

Dr. Ross Clare

Writer, Historian, Game and Narrative Scholar

An experienced game writer and narrative designer with a PhD in video game research. My deep knowledge of games theory, representation studies, and world-building have informed my storytelling for almost a decade.

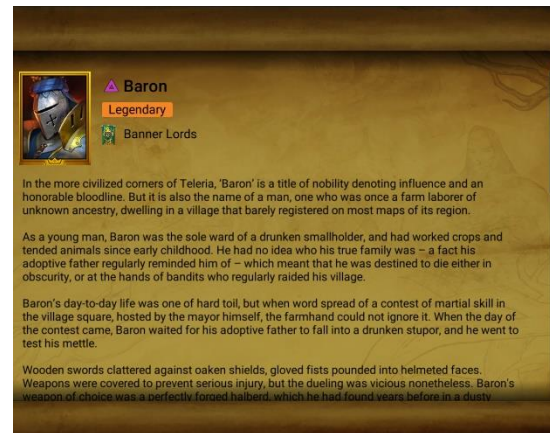
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Narrative Work

RAID: Shadow Legends

I have been tasked with writing biographies for some of the top-tier Legendary Champions.

You can find my writing in-game, but below, I've reproduced the complete biography of Baron, Legendary from the Banner Lords Faction.



In the more civilized corners of Teleria, 'Baron' is a title of nobility denoting influence and an honorable bloodline. But it is also the name of a man, one who was once a farm laborer of unknown ancestry, dwelling in a village that barely registered on most maps of its region.

As a young man, Baron was the sole ward of a drunken smallholder, working crops and tending animals since early childhood. He had no idea who his true family was – a fact his adoptive father regularly reminded him of – which meant he was destined to die either in obscurity, or at the hands of the bandits who regularly raided his village.

Baron's day-to-day life was one of hard toil. But when word spread of a contest of martial skill in the village square, hosted by the mayor himself, the farmhand could not ignore it. When the day of the contest came, Baron waited for his adoptive father to fall into a drunken stupor, and he went to test his mettle.

Wooden swords clattered against oaken shields, gloved fists pounded into helmeted faces. Weapons were covered to prevent serious injury, but the duelling was vicious nonetheless. Baron's weapon of choice was a beautifully forged halberd, which he had found years before in a dusty corner of his adoptive father's cellar. Many an evening after that drunken man had passed out, Baron had taken out the halberd to practice fighting.

To his own surprise, Baron fought his way to the final duel of the contest. His opponent had bribed officials to arrange their starting positions, such that the sun glared in Baron's eyes. But years of toiling in midday light allowed Baron to fight unfazed. After much feinting and parrying, his rival swung wildly, and missed. Baron brought his halberd down on his enemy's shield and

rent it asunder. All Baron had to do was knock his opponent off his feet to win the contest. At this point, as sudden as lightning, the spectators' cheers turned to screams.

Baron looked around. Bandits were attacking, and they were cutting down the mayor's guards with ease. The villagers fled. Soon, there was nothing but empty space between the mayor, who was frozen to the spot in fear, and the interlopers – until Baron ripped the protective layer off his halberd and stepped forward.

The bandits charged him. Baron charged back, running swifter than he ever had before into their midst. No matter how the bandits swung their maces or sliced with their knives, they hit only air. Yet somehow, Baron found his mark every time, as if he possessed some preternatural gift. Within minutes, Baron stood amid a pile of slaughtered foes.

Word spread of Baron's deeds, such that he was soon invited to the nearby city of Arkantis to be thanked for his service to the crown. Expecting only an audience with minor kingdom officials, Baron was surprised to find himself in the company of several Banner Lords. They plied Baron with questions about his early years. They were especially interested to hear how a peasant had come into possession of such a well-made halberd.

Bewildered and confused, Baron was later shunted from building to building, stranger to stranger until he found himself in the city's archives. There, a wizened old man unfurled scrolls, opened tomes, studied Baron's halberd... and revealed to Baron the provenance of his weapon.

It had belonged to a Banner Lord whose family were slain by a band of Siroth's minions. There was only one survivor, barely older than an infant. This matched Baron's own dim memories – he was, of course, that child. He had made his way to the nearest village, dragging the halberd behind him like a toy. He remembered being hoisted off the streets by an intoxicated man who probably sensed an opportunity for free labor. Only later did the man call him 'Baron', probably after the news of the boy's family's massacre reached his farm. In hindsight, Baron realized the man must have named him so out of a cruel sense of irony.

