

Reproductive Horror in Video Games: Tokophobia, Bodily Autonomy, and Player Agency in *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines representations of reproductive horror in *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne*, with particular attention to concepts associated with tokophobia, bodily autonomy, and player agency. Tokophobia refers to severe fear associated with pregnancy or childbirth and has been examined in clinical research through factors such as uncertainty, perceived loss of control, and concerns about childbirth. This study applies these concepts as an interpretive framework for analyzing fictional representations of reproductive fear in video games. Through comparative textual and ludological analysis, the study examines how narrative structures, character agency, and interactive mechanics shape representations of reproduction and bodily control. *Silent Hill 3* presents reproductive threat through Heather Mason, whose pregnancy is imposed upon her and becomes closely connected to the player's control of her body and actions. *Bloodborne* presents reproductive horror through a broader network of pregnancy, motherhood, loss, and supernatural reproduction within the mythology of Yharnam. The comparison demonstrates that the two games construct reproductive fear through different relationships between narrative control and player control. *Silent Hill 3* produces a more direct representation of reproductive threat because it places the condition within the playable protagonist, whereas *Bloodborne* distributes reproductive anxiety across characters and events that the player must investigate. The study argues that video-game horror provides a useful medium for examining reproductive fear because interactive agency can be placed in tension with bodily autonomy. This approach also demonstrates the value of distinguishing clinical tokophobia from the broader category of reproductive horror when analyzing representations of childbirth and reproduction in games.

INTRODUCTION

Tokophobia refers to an intense fear of pregnancy and childbirth. The term has been used in clinical research for several decades, although its definition and measurement have varied across studies. O'Connell et al. (2017), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of 33 studies from 18 countries, found substantial variation in reported prevalence. Nilsson et al. (2018) reached a similar conclusion in their systematic review of definitions and measurement methods, noting that researchers have used different instruments and thresholds to identify fear of childbirth. These differences matter when tokophobia is applied to cultural texts, since the depiction of reproductive fear does not by itself establish the clinical condition.

Research on fear of childbirth nevertheless identifies several concerns that are relevant to horror. Wigert et al. (2020) found that women described fear through uncertainty, anticipated suffering, and a perceived lack of control over childbirth. Sheen and Slade (2018) likewise identified concerns about unpredictable outcomes, physical harm, unwanted intervention, and limited participation in decisions concerning childbirth. These findings provide a useful basis for examining fictional representations of reproductive fear, particularly where the body becomes subject to processes that the individual cannot fully determine.

This study examines such representations in two survival-horror video games, *Silent Hill 3* (Konami Computer Entertainment Tokyo, 2003) and *Bloodborne* (FromSoftware, 2015). Both games associate reproduction with horror, but they construct this relationship through different narrative structures. *Silent Hill 3* places reproductive danger directly within its protagonist, Heather Mason. The Order seeks to use Heather's reproductive capacity

to bring about the birth of its god, giving the pregnancy a religious purpose that Heather does not choose. Her body consequently becomes central to a conflict over reproductive control and personal autonomy.

Bloodborne presents reproductive horror through a wider network of characters and supernatural forces. Queen Yharnam, Arianna, Iosefka, and other figures become associated with pregnancy, motherhood, or the production of offspring connected to the Great Ones. The game also links reproduction to the Healing Church's pursuit of knowledge and to humanity's attempts to understand powers beyond ordinary human experience. Reproductive events therefore occupy a wider narrative system in which human and supernatural forms of creation become increasingly difficult to separate.

The interactive nature of both games adds another dimension to this representation. Players exercise direct control over their protagonists, but that control is limited by the game's mechanics and narrative. Habel and Kooyman (2014) examine this relationship through the concept of agency mechanics, arguing that survival-horror games can use restrictions on player control as part of their horror design. Their approach is useful here because control over a character's movement or actions does not necessarily correspond to control over the character's body.

This distinction is particularly relevant to reproductive horror. In *Silent Hill 3*, the player controls Heather's movements, exploration, and responses to danger, yet cannot determine whether she assumes the reproductive role assigned to her by the Order. Her capacity for action remains considerable while her reproductive autonomy is restricted. *Bloodborne* creates a different relationship between player control and reproduction. The player controls the Hunter while encountering pregnancies and supernatural reproductive processes involving other characters. The Hunter can investigate or intervene in some events, but does not determine the reproductive processes themselves.

The resulting distinction between **player agency** and **reproductive agency** forms a central concern of this paper. Player agency refers to the actions available to the player through the game's mechanics. Reproductive agency concerns the character's authority over reproductive processes involving their own body. The two forms of agency can therefore operate at different levels. A character may possess substantial freedom of movement and action while having limited authority over reproduction.

The study asks:

How do *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne* represent reproductive fear through bodily autonomy, reproductive power, and player agency?

To address this question, the paper combines research on fear of childbirth with feminist theories of horror and scholarship on video-game agency. Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection provides a framework for examining the disruption of bodily boundaries and the relationship between self and other. Creed's (1993) concept of the monstrous-feminine is used to examine representations of female bodies and reproduction within horror. Oliver's (2010) work on pregnancy and the internal other further connects reproductive processes with questions of identity and bodily autonomy. Game-studies research on agency provides the basis for examining how these concerns operate within an interactive medium.

The paper argues that *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne* construct reproductive fear through a separation between bodily autonomy and player control. *Silent Hill 3* concentrates this conflict within Heather, whose reproductive capacity is claimed by the Order and whose resistance becomes a struggle over control of her own body. *Bloodborne* distributes reproductive horror among women, institutions, and the Great Ones, connecting reproduction to supernatural power and loss. Both games give players substantial control over their protagonists' actions while restricting their control over the reproductive processes that shape their narratives.

Their difference lies in the form of this restriction. *Silent Hill 3* makes reproductive danger immediate because Heather herself becomes the reproductive subject. *Bloodborne* creates greater narrative distance by distributing reproductive events among several characters and requiring the player to investigate their connections. The

comparison therefore examines how interactive horror can represent reproductive fear through different relationships between the player, the protagonist, and the reproductive body.

Tokophobia provides the clinical context for this analysis, while reproductive fear serves as the broader analytical category for the games. This distinction permits the study to draw on research concerning fear of childbirth without treating fictional characters as clinical subjects. The analysis instead focuses on specific concerns identified in that research, particularly uncertainty, loss of control, and restricted bodily autonomy, and examines how these concerns are represented through the narrative and mechanics of *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne*.

Tokophobia and Reproductive Fear

Defining Tokophobia

Tokophobia refers to an intense fear of pregnancy or childbirth. The term has been used in medical literature to describe both fear experienced during a first pregnancy and fear that develops after a previous pregnancy or childbirth experience. Researchers have also distinguished between fear of childbirth as a broad psychological experience and tokophobia as a more severe form of that fear. O'Connell et al. (2017) examined 33 studies from 18 countries and found considerable variation in reported rates of tokophobia. Their findings were partly attributable to differences in study populations and methods of assessment.

Nilsson et al. (2018) similarly found that fear of childbirth had been defined and measured in several ways. Their systematic review examined the terminology used across previous studies and found differences in both diagnostic criteria and measurement instruments. The authors argued that greater consistency was needed when assessing the prevalence and severity of childbirth fear. These findings are important for the present study because they establish tokophobia as a specific clinical concept with boundaries that should be respected when it is applied to fictional representations.

Fear of childbirth can occur at different levels of severity. A person may have concerns about childbirth without meeting the criteria associated with a severe phobic response. The distinction is relevant to the analysis of horror games because fictional narratives frequently represent fear through extreme circumstances. A character may experience an unwanted pregnancy, fear bodily transformation, or resist childbirth without the narrative establishing a clinical condition. Such representations can therefore be examined through the experiences associated with reproductive fear without assigning a diagnosis to the character.

The present study uses this distinction as its starting point. Tokophobia provides the clinical context, while reproductive fear describes the wider set of anxieties associated with pregnancy, childbirth, reproductive control, and changes to the reproductive body. This approach allows the analysis to remain connected to medical research while recognising the different purposes of clinical and fictional representations.

Fear of Childbirth and Loss of Control

Loss of control is particularly relevant to the present study. Research into fear of childbirth repeatedly identifies control as an important concern, although it appears alongside other sources of fear. Sheen and Slade (2018), in their metasynthesis of women's fears concerning childbirth, identified concerns about unpredictability, physical harm, unwanted intervention, and limited participation in decision-making. Their findings indicate that fear can arise from uncertainty about what will happen and from the perception that personal choices may have limited influence over the birth process.

