suub.uni-bremen.de/bitstream/elib/3068/1/00104169-1.pdf Accessed: 22 June 2021

Lindow, John. *Norse Mythology : A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002,
secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.138/16i.962.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Norse-Mythology-A-Guide-to-the-Gods-Heroes-Rituals-and-Beliefs.pdf. Accessed 22 June 2021.

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá porovnáním Severských bohů a mytologických stvoření v konkrétních videohrách, se svým teologickým zobrazením ve vybraných literárních dílech a umění. Dále se soustředí na jejich sdílené videoherní podobnosti, které tyto ztvárnění sdílejí, a také na způsob, kterým videohry používají a znovu ztvárňují znalosti Severské mytologie. Rovněž se zabývá způsobem, jakým tyto videohry používají různé formy gamifikace, aby mohli znovu použít kulturní a historické znalosti ohledně některých symbolických postav Severské mytologie. V této bakalářské práci se bude pracovat se čtyřmi hrami - Smite (Hi Rez Studio, 2014), God of War (SIE Santa Monica Studio, 2018), Assassin's Creed Valhalla (Ubisoft, 2020), a Hellblade - Senua's Sacrifice (Ninja Theory, 2017) a dalším z cílů je najít jejich znázornění v různých příkladech umění, které sloužili jako inspirace pro ztvárnění Severské mytologie v konkrétních videohrách.

Klíčová slova

Severská mytologie, Fantasy, Adaptace, Video hry

Annotation

This bachelor thesis will offer a comparison of Norse gods and mythological creatures in specific video games, and their theological representation in selected instances of literary fiction and visual art. This thesis is going to focus on their shared video games iconography which these renditions draw on, and on the ways, video games recycle and rehash popular knowledge of Nordic mythologies. This work is also focusing on how these video games use forms of "gamification" to repurpose and circulate cultural and historical knowledge about these emblematic characters of Nordic mythology. In this bachelor thesis, four video games are worked with - Smite (Hi Rez Studio, 2014), God of War (SIE Santa Monica Studio, 2018), Assassin's Creed Valhalla (Ubisoft. 2020), and Hellblade - Senua's Sacrifice (Ninja Theory, 2017) and finding their representation in various examples of art that serve as an inspiration of their respective renditions in the games.

Key Words

Norse mythology, Fantasy, Adaptation, Video games

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1. Introduction

Norse mythology has always been fascinating to me. Stories about mighty gods and other fantastic creatures nowadays started being more used in any type of media – television, books, or even video games. In this bachelor thesis, I am going to focus mainly on Norse mythology in video games but I will also mention other types of adaptations. This thesis is also going to focus on how these video games use forms of “gamification” to repurpose and circulate cultural and historical knowledge about these emblematic characters of Nordic mythology. I am going to talk about four video games in particular – *Smite* (Hi Rez Studio, 2014), *God of War* (SIE Santa Monica Studio, 2018), *Assassin’s Creed Valhalla* (Ubisoft, 2020), and *Hellblade – Senua’s Sacrifice* (Ninja Theory, 2017).

This work will be divided into two parts. The first one, theoretical, is going to mention information about religions and myths. Then will focus on adaptations and their aspects. There will also be a mention of convergence media and how it is connected with video games retelling stories. At the end of the theoretical part, information about selected video games will be given. The second part is focused on the specific gods themselves and how they are shown in some of the video games. When speaking of specific gods, at first, I will talk about their historical background, some myths, their relationships with others, and who they are according to mythology. I will find sculptures and art from around the world representing the Norse gods and compare them to myths and video games. Then I will speak of their visualization in video games and how they are portrayed in different ones.

The main goal of this bachelor thesis is to find these differences regarding Norse gods and define terms convergence media and adaptation.

2. Norse Mythology and Video Game Industry

2.1 Religion

The world before Christ. In our world existed various civilizations and many of them have never met. They could not influence each other in any way. Despite this fact, they all have one thing in common. Religion. Greeks, Romans, Mayan civilization, Chinese, and the Scandinavian people. Even we Slavs had our own gods, which we worshipped. Nevertheless, it is unknown if Slavic paganism was to some degree influenced by the North. All we know to this day about Slavic paganism is only understood thanks to the Christian chronicles, as they were the ones fighting against paganism and other religions.

Every one of mentioned religions is polytheistic. That means they are worshipping numerous gods. There is always one prominent ruler of every other god – Zeus, Jupiter, Kukulán, Shagdi, Odin. If we stay on the European continent, gods always symbolize something essential to our ancestors. Hélios, Huitzilopochtli, Freyr, and many more are gods of the Sun. It was also important to worship gods of war, fertility, and even – death. As mentioned, with the onset of Christianity, all of these religions started to fall. Regardless of that, many people still respect these gods. Today we can talk about neopaganism, which is relatively new, as it was established around the 1970-90s.

The closest to us is Scandinavian paganism, as we, ourselves, were once pagans. Our ancestors once created something which nowadays is called mythology. What is mythology? “Mythology is a system of myths; a collection of popular legends, fables, tales, or stories, relating to the gods, heroes, demons or other beings whose names have been preserved in popular belief.”^[1] It is necessary to note that myth is the oldest form of truth. In mythology, the main subject is God and how to come to him. This can be either done by studying the intellectual, moral, and physical nature of man - or by studying nature in the outward world. “Mythology is, in fact, religious truth expressed in poetical language.”^[2]

[1] Anderson, Rasmus Bjørn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 23

[2] Anderson, Rasmus Bjørn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 27

Norse mythology came from the Scandinavian peninsula and was upheld during the Viking Age (around 790 – 1100 CE). “Norse paganism is rooted in rituals rooted in oral tradition. The culture of the Vikings was intricately intertwined with the sagas of the ancient Norse gods.”^[3] Trying to discover Norse gods is not an easy job. As such, we essentially have only the “tips of icebergs”, and what is below the water’s surface, we will probably never know.

One of our biggest resources is *Eddic poetry* and *Skaldic poetry*. These contain stories about gods and a few heroes, but trying to create a full picture of Norse mythology just with these resources is like trying to solve a difficult puzzle. A few years later, a medieval *Prose Edda* comes to life. This particular book is what makes our picture clear, and we can connect everything together.^[4]

2.2 The Myth

In Norse mythology, before the earth was created, two worlds existed – Niflheim (the cold and dark world) and Muspelheim (the fire world). From Niflheim flowed twelve ice-cold streams, and the Muspelheim was so bright and hot that it could not be trodden by those who did not live there. Right in the middle between these two worlds sat Surt with a flaming sword in his hand.^[5] When the rivers from Niflheim flowed far, the venom inside hardened and became ice. When the heat from Muspelheim met with the ice, it created drops that quickened into life and shaped into a man’s likeness. His name was Ymer, called the old frost-giant.^[6] From another drops was created a cow called Audhumbla, from which four milk-rivers ran, and she fed Ymer. The cow licked salty rime-stones as the food. The first day she licked the stones, she licked out a man’s hair. On the second day she licked out a man’s head, and on the third day the whole man was there. His name was Bure. He had a son named Bor. Bor married a woman named Bestla, and they had three sons – Odin, Vile, and Ve.^[7]

[3] Christensen, Christian. “Why Did the Vikings Worship Odin? Get the Facts.” Scandinavia Facts. Scandinavia Facts, July 13, 2021. Accessed October 13 2022. <https://scandinaviafacts.com/why-did-the-vikings-worship-odin/>.

[4] Mark, Joshua J. “Ten Norse Mythology Facts You Need to Know” World History Encyclopedia, September 21 2021. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1836/ten-norse-mythology-facts-you-need-to-know/>

[5] Anderson, Rasmus Björn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 172

[6] Anderson, Rasmus Björn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 173

[7] Anderson, Rasmus Björn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 174

All three sons slew the giant Ymer, dragged his body into the middle between Niflheim and Muspelheim, and formed the earth. From his bones, they created mountains; from his blood created seas and water; and from his flesh created the land. ^[8] They created Midgard. Midgard was empty, even though the lands were beautiful. They tried to find any inhabitant but hadn't found a single soul – just two logs of ash wood. Ve carved the logs and gave them the shape of people. The two logs were now two naked people – male and woman. They are the father and the mother to all of us, to every human. Because Odin breathed the breath of life into these two logs, he is called the all-father. Odin is the father of all of us. ^[9]

Altogether, there are nine realms (incorrectly called worlds). Alfheim is the home of Aesir and Odin's home. In Alfheim live the light elves. Opposite of Alfheim is the Nidavellir, home of the dwarfs, also called the dark elves. Midgard is our world, the Earth, the world of women and men. In Jotunheim, the frost giants wander. Vanaheim is where the Vanir live. Vanir is also a god race, they are united with Aesir, and some even live in Asgard. Then there is already mentioned Niflheim and Muspelheim. The last world is called Hel – called after its ruler. This is where the dead go if they did not die bravely in the battle so they could go to Valhalla. ^[10]

And here start the stories of the almighty gods. Some of these stories will be mentioned in individual chapters concerning gods. Aesir gods live “happily” and have their own journeys and complex relationships between themselves. But their journey has to end somewhere. Ragnarok. One day a great winter will come. It will not be a normal winter. Once it starts, the winter will continue, following winter after winter. People will be hungry. Brothers will fight their brothers, and fathers will kill their sons. When only the few people remain, the two wolves catching the sun and moon will succeed. The sun and moon will vanish, and it will not be able to see the stars. After the unstoppable winter, a time of great earthquakes will come. Trees will fall, and any remaining place where people live will be destroyed. Fenrir, the giant wolf, will free himself from the shackles. The Jormungandr's venom will poison all sea life. Everyone that comes in a way to children of Loki will know dead. That is the beginning of the end. ^[11]

[8] Anderson, Rasmus Björn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 176

[9] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 30

[10] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 34

[11] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 235-237

2.3 Fantasy

Coming back to today, mythology would be considered something fantastical, supernatural, for someone even non-existing and just imagined by humans. To some degree, this could be a definition of a fantasy genre. “As a critical term, fantasy has been applied rather indiscriminately to any literature which does not give priority to realistic representation: myths, legends, folk and fairy tales, utopian allegories, dream visions, surrealist texts, science fiction, horror stories, all presenting realms “other than human”.^[12] Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher, tried to study some of the roots of this genre. After examining fantasists such as Edgar Allan Poe, Fyodor Dostoevsky, or Nikolai Gogol, he places them as the direct descendants of the Menippean genre. Menippean satire was present since the ancient Christian and Byzantine literature, and it was a genre that broke the demands of historical realism. In this early fantastical genre, states of hallucination, dream, or personal transformation were the norm. The Menippean also allowed dialogues with the dead.

Modern fantasy is no longer a communal form. When religious faith started vanishing, fantasy replaced the need to believe in something. “Through asceticism, mysticism, metaphysics, or poetry, the conditions of a purely human existence were transcended, and fantasy fulfilled a definite, escapist, function. [...] In a secular culture, fantasy has a different function. It does not invent supernatural regions, but presents a natural world inverted into something strange, something “other”.^[13] The biggest boom of fantasy was during the 19th century, created as an opposite version of realism, where books like *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll, 1865), *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, 1818) and the *Dracula* (Bram Stoker, 1897) were written.

In fantasy, anything impossible can happen because it contradicts the real and violates it, denies it.^[14] Making something fantastic requires the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text must make the reader consider the world where the book takes place as a world of living persons and hesitate between the natural and supernatural. Second, this hesitation is represented; it becomes one of the themes. Lastly, the reader must gain attitude with regard to the text – he will reject all poetic interpretations.^[15] After fulfilling, a literary work can become a fantasy.

