

THE PSYCHGEIST OF POP CULTURE

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THE WITCHER

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Carnegie Mellon University: ETC Press

Pittsburgh, PA



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Contents

Psychgeist of Pop Culture Series Edited by Rachel Kowert, PhD	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
	ix
Welcome to the Continent Rachel Kowert, PhD	i
Embodying Geralt Through Vocal Performance Doug Cockle	3
The Outsider Within Geralt of Rivia Through Monster Theory Seth Pierce, PhD	13
Ethics and The Witcher Code Christopher Leech	32
Monsters of Men Geralt and non-toxic masculinity Rachel Kowert, PhD & Kelli Dunlap, PsyD	53
Bardic Inspiration Jaskier's Music Through the Lens of Therapeutic Song Analysis Iliana Fernandez, MMT, MT-BC	75
What is Love? Triss, Don't Hurt Me Celeste Sangiorgio, PhD	92

Psychology of Attachment Yennefer of Vengerberg Marie Shanley	120
Resilience and Trauma Ciri Fiona Riannon Jared Kilmer, PhD & Elizabeth Kilmer, PhD	139
Authoritarian Parenting Tissaia de Vries Ashley J. Elliott, PsyD & Sarah A. Hays, PsyD	157
Paternalistic Leadership The Life and Times of Vesemir Hayden Jones	174
Psychology of Monstrosity Emiel Regis Rohellec Terzieff-Godefroy Amelia Herbst, PsyD	194
About the Authors	215
About the Editor	222
About the ETC Press	223

THE PSYCHGEIST OF POP CULTURE

Psychgeist of Pop Culture Series

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Over the last few decades interest in pop psychology has grown faster than our Netflix backlogs. This series highlights iconic pop culture content from television, film, literature, and video games through an examination of the psychological mechanisms that endear us to these stories for a lifetime.

Series titles

The Witcher (2023), edited by Rachel Kowert, PhD

THE WITCHER

Please note that throughout the book several acronyms are used to abbreviate the chapter titles from The Witcher series of books by Andrzej Sapkowski:

The Last Wish, TLW

Sword of Destiny, SoD

Blood of Elves, BoE

Time of Contempt, ToC

Baptism of Fire, BoF

The Tower of the Swallow, ToS

The Lady of the the Lake, LoL

Also note that when referencing the The Witcher Netflix series, the seasons and episodes are abbreviated. For example, “S1 E2” refers to Season 1, Episode 2, Four Marks.

WHAT IS LOVE?

Triss, Don't Hurt Me

Celeste Sangiorgio, PhD

Why are individuals attracted to some people and not others; what makes affection grow into relationships or wither, like a rose of remembrance, into apathy?

Characters in *The Witcher* are driven towards each other by the same forces that drive love and intimacy in our world – familiarity, communication, and reciprocity – but are also driven by and create tangible, observable magic within their romances.

Rejection and acceptance are baked into Triss Merigold's romance and intimacy throughout the course of the novels and games. She kindles, loses, rekindles, loses, and... changes her romance with Geralt over the years of *The Witcher* stories. She is woven into Geralt, Yennefer, and Ciri's family unit, with unique relationships and shared experiences with each person. Triss is accepted and rejected in turn at royal courts, secret societies, and

by witchers, sorceresses, and other outcasts. What does Triss Merigold's relationships with others tell us about attraction, love, intimacy, and relationships – in our world and the world of *The Witcher*?

A Little Girl from Maribor, the Fourteenth One of the Hill, and Venerable Triss the Fearless: Who is Triss Merigold?

A sense of self – someone's understanding of who they are as a person – is anchored by personal beliefs, goals, and life experiences.^{1, 2, 3} A sorceress's sense of self might be anchored by her beliefs about magical values, as well as her unique life experiences.

While some experiences are shared in *The Witcher* – all individuals live in a world where magic is real and has affected their lives – other experiences are not shared. Elves experience racism; non-royals receive little protection, witchers are raised by witchers, and sorceresses often train at Aretuza. Reacting to, understanding, and interpreting shared and nonshared experiences makes each sorceress and person unique in their development and sense of self.

Triss Merigold's thoughts about herself, the world around her, and the people in it are presented and changed throughout the course of the *Witcher* novels and games. As her values change, her expectations of herself, others, and her relationships also change. Different names are given to her sense of self following different experiences: sometimes she calls herself “a girl from Maribor”; at other times she is called “the Fourteenth from the Hill” and “Venerable Triss the Fearless”⁴. Which of these

identities does Triss accept and which does she reject? Her acceptance or rejection of these ideas, or titles, about herself throughout the course of *The Witcher* series affects her ability to form and develop relationships with others.