Wigert et al. (2020) reached similar conclusions through a metasynthesis of qualitative research. Their analysis found that women experiencing fear of childbirth described uncertainty about the process and its outcome. Some participants also expressed concerns about pain, injury, and the loss of control over their bodies. The researchers noted that these experiences could affect how women approached pregnancy and childbirth, particularly when they felt unable to predict or influence what would occur. The significance of control becomes clearer when reproductive fear is examined through bodily autonomy. Pregnancy involves substantial physical changes, and

childbirth requires decisions concerning the body that can carry serious personal significance. Fear may therefore involve more than anticipation of physical pain. It can also concern who makes decisions, who has authority over the body, and whether the individual can influence the process.

This dimension of childbirth fear provides a direct point of comparison with *Silent Hill 3*. Heather's reproductive condition is determined by forces outside her control. The Order assigns a purpose to her body, while Heather attempts to resist that purpose. The conflict therefore corresponds with a concern identified in childbirth research: the fear associated with losing authority over what happens to one's own body. The same framework can be applied to *Bloodborne*, although its representation is less concentrated. Several characters experience reproductive processes that are controlled or influenced by supernatural forces. The player encounters these events through the Hunter, whose ability to investigate the circumstances does not give the character authority over reproduction itself. The relationship between knowledge and control therefore becomes important to the analysis.

Fear, Uncertainty, and Anticipated Harm

Fear of childbirth is also associated with uncertainty about physical and psychological outcomes. Dencker et al. (2019) reviewed factors associated with fear of childbirth and identified anxiety, previous negative experiences, and concerns surrounding pregnancy and birth among the factors examined in the literature. Their review demonstrates that childbirth fear develops within a range of individual and contextual circumstances rather than from a single cause.

The importance of uncertainty is particularly relevant to horror because horror frequently places characters in situations where the consequences of bodily change cannot be fully anticipated. Pregnancy can become frightening within fictional narratives when its outcome is unknown or when the developing life is associated with a threat to the pregnant person. The reproductive process then becomes a source of uncertainty about bodily identity and future physical condition. Kelly Oliver's discussion of pregnancy horror is useful in this context. Oliver (2010) examines fictional representations of pregnancy in which the developing fetus can be constructed as an internal other. Her analysis considers the relationship between pregnancy, reproductive choice, and the presence of another life within the maternal body. The framework is relevant to horror narratives because the internal presence can be represented as a source of anxiety when the pregnant character lacks control over its development or significance.

This relationship is particularly visible in *Silent Hill 3*. Heather's pregnancy is associated with an entity whose purpose has already been determined by the Order. The developing life therefore carries a significance that Heather does not control. Her fear is connected to the consequences of the pregnancy and to the loss of authority over her reproductive body. *Bloodborne* presents a more fragmented version of the same concern. Its pregnancies are connected to supernatural reproduction, and the consequences vary according to the character involved. Arianna's pregnancy, Iosefka's transformation, and Queen Yharnam's connection to Mergo provide different representations of reproductive consequences. These events are presented through separate encounters, so the player must establish their relationship to the larger reproductive concerns of the game.

Reproductive Fear in Horror

The use of reproductive fear in horror has a longer history than video games. Feminist horror scholarship has examined the representation of pregnancy, motherhood, birth, and female reproductive bodies as sources of anxiety. Creed (1993) argues that horror cinema frequently constructs the maternal body through the concept of the monstrous-feminine. Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection is central to this tradition because it considers the disturbance produced when bodily boundaries become uncertain.

Pregnancy can become significant within this framework because it complicates the distinction between the individual body and another developing life. Horror can intensify this uncertainty by representing pregnancy as unwanted, involuntary, or physically transformative. The result is a form of reproductive horror in which bodily autonomy becomes part of the conflict. This framework applies particularly well to *Silent Hill 3*. Heather's reproductive capacity is treated as a resource by the Order, and the pregnancy is connected to the group's

religious objective. The reproductive body consequently becomes a contested space in which Heather's interests conflict with those of the institution.

Bloodborne develops a different structure. Reproductive horror is dispersed across several characters, and motherhood is associated with the Great Ones and their attempts to produce offspring. The game does not provide one central reproductive protagonist. Instead, the player encounters separate examples that gradually establish a larger pattern. This difference will be important to the comparison. *Silent Hill 3* makes reproductive fear personal and immediate because the central protagonist is herself subjected to the reproductive process. *Bloodborne* creates reproductive fear through multiple characters whose experiences are connected by the game's supernatural system.

From Clinical Fear to Fictional Representation

The distinction between tokophobia and reproductive fear allows the study to move from medical research into game analysis without treating the two fields as equivalent. Clinical studies examine real experiences of pregnancy and childbirth. Horror games construct fictional situations through narrative, visual design, characterisation, and gameplay. The forms of fear produced by these contexts are therefore different. The connection lies in specific experiences that can be represented across both contexts. Uncertainty, perceived loss of control, and concern about bodily change are documented in research on fear of childbirth (Sheen & Slade, 2018; Wigert et al., 2020). Horror games can incorporate these concerns into fictional situations in which reproductive processes become threatening.

For *Silent Hill 3*, the most significant concern is control over the reproductive body. Heather possesses considerable freedom of movement and action, yet the reproductive purpose assigned to her remains outside her authority. *Bloodborne* uses a different structure. Reproductive events are distributed across characters and are encountered through investigation, so the player's relationship to reproductive fear is more indirect. This distinction establishes the basis for the two case studies that follow. The analysis of *Silent Hill 3* will examine how forced reproduction, religious authority, and bodily autonomy interact within Heather's narrative. The subsequent analysis of *Bloodborne* will consider how pregnancy and supernatural reproduction are distributed among its characters and institutions. The comparison will then examine how both games use player agency to represent reproductive circumstances that remain outside direct player control.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis requires a framework that can account for two related questions: how reproductive bodies become sources of horror, and how that horror changes when the audience controls the protagonist. The first question is addressed through theories of abjection, the monstrous-feminine, and reproductive horror. The second is addressed through game studies, particularly scholarship concerning agency and control in survival-horror games.

Abjection and the Reproductive Body

Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection provides a starting point for examining bodily horror. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva (1982) describes abjection through the disturbance of boundaries between the subject and what the subject separates from itself. Bodily matter is significant within this framework because it challenges the distinction between the body as a coherent self and material that has been expelled from it. The abject therefore concerns the instability of boundaries and the discomfort produced when distinctions between self and other become uncertain. Reproduction presents a particular case of this problem. Pregnancy involves the presence of another developing body within the maternal body, which can complicate conventional distinctions between individual identity and physical otherness. Kristeva's framework does not treat pregnancy itself as abject. Its relevance to reproductive horror lies in the way fictional representations can make the internal presence threatening, particularly when the pregnant subject has limited control over it.

Kelly Oliver develops this relationship directly in her analysis of pregnancy horror. She argues that horror representations of pregnancy frequently involve anxieties surrounding women's reproductive capacities and

choices, particularly when the developing fetus becomes associated with an unwanted or nonhuman presence (Oliver, 2012). Her discussion of films such as *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Astronaut's Wife*, and *Splice* establishes a pattern in which reproduction becomes frightening when the pregnant body is connected to forces that challenge the subject's control over reproduction. This framework is relevant to *Silent Hill 3*. Heather's pregnancy is connected to a purpose determined by the Order, while Heather herself rejects that purpose. The reproductive process therefore becomes a conflict over bodily boundaries and authority. Her body is treated as the site through which another being will be produced, while her own interests are subordinated to the religious objective of the Order.

A similar problem appears in *Bloodborne*, although the game distributes it across several characters. Pregnancy and the production of offspring are associated with the Great Ones, while human characters become involved in reproductive processes whose consequences they cannot fully determine. The distinction between human and supernatural reproduction consequently becomes unstable. Kristeva's theory allows these representations to be examined through their treatment of bodily boundaries without requiring every instance of blood, transformation, or physical abnormality to be interpreted as reproductive symbolism.