[12] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 8

[13] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 10

[14] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 13

[15] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 16

Fantasy can deal with problematic vision regarding the narrator. Authors use either “I” or “he”, mainly using the “he,” but it doesn’t have to make the story clearer. Tale such as Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (Franz Kafka, 1915) derives from the inability to push away the hero’s experience – it is the reality of “he.” In this book, the main protagonist Gregor transforms into a bug during the night, and to make the narration more convincing, the story is told in “he” as follows: “He would have needed arms and hand to hoist himself up; instead he had only the numerous little legs which never stopped waving in all directions and which he could not control in the least. (pp. 12-13)”^[16] The narrator can be problematic, as it does not have to be convincing enough for the reader. “Is it possible to trust the man talking?” When the book is adapted, and transformed into a movie, these problems can be fixed with the camera, focusing on the object or the subject regarding its needs.^[17]

Bulgarian-French historian Tzvetan Todorov talks about three kinds of fantasy: The marvelous, where the world of supernatural magic belongs to the marvelous narrative. The narrator is impersonal and, as time goes by, becomes a knowing voice. This voice knows everything about already completed events. An example can be the opening of a story by Grimm called *Hans the Hedgehog* (Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, 1815): “There was once a country man who had money and land in plenty...”^[18] The second kind is mimetic. Story openings in mimetics equate between the fictional and the real world. The last kind is fantastic. Fantastic cofound elements of both the marvelous and the mimetic.^[19]

Norse mythology could be considered as the fantasies of history. These include invocations of elder gods and rulers of the world that are immortal (in this case, at least until Ragnarok). Fantasies of history are set in the mundane world, in the past or can be in the present, but cannot occur in the secondary world or any wonderlands. Norse mythology occurs in our world, on the Midgard, but also in the other realms already mentioned earlier. Central to the text are labyrinths, runes, or older texts. They can be easily mistaken for conspiracy theories, or could even generate real ones. If the story doesn’t end in destruction, it may be an instauration fantasy.^[20]

[16] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 18

[17] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 18

[18] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 19

[19] Jackson, Rosemary. In *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2009. 20

[20] Clute, John, and John Grant. In *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. London: Orbit, 1999. 334-335

Fantasy literature can offer the reader much of what a general fiction offers – an escape and adventure, but fantasy goes beyond the familiar realms of belief. Fantasy allows us to enter brand-new worlds and break away from being trapped in reality. Critics of the fantasy genre may believe that reading fantasy can shift a person’s focus to being less productive and procrastinate more. These critics also argue that it tempts readers into avoiding the reality of their lives by putting off real-world responsibilities to the side and evading serious personal issues. Although fantasy can encourage readers to imagine themselves in different roles and scenarios, making them do alternate decisions they would not under the regular occasion do and experience actions without taking any real risk. By reading fantasy, readers can also expand on their techniques for solving personal problems. ^[21]

[21] YA Hotline. Allen, Myrna, Linda Bedwell, and co. “The Psychology of Fantasy.” *Fantasy*, 2006. Accessed October 15, 2022. <https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/handle/10222/78589>. 58-59

2.4 Convergence Culture

People have come a long way since the first book mentioning the Norse gods. Living in the 21st century, new media types have been brought up to our attention, and we moved from reading, as someone would probably say, “just boring books.” “In the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms.”^[22] Author Henry Jenkins gives an example and tries to explain how convergence works. In 2001, a high school student created a Photoshop collage of Bert from *Sesame Street*'s (Sesame Workshop, 1970) called “Bert is Evil.” When the disaster on 11th September happened, one publisher from Bangladesh searched the Web for Bin Laden images to print them on anti-American signs and other merch. CNN reporters recorded the angry protestors marching through the streets and waving flags depicting Bert and Bin Laden together.^[23] Converge here means that “Bert is Evil” traveled from Sesame Street through photoshop, way on the Web, where the Bangladesh publisher found it, printed and used it; CNN reported it on their news, which ended in the living rooms of people around the world.^[24] Some people could say that convergence happens as technology progress, but Jenkins argues against that idea, bringing up a new term – new and old media.

Old, traditional media would be items that people used before the internet was created. Newspapers, books, radio, or even talking. New media is more or less any technology that surrounds us today. TV, computers, DVD player, and mobile phones. We don't need newspapers these days, as we can find anything needed on the news we have in our pockets – mobile phones. Sometimes the new media companies would talk about convergence, but they meant that old media would be absorbed fully and forgotten; they would just disappear.^[25] “George Gilder, another digital revolutionary, dismissed such claims: “The computer industry is converging with the television industry in the same sense that the automobile converged with the horse, the TV converged with the Nickelodeon, the word-processing program converged with the typewriter, [...]”^[26]

[22] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 3

[23] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 1-2

[24] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 3

[25] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 5

[26] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 5

People discovered that convergence is an old concept getting a new meaning as time passed. In October 2003, there was a converge talk at the New Orleans Media Experience. Many people gained to share their opinion, including video game nerds and companies. One of the panels focused on the relationship between video games and traditional media (books, radio, etc.). Video games were seen as a means of expanding the storytelling experience. Filmmakers of some companies had their ideas and wanted to use games to explore them because they would not fit within the two-hour film. ^[27] The first thing that came to my mind when reading this particular chapter was Marvel. A company creating incredible movies with superheroes has started creating even video games. Some of them, for example, the game *Thor: God of Thunder* (Liquid Entertainment, 2011), are spin-offs of movies. Nowadays, Marvel has many games that could be also just an idea of the filmmaker.

But when did the first signs of convergence media happen? According to Jenkins, Ithiel de Sola Pool's book *Technologies of Freedom* was probably the first to lay out the concept of convergence. This book was released in 1983. Pool said, that once upon a time, "companies that published newspapers, magazines, and books did very little else; their involvement with other media was slight." ^[28]

Each media that existed had its market where it figured, had its function, and each of them was regulated under different regimes. ^[29] All the new media technologies enable content to operate in different forms. Let's mention *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977 – present). One can choose if he wants to play a video game, watch a movie or read a comic book. The *Star Wars* franchise exists on many platforms and can have a different story each time or retell one particular story across media. *LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga* (Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, 2022) can be one of these convergences. In this game, players will play through every *Star Wars* movie and a few series (*The Mandalorian*, Disney+, 2019-2020) released before the game. Developers tried to summarize the television production as broadly as possible, added some memes, and created a game.

[27] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 9

[28] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 10

[29] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 10

Another great example of transmedia is the *Matrix* franchise. The filmmakers planted clues in the movies that won't make sense until we play the game. Fans could see all the movies, play the game and watch anime; just then, they would get the full context and know every detail. This also supports fans exchanging their knowledge with others, to get a broader view. "A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole." [30] "In the ideal form of transmedia, storytelling, each medium does what it does best – so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through gameplay or experienced as an amusement park attraction." [31]

This is something that has also happened in Norse mythology. Storytelling carved with runes into the stone was transcribed into books like *Prose Edda*, adapted into other books so it would be easier to read, and ended on the TV screen or in video games. The videogame *God of War* would not exist without the first oral myths.

"Convergence isn't something that is going to happen one day when we have enough bandwidth or figure out the correct configuration of appliances. Ready or not, we are already living within a convergence culture." [32]

[30] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 95-96

[31] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 96

[32] Jenkinson, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 16

2.5 Adaptation

From the previous section, transmedia means transforming some media to another, for example, from television to computer games. When converting the same material, or one connected, we can talk about adaptation. But what is an adaptation?

“Adaptations are everywhere today: on the television and movie screen, on the musical and dramatic stage, on the internet, in novels and comic books, in your nearest theme park and a video arcade.”^[33] Mrs. Linda Hutcheon mentions in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, that adaptations have a defining relationship to their prior texts, most often called sources.^[34] For some people, literature will have some kind of superiority over adaptation because it can be taken as an art form. To this status, Robert Stam assigns also two terms: iconophobia, which means a suspicion of the visual and logophilia, which is the love of the word as sacred.^[35] This superiority of the original texts leads us to the idea, that adaptations would be viewed as inferior. But still, they are increasing their numbers and, according to one statistic made in 1992, up to 85 percent of all Oscar-winning Best Pictures are adaptations only.^[36] One of the reasons this is happening can be the appearance of the new media.

Nevertheless, there must be something appealing about adaptations to make them famous. Hutcheon argues this could have a straightforward reason. This pleasure comes from repetition; people already recognize and remember the story or characters. For filmmakers, there is an apparent financial appeal to adaptations as well. They usually adapt reliable (already financially successful) stage plays or novels to avoid the risk of losing money.^[37] There is also a phenomenon of movies being “musicalized” for the stage after a movie origin. For illustration, the Disney movie *The Lion King* (Walt Disney, 1994) had its musical adaptation performed in 1997. The Disney fan community noticed some similarities between *The Lion King* and *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare, 1602), starting with a fatherless prince (Simba) having a villain uncle (Scar), and it even mentions an iconic *Hamlet* quote: “Goodnight, sweet prince.” According to an interview with the producer and co-director of the movie, *The Lion King* was supposed to be based on the *Bambi* (Walt Disney, 1942), but when they realized this story was familiar to *Hamlet*, they just kept going.^[38]

[33] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 2

[34] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 3-4

[35] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 4

[36] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 4

[37] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 5

[38] “Roundtable Interview: The Lion King.” Blu-ray.com, September 28, 2011. Accessed October 17 2022. <https://www.blu-ray.com/news/?id=7433>.

“Like sequels and prequels, “director’s cut” DVDs and spin-offs, videogame adaptations based on film are yet another way of taking one “property” in a “franchise” and reusing it in another medium. Not only will audiences already familiar with the “franchise” be attracted to the new “repurposing” (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 45), but new consumers will also be created.”^[39] Something similar was already mentioned earlier in the convergence media with the *Matrix*. The first movie was a success, so they created even a videogame with a new story from the same universe and with the same characters, so it could further develop the main storyline. Another example is the video game *The Godfather* (Electronics Art, 2006). Using the same voices and physical images of some actors from the movie, including Marlon Brando, it gains the adaptation aspect or “repeating” something already familiar to the audience. The only difference is that in this videogame, the player becomes a nameless mafia man trying to gain the respect of the main characters.^[40] Although when speaking of video games, there is one element they cannot easily adapt and novels are brilliant at it: “res cogitans”, or easily said, the space of the mind.^[41] When reading a book, the reader can imagine what the world and characters look like. When playing a video game this cannot be done, as the player already sees everything and he cannot imagine much. This also applies to the movies in comparison to the novels.

Adaptation can be described with three statements: First, adaptation can be seen as a product or a formal entity and as an extensive transposition of a particular work. This can turn into a shift of medium (like transforming a novel into a movie) or genre (an epic to a novel). Different interpretations can also be made by telling the same story from a different perspective.^[42] Second, adaptation can be viewed as a process of creation, as the act of adaptation always involves (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation.^[43] Third, adaptation is also a form of intertextuality: we enjoy adaptations through our memory.^[44] In short, adaptation can be defined as something already acknowledged of a recognizable work, a creative act of salvaging or appropriation, and as an extended engagement with the adapted work.

[39] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 5

[40] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 14

[41] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 14

[42] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 7

[43] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 8

[44] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 8

What are the most common elements of adaptations that we can distinguish? Themes are probably the easiest to see across media and genres. In fact, themes are one of the most important things in novels and plays. In movies, themes must always serve the story action; storyline is supreme in this case.^[45] Characters can be transported between media and works too. Murray Smith (philosopher and film theorist) argues, that “characters are crucial to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects to both narrative and performance texts, because they engage receivers’ imaginations through what he calls recognition, alignment and allegiance. (1995: 4-6)”^[46]

2.5.1 Adaptation in Cinematography

People have been representing mythologies in modern media for years. Nevertheless, after looking at some of the most recent popular movies (the 2000s), it looks like the most popular religion is not the Norse but the Greek. Norse mythology can still be seen on television screens. The most famous show is *Vikings* (History Channel, Amazon Prime, 2013-2020). While this show doesn’t represent gods or any mythological creatures, it represents the life of the Vikings. *Vikings* aimed to be as historically accurate as possible, but because of the lack of complete historical records, there is still some mysticism. In season 3, episode 2, “The Wanderer,” appears a man named Harbard, whose actions lead the inhabitants of Kattegat to the conclusion that he is a reincarnation of Odin. Another time we can see a reference to Norse mythology is when the main protagonist Ragnar tries to hang himself on a tree. Suddenly a murder of crows appears, chews through the rope, and sets Ragnar free. He sees it as a sign, chooses another path and, travels back to Wessex. In *Vikings* is also a representation of Floki, who should be Loki, as he is also a trickster. Another representation is Björn – a fierce fighter who fights until his last breath, and is fatally wounded. Björn should be demonstrating Balder, Thor’s brother. Ragnar’s family are descendants of Thor. Although, these all are just thoughts made by fandom and not an official information from the developers. As people were watching the *Vikings*, they noticed some similarities and tried linking them to myths.^[47] *Vikings* are not the only time we can see Norse mythology in cinematography.

[45] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 10

[46] Hutcheon, Linda. In *Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2006. 11

[47] Tyler, Adrienne. “Who is Harbard? Biggest Mystery Character Explained” *Screen Rant*, June 4 2022. Accessed November 1, 2022. <https://screenrant.com/vikings-harbard-character-mystery-god-explained/>

It is necessary to mention Marvel. This company focused on many gods and mythologies. In their newest TV show, *Moon Knight* (Disney+, 2022), they try to work around Egyptian mythology. Additionally, in their latest movie regarding Thor's adventures in fighting Gorr the God Butcher, Thor visits the Olympic Pantheon and Zeus. Marvel has created characters even based on Indian, Chinese or Japanese mythology. ^[48] Marvel has published several comic books regarding Norse gods and produced movies based on them. "Elements from old Norse mythology have been taken and then used creatively in the Marvel universe to create a coherent story where all things come together." ^[49] Even though some characters share the same name and similar depictions, there are some differences. Marvel has created something unique. They have their own Asgard and talk about other realms. Gods can travel from Asgard to Midgard the same way they would in Norse mythology – cross on a rainbow bridge with help from Heimdall.

We can see most of the mythology in a movie series regarding Thor. Some Marvel characters show similarities with their mythological "I." Viewers can name characters like Thor, Loki, and Odin, which will be mentioned more in the further chapters. Of course, there are way more characters in Marvel, for instance, Odin's wife Frigga, Thor's mythological wife Sif, Loki's children Hela and Fenrir, and the Valkyries.