Identity and values: Past and present family and friends

Witchers and sorceresses live within a network of overlapping and contrasting social and personal experiences, obligations, and goals – friendships, vendettas, politics, lovers, and otherwise⁵ (see Figure 1). Triss enters into *The Witcher* series with a similar network: she is friends and colleagues with Yennefer and she is an excellent sorceress, with relationships in Kaer Morhen, a membership in the Chapter, and a station in the Royal Court of Temeria. Her private sense of self – her personal beliefs, values, and desires are displayed in the text of *The Witcher* books as well.

It is rare for witchers and sorceresses to speak of their pasts – potentially due to their long lifespans. One reason for this may be that the early experiences that affect them are far enough in their past that they are no longer thought about; another possibility is that witchers, sorceresses, and other individuals with long lifespans are more affected by recent or sustained events.

Triss's references to her past offer small windows into how some negative experiences in her life history anchor her values in the present. There are multiple times where Triss seems to have negative experiences where she felt powerless or alone. When she discusses her childhood in Maribor, a coastal city, she rejects the feelings of helplessness she had – she is “not a little girl from a tiny tower in Maribor anymore”⁶. Instead, Triss describes herself

as a “free woman... belong[ing] to herself”⁷ and a “typical enchantress”⁸. For Triss, it seems like her magic and identity as an enchantress gives her freedom, a place in the world, and power that she did not have and presently values.

The few glimpses of Triss’s history with powerlessness can offer crucial insights into the origins of her values around helping others as well as the uncertainty and fear she feels about her ability to independently help others. At one point in *The Witcher* novels when Triss is sick and delirious, she yells “that someone called Kevyn kept his hands to himself, and immediately after that [declares] that destiny cannot be avoided”⁹. It is possible that Triss’s fever dream is not influenced by her past experiences; however, another interpretation is that Triss’s nightmare is inspired by an assault or danger she experienced in the past. In either case, Triss’s statement connects an assault to destiny that cannot be avoided. Her statement shows that she experiences fear and threats from others but responds that destiny, or justice, will meet those who threaten her.

If family or hometown experiences shaped Triss’s values, it is not revealed in her conversations with others, her inner thoughts, or her actions. Details of events and circumstances in Triss’s childhood and adolescence are unclear. Trade cities such as Maribor are diverse in income levels, housing, jobs, and people. Triss may have been raised wealthy or without money; she may have had siblings or had no family at all.

Early, core experiences like relationships with caregivers are universal – humans, dogs, wyverns, sorceresses, and witchers all experience a form of childhood, development, and the significant

THE WITCHER

relationships and experiences within. However, individuals with long lifespans have more opportunities over time to develop deep and significant friendships. Triss has long, and significant relationships with the sorceresses of the lodge, particularly Yennefer. Triss and Yennefer have known each other anywhere between 20 to 70 years, as Yennefer refers to Triss as a “friend” when meeting Geralt in *The Last Wish*,¹⁰ approximately 20 years before the events in the books and game. The mutual understanding and shared language of Yennefer and Triss’s friendship is shown in actions. They can read each other’s body language on a deep level, and each can tell just by looking at each other when one of them is upset or happy. In Triss’s words, they know each other “too well to be fooled” and each can tell when the other is “pleased” or “weary”¹¹.

