

The Hobbit's Embrace of Diverse Men

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Fantasy is a gateway into reality, in the sense that institutions created in fictional works serve to acknowledge the social constructs of the world. The genre of fantasy places well-known issues into often foreign settings to garner an objective stance, extracting the possible biases of audiences to bring attention to different perspectives. Throughout the years, the genre has rapidly increased in popularity as audience consumption has continued to expand demographically. The newfound appreciation has garnered worldwide attention for productions such as Peter Jackson's trilogy of *The Hobbit*, the prequel to the infamous *Lord of the Rings* trilogy released a decade prior. *The Hobbit* is the typical hero story that one would associate with when regarding the concept of fantasy, with the main premise surrounding the stolen homeland of thirteen dwarves at the hands of a dragon with the protagonist, Bilbo Baggins, sought out to assist in the reclamation (Jackson, 2012, 2013, 2014). With the attention from both old and new fans, the films dominated the markets of countries such as New Zealand, Germany, Russia, and the U.S with the box office numbers reaching the equivalence or higher of other famous franchises of the same genre such as *Harry Potter* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* ("All Time Worldwide," n.d.; Warner Bros, 2014). Yet, despite the attention, the notion of male gender roles and the typical characteristics associated with the definition of a male hero in fantastical works is overlooked, despite the progressive critiques in relation to female portrayals. This in turn has allowed for hegemonic masculine ideals to persist in forms of fantasy media with little to no dispute or alternating presentations, reinforcing toxic traits that contribute to detrimental beliefs on how men perceive themselves and other people. As Van Gilder (2019) states "until recently, research examining hegemonic masculinity, had been surprisingly underrepresented within communication literature," an overlooked aspect that has the potential of shaping how men

interact with minorities including women (para. 9). The question that must be asked is how do fantasy works contribute to the societal construct of hegemonic masculinity. If fantasy productions parallel the structures and institutions that are conducted in everyday lives, then how can the presentations affect how audience's make sense of their roles in society and what the ideal model embodies. It is then that I argue that *The Hobbit* serves as an introduction to the overlooked presence of hegemonic masculinity in fantasy productions to challenge the promoted characteristics that contribute to toxic attributes. Throughout the paper, what will be addressed is how scholars have failed to address the gap in dissecting male representation along with analyses that have been produced, the content and discourse surrounding the films, the choice of perspective utilized in the critique, the analysis itself, and finally the contribution the analysis provides.

Acknowledging Hegemony

Notions of gender roles are introduced to men early in their lives through childhood, with the freedom that young boys experience surrounding what Rotundo (2001) labels as "boy culture." This culture, reinforced by peers of similar age, values aggressive behavior, rejection of femininity, and heteronormativity, characteristics that all formulate the persisting existence of hegemonic masculinity (Blodgett & Salter, 2018; Khan & Blair, 2013; Powers, D. Rothman, S. Rothman, 1993; Rotundo, 2001; Van Gilder, 2019). Escaping from the world of femininity, as typically mothers are expected to allocate their time to raising the family while the fathers are the "breadwinners," the ideology of feminine characteristics equating to weakness is never corrected (Rotundo, 2001). The persistence of the idea of escaping femininity then carries on to adulthood, where those who do embrace that which is opposed will then be labeled as inferior. Paralleling such structures of gender, modern fantasy works' inspiration can be traced back to some of the

earliest forms of literature like *Beowulf*, with the Anglo-Saxon definition of a hero highlighting physical prowess and emotional expressions of vulnerability being discouraged serving as a template (Esteliel, n.d.). Male insecurity of fans of the fantasy genre, in the form of hypermasculinity, stems from stigmatization from their own gender community due to the lack of masculine qualities such as a skinny stature, disinterest in sports, or an overall less dominant presence (Blodgett & Salter, 2018). The lack of diverse of male characters showcasing feminine characteristics then encourages fans to overcompensate in their projecting, attempting to achieve the same qualities that their favorite heroes like Thor and Han Solo possess while rejecting the parts of themselves that they hate. The self-hatred formulates into an “us versus them” mentality, where femininity itself is declared as a menace that threatens to dismantle male-centric social structures that have been ingrained in society, situating into a dominant ideology (Blodgett & Salter, 2018; Van Gilder, 2019). Such ideologies are then implemented into the work of men, such as films, novels, and video games to create the cycle of hegemony within the media.