Hela's arriving in a movie *Thor: Ragnarok* (Marvel Cinematic Universe, 2017) is the beginning of Ragnarok. Odin is dead, and Thor with Loki have to unite against their "sister." Unfortunately for the Asgardians, they manage to defeat her late. Hela, alongside Fenrir and releasing demons onto Asgard, will be the end of the god realm. At the end of the movie, when even the rainbow bridge is destroyed, viewers can see Surtur, the fire demon, completely destroying Asgard. As the last survivors flee on a spaceship with Thor (who has lost his eye during a fight with Hela), they anchor on Midgard, where the new Asgard is recreated. The New Asgard, also called Tonsberg, is situated in Norway and can also be found in real life. Tonsberg is considered the oldest town in Norway. ^[50]

[48] "Mythological Figures." Marvel Database. Accessed November 3, 2022.
https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Mythological_Figures.

[49] Marvel vs Norse Mythology: Every God in Thor Explained & Compared | WIRED. WIRED, 2022. Accessed November 3, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgbG_Grh3_I. 0:21-0:31

[50] "Tønsberg." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed November 3, 2022.
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Tonsberg>.

2.6 Video Games

To better understand video games, let's briefly introduce the history, traveling back to the 1960s. We would stop at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where a small group of students attended The Tech Model Railroad Club. They liked to build systems and see how things worked. In the 1960s, many computers were huge enough to fill entire rooms. "For the gaming world, the biggest transformation is in the way computers display information. Early computers communicated via teletype. A few units had computer readout screens. Throughout the 1960s, the University of Utah, Stanford, and MIT were the only U.S. universities that had computers with monitors."^[50] At MIT, the favorite one of this nerd club was the TX-O computer. Steve Russell, a new club member, decided to create a new program: an interactive game. After nearly six months and 200 hours, the first game was created. It was called *Spacewar*.^[51] Since then, many new ambitious students created new simple games, companies were created, and the year 1972 happened. In 1972, the video game *Pong* was created by Allan Alcorn.^[52] *Pong* (Atari, Inc., 1972) is considered to be the first video game that was available to almost everyone. After *Pong*, video game production rose, and titles like *Pac-Man* (Bandai Namco Entertainment, 1980), *The Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo, 1986), and more were created.

In the 1970s, people were already enjoying cinematography at its finest, and developers had an idea to create video games after some of the best shows and movies at that time. The first video game adapted after a movie would be *Star Trek: Phaser Strike* (Milton Bradley, 1979). It was released for the first handheld game console Microvision simultaneously as the new movie *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Paramount Pictures, 1979). The main goal of this game was to destroy ships with phaser banks.^[53] The second adaptation game would be *Alien* (Fox Video Games, 1982) and the third is *E.T, the Extra-Terrestrial* (Atari, Inc., 1982). Looking at the whole list of adapted video games, one could say that almost every famous movie got its video game: *Tron*, *James Bond*, *Rambo*, *Batman*, and many more.^[54]

[50] Kent, Steven L. In *The Ultimate History of Video Games: From Pong to Pokémon and Beyond ; the Story behind the Craze That Touched Our Lives and Changed the World*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001. Accessed October 21, 2022. https://retrocdn.net/images/9/9c/UltimateHistoryofVideoGames_Book_US.pdf. 17

[51] Kent, Steven L. In *The Ultimate History of Video Games: From Pong to Pokémon and Beyond ; the Story behind the Craze That Touched Our Lives and Changed the World*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001. Accessed October 21, 2022. https://retrocdn.net/images/9/9c/UltimateHistoryofVideoGames_Book_US.pdf. 18

[52] Kent, Steven L. In *The Ultimate History of Video Games: From Pong to Pokémon and Beyond ; the Story behind the Craze That Touched Our Lives and Changed the World*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001. Accessed October 21, 2022. https://retrocdn.net/images/9/9c/UltimateHistoryofVideoGames_Book_US.pdf. 42

[53] "Star Trek: Phaser Strike." Memory Alpha. Accessed October 21, 2022. https://memory-alpha.fandom.com/wiki/Star_Trek:_Phaser_Strike.

[54] "List of Video Games Based on Films." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, September 21, 2022. Accessed October 21, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_video_games_based_on_films.

Video games have come a long way since *Pong*. Nowadays, gamers have countless possibilities of games to choose from. Previously talking more about 2D arcade games, now the new genres of games will be mentioned. As time went by, new genres were explored. Now we can name around thirty existing genres and, every gamer has own favorite. One of the most played is First Person Shooter (FPS). One of the oldest FPS games and favored by many is *Wolfenstein 3D* (id Software, 1992), which got sequels years later. *Doom* (id Software, 1996), *Far Cry* (Ubisoft, 2004), *Battlefield 1942* (EA Games, 2002), *Call of Duty* (Activision, 2003), and *Counter-Strike* (Valve Corporation, 1999) are just examples of other FPS games. The core of FPS video games is, as the name says, shooting/combat. The games can be historically based, or based on a fantasy world.^[55] Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games are the following trendy genre. “Much like RPGs, MMORPG’s, (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games), will ignite the imagination, and throw the player into a detailed world This time, however, it’s online. The world is now not only populated by some possibly detailed NPCs, but also other human players at the same time.”^[56] The MMORPG video game played for 18 years, since 2004, is *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004). Still releasing new extensions, being played on streaming platforms like Twitch, and even making it into an episode of *South Park* (*Make Love, Not Warcraft*, Comedy Central, 2006), this game could be considered the most prominent MMORPG ever made.

My personal favorite, and also one of the biggest genres, is Role-Playing Games (RPGs). Emerging from the *Dungeons and Dragons* created in 1974, RPGs are based on imagination and fantasy. At one point, players can ride a horse as a Viking warrior in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011), fighting dragons, and at other times can be in a futuristic world of *Cyberpunk* (CD Projekt, 2020), playing alongside Keanu Reeves. As the name of the genre says, players role-play as certain characters, making their way through the story and enjoying the new world. One of the biggest Role-Playing video games is *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (CD Projekt, 2015). Based on the books by Andrzej Sapkowski, players will play as a witcher Geralt of Rivia, traveling across the world on horse-back and fighting monsters. Some of them are even mythological creatures or monsters from Slavic paganism. Geralt will encourage Leshy, Chernobog, or Vodyanoi, for Czech people known as Vodník.^[57]

[55] Byrd, Matthew. “25 Best First-Person Shooter Games Ever Made.” Den of Geek, July 10, 2021. Accessed October 21, 2022. <https://www.denofgeek.com/games/best-fps-games-ever-console-pc/>.

[56] Wirtz, Bryan. “The Complete Guide to Video Game Genres: From Scrollers, Shooters, to Sports.” Game Design, October 13, 2022. Accessed October 21, 2022. <https://www.gamedesigning.org/gaming/video-game-genres/>.

[57] “The Witcher Bestiary.” Witcher Wiki. Accessed November 4, 2022. https://witcher.fandom.com/wiki/Category:The_Witcher_bestiary.

Why do some people try to search for video games to play, if not just to play? For students, video games can be an excellent method to teach history. “The strategy video games about History are the ones that offer the best narrative we can find in the market. History as a narrative is flexible enough to generate “histories”, or narratives that can be endogenous or exogenous to the chronology.” Strategy video games such as *Civilization III* (Aspyr, 2001) or *Forge of Empires* (InnoGames, 2012) offer chronologies with historical accuracy, which is making them suitable to the school curriculum.^[58] Video games can also help with learning different languages, most frequently English. The problem video game learning has to deal with is the lack of computer rooms that are unsuitable enough for History learning.^[59] Simply said, some computers are insufficiently equipped with older components, not able to run newer games like the Czech game *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* (Warhorse Studio, 2018). I can imagine that maybe in 20 years, future pupils and students will be able to learn history, languages, biology, physics, and many more by playing computer games and maybe even with virtual reality.

Video games do not have to be only lovely memories of living in a fantasy world. They also have their dark side. Video games, for some, can be used as a way to escape the real world. Working an inferior job twelve hours a day, getting a minimum wage, coming back home, depressed, but cannot offer medical help. Our depressed soul sits down in a dark room, starts his favorite video game, and escapes into a whole new world, pushing all his responsibilities away.^[60] “Video games provide an outlet for escapism because they can make us forget about our troubles. The reality is though, it’s a temporary paradise. When we put down the controller hours later, actual reality sets in and we’re back to square one. It’s here, in the silent dark nights, that the true sadness kicks in.”^[61] For this particular group of gamers, who seeks comfort and escape from reality, has been done a study by Jane McGonigal. She has found out that self-suppressive, as this negative kind of escapism is called, can lead to self-denial, mood swings, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicidal thoughts.^[62] Playing video games, can make gamers happy, which gives them dopamine. This dopamine can then lead to video game addiction.

[58] Radetich, Laura, and Eduardo Jakubowicz. “Using Video Games for Teaching History. Experiences and Challenges.” *ATHENS JOURNAL OF HISTORY* 1, no. 1 (December 31, 2014). Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://www.atiner.gr/journals/history/2014-1-X-Y-Radetich.pdf>. 4

[59] Radetich, Laura, and Eduardo Jakubowicz. “Using Video Games for Teaching History. Experiences and Challenges.” *ATHENS JOURNAL OF HISTORY* 1, no. 1 (December 31, 2014). Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://www.atiner.gr/journals/history/2014-1-X-Y-Radetich.pdf>. 4

[60] The Nightmare Of Video Game Escapism. YouTube. YouTube, 2020. Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RLv4JSnOJg>. 0:00-2:56

[61] The Nightmare Of Video Game Escapism. YouTube. YouTube, 2020. Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RLv4JSnOJg>. 2:57-3:15

[62] The Nightmare Of Video Game Escapism. YouTube. YouTube, 2020. Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RLv4JSnOJg>. 4:45-5:01

Earlier in this chapter has been mentioned first adaptation video games. Nowadays, movie makers started doing films and TV shows after video games. The first one, starting a brand-new trend, was *Super Mario Bros.* (Hollywood Pictures, 1993), based on a video game with a changeless name. Many people to this day may know the stories of Lara Croft, played by Angelina Jolie. Of course, this movie was also based on a video game. The year 2010 has brought us the movie *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2010). More brilliant movies have been screened until this day, such as *Warcraft* (Legendary Pictures, 2016), *Assassin's Creed* (New Regency Production, 2016), or *Resident Evil* (Constantin Film, 2002-2016).^[63] Sadly, many of these movies did not end well, as the game developers did not create them. Film producers have not stopped just with the movies, which are based directly on the video games, but have also tried making their own regarding the video game characters.

One of the best movie adaptations today could be *Arcane* (Fortiche Productions, Riot Games, 2021). Developers of this TV series tried to keep the art style similar to the actual game. Most of the movie adaptations mentioned before were created into a live-action, making them visually less appealing. The art style of this show is kept in 3D but still made the way, so it corresponds with the actual video game. Players of *League of Legends* (Riot Games, 2009) have always asked Riot to make a movie, as they always had awesome cinematics. Now it happened. Fortiche Productions, under the supervision of Riot Games, were able to focus on the story, and keep the lore exactly how it is in *League of Legends*. The whole camera positioning and focus are something, which makes the whole show more realistic. Riot Games even cooperated with Imagine Dragons and Woodkid to make the music, and not only them.^[64] That is what makes *Arcane* the best cinematographic adaptation of a video game.

[63] "List of Films Based on Video Games." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Accessed November 5, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_films_based_on_video_games.

[64] How Arcane Became the BEST Video Game Adaptation, 2021. Accessed November 5, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cuw2oNAGt6Y&list=WL&index=34&t=331s>.

2.7 Norse Mythology in Video Games

Norse gods made it from books to television screens during the 20th century, and with the creation of video games, it did not take long for them to appear on PC screens. The first video game concerning the Norse gods was released in 1983 for ZX Spectrum (an 8-bit home computer) and in 1984 for the Commodore 64 (also an 8-bit home computer, but a different brand). This game was called *Valhalla* (Legend, 1983) and was a single-player text adventure. This game aimed to collect six mythical objects: a key, ring, shield, sword, axe, and helmet. When a player acquires all of these items, he can access Valhalla. The player will interact with various creatures as he progresses through the story, including gods, dwarves, dragons, or animals like wolves, a snake and, a raven. ^[65]

In 1991, the video game *Dusk of the Gods* (Interstel, 1991) was developed. This was an isometric view role-playing game. The plot of this game takes place before Ragnarok. The player plays as a fallen warrior called Einherjar (Einherjar are a group of warriors taken to Valhalla by Valkyries). The warrior is tasked by Odin to attempt to change the incoming destiny of gods. The tasks given include recovering Mjolnir, finding a key to chain Fenrir, obtaining a breastplate for Heimdall, and strengthening the fishing line for Thor. Once all the tasks are finished, the warrior reports back, Heimdall blows his horn, and the outcome of Ragnarok is reported back to the player. ^[66]

I have already mentioned strategy games regarding History teaching. *Age of Mythology* (Ensemble Studios, 2002) is one of these real-time strategy games that could be an example. This game was released in 2002 by Microsoft Game Studios and is a spin-off from the *Age of Empires* series. *Age of Mythology* is based on defeating enemy units and buildings, building your town, and training units and villagers. The player can play in three different cultures, the Norse being one of them. Before starting the game, the player has to select one major god regarding to what culture they want to play – in Norse it would be Odin. As player level up their town, they progress to another stage and can select minor god. They can do this four times in total. All gods, major and minor, grants player unique stats and technologies. ^[67]

[65] “Valhalla (1983).” MobyGames. Accessed November 6, 2022. <https://www.mobygames.com/game/valhalla>.

