The Faculty of Humanities

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Master Thesis

Front page for examination assignment

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Title of assignment: Representation of Gender, Ethnicity and Sexuality in Fantasy Literature	
Min./Max. number of characters: 60-80 pages, excl. title page, abstract, table of contents, appendix etc. (1 norm page = 2400 characters incl. blanc spaces)	**Number of characters in assignment[1]:** 184.633
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Abstract

In this thesis, I will examine whether the representation of gender, ethnicity and sexuality in fantasy literature has changed from the time of Tolkien to contemporary works of fantasy, such as those by Sanderson. I will then attempt to compare these changes to changes in video games of the fantasy genre, with a focus on narrative as well as how characters are portrayed in these games, in order to determine whether or not the two forms of media draw inspiration from one another and whether the changes in representation are similar.

Firstly I will establish the form of fantasy as a genre that I will be using throughout this thesis. I will do this by first examining the history of the genre, from Tolkien, to the BAFS to fantasy as a standalone genre. Then I will examine a theory of different fantasies, in order to categorize the works of literature and video games I examine.

To help with this, I will make use of several theories on recognition, to find how representation affects our identification with certain characters, gender construction, to examine how the author might construct the story of a character to reflect their gender identity and self-image, nationalism, to be able to examine the idea of "us" versus "them" and how fantasy has changed in regards to the foreign power as invader or ally, and theories on video games as artwork and influencers of gender identity, to examine how the rising popularity of video games makes the medium able to influence those that play them.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the impact the two medias have on one another, as well as to establish that gender, ethnicity and sexuality is more represented in contemporary literature than ever before, and how the rise of ideas such as the non-binary gender has affected this representation.

By examining my chosen works, I find that while the representation of gender has become far more prevalent, with female characters taking a more active role in the narratives of both novels and video games, instead of functioning as support units to the male characters of the narrative. I find that the representation of ethnicities other than the stereotypical Western European has changed to instead explore different cultures and to refer to possible benefits from befriending and understanding other cultures. In this part I also examine whether a video game developer, when creating a game based on an older novel, should stay true to the source material, or whether they should try to include characters of other ethnicities, even if there were none in the

source material. I also found a change in the portrayal of the main nation of the narrative, from stereotypical white, to resembling other ethnicities. In this section, I also debate whether a lack of description of a character's appearance leads the reader to identify more or less with a character and whether the reader sees this character as looking a specific way, or expecting a specific ethnicity.

On the topic of representing sexuality in literature, I find that while there is an increase in the portrayal of LGBTQ characters, these are mostly side characters, aside from a single game which makes a point of including several gay, lesbian and bisexual characters.

Lastly, I argue that while there has been a change in how gender, ethnicity and sexuality is represented in literature and video games, there are discrepancies, such as portraying women as sexual objects, or refusing to include LGBTQ characters as more than minor story characters in most cases.

Representation of Gender, Ethnicity and Sexuality in Fantasy Literature

Indhold

Introduction

In this thesis I will study the ways fantasy literature has changed in recent years, specifically how the genre has changed to portray contemporary themes such as gender, race and sexuality. Because I want to find out how the fantasy genre has been influenced by cultural developments on these issues, as well as how books such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* and Brandon Sanderson's *Stormlight Archives* might have impacted another kind of media namely fantasy video games, in order to help my reader better understand how specific topics such as morality and the progression of the female character in such works has developed, and how these different types of media have inspired each other over the years. I have chosen to research this specific topic because the fantasy genre has been under constant change, following trends from both contemporary issues and popular culture. The reason for this study will be to first chart these developments through the genre's lifetime with a focus on *Lord of the Rings* as a starting point, and second, to determine the effects fantasy literature has on other forms of media and popular culture, specifically video games.

To start, I will examine the history of the fantasy genre and examine Mendlesohn's theory of fantasy sets in order to properly define the genre "fantasy", and how it will be used in terms of the thesis. This is important as fantasy might span more than just books, but also video games and movies, all of which share a symbiotic relationship of development and inspiration which is crucial for my arguments.

I will then examine the ways in which representation of gender, sexuality and ethnicity has changed in fantasy over the lifetime of the genre. I will examine gender stereotypes, roles and conventional presentations of especially female or non-specific genders in both old and new fantasy stories. I will examine the role of sexuality in fantasy as well, how such things as LGBTQ characters and polygamy have become increasingly common in these types of literature, and the effect this can have on the recognition of the reader. Lastly, I will examine the role of ethnicity in a genre mostly dominated by fictional worlds, where race is different from our own, but often influenced by real-world ethnicities. In this section I will also examine the shift in the ethnicity of the protagonist and major supporting characters as predominantly Caucasian. I will also look into the effect of the reader's recognition and view of a character being Caucasian without any evidence being provided to prove this.

To prove my arguments, I will make use of several works and theories that together can outline and explain the evolution of representation in fantasy.
To examine the reason why the topic of representation is important, I will draw on Rita Felski's theory of recognition in literature, to construct an argument of representation being a factor and a reason for representation, as it allows the reader to identify themselves in a character, and thereby coming to realizations about their own identities.
To explain the changing themes of ethnicity and nationalism in fantasy, I will make use of Maria Sachiko Cecire's article on medievalism, popular culture and national identity in what she calls "children's literature". This article can also be used to explain how fantasy literature moved to other forms of media, through her observations on the *Harry Potter* series and their move to both video games and movies.
To examine general theory about the construction of gender, I will examine Nancy J. Chodorow's *Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction*, in order to determine how gender is constructed in the individual, and how this gender construction can be portrayed in literature, in order to create characters whom the reader will identify with and recognize themselves in.
To examine gender identity in video games and the effect representation can have on this, I will make use of Sara M. Cole's article *Gender Identity Construction through Talk about Video Games* as well as the article *Virtual Muscularity: A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters* by Nicole Martins, Dmitri C. Williams, Rabindra A. Ratan and Kristen Harrison. Using these articles, I will be able to examine the effects on male gender identity through the predominantly masculine video game protagonists of the 1980s, and through this, discuss similar effects from a shift in how gender is portrayed in both books and video games.

I will draw upon a number of books and video games for my thesis, however I will focus specifically on a few which I see as the most striking and the most important for this specific theme.
The first book series I will examine is J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* novels. In the context of this thesis, the Tolkien books will serve as the baseline and starting point of the modern fantasy genre. Many themes of these books have been adopted by later authors and their influence can be felt in most works of fantasy today. This series is also important for this thesis, as it portrayed predominantly white characters, with other ethnicities, particularly the African inspired people

known as the *Haradrim* portrayed as a mystical, unknown and most importantly, evil-aligned force. While this series featured some female characters in a more combat-based role, these were outliers who were not among the main protagonists of the series, instead taking supporting roles.
I will then examine the *Wheel of Time* series by Robert Jordan, finished by Brandon Sanderson after Jordan's death. This series had moved greatly in terms of the portrayal of other ethnicities and cultures. Additionally, the series featured three separate love-interests for the protagonist, all of whom engaged in a polygamous relationship. The series also featured a large number of female protagonists, most of whom took a large role in shaping the outcome of the story.
Lastly, I will examine the *Stormlight Archive* series by Brandon Sanderson. These are the newest of the books I have decided to examine, with the first *Stormlight Archive* book being released in 2010. *The Stormlight Archives* will be used predominantly in the examination of ethnicity in literature, and the effects on recognition in the reader's assumption of a character's ethnicity. The main culture of the series is not described by skin-color or any other ethically identifying markers for a period of the first book, which could cause many readers to assume the ethnicity of these characters as Caucasian inspired. Sanderson however reveals, through the eyes of a character not from this culture, that the characters who had been the focal point so far, share similar physical traits to more Asian ethnicities.
When it comes to the video game medium for fantasy storytelling, I have chosen three series to examine. The first series of games are the *Final Fantasy* games. I chose this series because it is one of the longest running series of games to be released, with the first game being released in 1987. More specifically, I have chosen to examine two games in this series: *Final Fantasy IV*, published in 1991 as well as *Final Fantasy X*, published in 2001. Using this series, it can be possible to examine the evolution representation in video games in terms of gender, ethnicity and sexuality through the relatively short lifespan of the medium.
I will then examine the game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. I chose this game because it is largely based on a polish fantasy series by the same name. By examining this game, I hope to find heavy inspiration from the style of fantasy literature, and the ways in which the game has adapted these stylistic elements for a more receiver-involved experience of the story. Additionally, I chose the game because of its heavy focus on female supporting characters who, while often portrayed as equally or more powerful than the male protagonist Gerald, are often shown in revealing and

sexualized clothing. These female characters are also all, except for the adopted daughter of Gerald, Ciri, shown to be potential sexual partners of the main protagonist.
The last game I have chosen is the indie game *Undertale*, released by solo-developer Toby Fox in 2015. This game is characterized heavily by its gender-neutral protagonist, and its focus on including non-binary gendered characters as well as the featuring of same-sex relationships.

Defining Fantasy as a Genre

To better analyze the works I have chosen, we first have to establish a definition of fantasy literature. In order to do this, I have decided to examine the history of the genre.

Fantasy as a genre first emerged under the name "Sword and Sorcery" in the early 1960s after the massive success of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Before the emergence of Sword and Sorcery, there was no genre that resembled contemporary fantasy. Before this time, the works that laid the groundwork for the fantasy genre, or "pregenre" works, appeared over widely dispersed areas of the publishing market.
Most fantasy writers between World War Two and the early 1960s, such as Robert E. Howard and jack Vance, wrote in between science fiction, horror and action adventure fiction. Works by authors such as Tolkien, who had found "reputable" literary publishers, was not, in presentation, easily distinguishable from the works of authors such as Hemmingway and Edith Wharton.
Other Works of fantasy fell under the genre of "Children's Literature", whether or not that was the author's intention. It was a common idea that any work of fiction with elements associated with fantasy were especially suited for children.
A different genre from Children's Literature was however quickly introduced after the revival of Sword and Sorcery and the success of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. This genre was shaped by Ballantine Books and their especially influential "Adult Fantasy Series" which ran from 1969 to 1974[2]. By the 1980s, fantasy had become a fully-fledged genre, rather than an offshoot of science fiction or horror.
By the 1960s there was no commercially known fantasy genre, and when used, the term fantasy

[2] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy: From Antiquarianism to the BallantineAdult Fantasy Series. New York, Ny, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. p. 2

was not used to describe the material that later would be typical for the genre once it appeared, especially in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series, or BAFS.