ZONES OF IDENTITY AND CULTURE

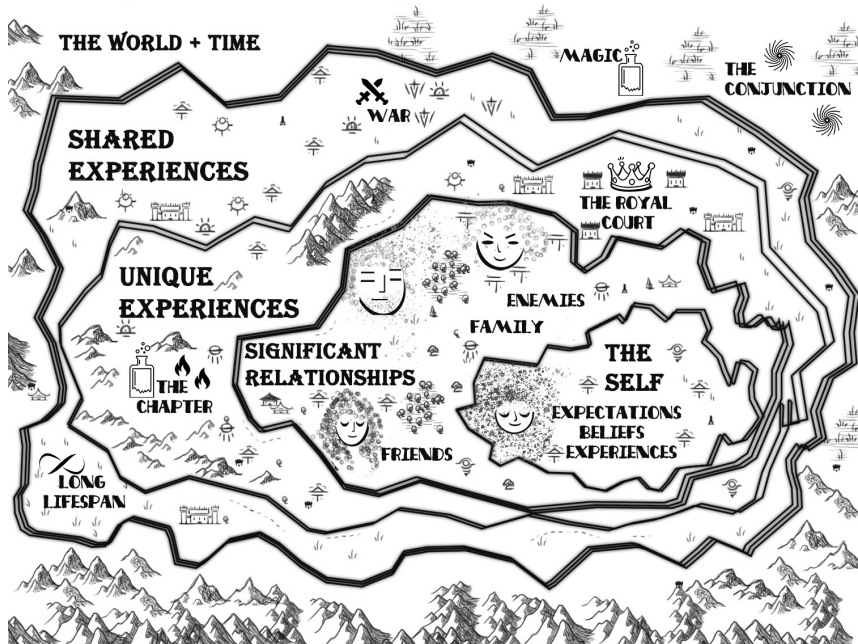


Figure 1. A map depicting Triss Merigold's identity in terms of cultural, personal, and shared experiences, adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Frame Model

Identity and values: Power, Fear, and Intimacy

Expectations, beliefs, and values that are cultivated through years of experience drive people towards decisions, relationships, and personal growth. At the start of *The Witcher* series, Triss has spent decades steeped in mage culture and politics. She has multiple, high-level positions: she works in the Temerian court, determines mage policy as a member of the Chapter, and takes on additional projects (such as assisting with Ciri's training). It is possible to connect her present positions to her past: she has obtained a number of powerful roles in the present; she is no longer powerless.

THE WITCHER

There are many possible reactions to meeting goals: satisfaction and developing new goals, identifying the next step, or changing values. Triss appears to have met her values for power and belonging in her work at the start of The Witcher novels, however, she has not stopped pursuing powerful roles, relationships, and actions. She seeks out powerful roles and relationships with conflicting values, like assisting the witchers and working for the Chapter. When Vesemir points out this conflict, Triss response, “But as for loyalty... I am loyal. And believe me, in this matter I can be loyal to both you and to the Chapter”¹² when asked if she could assist Ciri and serve as a member on mage organizations. Triss’s expectation that she can balance ambitiousness and relationships is continuously challenged, such as when she is unable to advocate for Yennefer while also serving on The Lodge¹³.

Power can be connected to physical and magical ability, but friendships, relationships, and other groups can be physically and emotionally protective as well¹⁴. It is possible that Triss’s initial interest in relationships with Ciri, Geralt, and Yennifer is motivated by interest in power and belonging. Intimacy, shared history and reciprocal interest and development, is expressed differently across different relationships;¹⁵ Triss developed different expressions of intimacy in her relationships with Geralt and Ciri, romantic intimacy and familial respectively. Triss and Geralt’s initial meeting and foundational relationship development is not shown in the books or the games. In her recollection, Triss links her interest in Geralt to Yennefer, stating that she was “jealous” and “fascinated” by Yennefer and Geralt’s

relationship; and later saying to Geralt, “I envy Yennefer... I envy her and you”¹⁶.

It is possible that Triss used a framework of familiarity with Yennefer to understand and create a mental image of Geralt, though it is impossible to know how Triss conceptualized and built her relationship with Geralt because this relationship developed between novels. Familiarity alone, or exposure through repeated contact with someone, can be sufficient to create attraction and long-lasting bonds, called the Mere Exposure Effect^{17, 18, 19}: Geralt is a frequently discussed topic among the sorceresses, and it clear that multiple sorceresses are interested in Geralt solely through familiarity, without having met him. He is approached and discussed by sorceresses on multiple occasions, including a mage cocktail party in *The Time of Contempt*²⁰.

Envy and longing

Beyond familiarity, Triss is forthright in her discussion of a common theme that surfaces in the novels: people envy Yennefer. Triss states directly that she envies Yennefer’s relationship with Geralt, whereas Sabrina Glevissig states, “congratulations, Yenna. I envy you. And you know how sincerely I can envy”²¹ and Philipa describes Yennefer’s relationship with Ciri as the reason “why we envy you” when speaking to Yennefer)²². Upon meeting Yennefer, Ciri is described as feeling “a burning envy... an overwhelming desire to possess what Yennefer had”²³. No reason in the text or games is given for why Yennefer consistently elicits envy in others.

Classic psychological theories, often referred to as psychoanalysis

or psychodynamic theories, could be used to interpret this envy as objectification: Yennefer is seen as an aspirational, ideal identity²⁴ for Triss and others to aspire to, as a woman, a sorceress, and in other social and personal roles. By extension, Yennefer's relationships with others become objectified and thereby possessable as objects^{25, 26}. Though complex (see Figure 2), object-relations theory boils down to the idea that people's inner worlds are alive and driven by a need to support or reject beliefs about themselves, others, and the world around them. There is more flexibility for multiple aspirational goals, or possible selves, in newer psychological models (see Figure 2). Triss's statements that she is "jealous" and "fascinated" by Yennefer and Geralt's relationship and her repeated interest in the "rapture" that she feels from the "tingling" and "pleasant, piercing vibration"²⁷ from Geralt's witcher medallion indicate that she sees Geralt at least in part as instrumental, an object of fascination, pleasure, and personal development.