[66] “Dusk of the Gods (1991).” MobyGames. Accessed November 6, 2022. <https://www.mobygames.com/game/dusk-of-the-gods>.

[67] “Age of Mythology.” Age of Empires Series Wiki. Accessed November 6, 2022. https://ageofempires.fandom.com/wiki/Age_of_Mythology.

The year 2011 was very important to many gamers. On November 11, the biggest game of the era was released. This game won Game of the Year award and even has its own Anniversary and Special edition. Not really connected to the Norse gods, but more to the way of Viking living, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011) is definitely one of these games every gamer has to play. *Skyrim* is an action role-playing video game developed by Bethesda Game Studios. Altogether, *Skyrim* is the fifth game from their *Elder Scrolls* series, released five years after the last game. The player will wake up and discover he is being transported toward his execution. He has to select his race, look, and name, and when it finally is his turn to be beheaded, a giant black dragon appears. Our main character flees the burning village and travels the world, accomplishing quests, fighting monsters, and in the free time, trying to get better relationships with factions, as they can provide rewards. *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* also offers three expansions for more hours of adventure. By the year 2017, players can even play *Skyrim* in virtual reality, making them immerse in the gameplay even more. ^[68]

Coming back to the year 2021, a new survival and sandbox game named *Valheim* (Coffee Stain Studios., 2021) was published. What is interesting about this game is the fact that only five people developed it. The plot of this game takes place in a world where dead Vikings go to prove they are fit enough for the halls of Valhalla. The player must craft tools, build his shelter and fight enemies to survive. Players have to craft their food to be able to survive and even have to watch not to run for a long time, or they will eventually run out of stamina. The health bar is also important to watch, or the player will die. As the main point of this game is to survive, it is up to the player how long the game will be long. It does not have an actual ending. ^[69]

This bachelor thesis mainly focuses on four relatively new video games. More game will also be mentioned briefly, as it was released only on the 9th of November 2022. I will discuss these video games in the following chapters.

[68] "The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim." Elder Scrolls. Accessed November 6, 2022. <https://elderscrolls.bethesda.net/en/skyrim>.

[69] Valheim, October 28, 2022. Accessed November 6, 2022. <https://www.valheimgame.com/>.

2.7.1 Smite

The video game *Smite* was created in 2014 by Hi-Rez Studios and is a free-to-play, third-person multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) video game. Until this day, gamers can play *Smite* on various platforms like Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Nintendo Switch, and PC. In *Smite*, players will play as a god, goddess, or other mythological creatures from mythologies of the world. With gods, players will fight in team-based combat and use their abilities against an opponent team of other players. *Smite* is also famous for having a successful esports scene with a million-dollar *Smite* World Championship. ^[70]

Smite is made out of several mythologies. Players can play as characters of Babylonian, Celtic, Egyptian, Japanese, or Slavic gods, and creatures. Norse gods are heavily included and some of them will be described more in the individual chapters regarding gods. Except for them, players can also play, for example, Ratatoskr, a squirrel living in a world tree Yggdrasil, jumping over branches and shooting corns. Those who want something more mature then can pick a champion like Tyr, the Lawgiver, and charge enemies with a giant sword. ^[71]

This video game has many different game modes with, the most significant being Conquest. Conquest is a default mode similar to any other MOBA, like *League of Legends*. Here gamers play as two teams with five players on each team. The goal is to kill the enemy team and destroy their towers and a fountain, which they are defending. Whose fountain is destroyed first loses the game. *Smite*, and any other MOBA genre games do not have any deeper story, but their characters on their own can have lore, which can also be seen in *League of Legends*.

[70] “Smite (Video Game).” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, November 2, 2022. Accessed November 11, 2022. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smite_\(video_game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smite_(video_game)).

[71] Smitgame.com. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://www.smitgame.com/gods/>.

2.7.2 Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice

Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice is a 2017 action-adventure game developed by Ninja Theory. Set in a dark fantasy world inspired by Norse mythology and Celtic culture, the game follows protagonist Senua, who is a Pict warrior (Picts were a group of people who lived in northern and eastern Scotland during Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages. ^[72]) and tries to acquire her dead lover from the goddess Hela. Players can play *Hellblade* on many consoles and newly also in virtual reality.

The plot of *Hellblade* is very interesting. The game is set in the 8th century, and the player plays as Senua, a Pict warrior who arrives at the border of Helheim from Hela. Senua believes she suffers from a curse because she can hear voices of spirits she calls "Furies." One of them is also a narrator and often breaks the fourth wall and talks directly to the player. Senua carries the whole time the decapitated head of Dillion, her lover. Our main protagonist is followed by Darkness, a dark entity. Senua defeats several bosses, like fire giant Surtr or the god of illusions, Valravn, and is attacked by Hela right as she crosses the bridge. Barely surviving, she managed to escape and eventually find a sword Gramr. Ultimately, Senua fights the Darkness and defeats the best Garm. She realizes that Darkness represents her father's abuse. Then she comforts Hela one more time. In the last moment, Hela summons Dillion, who tells her the importance of accepting loss. She kills Hela and accepts that she is not responsible for the death of Dillion or anyone else's. Senua banishes the Darkness from her soul and accepts the voices as someone who she is.

Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice was developed with the help of neuroscientists. This video game is supposed to be a compelling fantasy adult game, and that is why it also shows a mental illness. "Experts who worked closely with the team include Professor Paul Fletcher from the University of Cambridge, and writer and psychologist Professor Charles Fernyhough from the University of Durham, an expert on voice hearing. [...] They worked with a "recovery college", an establishment which acts as both a health facility, and a college for its patients. Antoniades was marked by the story of "a girl who has to live with an angry voice screaming at her, slamming on her doors and walls 24 hours a day.'" ^[73]

[72] "PICT." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pict>.

[73] "Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, September 17, 2022. Accessed November 14, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellblade:_Senua%27s_Sacrifice.

2.7.3 Assassin's Creed Valhalla

Assassin's Creed Valhalla is an action role-playing video game released in 2020 by Ubisoft. This is the twelfth video game in the *Assassin's Creed* series and a sequel to 2018's *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, which involved the mythological history of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta around the 5th century. *Valhalla* has been released for PC, Stadia, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X, and Series S. ^[74]

Assassin's Creed Valhalla is set in 873 CE and shows players the Viking life. Players take the role of the main protagonist Eivor, a Viking Raider, who can be played as male or female. The prologue takes us to Norway, where Eivor is as a child during a feast. The feast is interrupted by an enemy clan, and the whole village is executed. Eivor flees and is taken by the Raven Clan and wants revenge. As our hero touches the axe of his/her father, Eivor has a vision of Odin and a wolf. Sailing back home, the warrior visits a Seer Valka, who gives him a hallucinogenic broth that invokes another vision – Sigurd is missing an arm before a giant wolf attacks them. The next day Sigurd returns to the clan with warriors Bassim and Hytham, carrying a special device that players recognize as the hidden blade.

The next chapter takes us to England. Sigurd and Eivor start a small settlement in the Kingdom of Mercia – Ravensthorpe. Eivor's quest is to expand the settlement, welcome friends, and strengthen their friendship with the Danes and Saxons.

Eivor is greeted by Valka, who has come to settle in England. She gives him/her a potion that transports him/her to Asgard, the realm of Gods. Eivor transforms into Odin but is called Havi. Eivor has visions of Odin trying to avert Ragnarok, where he and the Aesir drink a mead that will reincarnate their soul into humans after Ragnarok. The player does not know that Eivor is Odin at first but finds out later as the story progresses. Back out of vision, Eivor is startled by Sigurd's changing behavior. It turns out that Bassim convinced Sigurd would be the ruler of England. Here the new character Alfred the Great appears, an establisher of the Templar Order. He imprisons Sigurd, and Eivor attempts to free him. Sigurd returns alive to Ravensthorpe, but his mind is full of bizarre destiny that has been put in his head by his jailer Fulke. ^[75]

[74] "Assassin's Creed Valhalla." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, November 14, 2022. Accessed November 16, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassin%27s_Creed_Valhalla.

[75] Gibson, Alex. "Assassin's Creed Valhalla: Story Summary." Twinfinite. Twinfinite, November 19, 2020. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://twinfinite.net/2020/11/assassins-creed-valhalla-story-summary-ending-explained/>.

Eivor goes on to make better friendships with other clans, expand territory, and do what a great leader does. At the end of the game, the player can have several possible endings, but probably the main one or the most interesting is where Eivor and Sigurd sails to Hordafylke. Sigurd leads them to a cave, when they find a door with a strange inscription. No one knows what the inscription says, but Sigurd says that this passage will lead to Valhalla. They walk in, and an elevator takes them to a giant mechanical opening. Sigurd walks with Eivor to the center, and a giant machine picks them up and plugs them. Eivor then wakes up in a bedroom and is welcomed to Asgard. Eivor starts living in a loop, where every day repeats, just Sigurd acts differently every day, as he is also “alive.” [76]

This game is difficult to explain on its own, as every *Assassin's Creed* game are somehow linked together, especially by the whole “machine” story. A group of people owns an Animus, a machine which with they can transform into someone else from the past. Then they discover the mysteries of Assassins and how the history looked like.

In *Valhalla*, the Norse gods can be seen in Eivor’s vision when traveling to Asgard. Some of these gods will be mentioned in further chapters concerning individual gods.

[76] Gibson, Alex. “Assassin's Creed Valhalla: Story Summary.” Twinfinite. Twinfinite, November 19, 2020. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://twinfinite.net/2020/11/assassins-creed-valhalla-story-summary-ending-explained/>.

2.7.4 God of War

God of War is a video game released in 2018 by Santa Monica Studio. It is important to note that *God of War* is just a sequel to previous video games from this series. Santa Monica Studio previously released seven more video games with the main protagonist Kratos. Players could see Kratos for the first time in 2005 on the Playstation 2, and he was the youngest captain of the Spartan Army. He ends up working with the god of war, Ares, acquires his iconic weapon, Blades of Chaos, and eventually kills his own two daughters and the rest of the family. He is cursed to wear the ashes of his own family, making his skin white color. Kratos kills Ares as an act of revenge and becomes the new god of war.

After leaving his old life, Kratos went to Midgard, where he met his new wife, a giantess Laufey. Together they had a son Atreus, half-god from father's side and half-giantess from mother. The god of war is desperately trying not to tell his son the reality of who he truly is, but despite that, Atreus find out. ^[77]

The story of *God of War* begins after the death of Kratos's wife, Laufey. Her last wish was for her ashes to be spread at the highest peak of the Nine Realms. Both of the men set on an adventure. Before being able to start, a mysterious stranger, who later turns out to be Baldur, attacks Kratos. Defeated, he is able to flee for a while to reappear further in the game. On their journey, Kratos and Atreus meet two Dwarven Huldra brothers, Brok and Sindri, who upgrade their weapons. They also meet a friendly Witch of the Woods after wounding her friend, a boar. The boys encounter a friendly World Serpent, Jormungandr, the "last" remaining giant. On their journey, they travel through realms to succeed on quests, and acquire items to progress further, such as the Light of Alfheim. They come across a Mimir, who is just a head and takes him with them on a journey. While searching for the components to open the gate to Jotunheim, they are attacked by Modin and Magni, the sons of Thor. Magni is killed, and after Atreus discovers who he really is, he decides to kill Modin, not listening to his father. Atreus becomes extremely arrogant. The boy foolishly picks a fight with Baldur, who destroys the portal to Jotunheim and throws the group to Helheim. ^[78]

[77] MolotovCupcake. "How God of War (2018) Connects to the Series' Storied Past." Fandom. FANDOM, April 28, 2018. Accessed November 11, 2022. <https://www.fandom.com/articles/1669-how-god-of-war-2018-connects-to-the-series-storied>.

[78] "God of War (2018)." God of War Wiki. Accessed November 11, 2022. [https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/God_of_War_\(2018\)](https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/God_of_War_(2018)).

The group escapes from Helheim and discovers that Baldur is Freya's son. Not wanting his son to be killed, Freya casts a protection spell on him, which makes him immune to all physical and magical attacks. The adventurers are attacked by Baldur again, but Freya tries to protect her son unsuccessfully. Atreus casts a mistletoe arrow, breaks Freya's spell, and injures Baldur. Kratos is then forced to kill him and, after the whole game, tells Atreus about his past as a Greek god.

After finally arriving in Jotunheim, the realm of giants, they find a temple depicting their adventures. The giants had foreseen everything that happened and foretold what was to come. Atreus discovers his true "I" as a part god, giant, and mortal and that his actual name is Loki. Kratos and Atreus fulfill their promise and spread Laufey's ashes. Returning to Midgard, Mimir warns them that the three-year-long Fimbulwinter began, meaning Ragnarok will soon come. ^[79]

According to an interview with Cory Barlog, developer at Santa Monica Studio, "Everybody on the writing team was reading the Prose Eddas and really started to research how the myths were translated, how they kind of spread out and are told, as well as the art team." ^[80] The art team even went to Iceland for a research trip to understand better the surrounding and atmosphere. Thanks to the research team's studies, the game is filled with little details, that an ordinary gamer can miss. Kratos's and Atreus's home right at the beginning of the game has Norse runes written around the doorframe to protect those that live in the house. A blessing like that can also be soon on Atreus's body in a tattoo way. He has tattooed Steady mind on his back, Strength, and Precision on his bow draw arm. ^[81]

[79] "God of War (2018)." God of War Wiki. Accessed November 11, 2022.
[https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/God_of_War_\(2018\)](https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/God_of_War_(2018)).