The 1960s however marked a surge of interest in the Sword and Sorcery genre, also known as "Heroic Fantasy". This gathering of literature mostly consisted of reprinted material that had first appeared in magazines between the 1920s and the early 1940s.

In the beginning, Sword and Sorcery was published as a subcategory of science fiction, gaining popularity rapidly. Due to its recent emergence, there was not a lot of material available for competing publishers, and because of a relatively low popularity the decade before, very few writers were actively producing Sword and Sorcery works.

The Lord of the Rings became popular to Sword and Sorcery fans, and even gained some popularity among the reading public, soon reaching bestseller status. Tolkien's influence on the Sword and Sorcery readership however was not perfect. While the popularity of *Lord of the Rings* certainly brought readers to Sword and Sorcery, the subgenre never achieved the same status and widespread popularity.

Ballantine Books recognized the popularity of Tolkien over Sword and Sorcery, releasing *The Hobbit* in 1965 and Tolkien's remaining works in *The Tolkien Reader* in 1966[3]. Through these releases, Ballantine Books attempted to attract both Sword and Sorcery readership, but also uniquely Tolkien readers that Sword and Sorcery was unable to attract.

To this end, Ballantine Books was approached by Lin Carter, who proposed a book on Tolkien. The book *Tolkien: A Look Behind the Lord of the Rings* was published in 1969. In one of the chapters, titled "The Men Who Invented Fantasy", Carter gave an account of the fantasy traditions which predated Tolkien, connecting this to earlier publications by Ballantine. He was subsequently hired as an "Editorial Consultant" by Ballantine Books, with the express purpose of consulting on their Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series which was started in 1969.

The BAFS was instrumental in shaping fantasy as a genre. It was the first time that fantasy was presented as a genre in its own right. Volumes of BAFS were still put with science fiction in bookstores, however the science fiction tag was replaced with the term "Adult Fantasy". The cover art similarly replaced those of the Sword and Sorcery and their muscled swordsmen battling monstrous creatures with one arm and holding a barely dressed woman with the other. Instead,

[3] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 3

the covers now depicted landscapes almost taken directly out of a fairy tale. This period still stands as one of the largest publishing projects of pre-Tolkien fantasy literature[4].
Through the sheer amount of published works, 66 titles in 68 volumes between 1969 and 1974, the BAFS became the dominant force within the fantasy publishing market, and with no real competition on the market, the BAFS soon gained a large amount of influence on two crucial points.

Firstly, the BAFS had the power to define the terrain of the fantasy genre. In the book *Tolkien: A Look behind the Lord of the Rings, Imaginary Worlds*, a book meant to study the newly emerged fantasy genre in the wake of the BAFS in 1973, Lin Carter defined the term "fantasy": "A fantasy is a book or story […] in which magic really works" and that fantasy in its purest form was "laid in settings completely made up by the author"[5]. Additionally, Carter states that fantasy must deal with the themes of "quest, adventure or war[6]". Even with contemporary works of fantasy, be they books, movies or video games within the fantasy genre, this template is still reflected. As such, the influence of the BAFS is still felt today.
The second point in which the BAFS gained a large influence over was the shaping of a "canon" of fantasy. This was achieved through the sheer amount of published titles, and the specific focus on reprints. Lin Carter wrote, in his introduction to the 1969 BAFS edition of *The Wood beyond the World* by William Morris, that "The book you hold in your hands is the first great fantasy novel ever written: the first of them all; all the others, Dunsany, Eddison, Pratt, Tolkien, Peake, Howard, et. al. are successors to this great original"[7]. Statements like this one was repeated over and over in Carter's commentaries, with authors like Cambell, Lieber and others switching places to be presented as one of Morris' followers.
Carter's commentaries shaped the dispersal of certain authors within the BAFS titles. The major authors included Morris, James Branch Cabell, Clark Ashton Smith and Tolkien among others. Works by authors such as Lieber, de Camp and Pratt were limited within the BAFS, as they had already been made available in editions by other publishers, and Ballantine tried to avoid publishing editions that would meet a lot of competition.

[4] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 4
[5] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 4
[6] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 4
[7] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 4

The BAFS series was however not to last. Releases decreased noticeably from 1972, and in 1974 they stopped completely. The emptiness left behind in the wake of this served to demonstrate Ballantine's dominance in the field of fantasy. Others tried to follow Ballantine, like the Newcastle Publishing Company who released its Forgotten Fantasy Library with a total of 24 volumes, which emulated but did not repeat the BAFS.

Ballantine did return with a new and refurbished BAFS in 1976, with a focus on newer releases, as the increase in interest had caused writers to start producing more works of fantasy. These writers began to follow a more Tolkien-derivative approach to writing fantasy.

After this distillation of the genre, came criticism. The constructed nature of fantasy as a genre post-Tolkien becomes clear when looking at the noticeable lack of critical discussion prior to the emergence of the BAFS.

Tolkien wrote the essay *On Fairy-Stories* to give as a lecture in 1939. This essay is possibly the most cited source from this pre-genre period, being used by critics for building the groundwork for their conceptual theories[8].

The essay and the ideas it present are among one of the earliest works in which the ideas and mechanics of fantasy were presented which is not surprising given the role of *The Lord of the Rings* in shaping the genre. The works he cites however, are mostly Victorian and Edwardian works published with a target audience of younger readers. Additionally, Tolkien discussed the "Fairy-Story", not fantasy. The ideas discussed in C.S. Lewis' essay *On Science Fiction*, come much closer to the genre we know as fantasy today. Lewis however, presented fantasy as a sub-genre of science fiction instead of a genre of its own.

The introductory pages of the 1963 *Sword and Sorcery* and 1965 *The Spell of Seven* anthologies by L. Sprague de Camp chart the BAFS to come fairly precisely, although he focused on what he called "Heroic Fantasy"[9]. The first of the full-length studies of the genre during its emergence through the 1960s to the 1970s was *Imaginary Worlds* by Lin Carter, published as a title in the BAFS in 1973. The focus of this study was of course the canon set by the BAFS. Most of the study deals with detailing the historical framework of the genre, beginning with William Morris and a reference to the traditional epic and romance. Additionally, Carter focuses a lot of the study on

[8] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 7
[9] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 7

the BAFS genre template to define fantasy. The last chapter include a form of "how-to" for aspiring fantasy writers.

Another work of criticism is L. Sprague de Camp's *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy*, first published in 1976. Although the work still makes use of the term "heroic fantasy", this work's main terminology is still virtually identical to Carter's. In this work, de Camp characterizes his subject as: "tales of swordplay and sorcery in imaginary settings, where magic works"[10]. Additionally, de Camp makes more use of detailed biographical information and demonstrates more critical acumen than Carter.

For a more academic study of the subject, we can turn to C.N. Manlove's *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*, which was published in 1975. While Manlove was not a major part in shaping the fantasy genre, his focus is open to the established BAFS template. The definition presented by Manlove is similar to those of Carter and de Camp, yet possesses a number of distinct terms, defining fantasy as: "a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms"[11]. The authors of Manlove's canon of fantasy includes five authors, with all but one, Kingsley, being in the BAFS canon as well.

Other studies were confusing to readers who had accepted the idea that the genre had been mostly shaped by Tolkien, Sword and Sorcery as well as the BAFS.

Irwin's *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* was published in 1976, an presented a different canon of fantasy. While names like Tolkien and Lewis are mentioned, they are little more than passing references, instead being replaced as main topics of discussion by authors such as Anthony Burgess, David Garnett and William Golding[12]. These authors are normally not associated with the genre, and their inclusion makes it clear that Irwin's focus was not the same as Carter or de Camp. Irwin's own definition of fantasy is similarly different from those of Carter and de Camp, carrying suggestions that are apart from authors such as Tolkien, instead defining the genre as: "that kind of extended narrative which establishes and develops an antifact, that is, plays the game of the impossible"[13]. Additionally, Irwin argues that the amount of published fantasy after

[10] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 8
[11] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 8
[12] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 8
[13] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 9

1957 had run dry, suggesting that he did not focus on the same genre as the one which Ballantine dubbed Fantasy.

Another study which moved away from the BAFS template of fantasy was Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, which was published in 1981. In this study, Jackson argues that the fantasy stories written by Tolkien, Lewis or Kingsley are closer to faery or romance literature than the genre she defined as fantasy[14]. Instead, Jackson chose to focus her attention on authors such as Hawthorne and Kafka, defining fantasy as: "Fantastic literature points to or suggests the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on disorder, on to illegality, on to that which lies outside the law, that which is outside dominant value systems."[15] While not close to Carter or de Camp's definitions of the genre, this definition lies somewhat close to that of Irwin, although it makes use of far more overtly psychocultural terms than Irwin's "game".

While the differences between these definitions of the fantasy genre could be ascribed to the common popular-versus-academical rift, with the popular opinion being flawed by imprecise terminology and the latter stubbornly ignoring the fact of common usage, this approach would only focus on who was disagreeing with who, rather than examining the actual substance of the disagreement. The main essence of the disagreement comes from the use of the term *fantasy*. When Lin Carter makes use of the term, he means something, while Jackson means something else. The use of the term by Jackson and Irwin can be seen as a continuation of the term's usage prior to the 1960s. While there is little criticism and no book-length studies of the term "fantasy" prior to 1960, there are anthologies, which are able to at least suggest what type of stories were seen as "fantasy" at the time. The two most widely known such anthologies, published between the later years of World War 2 and 1960 are *The Moonlight Traveler: Great Stories of Fantasy and Imagination* by Philip van Doren Stern, published in 1943, as well as *Timeless Stories for Today and Tomorrow* by Ray Bradbury, published in 1953. While both of these present their stories as "fantasy", this term is used without any qualification. Neither of these anthologies contain any stories which follow the BAFS template, however, almost all of the stories would fit well within the theoretical frameworks put forward by Irwin and Jackson.