As stated previously, research surrounding hegemonic masculinity within the fantasy genre has lacked content, with the majority of research acknowledging its presence but either directing the attention towards how it affects female characters or offering no further analysis of the repercussions towards men. Through previous assessments in regard to various fantasy productions, there is overall a consensus in identification of masculine characteristics within the genre, regardless of gender. Masculinity in the form of male characters often acts towards the suppression of women, while masculinity within female characters acts as a validation in their protagonist status (Bharathan, 2017; Chetia, 2017; Green, 2019; Ramsey, 2002). In attempts to bridge the systemic inequality gap historically related to portrayals of female characters often being sidelined or rendered helpless, creators will establish empowered female characters that

adopt the aggressive hypermasculinity associated with the hegemonic culture (Chetia, 2017; Kac-Vergne, 2016). While this does accomplish an increase in important female characters, adhering to the logic of masculinity as the superior only further demeans feminine individuals as often men will accept such characters as “one of the guys,” instead of validating the power that women are capable of (Van Gilder, 2019). The rejection of femininity is a fundamental characteristic of hegemonic masculinity that is interconnected with the other attributes such as heteronormativity and aggression (Blodgett & Salter, 2018; Khan & Blair, 2013; Powers, D. Rothman, S. Rothman, 1993; Rotundo, 2001; Van Gilder, 2019). This in turn leads to the toxicity that is associated with the degradation of females—especially those that embrace their feminine qualities—and the LGBTQ community. Violence within gay and heterosexual relationships stem from the concern of power and asserting dominance over the other fueled by their struggle to define their roles in a heteronormative society that inherently designates women as the submissive (Goldenberg, Stephenson, Freeland, Finneran, & Hadley, 2016). While encouraging female characters to be more dominant and have a prevalent role, the diversity of male characters remains stagnant and underexplored. The trilogy offers an opening towards further discourse regarding diversifying representation to combat the hegemonic norm to promote further inclusivity.

Approaching the Trilogy

A Hobbit's Tale

Through the span of the three films, thirteen dwarves and the hobbit Bilbo Baggins embark on a journey towards ridding the “Lonely Mountain” (the dwarves’ homeland) from the dragon Smaug that had slaughtered all its people and settled in amongst the treasury. Needing a burglar, as Smaug was acquainted with the scent of the dwarven kin, a well renowned powerful

wizard known as Gandalf the Gray all but forced Bilbo to take a leap of faith in pursuing an adventure that would quench the hobbit's wanderlust. Following a sequence of various altercations along the way such as trolls, goblins, wood elves, and a town run by a corrupt politician, the story leads up to a war allocated by the failure of the company to dispose of the dragon themselves (causing the local town to be destroyed) and the corruption of Thorin's mind through an ancestral curse causing him to rescind the promises he made of sharing the wealth. Enacted due to greed of jewels and thirst for revenge, the "Battle of the Five Armies" concludes with the death of the rightful king of mountain Thorin and his two nephews Fili and Kili, resulting in a bittersweet finale in the journey back home.

The release of *The Hobbit* films was highly anticipated amongst those familiar with the Tolkien universe given Peter Jackson's previous success with *Lord of the Rings*. Old fans were offered the chance to revisit the mythical world of Middle Earth while new fans were invited to introduce themselves into the foreign fantasy. Promotions were present through commentary such as RadioTimes's response to the 2012 film's trailer of the movie appearing "just as epic an adventure as Jackson's Lord of the Rings film" in addition to billboards and sculptures erected in the filming location of New Zealand ("Hobbit sculptures," 2013; "The Hobbit: An Unexpected," 2012). With the audience scores of the three films averaging around 80 percent and the worldwide box office income nearly reaching \$3 billion, numerous people around the world paid to view the movies in theater and found their interest to be adequately met or slightly exceeding in expectation ("The Hobbit Franchise," n.d.). Given the transnational consumption, despite the diverse range of potential audiences, there is an intended category of fans that the films appealed to: white males. The fantasy genre has a history of productions featuring the white male gaze, often reflective of the identities of the directors such as Gore Verbinski with Disney's *Pirates*

franchise, Bryan Singer's *X-Men*, and George Lucas' *Star Wars*. Jackson's trilogy is no exception with the films exhibiting a skewed gender ratio, with one featured semi-important female side character (and another in a brief cameo) in comparison to the numerous males. The focus on males and the appeal to the gender as the targeted consumer works as a form of representation, inviting men to either place themselves in the position of the protagonist or use the main character as an ideal role model in which to embody. There is a note of importance however, that despite the lack of female characters this does not equate to lack of female consumption. Women are reported to make up half of overall surveyed participants who claim fantasy to be their favorite genre (Watson, 2020). This further emphasizes the allowance of women to consume male media, however not vice versa as attributed to femininity rejection.