[80] God of War - Behind the Myths: An Interview with Cory Barlog | PS4, 2018. Accessed November 11, 2022.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxyEcgv34Rk>. 1:15-1:27

[81] God of War - Behind the Myths: An Interview with Cory Barlog | PS4, 2018. Accessed November 11, 2022.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxyEcgv34Rk>. 5:44-6:25

To tattoos, and not only that, reacted a Norse Mythology expert Jackson Crawford. Crawford notes that tattoos on Vikings had become a part of how people imagine the Norse cultures today; there is not even any old Norse word that would mean tattoo. Although, only one source concerning the Viking tattoos exists, and that is from 922/923 by Arabic writer Ahmad ibn Fadlan, who encountered eastern Swedish Vikings, and he says they were tattooed. We do not have any other source. [82]

Jackson Crawford also talks about other aspects of the game that has caught his attention and tries to compare them to the original myths. He really enjoyed the passage with meeting Jormungandr. As Kratos throws his axe to the sea, Jormungandr rise up from the water and spits out his axe. This axe is supposed to be named Eitr Imbued, translated as poison. Which is also what the serpent spits out on his enemies, including Thor. [83]

When the party comes to Alfheim, a realm of light elves, Freya notices that the column of light on the horizon is housed in the heart of the ring temple, and they will find what they need there. Norse temples of the old gods were supposed to have a ring upon which an oath was supposed to be sworn, so that is one interesting detail. Runes in the old Norse were often situated into a ring, which players can also see in the game. [84]

In our Norse sources like *Prose Edda*, Mimir is only a head. What we see at first in the game is Mimir's body attached to the tree, and Kratos cuts his head off. There could be two theories behind his look. First, in the authentic sources, Odin keeps Mimir's head as he is so wise and makes him a consultant to speak with. Second, Mimir had a well, and Odin had to pop out his eye to acquire wisdom. Odin originally had only one eye, but in God of War, Mimir has one eye. [85]

[82] Norse Mythology Expert Reacts to God of War. IGN, 2021. Accessed November 11, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs7JHbVkB-w>. 4:03-4:50

[83] Norse Mythology Expert Reacts to God of War. IGN, 2021. Accessed November 11, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs7JHbVkB-w>. 2:06-2:28

[84] Norse Mythology Expert Reacts to God of War. IGN, 2021. Accessed November 11, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs7JHbVkB-w>. 7:58-8:34

[85] Norse Mythology Expert Reacts to God of War. IGN, 2021. Accessed November 11, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs7JHbVkB-w>. 9:39-10:23

2.7.5 God of War: Ragnarok

Releasing a few years after the first game, *God of War: Ragnarok* is a sequel to the previous game. This new video game was released in November 2022 and already has amazing feedback, scoring 10/10 on IGN as a “masterpiece.”^[86] This video game can be played only on PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5, but as the first game, maybe even this one will be playable on PC in a few years.

The style of this video game is almost the same as the *God of War* (2018), a third-person action-adventure video game with an over-the-shoulder free camera. There are no camera cuts or loading screens, which makes the gameplay very fluent. Players can still fulfill their favorite puzzle minigames to acquire better stats or material to craft new gear. What is new is that Atreus is now a playable character in some moments where he goes on the adventure without Kratos.

The game starts with the death of Fenrir, a beloved wolf of Loki. This makes Atreus grieve. Atreus leave to calm down, but instead, he uncontrollably transforms into a bear and fights with Kratos. He did not know what he had done, but he began practicing Giant magic. Together they go back to their house and have visitors – Thor and Odin. Kratos fights with Thor and discovers about Tyr, whom Atreus wants to find. They manage to get to Svartalfheim and release Tyr from his jail. Together they visit a shrine in Asgard and find out that Asgard will be destroyed during Ragnarok, but other realms will be saved, thanks to Loki. Atreus leaves Kratos for a while and takes his own journey, releasing wolf Garm by mistake in Helheim. Kratos comes for help with Freya, and together stop the end of Helheim. They acquire a special mask and go back home, giving the mask to Tyr. Tyr kills their dwarf friend Brok because he is secretly an Odin in disguise and flees with the mask he wanted the whole time. Atreus and Kratos commit to Ragnarok and head to Muspelheim to seek Surtr to help him achieve his destructive form. The Ragnarok has come; Thor battles Jormungandr and sends the world serpent back in time. Odin then kills Thor for refusing to fight with Kratos again. The All-Father engages with Kratos, Atreus and Freya and is defeated. Atreus traps his soul and completely destroys it. Surtr destroys Asgard, and our group flees through a rift. At the end of the game, Atreus leaves with Angrboda and bid farewell to his father.^[87]

[86] Cardy, Simon. “God of War Ragnarok Review.” IGN, November 3, 2022. Accessed November 12, 2022. <https://www.ign.com/articles/god-of-war-ragnarok-review>.

[87] “God of War: Ragnarök.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, November 14, 2022. Accessed November 12, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_of_War_Ragnar%C3%B6k.

3. The gods, creatures and mythological beings

Norse mythology contains many Gods and God-related beings, and many of them could be mentioned, such as Freya, who appears very nicely in *God of War*, or Heimdall in *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*. The same could be said about the mythological creatures, as there is a giant wolf Garm guarding the gates of Helheim or a dragon Nidhogg, living at the root of the world tree Yggdrasil.

The following chapters will concern selected gods. First will be mentioned where the myths can be found and how they are written – in runes. It is essential to talk about this first because a lot of video games also use runes in their own way to expand the story or make their characters more interesting looking. Then will be mentioned three gods – Odin, his son Thor, and Loki, the God of Mischief. I have picked these three gods as they appear in video games and other media most of the time. The next chapters will consider Loki's children Fenrir, Jormungandr, and Hel.

3.1 Runestones

Before talking about Norse mythology, it is essential to talk about one of the resources from which we know about it – the runestones. What are they? As the name says, the Viking runestones are raised stones carved with runes that tell us a story. They first appeared in the 4th and 5th centuries in Norway in Sweden. In Denmark, it was three centuries later, in the 8th. These Scandinavian runestones tell us a story about great Viking expeditions or, more often, about death. “They were being erected in memory of the dead of mostly powerful people. They were intended to be visible and were painted in bright colours.”^[88] The Vikings mostly used colors red and white to truly highlight the runes so they could be seen even from a distance. “The stones often stood near roads or bridges, where many people passed by. They were not necessarily placed at the burial of the person they commemorated.”^[89]

Interestingly, these stones always carried the name of who raised this stone and for whom it was made. We can find there both men’s and women’s names. In one way, they are similar to the Egyptians. Except for the names, their position in society, and a short description of their character, the runestones could also carry a curse upon anyone who tries to desecrate the stone.

Looking at the runestones, we can clearly notice that the runes are situated inside a band, which often can be represented as a serpent or a dragon. As described on the Swedish runestones and in Figure 1, the most popular Norse legend in that area was Sigurd, the dragon slayer. This particular inscription is of an ordinary kind, where we can see Sigurd (number 5), thrusting his sword through the dragon’s body. He is holding his sword crafted by Reginn, who is beheaded under the number 3.

[88] “Rune Stones.” National Museum of Denmark. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-viking-age/power-and-aristocracy/rune-stones/#:~:text=The%20rune%20stones%20of%20the,where%20many%20people%20passed%20by>.

[89] “Rune Stones.” National Museum of Denmark. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-viking-age/power-and-aristocracy/rune-stones/#:~:text=The%20rune%20stones%20of%20the,where%20many%20people%20passed%20by>.



Figure 1: Ramsund Inscription ^[90]

Do these runestones represent Norse mythology in a particular way? Archeologists have discovered stone built into a Rök church wall in the 19th century, which carried a mention of Thor – the god of thunder. This stone was removed from the church wall in Rök, Sweden, and placed just beside him under a very primitive wooden structure. The Rök runestone is one of the most famous runestones, carrying the longest runic inscription, which has been important for both theological and historical views. ^[91] It also references Theodoric the Great, who has been an Ostrogothic king. This runestone is not the only one showing us some Norse gods. The next one I will mention is Altuna runestone. This one also reveals Thor with Hymir, but this time he is trying to fish the Midgard Serpent Jormungandr. Thor is using an ox head as bait, but as told in the Gylfaginning of the Prose Edda, the fishing line is cut loose by Hymir. Prose Edda also mentions that Thor’s foot went through the boat when fishing, which can be clearly seen at the runestone. ^[92] The last runestone I am going to mention is the Ledberg stone picturing the Ragnarok scene. Fenrir, son of Loki, is devouring Odin. Under this visualization lies Odin, already without legs and with hands in front of him. ^[93]

[90] “Sigurd.” Wikimedia Commons. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sigurd.svg>.

[91] “Rök Runestone.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, October 17, 2022. Accessed October 23, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%B6k_runestone.

[92] “Altuna Runestone.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, February 6, 2022. Accessed October 23, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altuna_Runestone#/media/File:U1161_Altunastenen_Tors_fiskaf%C3%A4nge_2.jpg.

[93] “Ledberg Stone.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, December 26, 2021. Accessed October 23, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ledberg_stone#/media/File:Ledbergsstenen_20041231.jpg.

Runestones are not only a matter of reality and the real world. They are also portrayed in some video games. One of them is *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*. There are these runestones called *lorestones*. Here they take function as collectibles, something that players can do to get extra achievement. When interacting with them, a glowing blue rune shows up, and a man Durth starts telling his teachings of the Northmen. Durth tells the player about Hel, the nine worlds, Ymir, and how he was killed, but also about Ragnarok and many more. Noticeably, these runestones look very similar to the original runestones; they are just more detailed. Every one of these these lorestones shows player a different rune. If the player unlocks all 44 of them, he unlocks a secret ending of the game.^[94]

In *God of War*, runes are used differently. Weapons have their own runic attacks, where they hold a particular rune, and it boosts their stats. The player cannot really see runes when using empowered skills; these runic attacks just held the same mythological names as *Tyr's revenge*. This will be mentioned further in some chapters. Another thing we can find the runes on in the *God of War* are Nornir chests. In addition to open them, the player must find three runes scattered around the area where the chest is located. This works as a puzzle that can improve the player's gameplay. Although some people can find this annoying, opening these chests can permanently increase a player's maximum health or their maximum Rage meter.^[95] Runes can also be found all around the *God of War* world, and Atreus is able to read them. The player can come closer and make the boy read them, discovering a brand-new story or a way to some legendary loot, which can be helpful.

[94] "Lorestones." Hellblade Wiki. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://thehellblade.fandom.com/wiki/Lorestones>.

[95] "Runic Attacks." God of War Wiki. Accessed October 23, 2022. https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/Runic_Attacks.

3.3 Thor

“The gods themselves dwelt in Asgard. Some of them were of the mighty Asa-race: Valfather Odin, and Frigg his Queen; Thor, the master of Mjolner, [...]. Especially did Thor seldom sit still when he heard rumors of giants; with his heavy hammer, Mjolner, he slew Hrungner and the Midgard-serpent, gave Thrym and all that race of giants bloody bridal-gifts in Freyja’s garments, and frightened the juggler Loki, of Utgard, who had to resort to his black art for safety.”^[96]

Thor (in the old Norse written as Þórr) is the god of thunder, the sky, and agriculture, the son of Odin and Jörd. His mother is sometimes wrongly mistaken because of Marvel. In several movies like *Thor* (Marvel Entertainment, 2011), or *Thor: The Dark World* (Marvel Entertainment, 2013), Thor’s mother is supposed to be Frigga. Frigga was later the wife of Odin but is mother to Baldur. The day Thursday is named after Thor – Thor’s-day. Trying to find out what Thor looked like is not an easy job. Let us consider the literature first. R.B. Anderson, in his book *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of our Forefathers, containing all the Myths of the Eddas, systematized and interpreted* describes Thor as red-bearded, girded with the belt of strength, swinging his hammer and riding a chariot drawn by two goats.^[97] These goats can also be seen in the tale *Thor’s Journey to the Land of the Giants*, which can be found in the book *Folk-Lore and Legends: Scandinavian* by Charles John Tibbitts. In this tale, Thor and Loki set out to the land of Giants with his chariot drawn by two goats. When the night comes, they put up at peasant’s cottage. Thor kills his two goats, has them skinned, and puts them in the pot. When they finish eating, Thor tells the peasant’s two children to throw the leftover bones into the skins, but the boy accidentally breaks one bone when trying to get to the marrow. When they woke up in the morning, the goats were alive again and had their normal form. Except for one, who was now lame in one of its hind legs, so Thor and Loki had to continue their journey without the goats.^[98]

[96] Sturluson, Snorri. In *The Prose Edda*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 3

[97] Anderson, Rasmus Björn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 13 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 298

[98] Tibbitts, Charles John. In *Folk-Lore and Legends; Scandinavian*. Good Press, 2019. 28-32

In *Prose Edda* there is not much of a mention that Thor is a thunder god, but there is one sentence showing this fact. It comes from the story of Thor and Hrungner: “Then Hrungner thrust the shield under his feet and stood on it, but the flint-stone he seized with both his hands. The next that he saw were flashes of lightning, and he heard loud crashing; and then he saw Thor in his asa-might advancing with impetuous speed, swinging his hammer and hurling it from afar at Hrungner.”^[99] To summarize how Thor looks like in most of the literature resources: red-bearded, very strong, carrying a hammer, riding a chariot drawn by two goats, and he drinking plenty of mead.