[14] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 9
[15] Williamson, Jamie. The Evolution of Modern Fantasy p. 9

When examined in the BAFS sense, the term "fantasy" was appropriated. In the earliest push of the genre, during the early 1960s, the protogenre material was dubbed as "Sword and Sorcery" or "Heroic Fantasy", with the qualifier *Heroic*, implying the need for certain qualifications and that the term "fantasy" was not enough. Carter dubbed these works simply "fantasy" in the late 1960s, the first time the genre had been designated like this collectively. Later, fantasy was connected with the phenomenon Dungeons and Dragons, evolving to primarily connote stories set in preindustrial, invented worlds where magic works.

According to John Clute, "fantasy is an extraordinarily porous term, and has been used to designate vast deposits of story, which within a given culture or historical period is deemed unrealistic[16]". The broader term of the fantastic encompasses a number of different subgenres such as dark fantasy, fairy tale, horror, science fiction, supernatural fiction and more. Therefore, the definition of fantasy as a genre has been a difficult task. By making use of Clute's work, Farah Mendlesohn developed four so called "fuzzy sets" of fantasy in order to classify different works: *portal-quest fantasy, immersive fantasy, intrusion fantasy* and *liminal/estranged fantasy*.[17]

The term *portal-quest fantasy* simply defines fantasy stories in which the fantasy worlds are entered through a portal, for example *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* written by C.S. Lewis and first published in 1950. While the fantastic exists on the other side of the portal, what is important is that it does not cross into the mundane world, as Mendlesohn puts it: "the fantastic is *on the other side* and does not "leak""[18]. Portal fantasies are almost always built as quest novels, and almost always proceed in a linear fashion with a clear goal which must be met. They often contain elaborate descriptive elements and must, instead of being defeated, be navigated. The language used in portal fantasy is often descriptive in the style of the anthropologist, exploratory rather than assumptive[19]. While it is rare, some portal fantasies achieve a gothic tone, like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* written by Lewis Carroll in 1865, and even then still keeps to the need to explain and describe as a main force behind both narrative and language used.

lastly, the portal fantasy relies heavily on both the reader and the protagonist gaining experience

[16] Lykke Guanio-Uluru. Ethics and Form in Fantasy Literature Tolkien, Rowling and Meyer. Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. p. 12

[17] Lykke Guanio-Uluru. Ethics and Form in Fantasy Literature Tolkien, Rowling and Meyer. p.12

[18] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, vol. 13, no. 2, 2002, p. 4

[19] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." p. 5

throughout the story. Whole some genres like horror rely on a technique of constantly surprising the reader, portal fantasy gradually leads towards a point when the protagonist knows the fantastic world enough to change it and to become part of that world's destiny.

While the common thought about portal fantasy is to assume that the portal is from "our" world into the fantastic world, the main theme of the portal fantasy is about entry, transition and negotiation[20]. This makes portal fantasy very compatible with the quest story, where, traditionally, the protagonist goes from a mundane existence where the fantastic, if they are aware of it, is distant or unknown, into direct contact with the fantastic through which the protagonist enters into negotiation with the world of the novel through a manipulation of the fantastic.

The immersive fantasy is based around the reader sharing not just a world, but a set of assumptions. This form of fantasy presents the fantastic world without comment, as the norm for both reader and protagonists. As Mendlesohn describes it: "we sit on the protagonists' shoulders and while we have access to their eyes and ears, we are not provided with an explanatory narrative."[21] The immersive fantasy is closest to science fiction in the way that it makes the reader understand a form of ironic sense of scientific facts, which helps explain its connection to science fiction. Once the fantastic becomes sufficiently assumed, it acquires a form of scientific cohesion of its own. The immersive fantasy however, for all its effectiveness, depends on an assumption of realism that denies the need for deeper analysis.

The best way to define immersive fantasy according to Mendlesohn is to define what it is not. The reader does not enter into the immersive fantasy, but rather, is assumed to be part of it. The story in and of itself must be a sealed concept, it cannot be questioned within the confines of the narrative. While the narrative of an immersive fantasy story might be started with an intrusion into the fantastic, the setting is already fantastic, and as such, the intrusion is not the source.

The most important fact for immersive fantasy stories is the requirement that the fantasy must be immersive from the point of view of the characters. The characters in an immersive fantasy must take for granted the fantastic elements which surrounds them. Therefore, a successful immersive fantasy story negates the sense of wonder we associate with fantasy, in favor of an atmosphere of ennui.

[20] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." p. 5
[21] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." p. 6

Finally, the fantasy worlds in which no magic is found, mostly take place in immersive fantasies. Sometimes, the magic takes place elsewhere, and in other cases, the fantasy novel takes place in an archaic world in which is not connected with ours.

Intrusive fantasy is most commonly set in a version of our world. The intrusive fantasy defines the fantastic as a bringer of chaos. Intrusive fantasy makes use of the beast in the garden or the elf seeking help. The genre is characterized by horror and amazement. It takes the reader away from safety without removing them from their place. While not necessarily unpleasant, the intrusive fantasy does claim that normality is an organized concept, and it normally holds that when the fantastic retreats from our world, it might be changed but the world still returns to a state of predictability. The intrusive fantasy often keeps "reality" and fantasy separate. In some examples, the protagonist might be the only one able to perceive the fantastic, while others might feel the effects of the fantastic but are unable to perceive it.

The language associated with intrusive fantasy mimics these structural characteristics. Because the base level is in the normal world, intrusive fantasy maintains a stylistic realism and relies heavily on the use of explanation. The main drive of intrusive fantasy is to be investigated, to gain transparency, these descriptions are direct and intense, and it is assumed that the reader shares in the ignorance of the point of view character. The used language often reflects a sense of constant amazement. Unlike the similar form of fantasy, the portal fantasy, we as readers are never supposed to become accustomed to the fantastic, making this form ideal for the strongest type of intrusive fantasy, the horror novel.[22] Because this sense of awe in characters is tricky, and may explain some of the tendencies of the form, such as the preference for stylistic realism as well as the preference for continuously introducing new protagonists to avoid the sense of horror, amazement and surprise from becoming stale because of an accustomed protagonist.

While normally set in a version of "our" world, intrusion fantasy can be set within an immersive world. The rules, however, are the same. There needs to be a clear line between "normality", however constructed, and the intrusion. The shown protagonists know what is normal, even if we as readers do not. The seeming innocence of the characters, however, is combined with their competence in maneuvering within the immersive fantasy. Because of this negotiation with the

[22] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." p. 8

immersive fantasy, the characters become actors within their own immersive fantasy, while they become acted upon by the intrusion.

The estranged fantasy is a rare form of fantasy. In this version of fantasy, we are given clues towards the familiar, telling us that what we are experiencing is our own world.[23] When fantastic elements are introduced, they are meant to be intrusive and against expectation. While the intrusion might be noteworthy and might cause chaos, the magical origins of the intrusion hardly causes a reaction. In the estranged fantasy, the enclosed nature of the immersive fantasy is absent, but just like an immersive fantasy, the protagonist does not show surprise at the fantastic elements. It is this reaction to the fantastic that shapes this form of fantasy as well as its context. The tone of estranged fantasy could be described as indifferent. Mendlesohn brings up the example of Joan Aiken's Armitage family from the novel *Yes, But Today is Tuesday* from 1953, in which unicorns appear on the family's lawn, while the family remains calm.[24]
While estranged fantasy presents the fantastic as a casual experience for the protagonist, it works to estrange the reader. While the portal fantasy has the reader sitting on the shoulder of the protagonist, the estranged fantasy has the reader inside the protagonist´s subconscious, as Mendlesohn puts it: "quietly screaming "but something is wrong""[25].
The estranged fantasy relies on a number of techniques, which differentiates it from the other forms of fantasy. It relies on an atmosphere of ennui while the intrusive fantasy shows a fascination with the fantastic monster. It differentiates itself from the portal fantasy through the use of the portal by refusing to cross the threshold. Where portal fantasy confronts the illusion of the fantasy, thereby reducing the fantastic. This refusal to cross the threshold works to generate confusion fear and awe by never fully demystifying the fantastic, thereby inciting the emotional state that is paramount in the creation of estranged fantasy.

[23] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." p. 10
[24] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." p. 10
[25] Mendlesohn, Farah. "Toward A Taxonomy of Fantasy." p. 11

Video Games as a Topic of Literature

Approaching the topic of video games as a form of art to be researched within the fields of literature and culture has time and time again been proven controversial. Some, like jack Kroll argue that: "Games can be fun and rewarding in many ways, but they can't transmit the emotional complexity that is the roof of art."[26] Critics such as Kroll argue that games are primarily a form of lay, focused on concepts like goals, points and results, and as such if seen as cultural artifacts, they can never be compared to the works of great artists, directors or writers. These debates have mainly been focused on the interactivity of games as well as the ability of the audience to care as much about pixels on a screen as a character in a film or a book. Adding to the debates was the controversy in 2012 when Paola Antonelli from the Museum of Modern Art incorporated video games in a permanent design collection, leading to outbursts like Jonathan Jones from *The Guardian*'s "Sorry, MoMA, video games are not art"[27].