Criticism of Popular Culture and Media

The criticism of popular culture and social media perspective focuses on the relationship between power and culture and how media productions can reinforce or repurpose social beliefs, inviting the audience to adopt, reject, or simply acknowledge these ideologies through awareness (Hoerl, 2016). Ideologies are referred to as the systems of ideas; a collective agreement upon societal outlooks in interpretations and comprehension influenced by the environment. Dominant ideologies are ones that hold power in cultures, often in a form that privileges certain groups. It is through the acceptance of these ideologies that hegemony formulates, as society continues to reinforce certain beliefs that construct a social order. One of the concepts that Hoerl (2016) provides as a strategy to analyzing popular media texts is hegemony itself, which is the categorization of an artifact in terms of contribution to discourse of a prevailing social order. The social order prominent in society and fantasy media, hegemonic masculinity, is a well-established cultural structure composed of characteristics contributing to gender roles and what

defines the ideal man. Through the analysis, what will be dissected is how the various connotative counter-hegemonic themes through the characteristics associated with characters and their actions creates an alternative form of representation from the typical fantasy masculine narrative. The process of finding these derived meanings is what Hoerl (2016) describes as signification, where meanings of signs are contextual and contribute to discourse surrounding social and political issues. Given the setting, many of these signs will be connotative; hidden amongst the implicit allegorical representations in a world different than the one audiences may be used to. Genre, however, must also be accounted for in the analyzation process considering the significance of contextual history in how a productions' theme(s) situates within its category. The mostly narrow approach will focus internally on how the signs identified interact mutually towards the overarching theme of reconceptualizing the masculine versus feminine agenda.

Analysis

The films' themes of comradeship and war are not atypical to fantasy works, an element that may arguably lack in terms of originality. What instead will be focused on is not what story is being told, but rather how the story is constructed through characters in their portrayals and interactions, exhibiting a different type of hegemonic depiction on a spectrum from nonconformity to conventionality. There are a multitude number of characteristics associated between each gender, fueled by dominant societal ideologies. The focal ones that will be attributed to the exploration of presentation within the trilogy are the adoption of feminine and masculine features or actions within important male character roles and their contributions to the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity. The purpose is not to overly glorify, but rather to identify the unique contributions overlooked and how these are a starting point towards a possible future of inclusivity to dismantle pressures of adhering to certain societal expectations.

The analysis will begin with the discussion on the genre itself, before delving into the characters from the films on a scale of effeminate to toxic hypermasculinity.

The Male Fantasy Genre

Like most social structures, typically the top of the hierarchy is that of men. As a result, many forms of entertainment are produced by and for the gender. The fantasy genre has a long-held history, with the more modern notion stemming from the nineteenth century European romances (MasterClass, 2020). Authors associated with influencing the genre's popularity are noted to be Tolkien himself along with George MacDonald, William Morris, and C.S Lewis, all white males (MasterClass, 2020). While older works of the Anglo-Saxon era are attributed to the components of the typical fantasy structure and character qualities, speculations also note another prominent historical event that plagued the world with moral dilemma: WWII (Shear, 2018; Wagner, 2016). The following century, after the created definition of modern fantasy, the genre experienced a dry spell that persisted until 1945, the year WWII concluded (Shear, 2018). Part of fantasy is not only the projected realities, but also the escapism. The surge in genre is noted to be part of the simplification and distraction that it provides, summarizing more moralistically gray situations into a "good vs evil" scenario where the hero always overcomes all obstacles (MasterClass, 2020; Wagner, 2016). The glorification and war work interchangeably with the typical masculine stereotypes that men are presumed to adopt, creating the hypermasculine and violent films such as *Batman*, *The Mummy*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Given the war-like nature that inspires productions, there are typically traits paralleled to hegemonic masculinity that characters are presumed to associate with. Some of these that are referenced within the trilogy include pride, selflessness (often through self-sacrifice), strength, power, and emotional tolerance. These are generally all depicted as positives within a hero,