If someone visited Stockholm, he would find exciting statues of Thor. One of them is right on the square Mariatorget. There takes place a central fountain which is crowned with a sculpture called *Tors fiske*, depicting Thor as he is trying to slay the giant Midgard serpent Jörmungandr. In this one, Thor is very lean, and muscular and is striking a pose where he is trying to smash Jörmungandr with his hammer.^[100] The other sculpture sits at the top of the *Djurgårdsbron bridge* along with three other gods – Heimdall, Frigg, and Freya. Here he is also very lean and muscular and is wielding his hammer.^[101]

Before talking about Thor in video games, it would be great to mention one giant company that adopted Norse mythology, took some of the characters, edited them, and used them at their will. This company is Marvel. Not only they edited how Thor looked a little, but they also changed his family relationships. Marvel’s Thor is lean, and strong, but he is blonde. Here, he is the brother to Loki and Hela; his parents are Odin and Frigg. As mentioned before, Thor should be a red-bearded strong man. There is a possibility that Marvel got inspired by some paintings of Thor, where he is depicted as a blonde man. However, they made an exception in one of their movies - *Avengers: Endgame* (Marvel Entertainment, 2019). Thor was grieving, and depressed, he gained weight while he was only playing Fortnite with his friends. After that, he starts meditating and tries to be a better person, gains his old body back, and fought alongside his lover until the end of the movie. In the same movie, *Thor: Love and Thunder* (Marvel Entertainment, 2022), he also possess a tattoo on his back, which represents his brother Loki.

[99] Sturluson, Snorri. In *The Prose Edda*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 58

[100] “Thor at the Maria Square in Stockholm: Sweden.” Nordic Culture, July 18, 2022. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://skjalden.com/maria-square-fountain/>.

[101] “Djurgårdsbron Thor Statue, #ThrowbackThursday for 10/9/2014.” Throwback Thursday, March 7, 2015. Accessed November 13, 2022. <https://throwbackthursday.wordpress.com/2014/10/09/djurgardsbron-thor-statue-throwbackthursday-for-1092014/>.

Marvel can be famous for making movies, but they have more media to offer – even video games. Some of them include Thor, the god of thunder. For example, *Thor: Son of Asgard* (Marvel Entertainment, 2011), *Marvel's Avengers* (Square Enix, 2020), and others. Because they are from Marvel, these Thor characters try to be the most accurate to comics. First presented in August 1962^[102], Thor can also be seen with his winged helmet, which he acquired from a group of Asgardian warriors called the Einherjar.^[103] The exact same helmet can also be seen in the game *Thor: God of Thunder*. This video game, made for consoles like Nintendo DS, PlayStation 3, or Wii, was based on the movie Thor. It even contains Chris Hemsworth voice. “Despite the game existing outside of the canonicity of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, some characters from the game eventually appeared in the 2017 film *Thor: Ragnarok*, such as Surt and Hela (from the Nintendo DS version).”^[104]

Marvel may have involved Norse mythology heavily in their work, but they are definitely not the only ones. Many people, or at least gamers, are familiar with the *Assassin's Creed* series. One of their best titles – *Valhalla*, has achieved 1 billion dollars in revenue, which makes this the most profitable game of the whole series. This is according to the Screenrant.^[105] This game shows us the true life of Vikings (not including the rap battles) and even gods. Thor here looks nothing like the one from Marvel. Brown hair, a long beard with fancy braids knitted in it. Dressed in heavy leather armor with a dark brown cloak on his back. With a dagger under his right arm and Mjolnir hidden under his cloak, he seems like a great warrior. When talking with Thor, he doesn't have a problem with joking, or at least if he is not drunk, and if needed, gamers can even have a rap battle with Thor, and it's just up to them if the god will “outrap” them. This game is also not suitable for children, as there is a lot of killing, but also curse words, and Thor is not afraid to use them: “Buri's ballsack!” In *Valhalla*, it's also possible to acquire Thor's armor. Golden-plated armor, decorated with blue cloth and fur around the neck, this armor looks truly majestic and is a lot different than that one Marvel had.



Figure 2: Thor in Assassin's Creed Valhalla^[106]

[102] Sanderson, Peter. “Thor.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Thor-comic-book-character>.

[103] “Winged Helmet.” Marvel Cinematic Universe Wiki. Accessed October 23, 2022. https://marvelcinematicuniverse.fandom.com/wiki/Winged_Helmet.

[104] “Thor: God of Thunder.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, August 23, 2022. Accessed October 23, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thor:_God_of_Thunder.

[105] Reeves, Brianna. “AC Valhalla Becomes Highest-Earning Assassin's Creed Game to Date.” ScreenRant, February 18, 2022. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://screenrant.com/ac-valhalla-sales-highest-earning-assassins-creed-billion/#:~:text=According%20to%20Ubisoft%2C%20AC%20Valhalla,Assasin's%20Creed%20title%20to%20date.>

[106] “Thor.” Assassin's Creed Wiki. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://assassinscreed.fandom.com/wiki/Thor>.

Although, even in *Valhalla*, players can get a winged helmet. The best on this set of gear is that player can get Mjolnir. To achieve this, players have to find hammer in specific locations, and when wielding it, a hammer even shows tiny sparks of lighting, exactly how it would do with thunder. ^[107]

Another game including Thor is *Smite*. Here it gets a little complicated, as *Smite* is a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena type of game, and players can buy skins for each playable character, including Thor. Skins can totally change how characters are going to look. In basic skin, which every player has since the beginning, Thor looks simple, but among other games, there they actually made him ginger, as it is described by R. B. Anderson. Although, he is only muscular because of his armor that makes him huge. Just the shoulder plates are almost double the size they should be. Thor has one skin called “Blood eagle.” ^[108] This may be only a coincidence or a brilliant intention of the creators. In history, the blood eagle was an execution method from the Viking age. The one supposed to die was lying on his belly, his back was cut open, and his rib bones were pushed out, sticking out of the body of the probably already dead man. It was meant to represent a flying eagle – instead of wings, it was broken bones. ^[109]

As described in quote number [96], Thor is being connected with his hammer Mjolnir (Mjolner), which became a symbol that can be seen across modern media. From books, across movies, and to the games. I would say that the depiction of Mjolnir is for Norse mythology and its religion, something like the cross for the Christians. Mjolnir is a magical hammer that only his owner can hold and is the only one who can lift it. This is supposed to represent Thor’s great strength and can also be seen in Marvel movies. Here, Thor is the only one who can yield the hammer. Although, there was one scene in the *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (Marvel Entertainment, 2015), where members of Avengers tried to pick up Mjolnir. Even with using Iron Man’s technology, no one was able to lift the hammer, and as Thor has said: “They are not worthy.” ^[110]

[107] Blain, Louise. “Assassin's Creed Valhalla Thor Armor and Where to Find Mjolnir.” Gamesradar. GamesRadar+, May 11, 2021. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://www.gamesradar.com/assassins-creed-valhalla-thor-mjolnir-armor/>.

[108] “Thor.” Smitegame.com. Accessed November 16, 2022. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://www.smitegame.com/gods/thor>.

[109] “Blood Eagle.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, October 19, 2022. Accessed October 24, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_eagle.

[110] Avengers: Age of Ultron - Lifting Thor's Hammer - Movie CLIP HD. TopMovieClips, 2017. Accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3bhQwY0KCY>.

3.4 Odin

„The highest and the oldest of all the gods is Odin. Odin knows many secrets. He gave an eye for wisdom. More than that, for knowledge of runes, and for power, he sacrificed himself to himself. He hung from the world-tree, Yggdrasil, hung there for nine nights. His side was pierced by the point of a spear which wounded him gravely.”^[111]

Odin is the god of war and the dead and a so-called all-father. When the Vikings were going into battle, they would throw a spear at the enemy army, dedicating the battle and the dead to the Odin. If one survived in a battle, Odin would be on their side, and if they fell, it is said that the god betrayed them. For Vikings, it was important to die bravely in a battle, as one would go to Valhalla, where the battle is celebrated by feast and mead.^[112] Odin is the father of all of us, as he breathed a breath of life into two logs, which were carved into the shape of a human – “our parents”. This story is similar to the one with Adam and Eve. One woman and one male were carved/ shaped out of something, and set to live in a new land (Midgard/ Eden). Nowadays, there are still people believing in Odin and other Norse gods. This religion is called Asatro and today has between 500 to 1000 people. Asatro religion can be found in Denmark^[113]

Odin had three wives – Jord, Rind, and Frigg. Jord is supposed to represent the original earth before man; Frigg is the cultivated, but inhabited earth, and Rind is the earth when it becomes unfaithful again. With every one of them, Odin had a son – Thor, Baldur and, Vale.^[114] Thor was previously mentioned in chapter 3.3. and Baldur will die by a Loki’s hand. Vale will be lucky enough to survive Ragnarok.^[115] Odin is the son of Bure and Bestla, which were licked out of the ice by a cow. He has two brothers named Vile and Ve.

[111] Gaiman, Neil. In Norse Mythology. Praha: Argo, 2017. 19

[112] Gaiman, Neil. In Norse Mythology. Praha: Argo, 2017. 20

[113] “The Old Nordic Religion Today.” National Museum of Denmark. Accessed October 25, 2022.
<https://en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-viking-age/religion-magic-death-and-rituals/the-old-nordic-religion-today/>.

[114] Sturluson, Snorri. The Prose Edda. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 25, 2022.
<https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 238

[115] Sturluson, Snorri. The Prose Edda. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 25, 2022.
<https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 429

According to Rasmus Bjorn Anderson, Odin is an old, tall, one-eyed man with a long beard, wearing a striped cloak and wearing a broad-brimmed hat, wielding a spear in his hand. Two ravens, Hugin and Munin, sit on his shoulders, and two wolves, Gere and Freke, lie at his feet. Ravens fly all over Midgard and bring information back to Odin. Wolves lie and guard their owner. Odin rides across the world on the eight-legged horse Sleipnir, who is the most excellent horse. [116] The god also has a gold ring Draupner, the sign of fertility. When Balder dies, he puts the ring on his remains and is burnt with Balder, but he sends the ring back as a memento of working together with his father. Odin’s spear was called Gungner – that is the reason why Vikings would throw a spear to receive a blessing from Odin when going into battle. [117] With his own spear, he wounded himself when hanging on the tree for nine days and sacrificed his eye for wisdom. Odin may also be considered the master of runes. “Odin, as master of runes, is the spirit that subdues and controls physical nature. He governs inanimate nature, the wind, the sea, the fire, and the mind of man, the hate of the enemy and the love of woman. Everything submits to his mighty sway, and thus the runes were risted on all possible things in heaven and on earth. He is the spirit of the world, that pervades everything, the almighty creator of heaven and earth, or, to use more mythological expression, the father of gods and men.” [118]

The same visualization as presented by Anderson can also be seen in the 18th-century manuscript. In *Figure 3*, we can see Odin wearing his striped cloak, wearing a broad-brimmed hat, already missing one eye. On his shoulders sits two companion ravens, and in his left hand, he is holding a spear Gungner. Odin is also wielding a sword in his right hand. He is represented by a not-so-long beard and short blonde hair. Being one of the oldest preserved illuminations representing Norse gods can be considered a great work.



Figure 3: Odin [119]

[116] Anderson, Rasmus Bjørn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 25, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 217

[117] Anderson, Rasmus Bjørn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 25, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 222-223

[118] Anderson, Rasmus Bjørn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 25, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 260

[119] “Odin.” Wikipedia, February 9, 2007. Accessed October 25, 2022. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manuscript_Odinn.jpg.

Probably the greatest modern art visualizing Odin I would consider to be in Hanover, Germany. The limestone statue was established in 1902 and currently stands behind the Museum of Lower Saxony. Sadly, the statue was damaged during World War II and put completely back up in 1987. The sculpture was created by Friedrich Wilhelm Engelhard, who created many sculptures of other gods like Thor, Baldur, and Valkyries, and his best work, the Edda frieze. Friedrich made Odin sitting on his throne, wielding a great black spear. Same as in the illumination from the 18th century, two ravens are sitting on his shoulders, and also two wolves are by his feet. Odin is wearing a winged helmet, comparable to Thor's. After closely examining his armor, it looks like he is wearing light leather armor, maybe a fancy chainmail, with a leather armor skirt and a cloak over his back. And finally, he has a great long beard. This statue can be seen in



Figure 4. ^[120]

Figure 4 Odin in Hanover ^[120]

Odin plays a minor role in the Marvel universe. He is considered to be a father to Thor and adopted Loki. His whole name, Odin Borson, gives us us an idea of who his father is. His first appearance was in the August of 1962 in a comic book called *Journey into Mystery*. This is also the first comic book where the new appearance of Loki was presented. Odin's first movie appearance was in a movie called *Thor*. The god looks like an older man, as he has already grey hair and wrinkles. One cannot notice his golden eyepatch over his right eye. This would point out how Odin sacrificed his eye for wisdom. Although, in the movie it is not seen how he lost his eye. All we know is that Odin went into a battle with Frost Giants and came out with just one eye. In a movie *Thor: Ragnarok* the viewers could see a tapestry depicting Odin riding his white eight-legged horse Sleipnir, wielding a huge spear, wearing golden armor, and also wearing a golden horned helmet, similar to the one Loki wears in the Marvel universe. It could be said that Marvel's Odin is close to his original representation. ^[121]

[120] "Odin Enthroned • Pagan Places." Pagan Places, January 26, 2021. Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://paganplaces.com/places/odin-enthroned/>.