The Monstrous-Feminine

Barbara Creed's concept of the monstrous-feminine provides a second framework for examining reproductive horror. In *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, Creed (1993) examines representations of women in horror through feminist psychoanalytic theory. Her analysis identifies the reproductive body as a recurring source of monstrosity within horror, particularly through figures such as the archaic mother, monstrous womb, and monstrous mother. Creed's argument is useful because it shifts attention from the assumption that women primarily occupy the position of victims in horror. Female reproductive capacity can itself become a source of horror within the text. This does not mean that reproduction is inherently represented as monstrous. Rather, horror can construct reproductive capacity as threatening when it becomes associated with uncontrollable creation, bodily transformation, or a threat to existing boundaries.

Silent Hill 3 provides a particularly direct example. Heather's reproductive capacity becomes necessary to the Order's religious objective, while Claudia interprets the birth of the god as part of a desired transformation of the world. Reproduction therefore acquires religious significance and becomes inseparable from the game's central conflict. Heather's body is valued according to its reproductive function, which creates a conflict between her identity and the purpose assigned to her. *Bloodborne* presents a less concentrated structure. Female reproductive figures occupy different positions within the game's mythology, and their relationships to motherhood vary considerably. Queen Yharnam's association with Mergo differs from Arianna's pregnancy, while Iosefka's transformation presents another form of reproductive and bodily violation. These cases should therefore be examined individually rather than treated as interchangeable examples of a single maternal figure.

Creed's framework is consequently useful for identifying the relationship between reproduction and monstrosity while leaving room for differences between the games. In *Silent Hill 3*, reproductive horror is concentrated around one protagonist and one institutional objective. In *Bloodborne*, reproductive horror is distributed across several characters and connected to the larger mythology of the Great Ones.

Pregnancy and the Internal Other

Oliver's analysis provides a more specific framework for the relationship between pregnancy and horror. Her chapter "Pregnant Horror: Gestating the Other(s) Within" examines fictional representations in which pregnancy produces anxiety concerning what develops within the maternal body. The chapter identifies reproductive choice as an important part of this anxiety and examines horror narratives in which women become pregnant with beings that threaten conventional distinctions between human and nonhuman life (Oliver, 2012). This concept is particularly useful for *Silent Hill 3* because Heather's pregnancy is connected to the production of a supernatural being. The pregnancy is therefore significant at both the physical and narrative levels. Heather carries a developing life, but that life has a purpose established by an external religious institution. The internal presence consequently becomes associated with a loss of reproductive authority.

Bloodborne complicates the same relationship. The children of the Great Ones are connected to a form of reproduction that does not conform to ordinary human expectations. The game repeatedly places human characters in proximity to supernatural reproductive processes, while the player gradually discovers the relationships between pregnancy, motherhood, and the Great Ones. Reproduction consequently becomes one of the means through which the boundary between human and supernatural life is questioned.

Oliver's framework helps establish why these representations can be considered reproductive horror. The issue is not simply that pregnancy appears in a horror narrative. The relevant concern is the transformation of reproduction into a source of uncertainty concerning the body, identity, and the nature of the life being produced.

Agency in Survival-Horror Games

The previous theories address the representation of reproductive bodies. They do not fully account for the player's role. Video games require a separate consideration of agency because the player participates in the protagonist's actions. Habel and Kooyman (2014) propose the concept of agency mechanics to describe how games can structure player control as part of their design. Their study examines survival horror and considers how interactivity can be manipulated to affect the player's sense of agency. Their analysis of *Dead Space* demonstrates that the player's ability to act can itself become part of the horror experience. This approach is particularly relevant to reproductive horror because control over a character's immediate actions does not necessarily provide control over the character's body. A player may determine where a character moves or how the character responds to an enemy while having no control over the narrative conditions that produce the threat.

This distinction can be applied to *Silent Hill 3*. The player controls Heather throughout her exploration of Silent Hill and the surrounding environments. The player can determine how she moves, fights, and investigates. Her reproductive condition operates according to a different system. The pregnancy has been imposed through the narrative, and its purpose has been established by the Order. The player can therefore control Heather's response to the reproductive threat without controlling the reproductive process itself.

Bloodborne produces a similar separation through a different structure. The player controls the Hunter's movement and investigation, but reproductive events involving characters such as Arianna, Iosefka, and Queen Yharnam are not subject to direct player control. The player may interact with some of these characters and affect certain outcomes, but the reproductive system represented by the game remains outside the Hunter's authority. The distinction between player agency and reproductive agency will therefore form an important part of the comparative analysis. Player agency concerns what the game's mechanics allow the player to do. Reproductive agency concerns authority over the reproductive processes that affect the characters. The two forms of agency may coexist at different levels. A player can possess substantial mechanical control while the protagonist remains subject to reproductive forces that cannot be directly controlled.

***Silent Hill 3*: Reproduction, Religious Authority, and Bodily Autonomy**

Silent Hill 3 places reproductive horror at the centre of its narrative through Heather Mason, a seventeen-year-old protagonist pursued by the Order. The game's central conflict concerns the attempt to use Heather's body for the rebirth of the Order's god. This narrative gives reproduction a specific political and religious function: Heather's body is treated as a means to achieve an objective determined by others. The resulting conflict can be examined through the concepts established in the previous sections, particularly bodily autonomy, reproductive agency, and the relationship between control and fear.

Holloway, Rubin, and Kurniawan (2012) include *Silent Hill 3* in their study of childbirth representations in commercial video games. Their analysis is significant because it identifies the game's treatment of Heather's encounter with the god-fetus as one of the more disturbing representations of childbirth within their sample. They also observe that Heather is accompanied during the event, distinguishing the scene from representations in which childbirth occurs without another character present.

The game therefore provides an unusual case for the study of reproductive horror. Reproduction is central to the plot, but the player does not participate in a conventional pregnancy or childbirth mechanic. Instead, reproductive

danger is communicated through narrative revelation, bodily symptoms, character dialogue, and the final confrontation with the entity developing within Heather.

Heather and the Appropriation of Reproductive Capacity

Heather's reproductive capacity is established as a resource that the Order intends to control. Claudia's objective is to bring about the birth of the Order's god, and Heather's body becomes the means through which this objective can be achieved. The conflict consequently concerns authority over reproduction as much as it concerns the survival of the protagonist.

This structure corresponds with the concerns identified in research on fear of childbirth. Sheen and Slade (2018) identify loss of control and concerns about unwanted intervention among the fears reported by women in qualitative studies. Wigert et al. (2020) similarly identify uncertainty and limited control as recurring features of childbirth fear. Heather's situation is fictional and supernatural, but the narrative mechanism is recognisable: an external authority determines what will happen to her reproductive body.

The Order's treatment of Heather also gives reproductive capacity an institutional value. Heather is important because of what her body can produce. Her individual wishes have little relevance to the Order's objective. This is particularly significant because Heather's resistance is expressed through ordinary acts of refusal. She does not accept the religious meaning assigned to her body, and her eventual actions are directed toward removing the reproductive threat.

The conflict therefore has a clear relationship to reproductive agency. Heather retains the ability to act, but the purpose of her reproductive capacity has been determined by another party. Her physical agency and reproductive agency consequently operate at different levels.

The Order and Religious Control

The Order provides the institutional structure through which Heather's reproductive capacity is appropriated. Claudia believes that the birth of the god will produce a world free from human suffering. Her objective gives reproduction a theological purpose, and this purpose justifies the coercion imposed upon Heather. This aspect of the narrative is important because the reproductive threat is not presented as an accidental supernatural event. It is deliberately cultivated. Claudia's actions contribute to the conditions under which the entity develops within Heather, and the Order's ideology gives those actions a religious justification.

The result is a conflict between religious authority and individual bodily autonomy. The Order treats Heather's body as part of a collective religious objective. Heather treats the same body as her own. The disagreement cannot be resolved through persuasion because the two positions assign different meanings to reproduction itself. Claudia's role also complicates a simple interpretation of the game's reproductive horror as male control over a female body. The principal agent imposing the reproductive objective upon Heather is another woman. This is consistent with Creed's (1993) argument that representations of the monstrous-feminine can involve female figures who reproduce or enforce structures of reproductive horror. The source of coercion is therefore institutional and ideological rather than reducible to the gender of a single antagonist. The Order's religious system also removes reproduction from an ordinary biological context. The developing entity is regarded as divine, and Heather's pregnancy becomes part of a process intended to transform the world. Reproduction is consequently assigned a value determined by theology rather than by the wishes of the person whose body carries the entity.