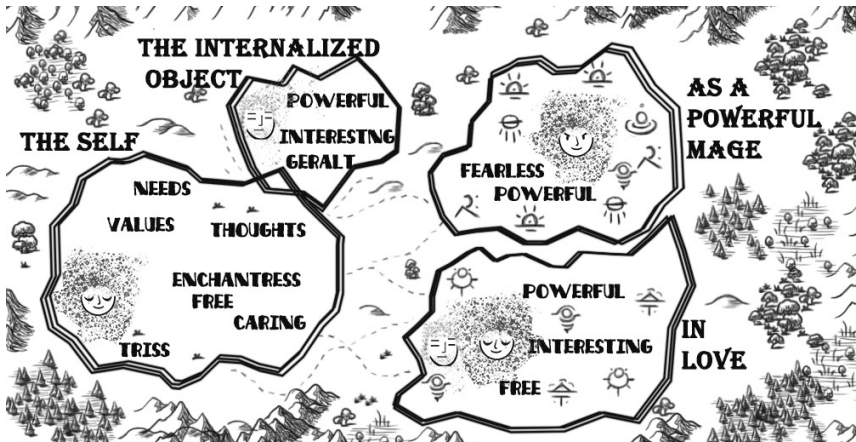


Figure 2. A map depicting Triss Merigold's identity in terms of her ideas about herself and personal goals, adapted from object-relations theory

Only human and not perfect

Triss's romantic desire and sexual interest in Geralt is present throughout the course of the novels: she thinks "I would prefer to sleep with Geralt in the worst," after their first interaction in the books and describes herself as "angry and aroused" when he does not demonstrate sexual interest²⁸. In her descriptions of her own actions towards Geralt, Triss thinks, "I've no control over myself" and says she "can't even think logically"²⁹. Triss's romantic and sexual interest in Geralt, does not appear to have ever been consensually reciprocated in the course of the novels. In her perspective, Triss recalls "seduc[ing] the witcher – with the help of a little magic" which led to "guilt, anxiety and pain. His pain"³⁰.

Sexual assault, physical abuse, and misconduct are pervasive in the culture of *The Witcher* series. Nearly every female main character either experiences sexual assault in the course of the novel or in the prior to the events in the novel. Triss appears to share this history with her peers in her experience with "Kevyn" that she recalls when sick and delirious³¹. Geralt is compelled by magic into sex multiple times throughout the course of *The Witcher* series; the guilt, anxiety, and pain that Geralt feels can be interpreted as a natural response to surviving perpetration of sexual misconduct. In this way, Triss is acting as a "typical enchantress"³² in the culture of the Witcher world; there is a clear history of magic users removing consent in their own sexual encounters and through their "breeding individuals into pairs" to create a child of Elder Blood³³. An argument can be made that it is unclear what magic was used to compel Geralt to sleep with Triss: it is possible that the magic Triss used could fall anywhere

on a spectrum from enhancing attractiveness to full subservience/compulsion. However, any pressure or misrepresentation in order to secure sexual contact with another person meets criteria for sexual coercion because it fails to provide the information that is needed for evaluating consent, therefore effectively removing consent³⁴. Triss's initial sexual contact with Geralt fits criteria of sexual coercion.

Geralt also must navigate, appraise, and express his own values regarding magic, romantic relationships, and sexual interest and misconduct in his response to Triss. Geralt communicates that he prioritizes preserving friendly intimacy with Triss, responding "Mistakes... are also important to me. I don't cross them out of my life, or memory. And I never blame others for them. You are important to me, Triss, and always will be. You never let me down. Never. Believe me..." in response to Triss's apology. Geralt's words appear to have made an impression on Triss, as she mentions them in a conversation with Yennefer, "I accept that, because I was indeed to blame. But I have to tell you one thing... He knows how to forgive"³⁵.