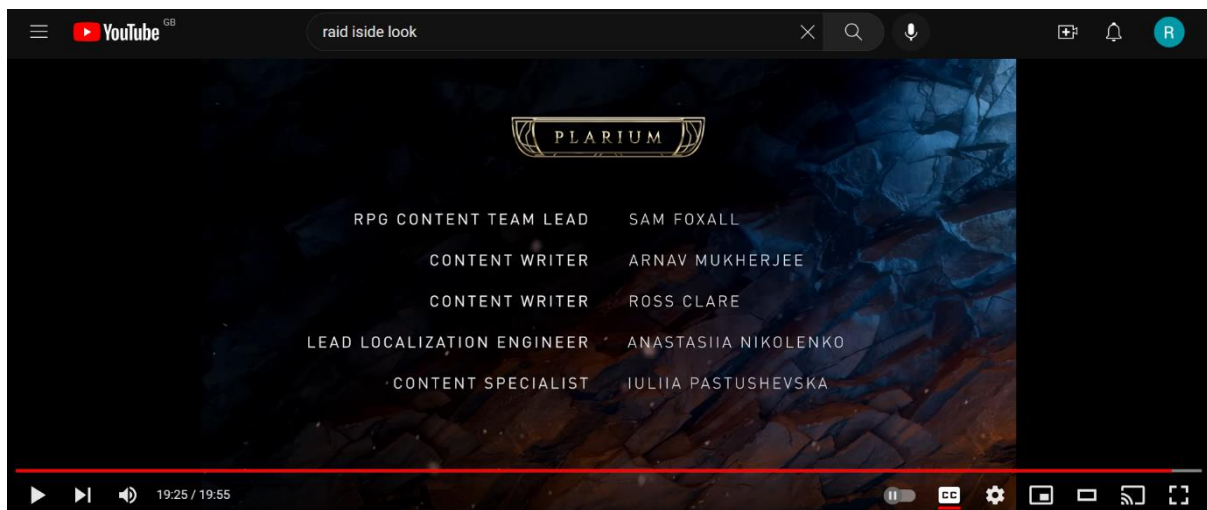
None of that matters now. Baron claimed his birthright: the Banner Lords inducted him into their ranks, his rags were replaced with a shining suit of armor, and an ornate helmet was placed upon his head. He came to wield his trusty halberd with great pride. It did take time for Baron to translate his amateur fighting skills into the finessed combat prowess the Banner Lords are famed for, yet he seemed instilled with an innate talent for warfare, as if the blood within him carried some memory of his noble lineage. Before long, Baron was among the most exceptional and decorated Banner Lords to ever safeguard Kaerok from the minions of Siroth.

Television

RAID: Call of the Arbiter

I was part of the team that made possible *RAID*'s animated limited series, *Call of the Arbiter*. Responsibilities included accurately timestamping video subtitles and promoting the series via Instagram.

You can find me in the credits of both the *Call of the Arbiter* series, and its accompanying *Inside Look* behind-the-scenes miniseries.



RAID: Call of the Arbiter | Inside Look | Part II - Assembling the Chosen

Character Work & World-Building

Stormfall: Age of War, Sparta: War of Empires, and Soldiers Inc.

“Known for hunting beasts in the wildlands beyond Darkshine, the Bone Hunter now seeks to rip into enemy lines on your behalf. When the blood-mood descends, the Bone Hunter sings a battle song of an age long past – one that stirs the souls of even the most doom-hearted of soldiers.”

Bone Hunter, *Stormfall: Age of War*

I am currently responsible for creating multiple new Units (characters) for three strategy/resource management games. This involves:

- Undertaking **creative reference research** for the Art & Design Department
- Liaising with Localization to establish details of proposed new characters
- Proposing and getting approval for **new character creations**
- **Naming** new characters and **writing character biographies**

I also lead the writing of new character biographies (see above and next page), which requires that I:

- Design backstories that **fit within**, and **complement, existing lore**
- Ensure the biographies **reflect** their unique Unit traits
- Achieve the above within optimal (i.e., short) character allowances



Unit descriptions

Eir's Herald, in *Stormfall*, written to reflect its inability to fight in PvP mode:

“Eir's Heralds follow in the tradition of the goddess' first defenders, whom she taught to fight against Balur's hordes. They stand like statues, silent and vigilant – until the Marennon approach. Only then do they spring into action, devastating the forces of evil before they can harm the innocent.”

The “RCT-TRAK”, a vehicular Unit for the near-future military game *Soldiers Inc.*

In the words of General Stratt, “the RCT-TRAK is what happens when computer nerds take over the military.”