Pregnancy as Bodily Uncertainty

Heather's experience also corresponds with the role of uncertainty in research on childbirth fear. The significance of the pregnancy is initially unclear to her. Information is disclosed gradually, and Heather must reconstruct the relationship between herself, Alessa, the Order, and the entity developing within her. The narrative therefore makes knowledge part of the reproductive threat. Heather does not initially possess a complete understanding of

her condition. As information becomes available, the implications of the pregnancy become clearer, but knowledge does not restore control. It instead establishes the nature of the conflict she must confront.

Oliver's (2012) analysis of pregnancy horror is useful here because it examines fictional pregnancies in which the developing entity becomes associated with an unwanted other within the maternal body. The reproductive process becomes frightening because the pregnant character's relationship with the developing life is determined by circumstances outside her authority. In *Silent Hill 3*, this relationship is intensified because the developing entity has been assigned a religious purpose before Heather has any opportunity to consent to that purpose.

The game therefore constructs uncertainty at two levels. Heather does not initially understand what is happening to her body, and she later discovers that the process has consequences determined by the Order. The discovery of information does not produce reproductive autonomy. Instead, it allows Heather to understand what she must resist.

The Body as a Site of Conflict

The game's body horror reinforces this conflict. Heather's body becomes the location through which the Order's religious objective is pursued. The reproductive process is consequently represented through physical symptoms rather than through a conventional depiction of pregnancy.

Holloway et al. (2012) specifically identify the scene in which Heather expels the god-fetus as a representation of childbirth within their examination of video games. Their study places the scene alongside other examples of virtual childbirth and notes the unusual and disturbing way in which *Silent Hill 3* represents the event. This scene is significant because it changes the relationship between Heather and the developing entity. Earlier sections of the game establish the entity as something within Heather, while the final sequence makes the separation physical and visible. The entity becomes an external object that can be rejected. Heather's action therefore represents a restoration of bodily control within the narrative.

The sequence also corresponds with Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection. The entity occupies an uncertain position between Heather and an independent being. Its presence complicates the boundary between the self and the other, while its eventual expulsion restores a clearer distinction between Heather's body and the entity. The horror emerges partly from this unstable relationship. Creed's (1993) account of reproductive horror provides a related perspective. The female reproductive body can become a site of horror when reproduction is associated with uncontrolled creation. In *Silent Hill 3*, the entity within Heather is neither a conventional fetus nor an ordinary child. It is the physical manifestation of a religious objective, and its presence converts reproductive capacity into a source of danger.

Player Agency and Heather's Resistance

The game's interactive structure complicates this reproductive conflict. The player controls Heather for most of the game. Movement, exploration, combat, and item use are determined through player input. Yet the reproductive condition at the centre of the narrative cannot be altered through ordinary gameplay. This separation corresponds with Habel and Kooyman's (2014) concept of agency mechanics. The player possesses meaningful control over Heather's actions, but the game's narrative establishes conditions that remain outside that control. The player's agency therefore concerns **response**, while Heather's reproductive agency concerns **authority over the condition itself**.

This distinction is especially clear during the final sequence. The player can direct Heather's actions, but the decision to reject the entity is established by the narrative. The player participates in Heather's resistance through gameplay, yet the reproductive conflict has already been defined. The game does not provide a menu through which the player can determine Heather's reproductive choices. Instead, reproductive autonomy is represented through the predetermined direction of the narrative and the player's control over its protagonist. The result is a particular form of interactive tension. The player has considerable mechanical agency while Heather has restricted reproductive agency. The two forms of control therefore coexist without being equivalent.

This relationship is important to the study of tokophobia because it parallels one of the concerns identified in the clinical literature: the perception that control over childbirth or one's body may be limited. Sheen and Slade (2018) identify this concern in women's accounts of childbirth fear, while Wigert et al. (2020) describe uncertainty and lack of control as recurring elements of those experiences. *Silent Hill 3* places these concerns within a fictional supernatural context, transforming them into a conflict that the player must navigate through Heather.

Reproduction and Refusal

Heather's final resistance gives the reproductive conflict its clearest expression. The Order understands reproduction as the means through which its god can be born. Heather's objective is to prevent that outcome. Reproduction consequently becomes a question of consent and authority. This point is important because the game does not present Heather's resistance as a rejection of motherhood in general. Her immediate concern is the specific reproductive entity imposed upon her and the purpose assigned to it. The distinction prevents the analysis from reducing the game to a general statement about pregnancy. The reproductive threat is frightening because it is involuntary, externally controlled, and connected to consequences that Heather does not choose.

Davies (2026) places *Silent Hill 3* within a broader discussion of pregnant protagonists in video games and identifies the game as an example in which pregnancy is directly incorporated into the protagonist's narrative and gameplay situation. This scholarship is useful because it places Heather within a wider history of representations of pregnancy in games, where reproductive states have often been peripheral to player-controlled characters. Holloway et al. (2012) provide an earlier perspective from game design research. Their study of 34 commercial games found that childbirth scenes were often simplified, distorted, or presented through highly compressed representations of birth. *Silent Hill 3* is particularly useful within this context because its reproductive event serves a strong narrative function rather than functioning merely as a status change or plot transition.

The game's treatment of reproduction is consequently inseparable from its treatment of Heather's autonomy. Her body is given a purpose by the Order, the player is given control over her immediate actions, and the narrative ultimately permits her to reject the reproductive process. These different forms of control establish the central relationship between reproduction and agency in *Silent Hill 3*.

Inherited Reproduction and Heather's Identity

Heather's reproductive conflict also depends upon her history as the reincarnation of Alessa and the adopted daughter of Harry Mason. Her reproductive role is therefore connected to events that occurred before the beginning of the game. The Order's interest in Heather is based partly on her relationship to Alessa and the events of the first *Silent Hill*. Recent scholarship by Pitillas and Martínez-Biurrun identifies *Silent Hill 3* as a game concerned with inherited trauma and transgenerational structures, arguing that Heather enters a cycle of religious ideology and maternal trauma that predates her own conscious choices. This interpretation is useful because it adds another dimension to reproductive agency. Heather's reproductive role has been constructed before she can choose it. The resulting conflict is therefore historical as well as physical. Heather inherits a reproductive function associated with Alessa, while the Order treats that inheritance as a reason to pursue her. Her body becomes connected to a past that she did not create.

This structure reinforces the importance of agency. Heather can decide how she responds to the Order, but she cannot alter the historical conditions that produced her situation. The player shares this limitation. The game permits action within the inherited circumstances while keeping the origin of those circumstances fixed.

***Bloodborne*: Reproduction, Supernatural Motherhood, and the Limits of Agency**

Bloodborne presents reproductive horror through a network of pregnancies, lost children, surrogate mothers, and attempts to produce or recover offspring associated with the Great Ones. Reproduction is therefore integrated into the game's larger account of human attempts to contact supernatural beings. This structure differs from *Silent Hill 3*, where reproductive conflict is concentrated within Heather's body. In *Bloodborne*, the player

encounters several reproductive narratives whose connections become clearer as the Hunter acquires knowledge about Yharnam and its history.

Recent scholarship supports this interpretation. Skott, Skott Bengtson, and Fiddler (2025) identify pregnancy and surrogacy as recurring elements in *Bloodborne* and argue that the game's attempts to create life are connected to humanity's attempts to control powers associated with the Great Ones. Their analysis is particularly useful because it treats reproduction as a structural feature of the game's world rather than as an isolated subplot. The reproductive imagery is also closely associated with loss. The game's description of the Great Ones states that each Great One loses a child and subsequently seeks a surrogate. This principle provides a recurring pattern through which the pregnancies of human women become connected to supernatural motherhood (FromSoftware, 2015). The player encounters several manifestations of this pattern, although the precise relationships between the characters and the Great Ones are deliberately left partly implicit.

The Great Ones and the Problem of Reproduction

The Great Ones occupy an unusual position within *Bloodborne*. They possess forms of knowledge and power that human characters seek to obtain, yet their motives and capacities remain difficult for humans to understand. The game's reproductive mythology is part of this difficulty.

The player learns that the Great Ones desire offspring, while the human institutions of Yharnam attempt to establish contact with them. The School of Mensis seeks communion with a Great One, while the Healing Church has pursued forms of transformation through blood and experimentation. These projects share an interest in overcoming ordinary human limitations, but their results are frequently associated with bodily alteration and loss. Skott et al. (2025) describe these attempts as failed or destructive forms of creation. Their analysis connects the game's reproductive themes to the broader problem of humans attempting to control forces that they cannot fully comprehend.