Negative emotions, such as guilt, are important signals in identity development and change: pain and embarrassment can indicate that someone has not acted in accordance with their own values^{36, 37}. This process, called cognitive dissonance (see Figure 3) can explain why Triss does not appear to use magic for coercive purposes for the remainder of the Witcher series: Triss experiences frustration, rejection, and anger in response to Geralt's lack of reciprocity in her romantic interest but never again uses magic to coerce Geralt into having sex³⁸. It is possible

THE PSYCHGEIST OF POP CULTURE

that these negative emotions drove her to reappraise her own values, reprioritize her social roles, and develop a new sense of self. Others often point out that Triss attempts to negotiate conflicting roles: loyalty to the witchers, her friends, and the lodge. Triss comes to recognize and reject indecisiveness in herself due to the pain it has caused her, stating that she “believed[d] them [the sorceresses of the lodge] when they explained that there are more and less important matters” and “no point saving people” she knows and loves but now feels “robbed”³⁹.

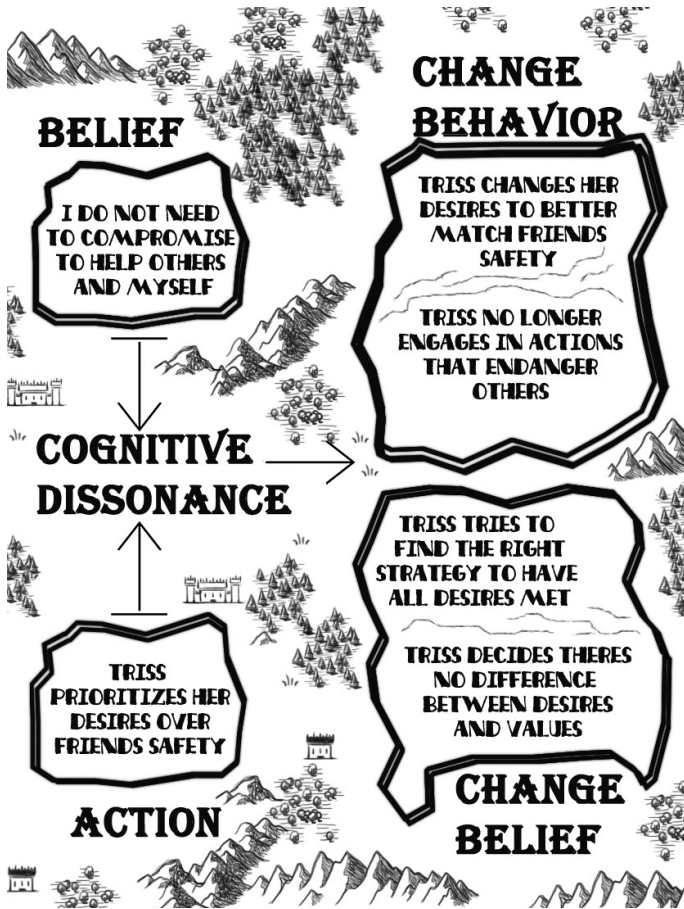


Figure 3. A map showing Triss's personality change through cognitive dissonance.

There are elements in *The Witcher* books and games that indicate that Triss changed as a result of feeling robbed: she became known as “Triss the Fearless”, a title likely given to a decisive person who can “commit acts of insanity” like “run and save” her friends “like a madwoman”⁴⁰. However, Triss is demonstrated to be working with Royal Courts and with the sorceresses lodge in *The Witcher*⁴¹ and *The Witcher: Assassins of Kings*⁴²; despite

this, she is an active, decisive supporter of the nonhuman cause in *The Witcher: The Wild Hunt* (CD Projekt Red)⁴³ game, indicating that her character change is maintained in *The Witcher* games.

Romance as Developmental Narrative

Triss, Geralt, and Yennefer are locked in complicated, overlapping intimate relationships. Sometimes, in the course of the books and the games, events that happened to Yennefer are transferred to Triss, further complicating these relationships and the shared history among these three characters. For example, in *The Witcher: Assassins of Kings*⁴⁴, Triss is compressed into a jade figurine. While she is captured; in *The Witcher* book series, Yennefer is “packed” and “kept in a box as a jade statuette for a month and a half” following the massacre at Thanedd⁴⁵. Furthermore, the text of a fantasy that Geralt shares about his future with Yennefer is used as Triss’s dialogue describing her fantasy of a future with Geralt in *The Witcher*,⁴⁶ Triss describes a fantasy she has of a future with Geralt: ““A house... Nice dream. You could breed horses and sheep, I’d tend the garden, cook meals. We’d sell what we grew to buy copper pots, iron rakes... We’d age with dignity. Evenings you’d play bagpipes of your own making, as a remedy for my gloom.” In the *Time of Contempt*, Yennefer reads a dream from Geralt’s mind and describes it back to him, saying:

“A pretty dream,’ said Yennefer, stroking him [Geralt] lightly on the shoulder. ‘A home. A house built with your own hands, and you and I in that house. You would keep horses and sheep, and I would have a little garden, cook food and card wool, which we would take to market. With the pennies earned from selling that wool and

THE WITCHER

various crops we would buy what we needed; let's say some copper cauldrons and an iron rake. Every now and then, Ciri would visit us with her husband and three children, and Triss Merigold would occasionally look in, to stay for a few days. We'd grow old together, beautifully and with dignity. And should I ever get bored, you would play for me in the evening on your homemade bagpipes. Playing the bagpipes – as everyone knows – is the best remedy for depression”⁴⁷.