[121] "Odin." Marvel Cinematic Universe Wiki. Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://marvelcinematicuniverse.fandom.com/wiki/Odin>.

Odin also appears in some video games. The first of them is *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*. Playing as the main character, Eivor, the player visits the seer Valka and with her help, accesses the memories of Odin. The story shows us how Odin is prophesied to die by Fenrir and tries to deny his fate. He went to a Frost Giant Angerboda, the wife of Loki and mother of Fenrir, and together with Loki imprisons Odin. He is eventually freed and introduced to another method of salvation. Odin went to Mimir and sacrificed his left eye for freedom. He went back to Asgard, fighting his fate even more and binding Fenrir with a magical chain crafted by a master blacksmith Ivaldi. On the day of Ragnarok, Odin sits with other gods and drinks the mead, trying to be reborn again. Odin in *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* looks like a younger male. He has blonde hair, just one side of his hair is shaved and tattooed with a symbol of the raven. This could represent Odin's raven companions. The young Odin wields a bow as his weapon. ^[122] Eventually, the player comes to a point in the game where he has to fight Odin in a boss fight. Odin is much older, already with grey hair. He wears a long black cloak framed with runes and wields his spear, which he will fight the player with. ^[123]

In *God of War*, Odin appeared more in the sequel *Ragnarok*. In the first video game, there are more hints about the existence of Odin. As players travel through the world, they can see ravens circling. These ravens do not do anything related to the story, but for killing all 51 of them, the player can get a "Allfather Blinded" trophy. This would be considered the only performance done by Odin, as he doesn't directly appear in the game. In the trailer for *God of War Ragnarok*, we can see a hooded person in the shadow, which according to the official fandom Wikipedia is Odin. And that's what we see in the video game *God of War Ragnarok*. Odin appears as a one-eyed bald man with a tattoo over his right side of the head. He has a grey beard, but not long as he should be. His whole visage looks very old, like a grandfather. Odin is thin, wearing a huge cloak and a cap. His crows can still be seen flying around. ^[124]

[122] *Assassin's Creed Unlocked: Episode 2 – Odin*. Ubisoft, 2022. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wylQdkVVOac>.

[123] *Assassin's Creed Valhalla - ODIN Boss Fight (Assassin's Creed 2020) 4K HD*. Zanar Aesthetics, 2020. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgBJvoW51K0>.

[124] "Odin." *God of War Wiki*. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/Odin>.

Smite represents Odin similar to Marvel and also to its original look. Odin has a heavy armor, a horned helmet, and a spear. He also does not have a right eye, so he has to wear a golden eyepatch. Players can notice his symbol of the Holy Trinity, which he wears on his belly and also has on several of his skins.

The videogame *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* not directly presents Odin. After countering Hela on the bridge to Helheim, Senua is wounded, and her sword shattered. She then gains a new sword Gramr, which Odin broke during a battle and was forged again. Gramr was then used by the god Sigurd to kill the dragon Fafnir. For Senua to repair this sword, she must complete the Trials of Odin.

Although these mentioned games are one of the best at representing mythology, there is one game released in 2008 which was played mainly by strategy lovers. This game is called *Age of Empires: Mythologies*. The first game was released in 1997, but only the extension, *Mythologies*, concerns gods. Odin in *Age of Empires* has grey hair and a beard, only one eye, and a weird-looking helmet, similar to the one used as the Viking stereotype. When playing as Odin, the player will acquire a new unit – raven. With this new unit, the player can scout the enemy area. ^[125]

Nevertheless, Odin has also appeared in a relatively new game *Valheim*. “He is a mysterious black-cloaked figure with a single glowing blue eye, holding a walking stick in his right hand. A faint blue aura persists around him as long as he remains.” ^[126] Odin here does not do anything heavily related to the player. He randomly spawns and observes from a distance. He cannot die nor even be targeted or attacked.

[125] “Odin.” *Age of Empires Series Wiki*. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://ageofempires.fandom.com/wiki/Odin>.

[126] “Odin.” *Valheim Wiki*. Accessed November 16, 2022. <https://valheim.fandom.com/wiki/Odin>.

3. 5 Loki

“The world’s last day approaches. All bonds and fetters that bound the forces of heaven and earth together are severed, and the powers of good and of evil are brought together in an internecine feud. Loke advances with the Fenris-wolf and the Midgard-serpent, his own children, with all the hosts of the giants, and with Surt, who flings fire and flame over the world.” [127]

Loki is genuinely one interesting character, and he is no ordinary god. Being mischievous, he does no good to others. “He steers the ship Naglfar in Ragnarok. He borrows Freyja’s feather-garb and accompanies Thor to the giant Thymr, who has stolen Thor’s hammer.” [128] It is crucial to mention Loki’s parents, as it will be mentioned again further. His father is one of the giants – Farbaute, and his mother is a goddess Laufey (sometimes also called Nal – “needle”). Loki even has two brothers – Byleist and Helblinde. He alone also has two sons and then three more offspring, which cannot be really called humans. I will talk about them more in the next chapter.

Loki is in *Prose Edda* described as a man of a beautiful face, fair-skinned, but although his beauty, he is evil in disposition. His ability in cunning surpasses other men, but he cheats in all possible things. [129] Another author, Neil Gaiman, describes Loki as follows: “Loki is very handsome. He is plausible, convincing, likable, and far and away the most wily, subtle, and shrewd of all the inhabitants of Asgard. It is a pity, then, that there is so much darkness inside him: so much anger, so much envy, so much lust.” [130] Neil Gaiman also mentions that Loki can walk in the sky with his shoes that fly. He also drinks too much, and when he drinks, he cannot guard his thoughts or words. The book *Norse Mythology*, same as *Prose Edda*, tells us a story about how Loki and his children will cause Ragnarok, the end of everything, and he will not fight on the side of the gods. [131]

[127] Sturluson, Snorri. In *The Prose Edda*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 3

[128] Anderson, Rasmus Björn. In *Norse Mythology; or the Religion of Our Forefathers, Containing All the Myths of the Eddas, Systematized and Interpreted*. Chicago: Griggs, 1876. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65910/pg65910-images.html>. 2452

[129] Sturluson, Snorri. In *The Prose Edda*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 3

[130] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 17

[131] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 17

Not only did he cause the Ragnarok, but he was the one who also killed the god Baldur. When others were shooting at Baldur as he was trying to show that nothing could hurt him, he went for a mistletoe, gave it to a blind Hoder, and made him shoot. Mistletoe was deadly to Baldur, and he fell dead. When they finally caught Loki for his crime, they tied him to three rocks, the serpent's venom dripping over his face. When this happens, he starts shaking, and this is what causes earthquakes. After researching if there is any statue of Loki, it has been found that this exact scene has been sculptured – Loki lying on rocks, surrounded by three snakes. Like many other Norse gods, he is pictured as very lean but not as muscular as Thor at the top of the Djurgardsbron bridge. This Loki statue can be found in Stockholm, Sweden, at the Town Hall.^[132] The exact same scene can also be seen in the painting from 1810 by Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg. Although, there is also depicted Loki's wife Sigyn trying to catch the serpent's venom, as it is mentioned in the story. Loki is very interestingly represented in an 18th century manuscript from Iceland. On a few pages, there are illustrated few of the gods, and one page is contributed to Loki. Loki can be seen holding a fishing net.^[133]

As well as Thor, Loki is also one of the Marvel characters. The world could see him for the first time in a comic book called *Venus*, which was published in 1948.^[134] Marvel fans would notice at first sight that Loki looks nothing like today, as “the first” Loki was ginger with a sort of devilish look.^[135] In 1952 Marvel released comic book #85 called *Journey into Mystery*.^[136] There he started to look more to what we are used now. Loki has gained his hornet helmet, and kind of green look.^[137] Loki nowadays looks very tall, with black hair and as a part of his costume, he owns a golden hornet helmet that became his symbol with which he can be recognized even in other forms (Loki can be a woman, child or even a cat).^[138] Probably the most significant difference to the story told in *Prose Edda* is his relationship with others. In Marvel, Loki is adopted by Odin and so is a stepbrother to Thor, but it's still mentioned in his full name – Loki Laufeyson, who is his mother.

[132] Flipper1971. “Sweden, Stockholm - Statue of Loki with Snakes Stock Photo - Image of Loki, Sweden: 144005366.” Dreamstime. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.dreamstime.com/sweden-stockholm-town-hall-stockholm-city-hall-punishment-loki-statue-loki-snakes-sweden-stockholm-statue-loki-image144005366>.

[133] “Icelandic Manuscript, Sám 66.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, November 17, 2020. Accessed October 26, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icelandic_Manuscript,_S%C3%81M_66#/media/File:Processed_SAM_loki.jpg.

[134] “Venus (Comic Book).” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, August 20, 2022. Accessed October 26, 2022. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_\(comic_book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_(comic_book)).

[135] “Venus 6/2,” Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://static1.cbrimages.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/venus-6-2.jpg>.

[136] “Journey into Mystery.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, July 13, 2022. Accessed October 26, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journey_into_Mystery.

[137] “Journey into Mystery (1952 - 1966): Comic Series.” Marvel. Accessed October 26, 2022. https://www.marvel.com/comics/series/2032/journey_into_mystery_1952_-_1966.

[138] Marnell, Blair. “The Many Looks of Loki.” Marvel Entertainment. Marvel Entertainment, July 8, 2021. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.marvel.com/articles/comics/versions-of-loki-in-the-comics>.

But what about Loki in video game adaptations? Loki can be seen or was mentioned in some of the RPG fantasy-based games. Of course, being one of the Marvel universe characters, he can be seen in games like *LEGO Marvel's Avengers* (Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, 2016). Loki even has made his way to Fortnite, a battle royal video game by Epic Games. Although, his look here is exactly the same as the one in Marvel and can be worn as a skin for players.^[139]

Loki plays an important role in the *God of War*. However, players do not know who Loki is until the end of the game. One of the main characters – Atreus, who is supposed to be the son of Kratos and Laufey, is a small boy whose mother just died and went on a journey with his father to take his mother's ashes to the top of one particular mountain. Accomplishing his father in the fight, he uses bow ranged attacks and a small knife from his mother on melee range (Marvels Loki also uses a knife when fighting on melee; author's note). There are hints during the game that Atreus is originally Loki. One of them is his runic attack, where he summons with his bow a Runic wolf. Runic attacks were described in more detail in chapter 3.1. Atreus's connection with wolves is very important. In *God of War: Ragnarok*, Atreus stands with two wolves – Skoll and Hati, sons of Fenrir. Atreus shoot his arrow to the sky, and Hati starts chasing the sun and delays Ragnarok.^[140] No one knew that Atreus was Loki until the end of the game. Before scattering the dust of his mother, the boy and his father, Kratos, goes through a hall under the mountain that Laufey has sent them to. The hall was full of Norse god statues. When Loki touches one wall, a tapestry shows up. It tells the whole story of the game again – it knew exactly what was going to happen. Atreus finds out his mother was a giant, which means that he is also one. As Kratos talks to his son after saying goodbye to Laufey, Atreus says: "I guess there's just one thing I don't understand. My name on the wall – The Giants called me "Loki"?"^[141] In *God of War*, Atreus (Loki) is a small boy with ginger hair and scarred face, with light freckling and blue eyes. Dressed in hides of fur, he indeed looks like a Norseman. "However, in *God of War: Ragnarok* he appears to be between fourteen and sixteen. In addition, Atreus has grown taller, towering even above Brok and Sindri, has a bulkier build, and has a deeper voice."^[142]

[139] Jr., Joseph James Andress. "All of Loki's Video Game Appearances." Game Rant, July 19, 2021. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://gamerant.com/loki-video-games-fortnite-lego-marvel/>.

[140] God of War Ragnarök - State of Play Sep 2022 Story Trailer | PS5 & PS4 Games. PlayStation, 2022. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfJ4Km46A-0> . 2:10-2:26

[141] God of War - Scattering Faye's Ashes (Ending). VGS - Video Game Sophistry, 2018. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://youtu.be/VyzGBghdMDI?t=832>. 13:52-14:17

[142] "Atreus." God of War Wiki. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/Atreus>.

Because Atreus spent his childhood with his mother, who was a Norse god, she taught him how to read runes, and told him the stories of gods and other realms. As the game progress, players will find various runes which the boy can read and retell the mythological stories by himself.