Scholarly debates on the same topic have been similarly divided. Some are in favor of games such as *Braid*[28] being compared to great art, some going so far to argue that some games belong in the museum. Others question why there is a need to label video games as art. According to Paulo Pedercini, one of these reasons comes from the evolution of games from simple fun and play to a serious cultural practice[29]. The question that arises from this statement then becomes whether all video games should be considered art, or only some games. The question can then be rephrased from "are video games art?" to "can video games be art?". This question has been tackled in a number of different ways. One argument holds that video games seemingly possess all the necessary, formal components that are expected from art. This argument supports Ernest Adams' claim that video games are legitimized as an artform through public expectation as much as the nature of the games themselves. Additionally, it is often argued that video games should be considered art, simply because of the rise, the genre often gives to other art practices, for example fan art or fan fiction.

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[26] Bourgonjon, Jeroen, et al. "Perspectives on Video Games as Art." CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, vol. 19, no. 4, 1 Dec. 2017. 2

[27] Bourgonjon, Jeroen, et al. "Perspectives on Video Games as Art. p. 2

[28] <http://braid-game-com/>

[29] Bourgonjon, Jeroen, et al. "Perspectives on Video Games as Art. p. 3

The similarities between art and video games at the aesthetic, narrative, political and philosophical level do not alone allow for the direct categorization of video games as art. While video games contain artistic elements such as music, graphics and narrative, these qualities do not automatically define video games as art themselves. On the other hand, the techniques used to develop video games can be considered an extension of traditional art.

In their essay *Perspectives on Video Games as Art*, Jeroen Bourgonjon, Geert Vandermeersche and Kris Rutten address two different perspectives for defining video games as art[30].

The first perspective is that of the historical-technological perspective. The progression of technology has often been the inspiration for new artists. An example of this is the emergence of photography. With the introduction of cameras, artists sought out new ways of exploring the new creative potential of photography. Through the specific selection of subjects, as well as through experimentation with technique, artists were able to turn the camera into an artistic medium and photography into its own distinct artform. Like video games, photography was not immediately accepted as a form of art, meeting resistance from the broader art world. Firstly, people needed to grow accustomed to the new technology, and secondly, the concept of art as continuously transitioning needed to be accepted. With this in mind, Ellen Sandor and Janine Fron hypothesize that: "For future generations, video games may become the most dynamic extension of cultural memory since photography was embraced as an art form."[31]

While video games offer new possibilities for established artists, they also allow for people without the opportunity to express themselves creatively to create art themselves. Some might create fan art or fan fiction as mentioned earlier, but some might create games themselves as a way of expressing themselves artistically. One example comes in the form of Ryan and Amy Green's autobiographical game *That Dragon, Cancer*, which deals with the loss of their child to cancer[32]. Ryan Green stated that the process of developing a video game was the best way to translate his family's experience during this difficult period of their lives.

The introduction of digitalization also changes the way art is created according to Montse Arbelo and Joseba Franco, as they argue that: "It changes the solitary artist into a collaborative nomad

[30] Bourgonjon, Jeroen, et al. "Perspectives on Video Games as Art. p. 4
[31] Bourgonjon, Jeroen, et al. "Perspectives on Video Games as Art. p. 4-5
[32] Bourgonjon, Jeroen, et al. "Perspectives on Video Games as Art. p. 5

belonging to multidisciplinary, transnational groups, it changes the materials used, the concept of the unique work and its inherent rights, its exhibition, and the function of the general public."[33]
The second perspective explored in Bourgonjon, Vandermeersche and Rutten's essay is the artistic perspective. While we have discussed that it is possible for artists to turn to video games to create art, however, what does video game technology offer artists? To answer this question, we need to examine the motivations artists might have for creating art. While these motives are too numerous to count, there are two motives which apply to the idea of video games as art.
The first motive is to mimic reality. This especially applies to more traditional approaches to art, where "good" art was seen as "realistic" art. This same trend can be observed in video games, where developers constantly seek to create more and more realistic images as possible. Especially in contemporary video games, as several developers seek to create more realistic games via technologies such as virtual reality.
While these technologically complex games have become more common with the release of software packages, not all video game critics agree that realistic and beautiful games are better. Some critics would argue that game designers have given in to so called "cinema envy", focusing on graphical versions of earlier released games instead of innovative and creative games.
The second motivation is to express emotions and belief. Video games have not always been considered successful in having the same emotional impact on the player as novels or films. Some would argue that video games are good for little more than evoking instinctive reactions such as when the player is killed. There are a number of reasons for this, but it should be remembered by anyone who studies video games that the role of emotion and narrative in video games is different across the different genres of games. While it is true that someone playing *FIFA 2017* or *Counter Strike: Global Offensive* might only experience small flashes of excitement or disappointment depending on their experience in the game, there are games such as the *Final Fantasy* series, the *Witcher* series and *Undertale*, games which are specifically created to tell a story through active player participation and evoke emotion through the bond the player creates with the characters they play as and interact with within the world of the game.

[33] Bourgonjon, Jeroen, et al. "Perspectives on Video Games as Art. p. 5

Felski on Recognition

Why do we feel compelled to like or dislike a certain character in a narrative? Why is it sometimes easier to understand the motives and goals of one character than it is of others? Sometimes, we find aspects of characters to be surprisingly familiar, leading us to identify ourselves with these aspects, and through them, the characters themselves. Rita Felski describes this process as "Recognition" in her book "The Uses of Literature". As she describes it:

> Suddenly and without warning, a flash of connection leaps across the gap between text and reader; an affinity or an attunement is brought to light. I may be looking for such a moment, or I may stumble on it haphazardly, Startled by the prescience of a certain combination of words […] I cannot help seeing traces of myself in the pages I am reading.[34]

Felski recalls the example of Stephen Gordon in *The Well of Loneliness* who is surprised to find that the desire to be a man and to fall in love with a woman is not a trait unique to her after reading the works of Krafft-Ebing. Experiences such as these can function to change a reader's sense of who they are. They change mentally by experiencing something external rather than internal by reading. Recognition means to literally "know something again". The reader is able to make sense of something that is unfamiliar to them by adapting it to a more familiar scheme. Recognition, however, should not be mistaken for repetition. It deals not just with what was already known, but what is becoming known. Something that might have been present in the subconscious, is able to take shape in the mind of the reader, becoming visible. By experiencing something external, an altered sense of self is constructed.

Anthony Giddens and Charles Taylor argues that this process of selfhood unfolding plays a large part in the modern sense of identity[35]. Without tradition and rigid social hierarchies, it is up to the individual to construct their own sense of self, and to give that self a purpose.

When this process of reflexive selfhood is created, literature is able to take an important role in figuring out the self and what it means to be a person.

The novel is especially useful for this creation. Novels often deal with a sense of psychological

[34] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. Oxford, Blackwell, 2008. p. 23

[35] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 25

awareness, exploring motive and desire while attempting to dive into the details of consciousness, finding connections and conflicts in self-determination and socialization.

Novels inspire readers to engage in self-scrutiny by depicting characters who are themselves going through introspection and soul-searching. Fantasy works allow for this same sense of self-scrutiny, but against the backdrop of a setting that might be more compelling to younger readers. Additionally, fantasy works require some measure of suspension of disbelief from the reader, allowing them to be more open and accepting of moments of certain character traits portrayed in the novel. The combination of self-scrutiny and reading became much more prominent in more recent decades, as women and minorities found that making use of literature was a good medium for exploring identity in gender, ethnicity and sexuality.

The theory of recognition, however, has been plagued by taboos and prohibitions. The practice has often been viewed as unseemly or the narrative equivalent of a "suicidal plunge into naiveté"[36]. Some argue that the practice of recognition is closer to narcissism than anything else, as critics describe it as arguing that a book is about the specific individual reading it, warning that the realm of art will be limited if one reduces narratives into mirrors of themselves.

Recognition has been further criticized in recent years because of the impact made by Emmanuel Levinas on literary studies. Levinas was a firm advocate of otherness, arguing that the thought that we can come to understand the strange or different is dangerous and that the basis of ethics depends on understanding the other as mysterious[37]. The other, according to Levinas, resists conceptual schemes. And ethics depend on giving up on the desire to know. Supporters of Levinas' claims, argue that the process of recognition functions to trivialize and colonize the other, becoming a process of narcissistic self-duplication, a subjectivity that turns everything into a version of itself.

If the process of recognition is to be accepted at all in literary theory, Felski argues, it should be changed, with the help of Lacan or Althusser, into a state of misrecognition[38].

Lacan and Althusser wrote to widely renowned fables of self-deception. Lacan wrote on the mirror-stage, when a child first notices their own reflection in the mirror and becomes completely absorbed. Because of the mirror, or because of a parent gesturing to mirror the child, they gain a

[36] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 26
[37] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 26
[38] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 27

sense of self. However, the image in the mirror is an illusion. It is an image of self, originating outside the self. The image in the mirror does not show the nature of identity, the void at the center as Lacan described it. Lacan saw the subject as essentially hollow, a figure that epitomizes the impossibility of ever knowing the self.

Althusser instead wrote of misrecognition as the moment a person walks down the street and hears the police officer yelling "hey you there!" somewhere behind them. In the act of turning around and feeling addressed by the police officer, the person comes to recognize themselves as a subject. They recognize themselves as someone bound by the law. This process of recognizing oneself as a subject is then to agree to oneself's subjection. As Althusser argues "the self believes itself to be free yet is everywhere in chains"[39]. By this, Althusser means that the individual's personhood possesses an obviousness as a self-evident reality that demands to be recognized. This obviousness however, makes the personhood the essense of ideology, quintessential means by which politics works. The fictional subjectivity created through moments such as the misrecognition of being called by the officer on the street works to place individuals into the state apparatus and thereby become acquiescent to the established status quo.

These two fables have, over the last decades, become premonitory parables, pointing out the illusory nature of self-knowledge. A literary critic can with these, compare a work of fiction to either the mirror or the police, and if it seeks to conform the reader, through misapprehension, into unified and autonomous individuals.

Storytelling and the aesthetics of realism can be seen as deeply implicated in this process of misrecognition, as the process of identifying oneself with characters in a story is the most important mechanism in which the reader is drawn to believing in the reality of the written person.