The most complex overlap between Triss and Yennefer is likely the introduction of Alvin in the first Witcher game. Alvin is a young boy with identical powers, presentation, and needs as Ciri: he acts as a medium and shares Ithlinne's prophecy of world destruction, has the capability to warp through space and time as a magical Source, and elicits a paternal reaction from Geralt. Unlike Ciri, the gameplay of *The Witcher*⁴⁸ requires that Geralt identifies who he would like to create a family system with: Triss or Shani. Whether players choose Shani or Triss, Alvin ends up lost to time through the course of events in the game and returns as the primary antagonist of the first Witcher game.

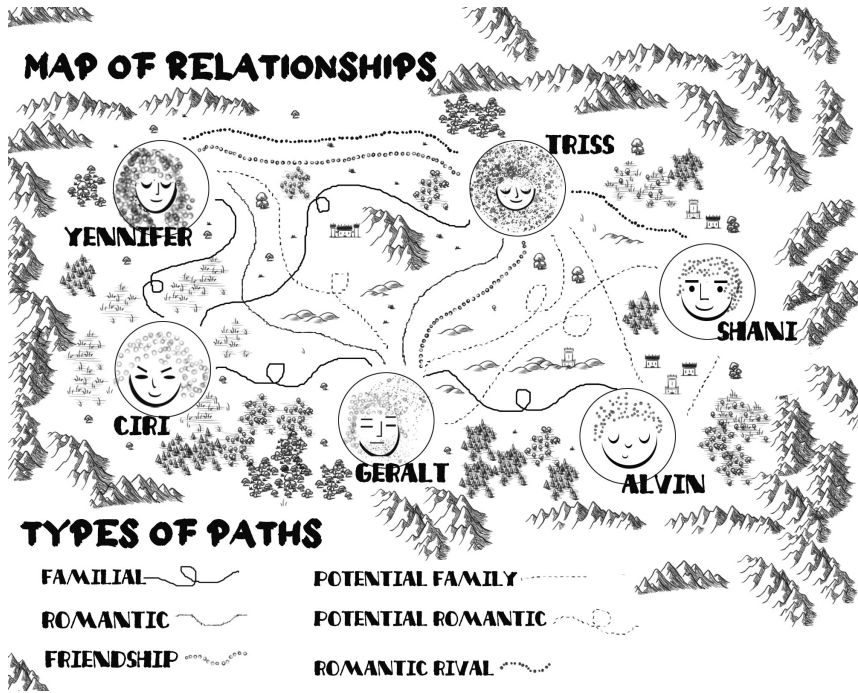


Figure 4. Map of stated relationships and potential relationships in the Witcher book and game series.

The development of Triss into a parental figure is a departure from her relationship with Ciri, who she refers to as her “little sister”⁴⁹. In describing her motivation to rescue Ciri in the books, Triss says “I owe it to Ciri... I love that girl like a sister” and Yennefer says, “you were the maid’s [Ciri’s] mentor, almost like an older sister, as you yourself said”⁵⁰. Triss, Yennefer, and Geralt are shown as complex and protective caregivers for Ciri, they teach her life, social, and academic skills and share their philosophies on life and the world around them. Similarly, Geralt mentors Alvin in the first Witcher game, which impacts Alvin’s philosophy when he’s returned as an adult and antagonist later in the game. Conversely, Triss’s interactions with Alvin are shown to be

THE WITCHER

prototypical, she limits Alvin's sugar intake and requests that Geralt act as a disciplinarian, and not impact Alvin's development.

Per the psychosocial stage model, (Figure 5) ^{51,52} individuals are motivated along the course of major life events to first learn and then share their identity with others through different types of relationships. Children, like Ciri in the books, are challenged through adolescence to become confident in, explore, and develop a sense of self. Ciri's identity and understanding of her own motivations was crucial throughout the books: her decision of whether to "leave a trail of death,"⁵³ become a "witcher-girl," or sit as a sorceress of the Lodge are crucial to how Ithlinne's prophecy is fulfilled.