The RCT-Trak came about because of the COM.Tigers, a group of “basement-dwellers turned radicals” (also General Stratt) who were caught by Excellia during a particular risky escapade. No longer content with simply hacking into private military networks, the COM.Tigers built a ‘mini-tank’ designed to infiltrate the very headquarters of Excellia via the water mains.

They planned to use an EM pulse to fry the HQ's security circuits and force a reset, allowing the mini-tank to download secret data from Excellia's research database. They were, of course, caught – and granted an offer to build a scaled-up version of their mini-tank to avoid a lengthy stay at a black-site prison.

Such was the genesis of the RCT-TRAK, a much longer Robotic Combat Tank with electronic warfare (EW) and counter-UAS capabilities. It will first obliterate any nearby enemy reconnaissance, and then promptly fire a cocktail of missiles. Whenever it is deemed necessary, its operators release an electronic pulse to further damage enemy vehicular units.

So, the General may have sounded like he was complaining about the state of military R&D in this crazy modern era – if it weren't for one further clarifying statement. “The RCT-TRAK is what happens when computer nerds take over the military,” he had said, “and I'm damned glad they did, ‘cos we ain't never seen a drop in battlefield casualties quite like this.”

The Lisovyk and the Mavka for *Stormfall*, based on Ukrainian mythology and created in support of Ukraine:

“The Lisovyk lay dormant in the woods of Darkshine for so long that most believed them to be mythical. But when war infringed upon their borders, the Lisovyk awoke, imbued with a quiet rage. In times of trouble, the Lisovyk creates a wall of gnarled wood to protect the defenders fighting alongside them.”

“Stand amidst the ruins of a village devastated by Balur's forces, and you will hear the whispered song of the Mavka. Peer into the dark, and you might witness her ghoulish lantern lighting the way. If the warriors beside her chant in the Mavka's name, their zeal for bloodshed may well be unleashed.”

UI Writing



I'm also responsible for writing **UI text**, which informs the player of the nature of new characters/Units, and mechanics of a new feature, and so on. The image above is a screenshot of a special Unit type in *Stormfall: Age of War*.

I am usually required to:

- **Create names and terms**
- **Investigate and establish** the nature of new features
- **Write instructive text** to inform the player

Character Design – Creative Referencing

As part of my role, I am responsible for **designing new characters**.

I lead the creation of characters from initial research and instructions to artists...



Guards covering the rest of his legs & feet, **all gold**:



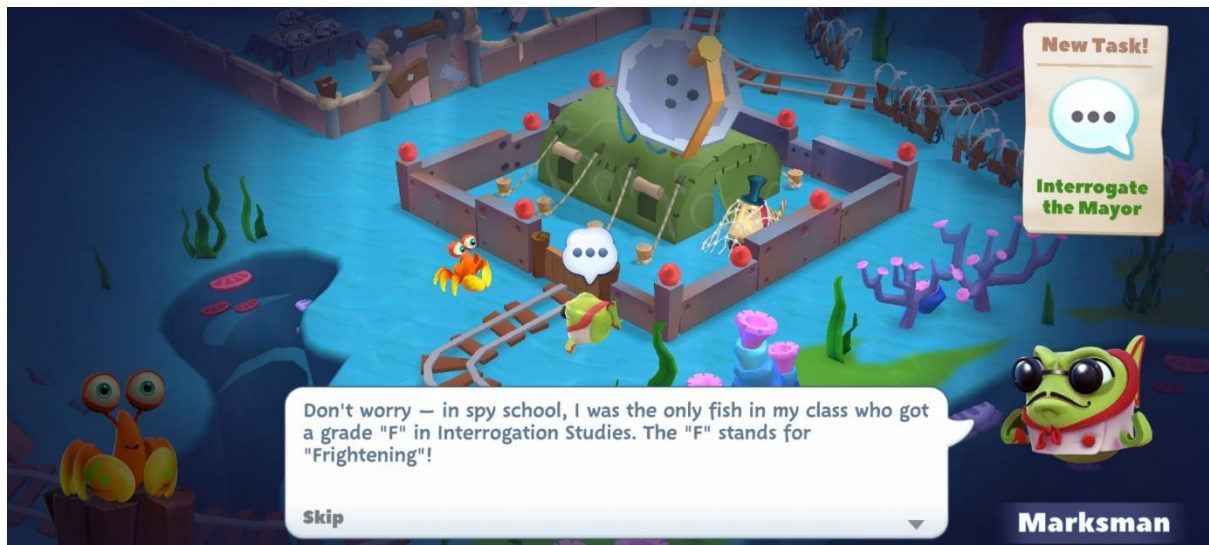
And Assyrian conical helmet:



... To naming and writing the character's biographies.