The fact that acts of misrecognition happen is of course not up for dispute. It should not be denied that people deceive themselves when it comes to their own desires and interests and that we as individuals often misjudge who or what we are. Literary texts are able to serve as a medium in which to constantly show moments of fallibility like this, showing the impossibility of self-transparency.

While recognition has become something of a taboo topic in English departments, other platforms

[39] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 27

have accepted the process more openly. Political theorists are hailing recognition as a keyword of modern times, making the process out as an idea that is generating new frameworks for debating the importance and the struggles for social justice.

One of these political theorists is Nancy Fraser who contrasts a cultural politics of recognition that is organized around differences of gender, race and sexuality towards a goal of economic redistribution similar to the goals of traditional socialism.

Feminism, LGBTQ activism and the motivations of racial and ethnic minorities towards self-determination, become visible examples of the demand for public acknowledgement.

Axel Honneth however, argues that the need for recognition is not a new concept, but rather an anthropological constant, a defining feature of what it means to become a person that assumes a number of cultural and political guises[40]. As Honneth proposes, recognition serves to offer a method to understand all kinds of social inequities as well as the struggle for self-realization.

Literary theory can learn from these debates by framing recognition in terms rather than gullibility. In political theory, the idea of recognition is given justice through the belief that recognition is not just an error, but as Charles Taylor argues a "vital human need"[41].

There is a small difference in the definition recognition in literary theory and political theory, however. When literary theorists think about recognition, they think of a moment of insight, of knowing and knowing again. These ideas have to do with comprehension, insight and self-understanding. When political theorists talk about recognition however, they refer to acknowledgement, not knowledge. The claim for recognition is one for acceptance as well as dignity and inclusion in public life. The political recognition is an ethical concept, a want of justice rather than the truth. Additionally, literary recognition focuses on a moment of clarity or personal illumination as well as heightened self-understanding where political recognition demands public acceptance and validation. Literary recognition deals with the self, where political recognition is focused towards the other. It would seem that the two meanings of the term are completely at odds with one another. Rita Felski, however, argues that the two concepts are far from being a dichotomy. She argues that the question of knowledge is entangled firmly with the practices of acknowledgement[42]. To further her point, she quotes an alternate idiom by Stanley Cavell: "what

[40] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 29
[41] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 29
[42] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 30

it really means to know other people has less to do with questions of epistemological certainty than with the strength of our personal commitments. So, too, our sense of who we are is embedded in our diverse ways of being in the world and our sense of attunement or conflict with others."[43].

The reasons for disciplinary reasons for disagreements about recognition are not hard to understand. The concept is very often looked down upon for its involvement in appropriation and a desire for sameness. Yet those claims fail to do the term justice in regard to its conceptual many-sidedness and suppleness. As Felski claims: "The capacity for self-consciousness, for taking oneself as the object of one's own thought, is only made possible by an encounter with otherness"[44], meaning that recognition presumes a sense of difference rather than excluding it, establishing a crucial condition for the creation of identity. When talking about selfhood via a relation to others, the concepts of self-knowledge and acknowledgement are closely bound together. We as humans are fundamentally social creatures. Our wellbeing and our survival depends on interacting with others. Therefore, the other is not a limit, but a condition for selfhood.

These relations are of course altered and changed by linguistic structures and cultural traditions. The "I" and the "You" are never naked or new. When we communicate with one another, our words are repeats of words used by so many others before us. Language in and of itself is filled with metaphors, figures and meanings that we never understand. The meaning of selfhood might be dialogic; however, we should be careful not to assume that dialogue is equal to harmony, symmetry or perfect understanding. Recognition is therefore not synonymous with reconciliation. These structures are not only able to constrain, but also sustain. Traditions and beliefs not only serve to mystify, but also to grant meaning. Words from the past are able to acquire new meaning and luster as we refurbish them through a large number of interactions. Language can therefore be seen from to points. From one side, it is a symbol of alienation and division, while on the other side, it is able to deliver mutual experiences of meaning that could not have existed before being created by words.

When attempting to acquire self-knowledge, language serves as our primary means of attaining it, rather than blocking it. How do we use these broad descriptions of recognition and

[43] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 30
[44] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 30

intersubjectivity to answer the specific concerns of literary studies? Literary texts can set into motion a number of different forms of recognition, and literature is therefore the perfect medium in which to examine recognition and its multitude of components.

We should not however, think of books as people, and we should not see reading as a face-to-face conversation. A book cannot think or feel, and they have no direct impact on the world. They affect the world via those that read them. So, we are unable to classify books as subjects. However, it is also not correct to categorize books as purely objects. Books are filled with layers of meaning. They are presented as symbols of beliefs and values, standing for something that is larger than themselves. Books are not people, but they represent the ideas and attitudes of persons or question collective ways of thinking. When we think about reading in this way, the process resembles the meeting with the generalized other, a term first coined by G.H. Mead.

A theorist of intersubjectivity, Mead argues that: "the formation of the self involves all kinds of messy entanglements, such that no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between our own selves and the selves of others."[45] By internalizing the expectations of these others, we come to acquire a sense of individuality, or we are allowed to look critically at the values and norms that formed us. This process cannot be learned alone. This idea of the generalized other is a way of describing the collectivities which we affiliate ourselves, and as such is an imaginary construction, not a real being. It can best be described as our view of how others view us, a view which affects our actions and the stories we tell ourselves. The term of the generalized other could therefore also be described as our relationship to the social imaginary, the stories, histories, ideals and beliefs which informs our individual histories.

The use of literature in the role of self-formation takes on an important part when the individual feels estranged from their immediate environment. As feminist critic Suzanne Juhasz describes it: "I am lonelier in the real world situation […] when no one seems to understand *who I am* – than by myself reading, when I feel the book *recognizes* me, and I recognize myself because of the book."[46] Reading in this regard could be seen as a way to feel relief in the fact that the reader is not alone. The book becomes proof that there are others who think and feel like the reader does. And through this process of recognition, the reader is able to feel recognized, and rescued from the

[45] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 32
[46] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 33

fear of not being seen.

When reading a work of literature, a spark of affiliation might strike the reader, leading them to identify with a specific character, to the point of them seeing the character possessing traits which identify them as part of the same broader community as the reader. Among literary theorists, this spark of affiliation is commonly known as identification. The term identification however, is notoriously vague and imprecise, often blurring together very different phenomena.

Identification can be an indication of a reader's formal alignment with a character, often brought on and encouraged through a number of narrative techniques such as focalization and point of view, while also referring to a sense of experiential allegiance with a character through a sense of attachment or affinity. Common criticism of identification of states that readers who formally align with a fictional character often accept the ideologies presented by that character without question. In reality, the result is far less predictable. Firstly, readers are far more varied in their evaluations and attachments. Secondly, texts often contain a number of unsympathetic protagonists or unreliable narrators whose perspectives the readers are not always likely to trust. On the occasion that a reader experiences a surge of affinity with a fictional character, the catch-all concept of identification is of little help in distinguishing between the different mental processes that might come into play. A possible scenario, popularly called the Madame Bovary syndrome, this process might overwhelm the mind of the reader, as Felski describes: "a reader's self-awareness is swallowed up by her intense affiliation with an imaginary persona, an affiliation that involves a temporary relinquishing of reflective and analytical consciousness."[47]

This attachment from the reader can take the form of a cathexis onto an idealized figure, often appreciated and treasured for their remoteness and distance from the reader's normal existence. This character facilitates an escape from the reader's everyday existence. By being immersed gully in this fictional world, the reader becomes caught up into a state of self-forgetting known as enchantment. Another experience one might gain from reading points black towards the reader's consciousness rather than away from it, leading to a phenomenology of self-scrutiny rather than self-loss. The fictional persona becomes a mirror that reflects an altered understanding of who they are, an experience of heightened self-awareness which is directed through an aesthetic medium. To see oneself in a character, becomes seeing someone new, which becomes to see

[47] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 34

oneself in a different light, developing a new vocabulary of self-description in the process. In this self-recognition, the alignment with a fictional character starts in interaction between self-knowledge and acknowledgement. A connection that comes with a powerful sense of cognitive readjustment. With these examples, we can therefore say that the idea of identification is poorly equipped to distinguish between the epistemic and experiential registers of reader involvement[48]. One question we can ask in order to better understand the process of recognition and identification and therefore move away from the catch-all nature of the process to a more narrow and precise theory. When an individual recognizes themselves in a novel, a film or even a video game, what quality, property or phenomenon is being recognized?

Firstly, we need to accept the fact that no matter what we read, we are unable to avoid linking it, at least in part, to something we know. The idea of otherness insists that we can distance ourselves from our frameworks of reference, however, it also asserts the firm hold this framework has on us. Sara Ahmed describes this idea through the question of the possibility of the nature of strangeness, of an encounter with pure otherness. As Ahmed observes, the stranger is always a distinct symbol with political and cultural history, making some people out to be more foreign or more alien than others. To quote Ahmed: "the stranger is produced not as that which we fail to recognize, but as that which we have already recognized as "a stranger"."[49] As such, Ahmed's point can hold equally to the otherness of literary texts. Literary otherness can be identified through a familiar set of maneuvers and classifications. With this, I do not mean that art is unable to be a source of surprise or wonder. Instead, this point serves to reaffirm that otherness and sameness are two aspects of the same aesthetic, instead of two completely different aesthetics. The perception of whether a phenomenon is other, new or different is dependent on the prior conception of what was already known.

if reading then, is unable to avoid including moments of recognition, the question changes from how to avoid recognition to what forms recognition might take. In one scenario, recognition is triggered by encountering something of direct likeness or similarity, as an aspect of what is read fits into an identifiable scheme of things. Felski refers to a scenario like this as one of self-intensification[50]. This process is usually triggered by a portrayal of the densely packed and detailed

[48] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 35
[49] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 38
[50] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 39

daily life. Sounds and smells might evoke a familiar feeling, while known objects and ordinary routines such as ways of talking or passing the time. While the reader is aware that they are reading a work of fiction, shaped by the internal pressure of genre and form, they might be surprised at the detail and clarity with which a specific facet of life is portrayed.