LIFE STAGES & CHARACTERS





GROUP NAME	AGE	CRISIS CONCEPT			
INFANTS	0 to 18 MO	TRUST VS MISTRUST			
TODDLERS	18 MO TO 3YRS	AUTONOMY VS SHAME DOUBT			
PRESCHOOL	3 TO 6 YRS	INITIATIVE VS GUILT			
CHILDHOOD	6 TO 12 YRS	INDUSTRY VS INFERIORITY			
ADOLESCENTS	12 TO 18 YRS	IDENTITY VS ROLE CONFUSION			
YOUNG ADULTS	19 TO 40 YRS	INTIMACY VS ISOLATION			
MIDDLE ADULTS	40 TO 65 YRS	GENERATIVITY VS STAGNATION		TRISS	
				GERALT	
				YENNEFER	
SENIORS	65 PLUS YRS	INTEGRITY VS DESPAIR			

Figure 5. Table of Eriksonian stages divided into groups by age and crisis and indicating which Witcher character is in each phase.

For the majority of their lives, witchers and mages remain within two life phases: intimacy vs. isolation (adulthood) and generativity vs. stagnation (middle adulthood). The relationships that witchers and mages engage in can indicate which stage a specific witcher or mage is in. A sense of belonging, or intimacy, can be found in the groups that witchers and mages affiliate with (e.g., the Lodge, Kaer Morhen). The goals of the lodge, council, chapter, and witcher schools are oriented towards the concept generativity, to pass on knowledge and leave a mark on the

THE WITCHER

world⁵⁴, ⁵⁵. For witches, generativity is achieved by preserving the natural order and protecting vulnerable people; for mages, generativity is achieved by raising new mages and influencing the course of history. Triss is described as the “youngest among” the members of the Lodge⁵⁶ and presents as younger in her goals: she is oriented towards exploring her relationships and affiliation with others, likely placing her in the young adult phase of intimacy vs. isolation. Triss’s story arc throughout the book series focuses on her ability to identify and develop relationships in which she can express her authentic self. At the end of the books, she can be understood as having achieved this goal by rejecting the lodge and becoming the person who would go on to be called “Triss the Fearless” by history.

In contrast to Triss, Yennefer and Geralt are presented as being within the generativity vs. stagnation life stage. Yennefer is introduced in the *Witcher* short stories as seeking a cure for her infertility so that she can conceive. Geralt’s discussion of his personal philosophy is oriented towards generativity: he often discusses his place in the world and the impact of his help. As Geralt finds that he can be more fulfilled in his ability to be seen and share his skills in his paternal relationship with Ciri than in being a Witcher, stating, “being a witcher doesn’t interest me any longer. I’m retiring,”⁵⁷ before hanging his sword on the wall of an inn.

It is possible that Triss’s character, grown from her experiences in the course of the novels, transitions from interest in intimacy to interest in generativity, or the mark she will make on the world. In *The Witcher*, Triss is interested in developing a parental

relationship with Alvin, further supporting her developing interest in generativity. However, in *The Witcher* and *The Witcher: Assassins of Kings*, Triss appears to have returned to a balancing act among her relationships with the sorcerer's lodge, the witchers, and royal courts, culminating in the unfortunate events and persecution of sorcerers and non-humans in *The Witcher: The Wild Hunt*.

The Witcher: The Wild Hunt, the third game, presents Triss as an autonomous, competent individual who is committed to protecting others, consistent with the trajectory of her character that was established in the novels. Triss is fully committed to rescuing mages from Novigrad and supporting her friends despite risks to herself: she is Triss Merigold the Fearless.

Mutual and Unrequited Love

Throughout the course of the events in the witcher series, Triss Merigold becomes confident in herself as a strong, self-assured woman who shares her values of love and justice with the world around her. As a strong, self-assured woman, Triss does not need a romantic relationship with Geralt to reinforce her beliefs about herself, as in object-relations (see Figure 3) or cognitive dissonance (see Figure 4); she can now self-perpetuate these beliefs. Likewise, Triss as seen in *The Witcher: The Wild Hunt* accesses generativity through her actions in support of others and does not need Geralt to create a generative situation or role (e.g., parenthood). She is seen as a leader by the mages of Novigrad and goes on to both have a high status position and lead a community in Kovir.