Reproduction consequently becomes part of the game's larger concern with human limitation. The Great Ones can produce or lose children, but human attempts to reproduce their conditions repeatedly result in suffering. This distinction becomes important when considering reproductive agency. The characters who seek supernatural reproduction often believe that they can direct its outcome. The game repeatedly presents evidence that such control is unreliable.

Queen Yharnam and Mergo

Queen Yharnam provides the clearest connection between motherhood, reproductive loss, and the history of Yharnam. Her appearances throughout the game establish her as a figure associated with pregnancy and mourning. The Hunter eventually encounters Mergo's Loft, where the unseen voice of her child can be heard and where Mergo's Wet Nurse protects the child.

The relationship between Yharnam and Mergo is partly communicated through environmental evidence and item descriptions. The Ring of Betrothal describes a form of marriage associated with bearing a special child, while the One-Third of Umbilical Cord connects the Great Ones to the loss of their children and the search for surrogates (FromSoftware, 2015). These fragments allow the player to reconstruct a reproductive history without receiving a complete chronological explanation. This method of storytelling changes the player's relationship to reproductive horror. The player does not initially witness Yharnam's pregnancy or the circumstances surrounding Mergo's birth. Instead, the player encounters traces of the event after it has already occurred. The horror is therefore constructed through investigation.

Zaidan, Pilbeam, and Carstensdottir (2019) examine *Bloodborne* through its representations of motherhood and maternal loss. Their discussion identifies the relationship between mothers and children as a recurring structure in the game, particularly through Yharnam and Mergo and through Kos and the Orphan of Kos. Yharnam's story also establishes a recurring pattern within the game: a child becomes the focus of conflict between a mother and external forces. Reproductive relationships are therefore repeatedly placed under institutional or supernatural pressure.

Arianna and the Reproductive Body

Arianna provides a more immediate representation of supernatural pregnancy. The Hunter can encounter her during the night of the Hunt and can direct her toward sanctuary. After the Blood Moon rises, she experiences physical distress and eventually gives birth to a Celestial Child. The significance of Arianna's pregnancy lies partly in the player's relationship to it. The player can influence where Arianna stays and can decide whether she remains within the protection of the Oedon Chapel. The player therefore has some agency concerning her circumstances, but cannot control the pregnancy itself.

This produces a different form of reproductive agency from that found in *Silent Hill 3*. Heather is the playable character whose reproductive condition forms the central conflict. Arianna is an NPC whose pregnancy the player observes and can influence indirectly. Her reproductive experience is therefore presented through another character's body. Skott et al. (2025) identify Arianna as one of several women in *Bloodborne* who become pregnant with supernatural offspring. They interpret these pregnancies through the game's wider theme of attempted creation and the repeated inability of humans to control the forces involved. Arianna's pregnancy also demonstrates the relationship between reproductive horror and uncertainty. She does not understand the full nature of what is happening to her. Her physical symptoms provide evidence of a process whose cause remains obscure until the player encounters its outcome. The player therefore possesses greater informational agency than Arianna herself.

This distinction is important. Knowledge does not necessarily produce control. The Hunter can identify the relationship between Arianna and the supernatural forces of Yharnam, yet this knowledge provides limited ability to determine the reproductive process.

Iosefka and Reproductive Experimentation

Iosefka provides another version of reproductive horror, although her role is more closely associated with experimentation and transformation. The Imposter Iosefka conducts experiments intended to transform humans into beings associated with the Great Ones. After the Blood Moon, she becomes pregnant with a Great One's child and can be found in a visibly altered state.

Her situation connects reproduction with the scientific ambitions of Yharnam's institutions. The character attempts to manipulate human bodies through medical experimentation, yet she eventually becomes subject to the same supernatural processes that her work seeks to understand. This reversal is important for the game's treatment of agency. Iosefka possesses knowledge and technical authority, but these forms of power do not protect her from reproductive transformation. Her attempt to control the human body becomes entangled with a process that she cannot fully control herself. The game's reproductive horror therefore operates at an institutional level. Human characters attempt to produce knowledge through experimentation, while the consequences of their work introduce new forms of bodily uncertainty. Skott et al. (2025) similarly connect the game's reproductive imagery with attempts to harness supernatural powers and the damaging consequences of those attempts.

The Healing Church and Reproductive Power

The Healing Church provides the institutional context for much of *Bloodborne*'s reproductive mythology. Its pursuit of blood, transformation, and contact with the Great Ones establishes a system in which human bodies become instruments for acquiring supernatural knowledge. The reproductive dimension of this system is particularly significant because the Great Ones' desire for children creates a potential route for human beings to establish contact with them. The One-Third of Umbilical Cord description makes this relationship explicit by stating that Great Ones lose their children and seek surrogates (FromSoftware, 2015). The concept of surrogacy introduces a significant question of reproductive agency. A surrogate carries a child whose existence serves another party's reproductive objective. Within *Bloodborne*, this relationship becomes supernatural. Human women can become involved in reproductive processes associated with beings whose purposes they cannot understand.

The game's treatment of reproduction consequently differs from the religious structure of *Silent Hill 3*. The Order has a clearly stated objective and actively seeks Heather as the means of achieving it. *Bloodborne* distributes reproductive authority among supernatural beings, human institutions, and individual characters. The result is less centralised, but the underlying problem remains similar: reproductive capacity becomes subject to purposes established by forces beyond the individual.

The Hunter's Agency

The Hunter's position is central to the game's treatment of reproductive horror. Unlike Heather, the Hunter is not the primary reproductive subject. The player instead encounters reproductive events while exploring Yharnam and its surrounding areas. This creates an important distinction between direct and observational reproductive horror. Heather experiences the reproductive threat through her own body. The Hunter encounters the consequences of reproductive processes through other characters and through environmental evidence.

The player's agency therefore operates differently. The Hunter can choose whether to interact with Arianna, whether to investigate certain locations, and whether to pursue optional encounters. Yet the reproductive events themselves remain largely predetermined. The player discovers them rather than controlling their occurrence. Habel and Kooyman's (2014) concept of agency mechanics helps explain this structure. The game gives the player meaningful control over movement and exploration, while narrative events remain constrained by the game's design. In *Bloodborne*, this distinction is especially significant because knowledge itself is part of the player's progress. The player must interpret fragmented evidence before understanding the relationship between the Great Ones and reproduction.

This structure creates a form of agency based on investigation rather than intervention. The player can seek knowledge about reproductive events, but knowledge does not automatically provide authority over them.

The Old Hunters and the Reproductive History of Yharnam

The reproductive themes of *Bloodborne* become particularly significant in *The Old Hunters* expansion because the Hunter's Nightmare reveals the consequences associated with the killing and dissection of Kos and the death of her child. The expansion therefore supplies historical context for the game's recurring relationship between motherhood, lost children, and institutional violence.

Kos is encountered as a dead Great One, while the Orphan of Kos appears as the central hostile figure of the expansion's final section. The relationship between mother and child becomes part of the history that produced the Hunter's Nightmare. The player's encounter with the Orphan therefore connects present gameplay to an earlier act involving a mother and her unborn or newly born child. Zaidan et al. (2019) specifically discuss the maternal relationship between Kos and the Orphan within their analysis of motherhood in *Bloodborne*. They connect the game's maternal narratives through the recurring association between mothers, children, death, and grief.

The expansion consequently deepens the reproductive structure already established in the base game. It does so through historical revelation rather than through a separate reproductive storyline. The player's understanding of Yharnam's supernatural order changes as the Hunter encounters evidence of what happened to Kos and her child. This is relevant to the present study because the expansion maintains the distinction between player agency and reproductive agency. The player can confront the Orphan and determine the outcome of the encounter, but cannot reverse the history that produced the Hunter's Nightmare. The player's control is therefore limited to the present consequences of an earlier reproductive violation.

The Maternal Body and the Limits of Control

Across these narratives, *Bloodborne* repeatedly connects motherhood with circumstances that exceed individual control. Yharnam loses Mergo. Kos loses the Orphan. Arianna becomes pregnant without understanding the cause. Iosefka's experiments leave her subject to the reproductive forces she attempts to manipulate. These cases should not be treated as identical. Their circumstances differ, and the game provides different amounts of

information about each character. They nevertheless establish a recurring relationship between reproduction and restricted agency. Creed's (1993) account of reproductive monstrosity is relevant here because the maternal body can become a site through which horror questions the boundary between human and nonhuman life. Oliver (2012) similarly identifies pregnancy horror as a genre concerned with anxieties surrounding reproductive choice and the possibility of producing a nonhuman offspring. *Bloodborne* adapts these concerns to a game world in which supernatural reproduction is part of the central mythology.