When we recognize aspects of ourselves in fictional characters, seeing our perceptions of behaviors echoed in a work of fiction, it makes us aware of the experiences we have accumulated, recognizing them as distinctive but not unique. The concept of "having an identity" pulls a great deal from these moments of recognition, shared history and commonality, making it obvious why social movements have so often been fueled by the writing and reading of fiction.

Another aspect of recognition comes in the form of the process of self-extension, or, seeing aspects of oneself in the distant and the strange. Felski brings up the example of the narrator of Mishra's *The Romantics*, who, when reflecting on the resonance of *Sentimental Education*, does not draw on any direct resemblances[51]. Mishra points out the misapprehensions, the condescension and the failed and misinformed gestures of friendship that ruins the drama of cross-cultural encounters. We see Californian students and the children of the French bourgeoisie seek enlightenment in India, expecting a serene, pacifist village. At the same time, the Indians having dreams of Rodeo Drive and being convinced that the Westerners live lives that are filled with glamour and happiness.

The narrator, however, also works to explore the complex cross-hatching of likeness and difference. While the narrator wonders what students in an Indian university in the late 1980s could have in common with Frenchmen of Moreau's generation, Mishra slowly uncovers small similarities between the everyday lives around the narrator and the "small, unnoticed tragedies of thwarted hopes and ideals Flaubert wrote about in *Sentimental Education*"[52].

Not only does the narrator find similarities between his own life and that of Moreau, but finds that modern India is filled with stories of chances taken and hopes fading. Mishra shows that portraying differences as unusual and tiptoeing around other cultures while making them out to be mysterious and unknowable is a patronizing process that makes us blind to moments when cultures and histories overlap with one another. Another accusation of recognition can be seen in

[51] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 39
[52] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 40

the arguments of Shu-mei Shih. Shih argues that attention from critics on non-Western literature is plagued by Eurocentric norms[53]. Shih points out a number of native problems such as generalizations, the reduction of literary works to nationalist allegories and the portrayal of multicultural identities purged of any portrayal of global inequities or economic structures. According to Shih, these practices derive from the "prison of recognition"[54], which she describes as reiterating the already known, be it false presumptions of universality or Orientalist fantasies of difference. Felski however, argues that Shih's accusation of recognition falls short as it offers a rather shortened account of complexity and doubleness. According to Felski, the main thread of Shih's essay: "demands that Western critics become more critical of their own practices (a call to self-knowledge) and details how non-Western literary works are often given cursory or careless treatment (a call for acknowledgment), remains entirely caught up in the premises and protocols of recognition."[55]

These models of recognition, either based in a perception of direct likeness or a metaphorical affinity, fuel much of the discussion on literature and politics. As some critics suggest, the experience of reading is always connected with our desire to reflect on who and what we are. These desires are then connected with a number of different experiences, histories and political realities. Our selves are constantly being caught up in moments of culture, history, body and biography, moments that throughout both literature and life have to be acknowledged. Other critics object to what they see as a willingness to put readers into specific groupings based on speculation about social identity, arguing that the value of imaginative art is in arts power to extend perception. By entering other worlds, we, as readers, become better acquainted with the unfamiliar, are taught to see things from different angles and allows us to see aspects of ourselves within distant lives. The notion of universality can be seen as a simple way of acknowledging the fact that a work of literature can resonate with readers from a number of different backgrounds. IF this was not true then only Irishmen would enjoy James Joyce, while gay men would be restricted to only reading Oscar Wilde or Edmund White. Instead, it could be suggested that critics who look down upon the presence of political affiliations in art, fail to experience the same imagination that they idealize.

[53] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 40
[54] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 41
[55] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 41

If our existence as individuals revolves around the drama of recognition, then our aesthetic engagement cannot be limited to not include the desire to know and to be acknowledged.
We all seek, in our own ways, to have our particularities recognized by finding echoes of ourselves in the world around us. The Asymmetric nature of recognition allows for books to serve as possible sources of recognition even to those who are deprived of other forms of public acknowledgment. An example of this, is the deprivation of this kind for women who desired other women. This desire built into both body and mind but unmentioned at home or at work, media and public life. Neither should it be said that acts of recognition such as these are purely political and not literary. A well-written work of fiction is able to resonate with readers in this way because it can fashion a narrative, rather than a sociological screed. A work of fiction which inspires acts of recognition based on the portrayal of same-sex relations through describing the drama of same-sex love through descriptions, and through the possible drawing on tragic topics in order to possess an aura of seriousness. These moments of recognition might however also carry a negative effect, as argued by Heather Love. Love remarks that *The Well of Loneliness* is "still known as the most famous and most widely read of lesbian novels, is also the novel most hated by lesbians themselves."[56] The tragic view of same-sex relations presented in the novel clashed with subsequent views on gay identity. This clash inspired a number of readers to deny any parallels between themselves and protagonist Stephen Gordon. While Love argues that these disavowals are not justified, they serve to remind us of the changing nature of moments of recognition. Moreover, it risks the process of "recognition as X" as theorized by Alexander Düttman[57].
This process involves being pinned down in a way that might feel constraining to the reader, defining and constraining one's personhood, thereby defining, exhausting and subsequently reducing said personhood. The reader might become fixated on defining the self, coming to believe that identities are governed through unchanging rules, lessening the place of ambiguity, disidentification and of varied opinions. This lessening is ill-suited for the process of reading, where relations between social demographics and particular affiliations as well as recognition are unpredictable and often in flux. If the identities of readers and characters are matched with the

[56] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 44
[57] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 44

assumption that a moment of recognition requires a direct resemblance, then the metaphorical and self-reflexive dimensions of literary representation are denied.

In modernity, we are often drawn to literary texts for reasons like the texts' willingness to catalogue the extend of our duplicities, deceptions and destructive desires. The image presented by Lacan of the child gazing into the mirror to see its idealized self-image falls short in explaining how literature represents the idea of selves. Felski describes the experience as: "seeing a unattractive, scowling, middle-aged person coming into a restaurant, only to suddenly realize that you have been looking into a mirror behind the counter and that this unappealing-looking is you."[58] The idea of the mirror is to not always reflect a flattering image. Seeing our reflection can be unsettling, taking us off-guard and often from unfamiliar angles. A work of tragedy for example, often relentlessly pound the reader over the head with the hard-to-manage nature of human subjectivity and the often-disastrous gap between expectation and outcomes, as well as the many ways in which the person misjudges themselves and others.

We value these literary works because they force us to confront our failings rather than strengthening our self-esteem.

Literature offers new ways of seeing as well as moments of self-apprehension and new ways of reading the self. By recognizing and knowing again, we can find new ways of knowing, meaning that recognition is not synonymous with repetition or the familiar. Moments of heightened insight are not just a personal revelation within a private communion between reader and text, but also connected with moments of acknowledgment and affiliation between the self and the other, creating connections across social demographics.

While much debate has been triggered over the language of identification, recognition is more independent from the integrity of self-identity because of its foundation in dialogic relation rather than possessing a core of personhood.

[58] Felski, Rita. Uses of Literature. p. 48

Medievalism and Nationalism

Fantasy stories often introduce a unique division of class, race and gender. These divisions have been described as a result of medievalism and nostalgia for the Middle Ages. Through the use of a number of medievalisms, the Middle Ages are reproduced and glorified for contemporary readers. Works such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Wheel of Time* and to an extent *The Stormlight Archive* are presented as reimaginings of the heroic Anglicized past. Works of fantasy such as these seem to almost evoke the idea of an idealized medieval Britain in presentation. The worlds created for these works are often modelled on feudal systems of loyalty and class hierarchy, and present medievalisms such as the questing protagonists, castle-focused architecture and, more often than not, simplified gender roles. In the essay *Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature* Maria Sachiko Cecire argues that a mixture of normative and cosmetic taken from medievalism appeals to a wider understanding of what she calls "traditional" Britishness in a way that extends to America and the Commonwealth, contributing to the "backbone of Anglophone identity"[59]. Even after globalization, newer works of fantasy continue to overwhelmingly replicate this wish for the medieval, but with changes that reflect similar changes in the British experience. The increases in cross-border flows of both people and information, the rise of cosmopolitanism and progressivism and changes is the nature of warfare all a mark on the nature of contemporary literature. However, even fantasy literature which shifts according to these new factors, seems to keep to the firm ideal of British nationalism that the genre's nostalgic nature demands. The *Harry Potter* novels (1997-2007) and their subsequent explosive rise in popularity paved the way for new fantasy stories which delivered these contemporary medievalisms on an international level through a widespread translation of texts, spin-off media such as movies, and through merchandise.

When talking about the importance of nationalism and the use of ethnic symbolism in literature, the significance of memories, myths, symbols and traditions are important. Together, these factors can be referred to as "ethno-history", or the memories of "the ethnic members" coupled

[59] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism, vol. 9, no. 3, Dec. 2009. p. 396

with an understanding of their communal past or pasts[60]. As Homi K. Babha describes this ethno-history: "The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpolates a growing circle of national subjects."[61]

The use of such medievalisms is especially useful in fantasy aimed towards younger readers such as the first *Harry Potter* novels, as these nationalistic signs are then instilled into the consciousness from a very young age, therefore allowing the reader to develop themselves in terms of a national identity. As Benedict Anderson says, the "imagined community" is fueled these literary presentations of ethnicity. Anderson argues that "Nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love vert clearly in thousands of different forms and styles"[62]. It can be said that the recent increase in fantasy stories written for both children and adults and their popularity makes the genre a suitable way to instill this sense of nationalism.