At the start of the Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt, Triss and Geralt are well situated to begin a romantic relationship, defined as a relationship with shared history and mutual interest, respect, passion, and interest⁵⁸. Love can be thought of as combinations of three core components that are combined into different types of love that are found in different types of relationships (see Figure 6). These three components are: 1) physical and sexual interest (i.e., passion), 2) emotional and mental closeness (i.e., liking, intimacy), and 3) environmental, time, and domestic responsibilities (i.e., commitment). The most complex love, called consummate love, occurs when all three of these components – passion, intimacy, and commitment – are reciprocated among individuals. Other relationships call for different combinations of these elements: for example, companionate love (commitment and intimacy) is a common type of love shared among friends and family.

TYPES OF LOVE

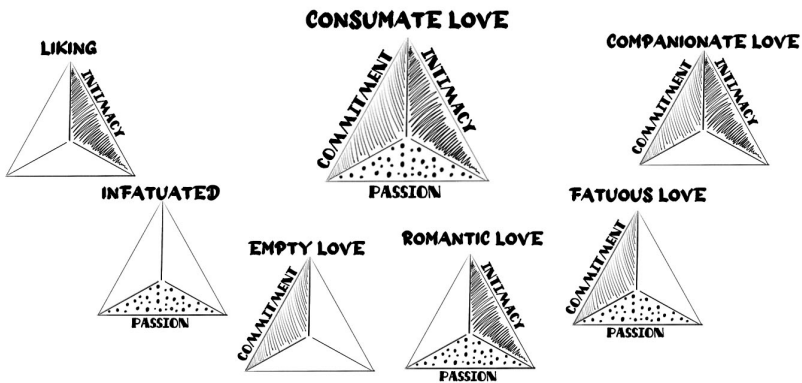


Figure 6. Sternberg's Model of Love, with different combinations of the core components of love into different possible experiences of love.

The three components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment are present in varying degrees throughout the course of Triss and Geralt's relationship. In the *Witcher 2: Assassin of Kings*, Geralt can choose to give Triss a rose of remembrance that is said to never wither as long as love is shared between the giver and receiver. Despite Geralt's romantic actions towards Triss in the *Witcher* games, the rose of remembrance can only be found wilted in Triss's home. One interpretation of this is that the story about love protecting a rose of remembrance from wilting is a story and is not true. Another interpretation is that Geralt and Triss did not share consummate love, with all three components of love, until the events of *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt*. Rather, it is possible that Triss and Geralt shared romantic love (passion and intimacy, without true commitment) or empty love (commitment and passion, without intimacy). Triss says that she kept the rose "as a warning," which may indicate that she also wants to remember her change and progress.

True love can be described in our world, but in the world of the *Witcher* books and games love and destiny have tangible, observable effects. In *The Witcher*, a werewolf curse is broken through the use of "true love," which may also be described by consummate love. Similarly, a curse that impacts Ciri's father is broken when he successfully fills his destiny by formalizing his relationship with Ciri's mother; the curse is broken despite Ciri's father stating "the fact" that he "never loved her"⁵⁹. However, there are several ways to interpret this statement: 1) it is unclear if true, consummate love has to be mutual, potentially it can work if it is sent in one direction, and 2) it is possible that Ciri's parents

THE WITCHER

shared mutual affection and Ciri's father is lying or otherwise has lost his understanding of their relationship over time.

Taken together, while it is possible that Triss and Geralt shared types of intimacy and different types of love prior to the events of the *Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt*, it is much more likely that they can develop and share true, consummate love during the course of the final game in the series, *Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt*. Triss develops her sense of identity and self through the course of the *Witcher* series: transitioning from interest in others as a way of knowing herself into understanding that she can interact with others as a way to express and share her values. In her new, confident sense of self, Triss is ready to enter into a mature, mutual relationship with Geralt, should he share interest in intimacy, passion, and commitment.

Concluding thoughts

Triss is a complex woman who has supported and injured friends and groups throughout the course of the events of the *Witcher* stories. As she develops, she becomes more self-assured and oriented towards sharing her values with others. Triss at the start of the series needs support and guidance, which she attempts to find by listening to others (e.g., the Lodge) or possessing their relationships (e.g., Geralt). Triss explores the discomfort that these actions bring her and uses this to propel her into new ways to share her values: by autonomously working in accordance with her own values. The *Witcher* and *The Witcher: Assassins of Kings*, games 1 and 2 respectively, depart from this trajectory, but Triss recovers her development and supports others and herself with confidence in the *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt*. In *The*

Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt, Triss has worked on herself and developed into a person who can create true, consummate love – with intimacy, passion, and commitment – with Geralt, should he be willing to.

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THE WITCHER

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THE WITCHER

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THE PSYCHGEIST OF POP CULTURE

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THE WITCHER

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