where each holds merit towards achieving goals whether it be the determination through pride or the domination of the enemy through the power of strength. What will be noted, however, is that through the analysis of each character, these traits are distributed amongst both the good and evil archetypes. The previous positive connotations are rejected for the exploration of the consequences that result from excessive compensation. The argument is not that these traits are all inherently negative, but that the limited perspective offered by the genre within various forms of entertainment has created a space of hegemony that values only these elements with little regard to alternative perspectives. The creation of biased forms of entertainment encourages men to exclude those that don't fit the mold, increasing the social power imbalance between privileged men and minorities.

Feminine Characters

The underdog. Bilbo Baggins is defined, by nature, a more traditionally considered feminine individual. The qualities of what determines a feminine individual fall under the same social constructs that persist with hegemonic masculinity, a generalization of what constitutes each gender both in physicality and disposition. Typically, characteristics associated with women include emotional sensitivity, nurturing nature, passive attitude, and a physically smaller stature ("What are," n.d.). Bilbo exhibits a majority of these traits, partially due to his own personality and also as a result of his race as a hobbit. Hobbits are creatures established to be instinctively domestic and docile, favoring childbearing, gardening, cooking, and peace. These attributes are not distinct by gender but rather by individual as, with Bilbo's own lineage, his mother was ostracized for her more masculine characteristics of a domineering personality and adventurous nature, while his father's gentle attitude was considered more respectable. Bilbo's "hero" label stems from the combination of these genes, inheriting his mother's thrill of the unexplored while

maintaining his father's timid personality. As a result, these characteristics are what defines Bilbo as the underdog, where the fantastical genre has had a history of buff, courageous men that dive headfirst into conflict and independently solve their solutions, giving audiences a preexisting image of what defines a hero in their mind. These expectations are subverted as Bilbo has no problem voicing his fears and skepticism towards his own capabilities, unafraid to exhibit vulnerable emotional responses such as grief, hesitance, and sympathy. Physically, hobbits are short creatures that average around the height of 3 and a half feet ("Hobbit Team," 2010). Bilbo's appearance is very delicate, with medium-short curly hair, a short stature, and rounded figure. Jackson emphasizes such discrepancies through the direct contrast of the more masculine stature of the dwarves who are all taller than Bilbo and display a more muscular physique and intricate facial hair. While his appearance is not directly condemned, it is inferred that his well-kept attire can be a source of validation of audiences' rationale to doubt his capabilities.

Throughout the films, in typical hero fashion, Bilbo encounters various obstacles that test his mental fortitude. While the trilogy does have quite a few sequences of violence through battles, and the third being about an entire war, events where Bilbo oversees procuring solutions to various predicaments is often led through passive methods or results. In his first encounter, with the entire party being captured by three trolls threatening to eat them, Bilbo serves as a distraction through talking while waiting for the eventual assistance from Gandalf. The battle of riddles between Gollum and Bilbo emphasized wit over brawns and given the opportunity of ending Gollum's life, Bilbo still abstained. When the battle of the five armies was initiated due to Thorin's mentally corrupted state, Bilbo stole the Arkenstone (the gem resulting in the sickened mind of the dwarf king) in attempts to provide a trade that would settle the desires of all parties involved. Jackson represented Bilbo's strength in an alternative fashion, dismissing the

importance of physical strength to emphasize that the characteristics of femininity can be utilized in a way that redefines the traditional concepts of power.

Another aspect of hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, is undermined by the exclusion of a female love interest for the hero, instead focusing on the bond between Bilbo and the leader of the dwarves Thorin. Initially, Thorin was skeptical of Bilbo's capabilities due to his feminine stature and naivety of the outside world. Through the three films, with the gradual progression of their friendship, physical expressions of affection are shared between the two such as intimate contact and gift giving. Sentiments such as these are generally discouraged in societies dominated by the hegemonic masculinity ideologies, fearing that such presentations indicate homosexual connotations, as represented in memes such as the "no homo" slang and more recently "sus" as an indicator for men acting out of the heterosexual norm (Urban Dictionary, n.d.). By normalizing displays of affection between men, the movies work towards deconstructing the gay stigmatization and promote healthy emotional outlets.