The importance of successful novels such as the *Harry Potter* novels or the *Lord of the Rings* novels on the construction of societal norms is not to be underestimated. They are able to highlight the naturalizing effects of popular culture, namely that such a novel can make "a particular way of looking at the world appear to be part of the natural order "just the way things are""[63]. This argument can be backed up by Ernest Gellner's argument that nationalism is "so very simple and easy that anyone can make it up almost at any time, which is partly why nationalism can claim that nationalism is always natural"[64]. From these arguments it can be said that medievalisms in fantasy stories create a continuity with the past and connects to traditions and history in a way that, coupled with widespread and complementary deployment in popular culture, indicates a natural order that is not in need of justification or explanation.

Fantasy norms often appeal to popular ideas of national identity. That has been the case for as long as there has been fantasy stories or faerie tales. As Susan Cooper (1989) says:

[60] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 397
[61] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 397
[62] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 397
[63] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 397
[64] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 397

> The struggle between the Light and the Dark in my books has more to do with the fact that when I was four World War II broke out [than with her Arthurian sources]. England was very nearly invaded by Germany, and that threat, reinforced by the experience of having people drop bombs on your head, led to a very strong sense of Us and Them. Of course Us is always the good and Them is always the bad.[65]

Cooper's use of both new and old history as inspiration for her stories combined them into a source of individual identity, thereby reinforcing the nationalization of fantasy as a tool which shapes the past to give readers a present national identity. The definition of "Us" in fantasy literature is always known. The "Them" is equally obvious. However, some stories attempt to shift this dynamic. *The Stormlight Archives* for example. During the first two books, it is told to us that humanity, the "us" of this story, has the right of the land. That the Voidbringers, the "them", is coming to destroy the world and take it for themselves. However, at the climax of the third book *Oathbringer*, it is revealed that humanity was the invader. That the creatures who would become the Voidbringers were the first civilized creatures in the world. At this point, the dynamic shifts. It is still a story of "us" versus "them", however the "them" shifts. Instead of the Voidbringers, the term is focused on the recently revealed god-like being "Odium" who brought mankind to destroy the world, and later corrupted the Voidbringers when humanity left him.

Another way to invoke this feeling of ethnicity and nationalism can come from the use of the so called medieval *mappae muni*, or "world maps". When referring to medieval maps, the these frequently lumped together China, Africa and Russia as part of a peripheral region simply called the "Indies". Both Jordan's *Wheel of Time* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* come equipped with maps available on the inside cover. In both, mysterious lands filled with non-human peoples are placed on the edges of the maps. Both are also bordered by a great desert-region filled with people of dark skin and mysterious motivation. In Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* the Haradrim are absent for most of the story, until they are revealed to have given their allegiance to the antagonist Sauron. In Jordan's *Wheel of Time*, the Aiel Waste lies to the east, and the people there are feared as raiders and pillagers by their western neighbors. It is only when protagonist Rand al'Thor travels east and befriends the Aiel people that they are demystified and revealed to simply

[65] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 399

be of another culture. While their culture is different, it is not as counter to the western cultures as first described. Another series of novels, Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, published around the same time as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, features another inhospitable desert to the south, populated by a mysterious scimitar-wielding people known as Calormenes who worship a false god and raid Narnia under the guide of holy wars. Geraldine Heng makes the argument that

> Key to the notion of an imagined community, medievalist scholarship decides, is self-identification by national grouping, especially in defining one's national community against large communities of others in oppositional confrontations over territory, political jurisdiction and dominion, and warfare.[66]

A great deal of fantasy stories, especially the earlier ones, follow this example of medieval crusades against foreign Muslims as the racial-religious "others" in their definition of the self. This idea borrows from the romanticized idea of the Crusades, often associated with the land now known as the Middle East. The idea of the Middle East is often used because it is close enough to be constantly in the minds of the "us", however distant enough to be alien, possessing an air of mystery. The region has inspired the fear and inspiration of Western Europeans.
Billie Melman describes the use of the region best when she said that: "Its midway position and very proximity to Europe, as well as the longevity of religious, political, and cultural exchanges with the West, defined the Middle East as a border zone. It was *of* the West, yet *outside* it, familiar, yet alien"[67]. For a long time, this idea of the Middle East in literature was generally an indication of a pagan foreigner for Europeans. By the time of Tolkien and Lewis, these religious and cultural implications had become associated with a number of other factors, but some, Lewis for example, seem to have reasons for their inclusions of Middle Eastern-inspired culture that were very similar to older ideas of the Middle East as he writes in a 1932 letter to his brother:

> When I have tried to rule out all my prejudices I still can't help thinking that the Christian world is (partially) "saved" in a sense in which the East is not. We may be hypocrites, but there is a sort of unashamed and *reigning* iniquity of temple prostitution and infanticide and torture and political corruption and obscene

[66] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 399
[67] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 400

> imagination in the East, which really does suggest that they are off the rails – that some necessary part of the human machine, restored to us, is still missing with them.[68]

In contemporary fantasy, the use of ethnic grouping like this has decreased by a fair bit. This delineation of cultural identity is seen is desirable by ethnic groups, however with globalization and an increasingly interconnected world, any overt racism or xenophobia is all but impossible if one hopes to reach a wide readership.

The *Harry Potter* novels for example, functions in a sort of "fantasy" Britain, where uncomplicated racial relations is portrayed by portraying British characters from a number of different ethnicities as members of the magical community.

A number of characters in the *Harry Potter* novels such as the Asian-named Cho Chang and the Black boy Lee Jordan are shown to live at Hogwarts without any issues arising from racial issues. These characters are however unimportant to the overall story and are never actually given any real development as characters. At no point in the series is the question or topic of their ethnicity raised and their lives do not seem to be different because of it. These characters could in other words be White or have Anglicized names without changing the story or how the novels would be perceived. These characters are fully integrated within British society and have adopted the British cultural norms to the point of only being ethnically different because of their names and the color of their skin. By portraying minority characters this way, J.K. Rowling is able to fully make up the medievalised nationalistic British fantasy without altering the nostalgia that it demands. As such, she made use of thin racial diversity in order to appear inclusive, although it does demand that minorities and immigrants make no real impact on the culture they inhabit.

Rowling instead addresses the issue of blood-based inequality through her use of "pure-blood" wizards and their prejudice against those born to nonmagical parents, "Muggle-born" or "Mudbloods", and those with one magical parent and one non-magical parent, called "Half-bloods". The primary antagonist Voldemort and his followers, the Death Eaters, are portrayed to resemble Nazis with a deep obsession for keeping the magical bloodlines pure. Rowling does not however, address any racial intolerance in the present-day Britain in which her magical world is placed.

[68] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 400

In a similar way, Sanderson creates tension through blood through his use of the lighteyes and the darkeyes. In his world, the lighteyes are told to have been chosen by God to govern and rule over others, namely the darkeyes. In truth, the rule that people with light colored eyes are worth more than those without comes from the fact that using an ancient form of magic, or "surges", turns one's eyes blue. Through thousands of years the myth of these light eyes was twisted, and details lost until only the idea of light eyes being more powerful than dark ones was left.

Another way medievalisms tend to be well suited for fantasy and its conservative structure comes through the idea of space and territorial control that resembles the romantic crusades. For stories set in worlds made up by the author, this concept is fairly simple to achieve. In *Lord of the Rings*, the goal of the protagonists is to prevent the dark lord Sauron from invading their home of Middle Earth, in *The Wheel of Time*, there are both the forces of the ever-present "Dark One" and his army of malformed humanoid creatures, there are the Middle-Eastern Aiel to the east with their raiding parties, and there are the Seanchan, foreign forces from across the western ocean, coming to conquer the world. Sanderson follows this model differently, instead making the nation he primarily focuses on, Alethkar, invade the lands of a recently discovered humanoid species after the assassination of the king of Alethkar. Although different from the two other examples, Sanderson's theme also plays in with the romanticized idea of the crusades, although it is put in a rather critical light by the fact that many of the main characters disagree with the method used to avenge the king. Sanderson's story of the Alethi invasion also works as a critique of the war in the Middle East. Retribution for a crime against the nation, prolonged by the promise of abundant resources in the land that is invaded, and because the seemingly minor and outnumbered enemy fights using guerilla tactics, striking and then hiding in caves and hidden bases.
Harry Potter, however, is set in present-day Britain. With the entire world mapped out, danger is moved from monstrous foreign foes to enemies on the inside. For Rowling, this is manifested most directly ion the presence of the Death Eaters as native members of the magical community itself. Cecire however does point out another, subtler example of the anxiety of an invasion of the home territory. As she describes a scene from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*:

> Harry helps his friend Ron de-gnome their family garden, a chore that involves plucking small, bald, suspiciously "leathery-looking" garden gnomes out of the shrubbery and whirling them by the ankles in order to swing them over the fence.

> This gnome-flinging is obviously meant to be comical, but it also reinforces the acceptability of ejecting unwanted persons from the spaces that are recognized as owned and groomed by the kinds of people that qualify as actual people, supported by the power of the ruling government and worthy of rights.[69]

Even the language of these garden gnomes shows some form of ingrained xenophobic tendencies. They are shown to speak English, however with thick accents and a weaker grasp of grammar than the other characters. To further enhance the sense immigrants ejected from their new homes, the gnomes leave the garden in "a straggling line, their little shoulders hunched"[70]. Similarly, Rowling is focused on the protection of familiar spaces when it comes to conflict. The primary home for the protagonists lies within Hogwarts, the magical boarding school built in the old castle. The castle imagery is one of the most nationalistically charged parts of the franchise, and it makes sense that this location would become the most frequently contested area of the series, as the Death Eaters are constantly attempting to breach the defenses of the castle. These conflicts resemble the early medieval attacks against England as well as the Battle of Britain during the Second World War. Rowling even makes use of the medieval *mappae mundi* through her use of the Marauder's Map of the school that is given to Harry. The map shows the layout of the entire school and in a way makes Harry a master of the local terrain. The map even lets Harry track the movements of everyone on school grounds, allowing him to, at first, sneak out of school for a day off in the local village, but later, the surveillance properties of the map allows Harry to use it against Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

This perpetual threat of invasion from within by those that do not share our views or values, as well as this focus on surveillance, all gives the feeling of post-9/11 warfare. Everyone in the magical community is being threatened by Voldemort and the Death Eaters. It is impossible to know who to trust, although some groups are to be trusted even less than other groups, for example those that belong to the Slytherin house of Hogwarts. This profiling of Slytherins comes from former Slytherin students having a large presence among the Death Eaters, as well as their sigil, a snake, being very much related to Voldemort himself.