Dialogue Writing – *Undersea Solitaire*



I write character dialogue for the casual mobile game *Undersea Solitaire*.

The challenge is always to both **set up the next player task** and **wrap up the previous player task**. At every possible opportunity, I take it upon myself to infuse as much **character** as possible within tight character limits (infusing light comedy into dialogue is something of a speciality!).

It is also necessary to accommodate for **branching narratives** – which sometimes means making the tough decision to remove or modify a particularly flavourful joke.



Dialogue Writing – StoryQuest

For my work on “[StoryQuest](#)”, I produced diverse characters and provided players with event descriptions to situate their experience in a point-and-click/hidden object game.

I was responsible for adapting classic literature into virtual formats and ensuring narrative cohesion between ‘Books’. The player is presented only with text and static images (so, below, there isn’t *actually* a dog), so I wrote in such a way that conjured a sense of the would-be surrounding environment.

Please find an excerpt below from “Nicholas Nickleby”:

Scene 3: Holmes’ Hunch

Pre-scene Dialogue:

Screen 1

ROSE:

Our interview with Peg turned up little, so Holmes suggested we go directly to Wackford Squeers’ property and search there for the stolen will. After making our way through the secluded woods, we located Squeers’ grounds.

Screen 2

SHERLOCK HOLMES:

“Easy, boy! I was able to procure this... reasonably well-trained hound to help us search the property. Excitable little thing!”

Screen 3

ROSE:

“He’s adorable!”

Screen 4

SHERLOCK HOLMES:

“Mm, quite. If my hunch is correct, Squeers would have hidden the will somewhere that he, and only he, would be familiar with.”

Screen 5

SHERLOCK HOLMES:

“I do not believe Squeers would hide the will inside his house. He knows as well as anyone, that’s where hopeful thieves would begin their search. We’ll start here, outside. Let’s make haste before Squeers returns home. Come now, little pup!”

Scene 4: Hound's Scent

Pre-scene Dialogue:

Screen 1

ROSE:

What little sunlight could make its way through the trees began swiftly to fade as our search wore on. Just as we were running out of places to look, our faithful hound began barking and snuffling at a run-down shed hidden under dense foliage.

Screen 2

SHERLOCK HOLMES:

"Good boy! The hound sniffed out the freshly dug ground behind this shed. See? The will was buried here, inside a lockbox. None but Squeers could know it was here - why, without this dog, we would've missed it ourselves."

Screen 3

ROSE:

"Oh, good dog! Who's a good dog?"

Screen 4

SHERLOCK HOLMES:

"Never bet against a hound's sense of smell!!"

Post-scene Dialogue:

Screen 1

ROSE:

Having recovered the will and secured Madeline's fortune, Holmes and I were able to return it to Madeline for safe keeping. Now the story could be restored - Nicholas and Madeline could get married!

Narrative & Sensitivity Consultation

As Narrative Consultant for **Tuyoo Games**, I reviewed, edited, and wrote content to ensure a high degree of **cultural sensitivity**.

Typically, I would receive a package of content in PowerPoint, Excel, or Word format and write or rewrite material to ensure its suitability and appropriateness prior to release.

For example, I provided advice and writing for an unreleased project centred around a young female protagonist (Rachel) who, upon breaking up with her boyfriend, decides to change up her lifestyle and her looks.

I was **concerned** the content might be sending **the wrong message** – that this young woman was unnecessarily bitter, that she’s placing a premium on her looks, and that she’s making changes to herself to ‘get back’ at a man.

So, I made the following alterations:

(1) Beginning the narrative: “What happened to us? What happened to *you*, John? Am I not good enough for you?”

Rationale: As if talking to John (even though he is not present). Bold, direct, raw, distressing questions allow players to directly connect with Rachel state of mind: she blames herself AND John. I suggest splitting up into two lines – these are big questions.

(2) Mid-way through the narrative: “I don’t *need* to prove anything to you, John... I’ll live my best life without you!”

Rationale: Because it’s later in Rachel’s transformation, more upbeat. Best to avoid “regret” (the developers’ initial suggestion), as it makes Emily seem petty and unrelatable. Instead, Rachel realises that she’s doing this for **her**, not anyone else – that she **is** “good enough”, and that this can be a positive step forward in her life.

(3) End: “I feel so much more like myself – I can’t wait to start living my new life!”

Rationale: Optimistic, forward-facing, her new life is just beginning, and there’s an emphasis on her feeling good inwards **and** outwards. She feels **more** like herself, not like some other, different person. That way, we avoid suggesting that ‘looks are everything’, she just needed to get out of a toxic relationship with someone who didn’t respect her.