The game's reproductive horror is therefore connected to both bodily uncertainty and the failure of control. Characters seek knowledge about the Great Ones, institutions attempt to use reproductive processes for their own purposes, and the player investigates the consequences. None of these forms of agency provides complete authority over reproduction.

Comparative Analysis: Two Forms of Reproductive Horror

Silent Hill 3 and *Bloodborne* both associate reproduction with fear, bodily uncertainty, and restricted agency. Their methods differ because the games position the player differently in relation to reproductive events. Heather is herself the reproductive subject, whereas the Hunter encounters reproductive horror through other characters and through the investigation of Yharnam's history. This distinction affects how the player experiences the themes associated with tokophobia.

The comparison is therefore based on three related questions. How is reproductive control represented? How is the reproductive body positioned within the game's horror system? How does player agency affect the representation of fear?

Direct and Indirect Reproductive Threat

The most significant difference between the games concerns the player's proximity to reproductive threat. In *Silent Hill 3*, reproduction is directly connected to the protagonist. Heather's body is central to the Order's objective, and the player controls Heather throughout the events that lead to the birth of the god. The reproductive threat consequently remains attached to the character whose actions the player controls. *Bloodborne* establishes a greater distance between player and reproductive subject. The Hunter encounters Arianna, Iosefka, Queen Yharnam, and other figures whose reproductive experiences form part of the game's mythology. The player investigates these experiences but does not inhabit them through the playable character.

This distinction matters when the games are considered through research on childbirth fear. Sheen and Slade (2018) identify loss of control as a recurring concern in women's accounts of childbirth fear. Wigert et al. (2020) similarly identify uncertainty and limited control as recurring experiences. *Silent Hill 3* places the player closer to these concerns because Heather herself lacks authority over her reproductive condition. *Bloodborne* instead makes the player an observer who gradually acquires information about reproductive processes that have already occurred or are occurring elsewhere.

The two games therefore create different relationships between knowledge and fear. *Silent Hill 3* gives Heather information about her condition while she remains subject to it. *Bloodborne* withholds information from the Hunter and makes discovery part of the game's progression. The first structure creates personal reproductive threat; the second creates investigative uncertainty.

Reproductive Agency and Player Agency

The distinction between reproductive agency and player agency becomes particularly useful here. In *Silent Hill 3*, the player has mechanical control over Heather, but this control does not include the reproductive process. The player determines how Heather moves through the environment and responds to enemies. The pregnancy remains a narrative condition imposed upon her. *Bloodborne* creates an even stronger separation. The Hunter does not become pregnant, and the player cannot directly determine what happens to Arianna, Iosefka, Yharnam, or Kos. Some interactions can alter circumstances around these characters, but the reproductive events remain outside the player's direct mechanical control.

Habel and Kooyman's (2014) discussion of agency mechanics is useful because it demonstrates that player control can itself become part of a survival-horror game's design. Agency does not have to mean unrestricted control. A game can provide meaningful actions while restricting the player's influence over particular aspects of the narrative. This principle is especially relevant to reproductive horror. Both games allow the player to act, but neither allows the player to determine reproduction itself. The difference lies in proximity. Heather's body is directly connected to the reproductive conflict, while the Hunter observes reproductive consequences through other characters.

Bodily Autonomy

Bodily autonomy is more explicit in *Silent Hill 3*. The Order requires Heather's body for the birth of its god, and Claudia's actions are directed toward this objective. Heather's resistance is consequently a struggle over who has authority over her reproductive capacity. This corresponds closely with the concerns identified in qualitative research on childbirth fear. Sheen and Slade (2018) found that women's fears can involve the prospect of losing control during childbirth, particularly when medical intervention or uncertainty affects their ability to participate in decisions concerning their bodies. Wigert et al. (2020) similarly identified concerns about control as an important feature of childbirth fear.

The supernatural context of *Silent Hill 3* changes the circumstances but preserves the structural concern. Heather's reproductive body is controlled by an external authority. The threat does not depend solely on physical pain. It depends on the removal of choice. *Bloodborne* treats bodily autonomy less directly because reproductive experiences are distributed among different characters. Arianna's pregnancy, for example, occurs without her apparent understanding of its supernatural origin. Iosefka's reproductive transformation is connected to experimentation conducted within the Healing Church's wider system. Yharnam's reproductive history is tied to forces associated with the Great Ones. In these cases, the body becomes subject to processes that characters cannot fully understand. The problem is therefore less clearly institutional than in *Silent Hill 3*. The source of authority is dispersed among supernatural beings, religious institutions, and individuals seeking forbidden knowledge.

This difference affects the political dimension of the horror. *Silent Hill 3* presents reproductive control through a recognizable institutional hierarchy. *Bloodborne* presents it through a supernatural system whose hierarchy is difficult for the player to reconstruct.

The Internal Other

Both games also construct reproduction through the relationship between the body and an internal other.

Oliver (2012) argues that pregnancy horror can involve the development of an other within the maternal body, particularly when the pregnancy is associated with uncertainty or a threat to reproductive choice. This concept is directly applicable to Heather. The being developing within her is associated with the Order's religious objective, and its presence threatens her control over her own body. Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection provides another way of understanding this relationship. The developing entity complicates the boundary between Heather's body and another being. The final expulsion of the entity establishes a physical separation between Heather and the reproductive threat. *Bloodborne* uses the internal other differently. Arianna's pregnancy creates a similar division between maternal body and supernatural offspring, but the player experiences it from outside the pregnant character. The significance of the internal other is therefore established through observation and discovery.

The game's fragmented storytelling reinforces this distance. Information concerning reproduction is distributed across character encounters, item descriptions, locations, and environmental details. The player must construct relationships between these fragments. The reproductive other is consequently also an epistemological problem: the player must first determine what the developing or lost child represents. *Silent Hill 3* provides considerably more narrative focus. Heather's reproductive condition becomes increasingly explicit as the story progresses. The player does not need to construct an equivalent reproductive mythology from dozens of independent fragments. The threat is attached to Heather and the Order's objective.

The difference can therefore be described as one of narrative concentration. *Silent Hill 3* concentrates reproductive horror around one protagonist. *Bloodborne* distributes it across the world.

Motherhood and Loss

Motherhood is also treated differently. In *Silent Hill 3*, motherhood is connected primarily to the intended birth of the god. The Order gives reproduction a religious purpose, while Heather rejects that purpose. Motherhood is therefore subordinated to the institutional objective of producing a divine being.

Bloodborne presents a wider range of maternal relationships. Queen Yharnam's relationship with Mergo involves loss. Kos and the Orphan of Kos provide another maternal relationship that is central to the history revealed through *The Old Hunters*. Arianna's pregnancy presents motherhood through an ordinary human character whose child is transformed by the supernatural conditions of Yharnam. Zaidan et al. (2019) identify motherhood and maternal loss as recurring elements in their analysis of *Bloodborne*. Their discussion is useful because it treats the game's mothers as connected through recurring experiences of loss and separation rather than as isolated characters.

This creates an important distinction from *Silent Hill 3*. Heather's reproductive conflict concerns the prevention of an unwanted birth. *Bloodborne* frequently concerns children who have already been lost, hidden, or transformed. The former is structured around anticipated reproduction; the latter repeatedly returns to reproductive loss. The distinction also affects the temporal structure of fear. Heather fears what her pregnancy will produce. *Bloodborne* often asks the player to investigate what happened to a child after reproductive events have already taken place.

Tokophobia and the Representation of Anticipation

Tokophobia is particularly relevant to *Silent Hill 3* because the game's reproductive threat is associated with anticipation. Heather learns that something is developing within her, discovers its intended purpose, and eventually confronts the consequences of that process. Clinical research indicates that fear of childbirth can involve anticipation of pain, uncertainty, loss of control, and concerns about the outcome of childbirth (O'Connell et al., 2017; Dencker et al., 2019). The fictional circumstances of Heather's pregnancy are obviously very different. The analytical value lies in the structure of the fear.

The game repeatedly establishes an anticipated event: the birth of the god. Heather's actions are shaped by her knowledge that this event is intended to occur. The player consequently shares the anticipation. Progress through the game does not remove the reproductive threat; it moves Heather closer to the point at which the threat will be resolved. *Bloodborne* uses anticipation less directly. The player often discovers reproductive events through retrospective evidence. The question is frequently what happened, rather than what will happen. However, the game also contains moments in which the player knows that an unborn or newly born entity exists before encountering its consequences. The two games therefore represent different temporal forms of reproductive horror, which are anticipatory horror in *Silent Hill 3*, and investigative horror in *Bloodborne*.