The gentle guide. Typically, through fantasies a mentor is established as a guide towards the main protagonist in beginning their journey and assists them throughout. Some infamous examples of such are Obi Wan in *Star Wars*, Dumbledore in *Harry Potter*, and Morpheus in *The Matrix*. Occasionally, these mentors will also supply the hero with a boon, often some sort of weapon (magical or not) that will be used to defeat the antagonist. Gandalf takes a very different approach, both on how the boon should be utilized and on why he chose Bilbo Baggins to be the proclaimed burglar of the dwarven company. In the first film, the audience is introduced to the origin of the infamous sword "Sting," found amongst the hoard of three trolls. When Gandalf digs the weapon out from amongst the rubble and bestows it to Bilbo, in response to the main character's inexperience with weaponry, he replies that "true courage is not knowing when to

take a life, but when to spare it,” both a passive approach to violence and a compassionate response (Jackson, 2012, 1:14:28-1:14:36). This advice would later come into play with the altercation between Bilbo and the franchise mascot Gollum, where Bilbo’s empathetic nature in correlation with Gandalf’s guidance led to a flight over fight response. When the dwarves rest amongst the elves in Rivendell, royal elf Galadriel questions the proclamation of Bilbo as the thirteenth member to which Gandalf responds:

“Saruman believes it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. It is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love. Why Bilbo Baggins? Perhaps because I am afraid, and he gives me courage” (Jackson, 2012, 1:51:45-1:52:23).

The first portion of the quote instantly dismisses power as a dominant tool for resolving issues, a main element considered to be a masculine trait. Power and dominance work interchangeably towards the major goal of men to climb the social ladder, whether it be militaristic, career oriented, or familywise (Rotundo, 2001; Van Gilder, 2019). By stripping power’s potency and replacing it with kindness and love, the director effectively provides a counter-hegemonic depiction of the qualities that are praised as the epitome of a hero, transitioning effectiveness of a masculine-associated concept to feminine. Gandalf finishes his statement admitting to his fears and his reliance on another, showcasing a powerful wizard figure in a vulnerable light with no ridicule or mockery of his distress.

Hegemonic and Nonconforming Hybridity

The (non)heteronormative couple. While the main character is relieved from a story of romantic tension, that is not to say that romance is completely absent. Kili, nephew of Thorin, is roped into a love-triangle with wood elf Tauriel who also has the adoration of fellow elf prince

Legolas. In a way, Jackson's addition of a female character for her role to act as a love interest enforces the heteronormative notion that a story is incomplete without it; however, the relationship within itself defies the typical romance depictions in past media. One major notable difference that is often a cause for ridicule in society is the height difference. The dwarf and elf relationship dynamic presents an inherent height gap, with Kili's height reaching to about the top of Tauriel's chest. Given the dominant and passive gendered roles in society, men shorter than their partner are often ridiculed by the same gender due to the presumed incapability of taking care of the "weak." Furthermore, while Legolas and Kili were both pining after the same woman, neither felt the need to prove themselves to her in the typical fashion of power and dominance, usually in the form of some physical fight or competition. The relationship between Kili and Tauriel within the two latter films progressed subtly, with most of the affectionate gestures on behalf of the former. In the end death tears them apart, subverting the trope that settling down with the love interest and raising potential children is the eventual duty of a man's life (Rotundo, 2001).

Beauty in war. The race of elves, like hobbits, are feminine by nature due to their appearances and culture. All have delicate features with high cheekbones accompanied by pale skin and a slim figure, the epitome of the general Eurocentric beauty standards for women ("The History," 2017). The femininity of elves was even referenced within the trilogy itself, with the first movie implementing a comedic misunderstanding where one of the dwarves admits attraction towards a male elf after assuming the gender to be female. Such beauty extends to Orlando Bloom's character Legolas. The blonde prince was introduced as a means of continuity for *The Lord of the Rings*, acting more as a cameo than a crucial character. Nonetheless, the presence of Legolas serves as the combined feminine and masculine appeal, clashing

fundamentally different descriptors. Legolas's femininity ends with his appearance, where his personality is the ideal warrior. Ruthless, many of the action sequences and intricate maneuvers showcase his expertise. Besides his contribution to the war, his personality is reduced to an arrogant son who trifles against his father in the typical fight over dominance fueled by the death of his mother. It is unclear, besides the obvious cash grab, what Jackson was trying to accomplish in this rendition of the character, especially considering he was not in the original novel.