Note that, initially, she’s talking to an absent John – now, she’s talking about “I”, herself!

Excerpt from *Ancient Greece and Rome in Videogames* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021)

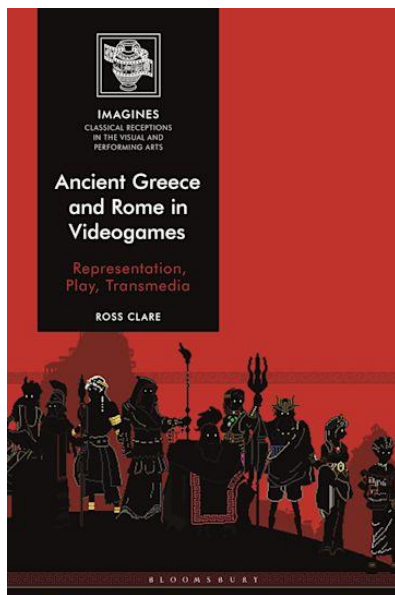
My solo-authored book, [published by Bloomsbury](#) (2021). Here, I analyse *God of War 2*'s blending of level and narrative design:

This skipping between visually shown and actively played sequences is replicated in *GoW 2*, where the Titan Atlas operates as both a character and a game “level”. As in the myths, Atlas here upholds a landmass: in the game, this is a significant chunk of the gameworld itself. The player discovers this as she moves underground, where Atlas is then introduced through a cutscene. When she regains control, the player must move Kratos across Atlas himself, using the craggy outcroppings of his giant face as ledges and shelves, navigating them as she would any environment in the game. The Atlas character is therefore transplanted from the mythological corpus into a non-playable character with a speaking role, and then translated into a surface upon which to operate. Such playful use of the mythological characters resonates with the ‘meta-hero’ nature of Kratos himself; Kratos is part generic Spartan, part Greek hero,¹ and part player, just as this meta-characterisation of Atlas situates him as part mythic Titan, part narrative mechanic, and part level design.

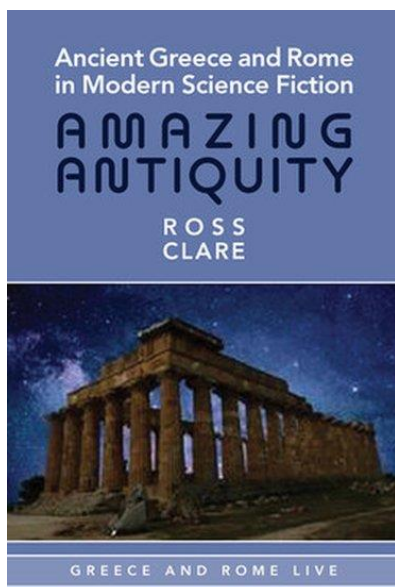
A theme therefore begins to emerge in which these videogames borrow epic film techniques, even if this is sometimes seemingly to the detriment of the play process. For example, the game camera in all three games often moves automatically as the player plays, and sometimes it intentionally makes Kratos harder to see and control to provide a breath-taking view of the surrounding scenery. In seeking to show the visually impressive gameworld, the game is programmed to operate against usual relations between game and player wherein the camera provides the best possible view of in-game events. When the player finally encounters and battles Cronos in *GoW 3* (Image 2.3), Kratos can barely be seen between the titan’s thumb and finger, but the player is nevertheless required in the subsequent sequences to operate her protagonist. The more the player moves and fights, the harder it becomes to even see Kratos. Present here is a sense of scope akin to the epic film, as the game is temporarily programmed to work against the usual dynamic in which the camera provides the player with the optimal perspective. However, although the player is sometimes potentially at a disadvantage, the uniqueness of interactive “epicness” is nonetheless revealed by the above instances as tonally

¹ Chmielewska (2016: 186), describing Kratos as a ‘meta-hero’ composite of Hercules ‘and other mythical heroes’.