Figure 5: Atreus (Loki) in God of War [143]

Loki can also be seen in *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*, and his story is complicated. His adventure begins way before the main story. In the beginning, there was another part of “gods” called Isu. They knew the world was going to end, so they took their own DNA and put them into humans. Loki was not one of these lucky enough picked to survive, but thanks to trickery, he eventually survived too. The story of *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* takes place in the 9th century. Loki wants to find and kill Odin, who was also “reincarnated” into a human. Loki befriended a Viking called Sigurd and traveled with him until they met Eivor – Sigurd’s sister. At that moment, Loki does not know that she has the DNA of Odin inside of her. Moving a little bit with the story, Odin chained Loki’s son Fenrir, as he was afraid of him. Loki hates Odin even more, and this leads to fighting Loki in a boss fight. After the fight is over, Loki indicates they will meet again. The trickster god in *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* has very short hair, just on top of his head, and the rest is shaved, making his short beard his main focus. Dressed up in light cloth armor he does not look like a challenge to fight, but he proves the opposite during the boss fight. [144]

Loki is fated to start Ragnarok. He will be the one to end the whole world. The god breaks free from his long-lasting prison and fights Heimdallr. They both kill each other. [145]

[143] “Comparison of Atreus in God of War 2018 and God of War: Ragnarok.” Reddit, September 18, 2021. Accessed October 26, 2022.

https://www.reddit.com/r/GodofWar/comments/pqnc8/comparison_of_atreus_in_god_of_war_2018_and_god/.

[144] “Loki.” *Assassin's Creed Wiki*. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://assassinscreed.fandom.com/wiki/Loki>.

[145] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 143-149

3.6 Loki's Children

“Loke had yet more children. A giantess in Jotunheim, hight Angrboda. With her he begat three children. The first one was the Fenris – wolf; the second, Jormungandr, that is, the Midgard-serpent, and the third, Hel.” [146]

Loki has met his giantess Angrboda in Jotunheim. The giantess is mentioned only once in the Prose Edda and only when talking about her children.

3.6.1 Fenrir

The first child they had together was a giant wolf god Fenrir. When the wolf god was born, he could not start growing. He was getting bigger every day. Odin found out that Fenrir is prophesied to be his death and swallow All-father during Ragnarok. Odin, trying to fight his fate, command dwarfs to craft a legendary binding Gleipnir. When the binding was crafted, the Aesir gods tried to trick Fenrir, by tying him up in an essential chain for the first time. Fenrir had no problem breaking it. They tried another chain, and again, the wolf broke it. Fenrir did not want to test his luck for the third time, so Tyr, the only brave god, put his hand into the wolf's mouth. Fenrir let himself tie up, but as the binding was getting tighter and tighter, he started struggling and bit Tyr's hand off. Fenrir was finally bounded and could not grow further. Gods tied Fenrir to the big stone, to which he reacted violently and tried to eat the gods. The gods thrust the sword between his jaws, so he would not be able to close them. Fenrir will lie this way, with open jaws, until Ragnarok. [147]

Fenrir can be seen on some of the ancient relics. As already mentioned in chapter 3.1 concerning runes and runestones, Fenrir was depicted on the Ledberg stone, where he devours Odin. That is one of many times, where we can see Fenrir on the rune stone. Another example can be found on Thorwald's Cross, on the Isle of Man (United Kingdom). There Fenrir is trying to eat Odin, who is throwing a spear at him. [148] Tullstorp runestone in Sweden shows a beast, which could represent Fenrir. [149]

[146] Sturluson, Snorri. In *The Prose Edda*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 32

[147] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 85-92

[148] “Fenrir.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, October 25, 2022. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fenrir>.

[149] Olsson, Sven-Olle R, and Svern Rosborn. “Tullstörpsstenen.” 2014. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://skanskaakademien.se/images/Allmant/Tullstörpsstenen.pdf>.

In most media, Fenrir is presented as a big black wolf. His actual appearance is not mentioned in any of examined resources. All that is mentioned is only concerning his height and how fast he is growing. Not many years ago, the legendary wolf appeared for the first time in *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*. Players could see him as a still averaged size wolf, locked in a cage, which he would still fit in. As the story progresses, Fenrir acquires almost undead visualization. He already grew up to his monstrosity. Golden glowing eyes, huge snout ready to kill. His fur is entirely black, but in some spots, Fenrir looks abraded, wounded, or bleeding. On his back is located a huge golden rune band. Unfortunately, the player cannot see the band full, so the Fenrir runes remain a mystery. ^[150]

Fenrir can also be seen in *God of War: Ragnarok*. At the beginning of the game, Fenrir is a wolf owned by Loki. For Loki, Fenrir is his family and someone he takes care of. Not a few minutes into the game, Fenrir dies of sickness, and his soul leaves his body. Atreus casts a spell, so his friend's soul is transferred into a knife. Atreus uses Fenrir's soul during the battle with Garm. His little soul enters the former prisoner of Helheim, which resurrects Fenrir, who aids them during Ragnarok. ^[151] Fenrir looks like a normal-looking wolf, except for his height. He has huge claws and fangs that can be seen even with his closed mouth. Fenrir's half face is white-marked, otherwise, his whole body is dark colored in black/grey. Atreus and Kratos also sometimes call him a "Good boy". ^[152]



Figure 6: Fenrir in God of War: Ragnarok ^[153]

[150] "Fenrir." Assassin's Creed Wiki. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://assassinscreed.fandom.com/wiki/Fenrir?so=search>.

[151] "Fenrir." God of War Wiki. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/Fenrir>.

[152] "God of War Wiki." Fandom. Accessed November 2, 2022. https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/God_of_War_Wiki.

[153] "Fenrir." God of War Wiki. Accessed November 2, 2022. <https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/Fenrir>.

3.6.2 Jormungandr

According to the *Prose Edda*, Jormungandr is the second child of Loki. ^[154] As mentioned in the chapter about runestones 3.1, the Altuna runestone display Thor trying to fish the Jormungandr. That is one of the most common illustrations we can find. In this myth, Thor went out of Asgard to go sea fishing in a rowboat. He went together with Hymir, who would not let him row the boat alone because of the way Thor looked. Thor has distinguished as a weak young boy. The distinguished god was starting to get angry and wanted to set the hammer ringing on the Hymir's head, but he controlled himself. Hymir told him to get his own bait, and Thor did so. He brought an ox head as bait for the fish. They arrived at the place where Hymir was accustomed to sit and catch flat fish. Thor wanted to row even further, but the giant warned him, that they will enter the waters of the Midgard serpent. When Thor was satisfied with the fishing spot, he took out his bait and threw it. The Midgard serpent Jormungandr snapped on the ox head and the big hook stuck in the roof of its mouth. It wiggled so hard that even Thor's fists knocked on the gunwale. Thor became angry and using all of his strength; he dug in his heels so hard that both of them went through the boat. Thor drew the serpent up on the boat and wanted to smash it with his hammer, Hymir took his knife and set the sea serpent free. Thor was furious and waded ashore. ^[155]

Portrayed in Figure 5, we can see giant Midgard serpent Jormungandr leaping towards the ox head, as depicted in this tale. ^[156]



Figure 7 Jormungandr ^[157]

[154] Sturluson, Snorri. In *The Prose Edda*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 32

[155] Sturluson, Snorri. In *The Prose Edda*. London: Penguin Classics, 2005. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=62028&kod=ARL100252>. 32

[156] Gaiman, Neil. In *Norse Mythology*. Praha: Argo, 2017. 187-200

[157] Jungpionier. "Jörmungandr in the Edda Oblongata." World History Encyclopedia, October 21, 2022. Accessed October 13, 2022. <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/13622/jormungandr-in-the-edda-oblongata/>.

Jormungandr in this illustration has a terrible-looking head, almost looking like some degenerated cow, with ears similar to the oxen one. In the middle of his forehead, one big horn takes place. What is interesting is the fact that he looks like a lindworm – a mythological animal appearing in the 11th century in Sweden on some runestones. “The creature appearing as wingless with a serpentine body, dragon’s head, scaled skin and two clawed forelimbs.” We can see the same in *Figure 7*. The green tongue of Jormungandr on this illumination could represent his venom which will one day kill Thor during Ragnarok.

Jormungandr takes an essential role in *God of War*. He becomes an ally with the main characters of this game, Kratos and Atreus; after they wake him. According to Freya in game, the Midgard serpent had a battle with Thor, which could be felt across all of the nine realms. One time, when Kratos acquired the head of Mimir, they are acknowledged that Jormungandr will start a Ragnarok, where he manages to devour Thor. The serpent holds strong hatred against Thor and Odin, because they massacred giants, and the serpent is the last of his kind. Kratos with Atreus asked the giant for help when fighting Baldur, and so he did – then he disappears and is never seen in the game. Atreus calls Jormungandr in the ancient Norse language, which later helps us reveal the boy’s secret, which even he doesn’t know. ^[158]

In *God of War*, Jormungandr is portrayed as an ancient being. He has no legs or horns, and looks like a giant snake. His representation in-game looks more fundamental than the one in *Figure 2*. The Earth serpent’s body is covered in scales and moss, as he spends his whole life living in the water. His movements are fluent, he acts wisely, although when it comes to fighting, Jormungandr is very agile and has no complications going over obstacles to help his friends. ^[159]

The giant Earth serpent can also be found in *Smite*. Here he is a character that the player can play as. He has multiple abilities which comparable to *God of War* – venom, speed, and durability. It can move incredibly fast when jumping on other characters to kill them. Jormungandr also possesses a poison, which is his advantage, besides his giant body. Both of these games have reproduced Jormungandr’s main abilities to his “actual ones”. ^[160]

[158] “Jörmungandr.” God of War Wiki. Accessed October 13, 2022.
<https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/J%C3%B6rmungandr>.

[159] “Jörmungandr.” God of War Wiki. Accessed October 13, 2022.
https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/J%C3%B6rmungandr?file=World_Serpent_full_body.jpg.

[160] “Jormungandr.” Smitgame.com. Accessed October 13, 2022.
<https://www.smitgame.com/gods/jormungandr#:~:text=There%20is%20a%20single%20being,the%20light%20from%20the%20sun.>

3.6.3 Hel

The youngest of them all was Hel. Just like her siblings, even she was banished, as Odin feared his fate. Hel was cast into Niflheim and given power over the nine worlds. She should deal with people who die from sickness and old age – or those who do not make it to Valhalla. In Niflheim, she has a splendid mansion surrounded by a great wall. Hel has a man-servant whose name is Ganglate, and her maid-servant is Ganglot. One half of Hel is blue, and the other half looks like flesh. She is easily known thanks to her image. ^[161]

Hel is one of the main characters in *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*. Leader of Niflheim, guardian of all the souls who did not die an honorable death. Senua, the main protagonist of the game, travels to Niflheim to get her dead lover Dillion back to life. After solving puzzles and finally making it through the guardian of the gate, Senua faces the mighty Hel. Hel's look is truly disgusting. Half dead, half-naked, no hair, black eyes. What is rest of her half-naked body is covered in runes. ^[162] This look is probably the worst one ever seen of Hel.

Hel in *Smite* is considered of two characters. The player is able to freely switch between her dark and light form, which also changes her spells. Her light form has the ability to heal and help allies, while the dark form does damage. When in light form, Hel looks like a beautiful blonde woman, and her dark form is beautiful too, just with black/purple hair. Her duality can also be seen on her various skins, as they mostly show two different persons – against each other, very similar, just one beautiful light, and the other one dead. ^[163]

There are not many Hel depictions in the real world, and the only visualization we have comes from old book sources like Prose Edda. Unfortunately, we cannot compare that much of a real-life representation of Hel to her video game depiction.



Figure 8: Hel in *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* ^[164]

[161] "Hela." Hellblade Wiki. Accessed November 8, 2022. <https://thehellblade.fandom.com/wiki/Hela>.

[162] Smitegame.com. Accessed November 8, 2022. <https://www.smitegame.com/gods/hel>.

[163] "Hel." Smite Wiki. Accessed November 8, 2022. https://smite.fandom.com/wiki/Hel?file=SkinArt_Hel_Default.jpg.

[164] "Screenshot :: Hela." Steam Community. Scarlizz, September 25, 2017. Accessed November 8, 2022. <https://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=1119642165>.

4. Conclusion

Norse mythology in video games have been appearing since the 1983. Games have made a great adjustment and changed a lot since then. These days video games have awesome graphic and immersive gameplay. Nowadays the two best concerning Norse mythology would be *God of War* and *God of War: Ragnarok*. These two represents gods and myths similar to the myths with decent edits to make them more appealing to the player. *God of War: Ragnarok* represented characters like Odin and Thor more accurate than *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* did.

If one would like to know more about Norse myths, he can play either *God of War*, where Atreus and Mimir tells the stories of mighty gods and creatures, or he can play *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*. In both ways, player would not get the full context and still the best method to know more about the myths is to read books. Prose Edda would be the best, but for some can be harder to read, even though it had been translated many times to fit the modern English. I would consider the book *Norse Mythology* by Neil Gaiman as the number one for someone, who wants to find out more about gods and even train their reading in English, as it is written very nicely and simply.

With *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* coming to the virtual reality is beginning a new chapter of gaming. It is possible that in a few years, virtual reality will expand in a such way, that players could fight gods themselves. Right now, they can enjoy only the Viking's life in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*.

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https://godofwar.fandom.com/wiki/J%C3%B6rmungandr?file=World_Serpent_full_body.jpg.
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