However, what can be noted is the imbalance resulting in hypermasculinity is tied to violence, where the audiences may not find Legolas particularly likeable within this context, but the action he contributes on the battlefield makes up for his faults. While it may be argued then that such presentations would perpetuate the hegemonic association between aggression and men, the aspect of a "beautiful" man cannot be ignored. The unique exploration of an entire race being ethereal, despite gender, brought the definition of power to both of masculine and feminine men.

Antagonists as toxic masculinity

Selfish demise. Thorin Oakenshield is Jackson's representation of the repercussions of hypermasculinity. One of Tolkien's main themes that Jackson promotes through the Middle Earth universe is the concept of pride, and how it is man's major flaw. Pride within the hegemonic masculinity context represents a means of justifying aggression. Thorin's entire character is formulated around the concept of redeeming his and his family's honor through the reclamation of their homeland, a flaw on the borderline of obsessiveness that serves as his foil. Due to past conflicts with the elves, Thorin refuses negotiating with their kind on multiple occasions, increasing the difficulty in completing his journey and allocating for violent solutions over peaceful alternatives. The presumption of independence and the consequences of emotional expressions as a sign of weakness in a man eventually leads to the downfall of him and his two

nephews, as he was determined to suffer the sickness plaguing his mind in isolation. While he was able to eventually overcome the sickness, the consequences of enacting a war in his greed-hazed state left him vulnerable to the Pale Orc, a creature that swore to eradicate Thorin's bloodline. The death was mourned by all, but never marveled. Proceeding the ultimate battle within a fantasy film, regardless of who does or does not survive, those who participated are typically praised for their heroic deeds. Jackson takes a different approach, unwilling to praise the violence and bloodshed to create a somber atmosphere in contrast to a triumphant one, leaving Bilbo's last memory of Thorin through his funeral.

Men in Monsters. The orcs, goblins, and the dragon Smaug are all vile, selfish monsters. These beasts, however, offer a sense of familiarity as the audience can recognize the same characteristics that are identified within these creatures to that of toxic masculinity. Unlike the other races, these beings rely on aggression with little to no agency in questioning their motives. Their rationalities are constructed by the notions of greed, power, and violence, paralleling the social construct as men serving to be the inherent dominant power. Depictions such as these create the alternate perspective of otherwise commendable traits in other works, demonstrating the potential harm from the simplified notion of features associated with masculinity. Within the populations of the three races, there is no evidence throughout the films that there are females within each type, another element that forces the audience to associate the negative qualities with the male populace. One issue, however, that must be pointed out and can be utilized for further improvements, is the fact that these creatures are lacking in humanistic qualities. By creating races differing from humans to an extreme where physicality is distorted enough to not be relatable or associated with reality, audiences can easily dismiss the qualities of these monsters as fictitious instead as a form of representation. Unless the audience is capable and

knowledgeable enough to comprehend the initial intention behind the creation, the meaning may become lost in the interpretation process. Exploration of more explicit depictions of the harmful effects of masculinity embodied within characters is then a concept that can be further explored through the genre as a result of the trilogy's introduction.

Conclusion

While *The Hobbit* may not be a revolutionary production, the three films fashioned a gendered narrative that has been neglected within the genre of fantasy. By producing a message opposing the typically presented hero and denouncing (rather than praising) the elements of hegemonic masculinity, Jackson's work creates diversification amongst a history of uniform representation. As stated before, fictional media and reality work interchangeably, with social structures within both paralleling one another. The roles of females in media have drastically changed as the progressive movements towards equality has demanded for better representation, yet due to the privilege men maintain in many societies, the questioning of the repercussions of enforcing the character of the ideal man in media is ignored. The negative aspects of hegemony are only as relevant as civilization's desire to maintain these patriarchal structures, yet by offering irregular portrayals, the narrow exposure expands to create a new norm (Hoerl, 2016). When presented with an alternative to the dominant ideologies that are known, it can inspire further productions of replication and encourage discourse amongst audiences. The definition of the ideal man has changed and it's about time that the genre of fantasy catches up to diversify content for the goal of inclusivity rather than oppression.

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