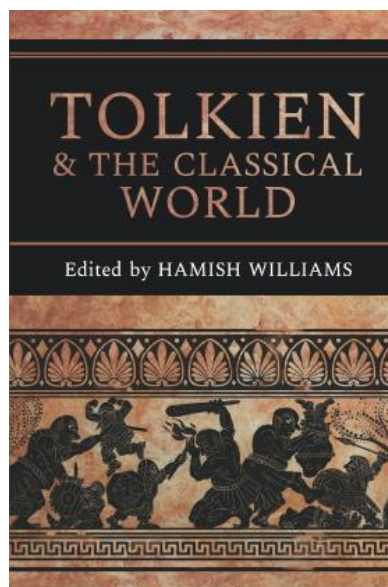
present in both watched and played sequences: Atlas is both active and passive, watched and played with, whereas Cronos in both acts as a foundation for a moment of epic visualisation and as an instance of challenging play. Such instances are medium-specific reactions to the demands of the epic tradition, splitting spectacle into “seen” and “played” and interweaving the two to generate the play experience. Consequently, this means that while the games do derive behaviours from their cinematic predecessors, they nevertheless adapt them to suit the needs of the videogame medium.



The book was born from my PhD research project. When finished, I went on to write...



... a second book on science fiction...



... and contributed a paper to a study of Tolkien.

***StarTrek.com* Article**

Tuvok Was A Champion of Men's Mental Health

[Published by *StarTrek.com*, March 3 2021](#)

warning: discusses issues of sexual assault

In the “Hunters” episode of *Star Trek: Voyager*, the crew is overjoyed to receive an e-bundle of correspondence from their loved ones back on Earth. Tuvok, too, receives a letter from his wife and children. Neelix, beside himself with joyful empathy, delivers the message. Tuvok acknowledges receipt – and continues his work. “You’re going to wait until you’ve finished the tactical review?” Neelix asks, dumbfounded. Tuvok stoically confirms, that is indeed his intention.

And yet when Neelix leaves the room, Tuvok is evidently – if understatedly – drawn to the message. And why wouldn’t he be? He hasn’t heard from his family in over three years. The glance from the console towards the letter is brief and subtle, but significant.

You see, Tuvok feels very deeply. We, the viewer, know this. So, too, does Tuvok himself.

Why, then, would Tuvok be so reluctant to show this to his colleague? To anyone, in fact? We’d be forgiven if we took for granted the characteristic ‘unfeeling’ logic of the Vulcan people, thanks to the decades-long presence of Spock and to the multitude of stoic Vulcan guest stars across the franchise.

But when we dig a little deeper into the reasons for Tuvok concealing his emotions, and into the unhealthy Vulcan means of handling those emotions, we mere 21st century humans might well come to make some very striking, and very familiar, observations.

Most revealing are the flashback sequences in “Gravity”, which show an adolescent Tuvok learning emotional control from a Vulcan Master. Young Tuvok is utterly brimming with feelings, and what’s more, he is infuriated by the idea that he must suppress them at the behest of wider Vulcan society. Why must we fight against the natural expressions we were born with? Emotions, the Master ripostes, are powerful tools – tools that must be harnessed and, ultimately, repressed.

The problem here is that, while the Vulcan Master is obviously right to steer Tuvok away from the unreturned passions of his would-be lover – a Terellian diplomat named Jara – he then teaches Tuvok to deal with it in what we humble Earthlings would deem to be wholly inappropriate and unhealthy methods. Self-control is indeed important, for a man and for those around him. But the Master says that love is the most “dangerous” of all emotions – and that it must in effect be ignored. You mustn’t risk speaking your heart only to be rejected for this will result in “shame”. That is, do not communicate how you feel, *ignore* how you feel, for fear of embarrassment. It is best, he implies, to ignore it all, hope it all goes away.

Vulcan society thus teaches both feeling and emotional communication **out** of young men. The sensations of love and lust are not absent at all in their future lives. In the same episode, Tom Paris will confront adult Tuvok: “You work hard to bury [your emotions], but they’re there.” This woman you’ve met here, he says, when you look at her you “look like someone who wishes he wasn’t born Vulcan.” If you felt you could admit it, you would.

If it isn’t obvious already, I’m explicitly comparing the culturally enforced suppression of male Vulcan emotion and the subsequent harmful effects this has on subsequent male behaviour - to the very same culture(s) and behaviours we live in and exhibit today. Of course, Vulcan isn’t an all-male society – who can forget the unsurpassable Kim Catrall in *Undiscovered Country?* - but when we see the ways in which young Tuvok is taught not to express feeling, the ways in which he carries this through into his adult life, and the profoundly flawed and harmful ways in which both Tuvok and Ensign Vorik (see below) deal with repressed emotions, we see an analogy with our male human selves/counterparts. Through the Vulcans, we are perhaps even forced to consider why men in our present-day society refuse to speak of their feelings and emotions (the good and the bad) even when they threaten harm.