This distinction is useful because tokophobia itself concerns anticipated childbirth. The fear occurs before the event and can shape how pregnancy is experienced. *Silent Hill 3* more closely reproduces this temporal structure because the player accompanies Heather toward an anticipated birth.

The Role of Knowledge

Knowledge operates differently in the two games. Heather gradually discovers why the Order wants her. Her knowledge becomes increasingly specific as the narrative progresses. Once she understands the purpose of the pregnancy, she can identify the threat she is resisting. The Hunter's knowledge develops through a different process. *Bloodborne* rarely provides complete explanations. The player must interpret item descriptions, character dialogue, architecture, and encounters. Reproductive relationships are among the game's most fragmented forms of information.

This difference is important when considering the relationship between fear and uncertainty. A fear becomes more specific when its source is understood. *Silent Hill 3* moves toward greater narrative clarity concerning Heather's pregnancy. *Bloodborne* maintains uncertainty for much longer, which allows reproductive horror to remain part of the game's broader epistemological structure. The player consequently has different responsibilities in each game. In *Silent Hill 3*, the player primarily responds to an established threat. In *Bloodborne*, the player must first determine the nature of the threat before its significance can be fully understood.

The Significance of *The Old Hunters*

The Old Hunters strengthens *Bloodborne*'s reproductive themes because the expansion provides additional context for the relationship between motherhood, children, and institutional violence. The history surrounding Kos and the Orphan reveals consequences associated with the treatment of a Great One and her child.

This material should be considered part of *Bloodborne*'s larger reproductive structure rather than treated as an unrelated narrative. The expansion gives the player another example of the relationship between a mother and child within the game's supernatural system. Its placement late in the player's progression also means that the significance of motherhood and lost children can be understood through knowledge accumulated from the base game. The comparison with *Silent Hill 3* becomes useful here. Heather's reproductive conflict is resolved through direct resistance against the institution that seeks to control her. The Hunter's relationship with reproductive horror is more historical. The player encounters the consequences of actions committed before the Hunter entered the story. Consequently, *Silent Hill 3* frames reproductive agency as a problem of resistance, while *Bloodborne* frames it more often as a problem of discovery and consequence.

Two Models of Reproductive Horror

The comparison indicates that the games employ two distinct models. *Silent Hill 3* uses a protagonist-centred model. Reproductive horror is attached to Heather's body, and the narrative follows her attempt to regain control over the reproductive process imposed upon her. Player agency reinforces this structure because the player directly controls Heather's movement and actions. *Bloodborne* uses a world-centred model. Reproductive horror is distributed among several characters and becomes part of the mythology of the Great Ones. The player investigates these relationships while controlling a protagonist who remains physically separate from the reproductive bodies at the centre of the narrative. Both structures can be examined through the concerns associated with tokophobia. Fear of childbirth can involve uncertainty and perceived loss of control, while the fictional representations examined here transform those concerns into supernatural forms (O'Connell et al., 2017; Sheen & Slade, 2018; Wigert et al., 2020).

The difference is therefore one of emphasis. *Silent Hill 3* makes reproductive autonomy the immediate concern of the protagonist. *Bloodborne* makes reproductive mystery part of the world's underlying structure. This distinction gives the comparison its central value. The games do not simply contain similar imagery. They organise reproductive fear through different relationships between body, narrative, and player agency. That difference becomes particularly important when considering whether horror games can represent experiences associated with tokophobia through interactive form.

DISCUSSION

The comparison between *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne* shows that reproductive horror can be structured through different relationships between bodily autonomy, uncertainty, and player agency. Both games draw upon concerns that appear in research on fear of childbirth, particularly uncertainty and perceived lack of control. Their fictional settings, however, transform these concerns into different forms of interactive horror.

A distinction between tokophobia and reproductive horror remains necessary throughout this discussion. Tokophobia refers to severe fear associated with childbirth and, in some definitions, pregnancy, whereas reproductive horror is a broader analytical category concerning fictional representations of reproduction as threatening. Recent clinical literature continues to distinguish ordinary childbirth fear from severe or clinically

significant fear. The games can therefore be analysed through tokophobia without assigning a clinical diagnosis to their characters.

Tokophobia as a Fictionalised Horror Structure

The strongest connection between tokophobia and *Silent Hill 3* concerns anticipated loss of control. Heather is placed in a reproductive situation that she does not choose, and the purpose of that pregnancy is determined by the Order. Her fear consequently concerns the consequences of reproduction as much as childbirth itself. Clinical research supports the importance of this distinction. Fear of childbirth can involve concerns about physical consequences, uncertainty, previous experiences, and perceived inability to cope with the birth process. A systematic review of support interventions describes severe fear of childbirth as a specific form of pregnancy-related anxiety that can affect quality of life and reproductive decision-making.

The game converts these concerns into a supernatural narrative. Heather knows that a birth is intended to occur, yet she has no authority over its intended purpose. The resulting fear is therefore constructed around anticipation. The player knows that an event is approaching, while the character attempts to prevent it. *Bloodborne* produces a weaker but broader connection to tokophobia. Its reproductive events involve pregnancy, childbirth, maternal loss, and supernatural offspring, but the player usually encounters these subjects through characters other than the Hunter. The relationship with tokophobia is consequently more indirect. This distinction matters for the argument here. It would be inaccurate to claim that both games represent clinical tokophobia in the same manner. *Silent Hill 3* provides a stronger representation of several experiences associated with severe reproductive fear, whereas *Bloodborne* uses reproductive anxiety as part of its larger horror system.

Control, Consent, and the Reproductive Body

Control provides the clearest point of connection between the two games.

Heather has extensive physical agency. The player can move her through the environment, determine her responses to enemies, and guide her investigation. Her reproductive condition remains outside that control. The player can control Heather's actions while being unable to determine whether she becomes pregnant or what the pregnancy will produce. This separation gives *Silent Hill 3* a particularly useful structure for examining reproductive autonomy. The player experiences a form of agency while the protagonist experiences a restriction of agency. The two conditions exist simultaneously.

Research on childbirth fear identifies control as an important dimension of the experience. Sheen and Slade's (2018) metasynthesis found that women's fears concerning childbirth included concerns about control and the circumstances surrounding birth. Wigert et al. (2020) likewise identified loss of control as a recurring theme in qualitative accounts of childbirth fear.

The similarity should be understood at the level of structure rather than circumstance. Heather's situation is supernatural and fictional. The clinical research concerns actual experiences of pregnancy and childbirth. The comparison becomes useful because both involve a subject confronting an important bodily process whose outcome is perceived as difficult to control. *Bloodborne* distributes this problem across several characters. Arianna's pregnancy is not controlled by the Hunter. Iosefka's transformation is connected to experimentation that ultimately produces consequences she cannot fully govern. Yharnam's relationship with Mergo is defined by loss, while Kos and the Orphan of Kos provide another maternal relationship shaped by violence and separation. The game therefore presents reproductive agency as fragmented. No single character occupies the same position as Heather. Instead, different characters represent different forms of reproductive vulnerability.

Interactivity and the Experience of Fear

The interactive form of video games changes how these themes are presented. Habel and Kooyman's (2014) research on agency mechanics demonstrates that survival-horror games can use player control itself as part of their design. Control is therefore not simply a means of progressing through the game. Its distribution can affect the player's experience of vulnerability.

This is particularly relevant to *Silent Hill 3*. The player has direct control over Heather but lacks control over the reproductive process at the centre of the narrative. The contradiction creates a specific relationship between gameplay and story. Mechanical agency remains available while reproductive agency is restricted. The same distinction appears in *Bloodborne*, although its structure is different. The Hunter can investigate reproductive events, interact with affected characters, and influence some circumstances surrounding them. The player cannot determine the reproductive processes themselves.

The difference is therefore between response and control. In *Silent Hill 3*, the player responds to a reproductive condition imposed upon the playable character. In *Bloodborne*, the player investigates reproductive conditions imposed upon other characters. This distinction contributes to the paper's broader argument about interactive horror. The games do not reproduce clinical experiences of tokophobia. They construct fictional situations in which the relationship between bodily autonomy and player control can be made part of the horror experience.

Anticipation and Discovery

The temporal structure of reproductive horror provides another major difference.