Men and boys the world over continue not to express themselves. This, I’m sure we can agree, is a widely acknowledged fact of life even now in the 21st century. As many (though not all, and this is the problem, really) men can tell you, society insists it is important to “be a man”, to “man up”, and, of course, never, **ever** to cry. Such an outward expression of sadness or grief is liable to designate you as effeminate (whatever that really means), “less of a man” (whatever ‘man’ even is) and will embarrass deeply whoever might be around you (it won’t). Express yourself? No, men are told, it is best if you just maintain silence. Ignore the fact that residing within all men and boys is a persistent voice that wishes to be heard, one that when permanently silenced eats away at him and threatens both subtle and explicit harms to him and those around him. Never confess that a hurtful comment harms your feelings; don’t embarrass yourself by admitting to others that you have a personal problem; and if you’re straight, only ever approach women with an overabundance of confidence verging on entitlement.

How many of us know that these ‘suggestions’ are profoundly wrong?

How many of us nevertheless recognise them?

See what happens to those (Vulcan) men who are taught in this way, who are forced to keep their emotions silent and are not provided proper guidance for suitable behaviour. What kinds of terrible consequences might occur? Just ask Ensign Vorik (though you’d likely be met with embarrassed silence).

In “Blood Fever”, Vorik experiences the *pon farr* and makes lustful advances towards B’Elanna Torres. She rebuffs him repeatedly – but to Vorik, ‘no means yes’. He even forces a mind meld upon her – it is, in effect, sexual assault. Thankfully B’Elanna is able to fight him off (at least this time), though she should of course never have been put in that position in the first place.

Vorik is mortified when he must eventually explain himself, although he struggles to even appreciate what he has done and why. Tuvok is visibly uncomfortable when approached to assist. He is of very little help, despite being the only other (certainly senior) Vulcan aboard and when he does finally offer Vorik his help, Tuvok is uncharacteristically overly apologetic. This is

because – and both Vulcans make this clear – *pon farr*, being a sexual process that elicits very strong, otherwise ignored feelings, is never spoken about in public. It is far too embarrassing for a man to acknowledge another man’s problems, even if it ends up being a detriment to women or himself.

The Doctor claims this to be a “Victorian” attitude to mating – but in witnessing the combination of both the socially-sanctioned suppression of emotion we saw in “Gravity” and the violent emergence of bottled-up feeling present in “Blood Fever”, we might be inclined not to see this behaviour as a thing of the past. Not for the Vulcans – and perhaps not for we humans either.

It may seem as if I’m being unduly harsh on the male of the species, but these analyses aren’t without reason. Year upon year crime statistics in the UK demonstrate that male sexual assault perpetrated against women is a persistent issue, and that many instances of these are committed [against under-16s](#) by [boys who know no better](#). Expertise that is beyond me can tell you why – some psychologists believe that men ‘lashing out’ at women is [more about fear](#) than sex, that the only ‘acceptable’ outlet for handling difficult emotions is to act out in anger - but surely one reason for this hideous lack of respect for women’s autonomy might reside in the way we teach boys about girls? And, surely, in the way we teach boys about themselves?

Consider that, in the UK at least, consent wasn’t on the school sex education agenda until way into the 2010s. Then put that into the wider cultural context in which men and boys (UK and elsewhere) operate. It is not hard to see how a male-centric global society such as ours infiltrates the minds of the young. Men are powerful, they are leaders, they take what they want; women, so says everything from media to advertising, are pretty, passive receivers, the objects of the ‘male gaze’. Without acknowledging the uncomfortable feelings of male love and lust in both the real world and in the world of *Star Trek*, the reality underpinning Robert Graves’ famous quote threatens to persist in either universe: “Man Does, Woman Is”, man acts, woman is acted upon.

The men of both worlds need to learn to know themselves, and to respect others. So, the male youth of today’s Earth might therefore do well to have their own Vulcan Master teaching them to respect a young woman’s rebuff (as in “Gravity”), even while they might need to quit his lessons before he got on to ‘How To Pretend You Don’t Have Any Feelings At All 101’.

Our principal issue (only for the purposes of this article, not for the broader issue of assault) is in how this could all have been stopped if Vorik had **understood** what he was feeling and doing, and if Tuvok was able in the first instance to assist by **talking** to him. That B’Elanna was attacked in the first place is due to the fault of the attacker, Vorik; the embarrassed reticence of his Starfleet/Vulcan ‘mentor’ figure, Tuvok; and of the wider Vulcan society that oppressed the two of them in the first place, as seen in “Gravity”.