Silent Hill 3 is organised around anticipation. Heather gradually learns what is happening to her, and the player learns that the Order intends to bring about the birth of its god. The approaching event remains relevant throughout the latter part of the narrative. This structure resembles an important feature of childbirth fear: the feared event exists in the future and can therefore shape the experience of pregnancy before childbirth occurs. Contemporary research continues to identify fear of childbirth as a form of anxiety that can develop during pregnancy and affect reproductive decisions.

Bloodborne frequently reverses this structure. The player discovers evidence of reproductive events after they have occurred. Yharnam's pregnancy and Mergo's existence are reconstructed through environmental and textual evidence. Kos's relationship with the Orphan becomes especially important in *The Old Hunters*, where the player encounters the consequences of earlier events. The result is a difference between anticipatory reproductive horror and retrospective reproductive horror. Heather fears what will happen. The Hunter investigates what has happened. This distinction helps explain why *Silent Hill 3* remains the stronger case study for a paper centred on tokophobia. Its narrative places the protagonist in anticipation of a reproductive event. *Bloodborne* provides a valuable comparison because it demonstrates how reproductive horror can function without placing pregnancy at the centre of the playable character's experience.

Gender and Reproductive Authority

Gender is also important to the comparison because both games locate reproductive horror predominantly within female bodies. In *Silent Hill 3*, Heather's reproductive capacity is the basis for the Order's interest in her. Her body becomes valuable to the institution because it can produce the being that the Order desires. Claudia, another woman, acts as the principal agent pursuing this objective. The game therefore presents reproductive control through an institutional system rather than reducing it to a conflict between male and female characters.

Bloodborne distributes reproductive roles more widely, but its supernatural reproductive system also relies heavily upon female bodies. Arianna and Iosefka become pregnant or altered through processes connected to the Great Ones. Yharnam and Kos occupy maternal positions within the game's mythology. This recurring association between female bodies and reproductive horror is consistent with feminist horror scholarship. Creed (1993) argues that horror cinema has repeatedly constructed the maternal and reproductive body as a site of monstrosity. Oliver (2012) similarly examines pregnancy horror through representations in which reproduction becomes associated with an unwanted or threatening internal other.

The games adapt these conventions to interactive media. *Silent Hill 3* gives the reproductive body to the playable protagonist, which allows the player to act through the character whose reproductive autonomy is threatened. *Bloodborne* generally places reproductive bodies outside the playable character, creating a more observational relationship. The difference is significant. The first structure asks the player to inhabit a character whose body is under reproductive threat. The second asks the player to investigate the reproductive suffering of others.

The Limits of the Tokophobia Framework

The concept of tokophobia has analytical value, but its limits must be recognised. Clinical definitions concern real psychological experiences. A fictional character cannot be diagnosed through narrative evidence alone, particularly when the character's psychological state is constructed for a horror narrative. Heather's fear, for example, can be examined through the themes associated with tokophobia without claiming that she clinically has the condition. The same applies to the women of *Bloodborne*. Their pregnancies and reproductive experiences can be interpreted through research on fear, autonomy, and reproductive anxiety. That does not make them clinical examples of tokophobia.

This distinction also prevents the paper from reducing reproductive horror to childbirth fear. Fear of childbirth is only one part of the broader representational system. *Bloodborne* demonstrates this especially clearly because pregnancy is connected to supernatural experimentation, motherhood, loss, and the desire for knowledge. Recent clinical literature supports maintaining a distinction between general childbirth fear and clinically significant tokophobia. A 2024 systematic review describes tokophobia as severe fear associated with pregnancy and childbirth, while noting that childbirth fear exists along a spectrum of severity. A 2024 review of fear-of-childbirth measurement instruments likewise emphasises the importance of distinguishing different levels of fear when assessing the condition.

What Video Games Contribute

The comparison becomes most useful when the games are considered as interactive works rather than simply as stories containing reproductive imagery. The player's relationship to the protagonist changes the representation of reproductive fear. In *Silent Hill 3*, the player directly controls Heather while the central reproductive process remains outside that control. The resulting separation between mechanical agency and bodily autonomy is central to the game's design. *Bloodborne* adopts a different structure. The Hunter's ability to explore Yharnam means that reproductive horror is encountered through investigation. The player decides where to go and which characters to interact with, but the reproductive histories of those characters cannot be rewritten through ordinary gameplay.

The distinction demonstrates how games can represent restricted agency through the distribution of control. A novel can describe a character's lack of control, and a film can show it. A game can additionally give the player control over some aspects of the character while withholding control over another aspect. This produces a specific relationship between player action and narrative constraint. That feature is especially relevant to reproductive horror. The player can act, but action does not necessarily produce bodily autonomy. In *Silent Hill 3*, the player can fight the Order's servants without being able to prevent Heather's reproductive condition through ordinary gameplay. In *Bloodborne*, the player can intervene in the lives of certain characters without gaining control over the supernatural reproductive system governing them.

The distinction gives both games a useful position within the study of horror and agency. Their reproductive themes are communicated through narrative, but their interactive structures determine how the player encounters those themes.

The Comparative Argument

The comparison supports a distinction between two models of reproductive horror. *Silent Hill 3* presents reproductive horror through direct bodily occupation. Heather is the reproductive subject, the Order seeks to control her reproductive capacity, and the player controls her actions while lacking control over the pregnancy itself. *Bloodborne* presents reproductive horror through distributed reproductive mythology. Several characters experience pregnancy, motherhood, or reproductive loss, while the Hunter investigates the consequences without becoming the reproductive subject. This difference affects the relevance of tokophobia to each game. *Silent Hill 3* offers the closer representation because its narrative is organized around an anticipated reproductive event imposed upon the protagonist. *Bloodborne* provides a broader model in which reproductive fear becomes part of a system of supernatural motherhood and loss.

Neither game should therefore be treated as a direct simulation of tokophobia. Their value lies in the way they translate concerns associated with reproductive fear into fictional and interactive forms. Research identifies uncertainty and perceived loss of control as important elements of fear of childbirth. The games transform those concerns through different relationships between the player, the protagonist, and the reproductive body.

The comparison also explains why *Bloodborne* remains useful despite its greater distance from tokophobia. Its reproductive imagery provides a counterexample to *Silent Hill 3*. Where *Silent Hill 3* concentrates reproductive fear within one playable character, *Bloodborne* distributes it throughout its world. That contrast allows the paper to examine how interactive horror can represent reproductive anxiety through more than one narrative structure.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne* represent reproductive horror through the related concerns of bodily autonomy, uncertainty, and restricted agency. The comparison demonstrates that both games make reproduction a source of horror, but they organise that horror through different relationships between the player and the reproductive body.

The distinction between tokophobia and reproductive horror is important to the study. Tokophobia refers to severe fear associated with pregnancy or childbirth, and clinical research identifies factors such as uncertainty, perceived lack of control, previous negative experiences, and concerns about childbirth as relevant to the condition. The games examined here do not provide clinical representations of tokophobia. Their value lies in the way they fictionalise concerns that can be associated with severe fear of childbirth. *Silent Hill 3* provides the closest connection to this framework. Heather is placed within a reproductive process that she did not choose, while the Order assigns a religious purpose to her pregnancy. Her physical agency remains considerable because the player controls her movement and decisions throughout the game. Her reproductive agency, however, is severely restricted. The contrast creates a significant feature of the game's horror: the player can control Heather's actions while being unable to control the reproductive condition imposed upon her.

Ultimately, *Silent Hill 3* and *Bloodborne* demonstrate that reproductive horror can be constructed through more than disturbing imagery or narrative subject matter. Their treatment of reproduction is closely connected to questions of agency. *Silent Hill 3* places the player within the actions of a protagonist whose reproductive autonomy has been taken from her. *Bloodborne* places the player in a world where reproductive histories must be reconstructed and whose consequences cannot be fully controlled. The comparison therefore supports a broader understanding of reproductive horror in games. The significance of these representations lies in the relationship between what the player can control and what the reproductive body cannot escape. *Silent Hill 3* makes this conflict immediate through Heather's experience, while *Bloodborne* distributes it across a larger mythology of pregnancy, motherhood, loss, and supernatural reproduction. For a study of tokophobia in video games, this difference is central. It shows how interactive horror can represent fears associated with reproduction through both direct bodily threat and indirect investigation. The games provide different fictional structures, but both demonstrate that reproductive horror can function as a question of agency as much as a question of the body.

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