And at the centre of this is the inability to **communicate**, an opposition to the notion that emotions are perfectly natural provided we know how to handle and express them properly. The secrecy intrinsic to the *pon farr* in *Voyager* makes it harder for Vulcan men to understand what is and is not acceptable, and the wider fact that Vulcans are taught from an early age to suppress and disregard emotion forces them to pretend they don’t exist or are not a threat.

This is not in any way to excuse or defend those men who perpetrate violence against women in the real world (or onscreen). I suggest instead that providing clear and consistent advice to boys in their formative years might well prevent their acting irresponsibly and harmfully to women and girls in future. [The data suggests that educating boys in what is and is not right – rather than ignoring the thorny issue of action – decreases rates of assault](#). Certainly some clear communication, from education to interpersonal conversation, may have helped shape Vorik (and Tuvok) into healthier, positively expressive individuals.

Because they hadn't been taught this, Vorik is 'allowed' to make advances at B'Elanna entirely against her will, while Tuvok's ability to intervene and to pull Vorik back is stifled. Vorik needs to know that the limits of appropriate behaviour concerning his attraction – an emotional, lustful impulse he understands very little about because it is shrouded in shame - need to end long before they infringe upon B'Elanna's personal space. Tuvok needs to be able to spot this and put a stop to it. That both "Blood Fever" and "Gravity" emphasise the effect that unrequited love of a woman has on a Vulcan suggests the *Star Trek* writers and production staff appreciate how harmful the repression and subsequent explosion of emotions and feelings can be.

To me, the Vulcan way of doing things appears eerily like the 21st century real world's own methods of 'educating' men: get them when they're young; ensure they never show their true feelings; suggest that the eruption of bottled-up emotions (here, *pon farr*) is a more or less natural part of life ('boys will be boys', perhaps?) instead of facing up to it and challenging it; eventually, distance yourself from everyone around you until you blow up.

Yet *Voyager* also shows to us an exaggerated version of what men *could* be if they weren't tied down by such constraining gender norms. In the episode "Riddles", an alien attack disrupts both Tuvok's memory and his emotional stability. It is implied that his cognitive reasoning is affected, and that he loses self-control – but it would be more accurate to say he loses the **barriers** that prevent him from showing those emotions. It is perhaps unsurprising that, given the ability to do and say as he feels, *this* Tuvok is a very pleasant fellow (if a little childlike in temperament). An unguarded Tuvok is able to play, to make things, to become actual friends with the crew. Even Neelix! This clearly demonstrates that, without the cultural and social baggage, Tuvok would be a happy, healthy, creative, and expressive individual.

Unfortunately, though understandably, *Voyager* needs its Tuvok back. A 'cure' for this 'ailment' is made known to him, but Tuvok immediately declines. In initially refusing to undergo treatment to become 'normal' again - "I want to be able to have fun, with you!" – he is effectively saying that he is unhappy with his life as an overly logical, seemingly emotionless being who is forbidden to face the turmoil within himself.

Unhappy is the key word here – for this is the other side of the problem concerning men and boys' inability to talk and to express, it represents the other devastating consequence of bottling-up-then-blowing-up. Although the apparently superhuman Tuvok can deal with his ever-oppressed emotional state well enough for the most part, we regular men and boys of 21st century Earth perhaps cannot. Statistics and figures the world over from [the US](#) to [the UK](#) to [Japan](#) and everywhere in between reveal that with each passing year comes an increase in men and boys' self-harm and even suicide. This, of course, is because of the very strictures we place on them to 'toughen up', to not speak, to not 'be weak', to avoid empathy.

As I understand it, and in seeing these two episode as Vulcan analogies for very real problems, there are two likely outcomes for men who bottle up their feelings and refuse to communicate the mental and emotional issues they face: they will become depressed and thus risk bringing harm to themselves (whether feeling like they must live unhappy lives, or worse), or they will lash out when it all becomes too much, thereby harming others.

Despite the obstacles, however, well-adjusted, self-aware men can be wonderful. Tuvok, too, can also be utterly lovely. Most *Voyager* fans like Tuvok: on a more regular day he is intelligent, quick-witted, loyal, deeply respectful of his friends (especially Janeway). Let's not forget that Tuvok is an excellent dad. In "Innocence", he is forced to look after three children (or so we think). While he is often exasperated (children *are* often exasperating), he is also responsible, sensible, protective, brave, assertive without being unkind. He describes in this episode how he is able to live 'without emotion' yet still love his wife and his own children: they are a part of his very soul, they mean more to him than any identifiable emotion.

This is much closer to the Tuvok I want to be. And while Tuvok, Vorik, and the Vulcan Master often show us how men and boys *can* think and act when at their worst, in doing this they might allow us to reconsider what we both do and *don't* want to be.