[69] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 402
[70] Cecire, Maria Sachiko. "Medievalism, Popular Culture and National Identity in Children's Fantasy Literature." p. 403

The profiling of Slytherins as being connected to evil mirrors contemporary society and its racial profiling of Muslims, and even just those with features that might look Middle Eastern, after 9/11.

Gender Construction:

When looking at gender in fantasy, it is very clear to see the development the genre has gone through in recent years. When fantasy books were still listed in the science fiction sections of bookstores and the genre was under the name *Sword and Sorcery,* a single look at the front cover could tell almost everything about the portrayal of gender in the story. These books typically featured a strong swordsman with rippling and glistening muscles fighting off some horrendous monster with one hand with the other arm around the narrow waist of a beautiful frightened woman, wearing very revealing, and possibly very impractical, clothes. Then, with the introduction of the BAFS, the cover art was replaced with faerie-like landscapes, and images that make the reader think of mysterious worlds, magic and quests to far-off lands. The BAFS was however mostly made up of works published in the pre-Tolkien era as well as those works that were directly inspired by Tolkien.

The genre has similarly experienced a change in readership in more modern times. Originally a genre targeted at adolescent boys, the genre was shaped to appeal to this male fantasy of strength, adventure and beautiful women. For less athletic readers, the idea of magic offered a direct connection between bookishness, intelligence and strength. It can be said that anyone can swing a sword, but that it takes a specific mind to learn these arcane secrets. The genre even gave rise to the similar "Young Adult" fantasy genre, which mirrored the trouble time of puberty with a battle that the protagonists, which are often adolescents themselves, overcome and mature through. As Chris Crowe states: "fantasy may provide adolescents with a feeling of overcoming the odds and being triumphant at a time when their own lives are often a series of "battles" that they lose or never even get to fight"[71].

With fantasy as such a popular genre for young adults, both in the form of books, video games and movies, the topic of gender and its representation in fantasy literature becomes important as this time of adolescence is dominated by the struggle to build an identity and the search for validation and recognition in daily life.

[71] Crowe, Chris. "Young Adult Literature: Dear Knucklehead: Wise Up." The English Journal, vol. 90, no. 1, Sept. 2000. p. 136

Gender as a quality is a challenging topic, as there is no real singular definition of gender. In the definition of gender, psychoanalysis has been a topic of discussion as it tends to reduce gender to singular features or claiming a universal definition. A common criticism of psychoanalysis in the field of feminism argues that feminist psychoanalysis does not pay enough attention to differences and variations among women and the different, unstable and contested nature of gender meanings[72]. Instead, gender can be argued to be a construct of culture, language and power relations, all factors which are part of gender relations portrayed in literature. These factors can all be seen as particular to the individual. As such, contemporary changes in literature can be used to chart changes in gender perception, as well as changes in the construction of gender identity.
For this thesis I will make use of Nancy J. Chodorow's theory of gender construction to establish a methodology of how gender is created through perceived cultural cues, which I will then use when examining my chosen works of literature.
The theory of gender identity as a construct of culture draws upon the idea that perception and meaning are created psychologically. People make use of available cultural meanings and images, but these are experiences through emotion and fantasy. Additionally, some interpersonal context affects how these images are experienced.
Emotion and unconscious fantasy are not organized variables. The unconscious fantasy is defined as "aspects of self and other in immediate, emotionally cast terms"[73].
These unconscious fantasies become more elaborate through their articulation of characters and stories and can become more or less expressed in preconscious or conscious fantasies.
An unconscious fantasy come from within, and if not expressed in a linguistic manner, gives individual interpretation to experienced culture, stories and language. Even unconscious fantasies that are not specifically gender related have an impact on the individual's ability to articulate their gender experience. At the same time, some aspects of gender identity and the unconscious gender fantasy draws upon language, cultural stories and interpersonal emotional response conveyed by people such as parents or other caretakers as well as any person the individual feels a sense of recognition from and their own personal sense of gender.

[72] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol. 20, no. 3, Apr. 1995. p. 516

[73] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 517

Chodorow's theory draws upon the psychoanalytic idea that the capacity to create personal meaning is an innate human trait that continues throughout the individual's life. That subjectivity creates and re-creates, merges and separates fantasy and reality, inner and outer, unconscious and conscious, felt past and felt present. That each aspect of these pairs gives meaning to and resonates with the other[74]. These aspects help the individual create meaning and helps them create an identity.

Common feminist theory holds that "gender cannot be seen apart from culture"[75]. Ethnic, international and linguistic factors to micropolitical and performative factors, the cultural and political centrality in the construction of gender are well documented. Likewise, are the issues pf generalizing and seeing gender as a singular identity. The theory that I will utilize in this thesis holds that gendered meanings are indeterminate and are contested culturally and politically, but also formed through the emotional self. The psychological process of creating meaning, gender identity, sexual fantasies and identifications are formed and reshaped throughout the individual's lifecycle. The individual feelings of self and unconscious fantasies formed by emotion are as integral to the subjective gender as language or culture.

By making use of psychoanalysis, we can elicit a theory of personal meaning by examining clinical-based accounts as well as any developmental accounts that pay specific attention to the creation of emotional meaning as well as the intersubjective fluctuation of emotional meanings of the self and objects. We can then describe how the individual animates and colors, through both unconscious fantasy and emotion, the anatomic, cultural, interpersonal and cognitive world we as individuals experience and the meanings we create through these experiences.

The process of personal animation, the process of using past experiences and feelings to supplement meaning in the present, was called *transference* by Freud[76]. Transference can be divided into two major processes, projection and introjection. The first process, projection, otherwise called projective identification, deals with the concept of the individual giving emotional and fantasy meaning to other people, objects or concepts, or projecting fantasized or experienced aspects of their own identity into aspects of these others, objects or concepts.

[74] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 518
[75] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 518
[76] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 520

The second process, introjection, deals with the opposite process. By introjecting, the individual takes in aspects of the world around them, the perceived world, and give them fantasy meaning and emotional meaning. When encountering an object, experience or meaning that is especially important to the individual, it may be experienced as a transitional phenomenon, both personally created by the individual, and presented from the outside. Freud argues that all the traditionally described defensive processes can be employed through projection and introjection. Experiences are split between self and other and into good and bad experiences. The individual isolates or denies feelings or thoughts, repress or discredit ideas or wishes, break connections between otherwise connected emotions or fantasies. These processes are found wherever fantasy or emotional meaning is given to people and situations. Both in analysis and outside of analysis, these processes exist as a fact of life. They are not just present within the creation of identity in early relations. They also come from an individual's current internal psychological situation, relating to people in their life or from any important event, experience or person in their life. These processes therefore directly contribute to the individual´s personal psychological uniqueness.

The argument that each individual's gender subjectivity is a unique creation to that person helps address the question of difference in gender theory. From this argument, it can be stated that each person inflects their own gender with their own mixture of masculinities and femininities. Although it can be useful to generalize some aspects of many people's subjective sense of gender, widespread variations in subjective gender and observed aspects of gender. It could also be argued that generalization of gender can be useful when examining specific cultural, ethnic or class groups or during specific periods of history. Chodorow however, argues that "we need to be careful that our claims do not go beyond our data base"[77], meaning that generalizations about psychology or personality traits is based more in statistics than universality.

Many contemporary theories about the construction of gender identity tend to deal in more generalized and universalized terms when it comes to women as opposed to men. These theories tend to imply that they describe the core experiences of both femininity and masculinity. Some even argue against feminist recognition of female diversity and against clinical observations about

[77] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 522

individually.

Chodorow however, argues that "Part of the tenacity of gender is its personal individuality"[78] meaning that to fully understand any single individual's gender identity, one has to investigate and understand that individual's unique grouping of personal and cultural meaning.

It can also be said that there is a difference between what we see, experience an observe transferentially, clinically and empirically of gender identity, as well as sexual and gender fantasies and, on the other hand, what we are told by theoretical and developmental accounts of the inevitable stages of development, the supposed "psychology of women" or the role of gender when it comes to transference. The idea that gender is a construct of context, contradictions and sometimes random chance, and the idea that gender is a product of culture, is an idea of more contemporary gender theory. Different sources of empiric data can be used to back up this theory of gender construction. The clinical consulting room shows evidence of individuality, personal meaning and the individual projective animations of cultural meaning. Psychoanalytic literary critics are able to find empiric sources from reading texts and sociologists find emotion from interviews. Autobiographers argue of emotional, historical and social interconnections. Chodorow gives an account of a number of interviews and consultations that may help to reinforce her theory. I will briefly list these examples in order to use them as reference points in my analysis later in this thesis.

The first example given relates to a woman Chodorow refers to as Ms. A.[79] She argues that Ms. A sees a difference between men and women as the most important distinction in gender. She claims that for Ms. A, the emotion that dominates gender construction is anger. She seeks a father figure in Chodorow, at whom she can direct a dismissive and accusatory anger that she identifies closely with men and her father specifically. This focus on anger leads Ms. A to fear both her own anger and that of Chodorow, as she describes it as absolutely destructive. The anger of a woman can destroy children who then in turn destroy their mothers. She is afraid that her own anger destroyed her relationship with her mother, and that it will destroy her relationship with Chodorow, a person she has come to depend on. In contrast to the destructive anger of women is the anger of men. This anger, as Ms. A argues, is sudden and explosive, often with violent

[78] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 524
[79] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 527-528

undertones. Once this sudden anger has burst out however, it is gone and the recipient of that anger is still there after. Ms. A wishes that she was a man, because she would be unable to destroy relationships with anger, therefore becoming able to express the anger she feels instead of repressing it. Ms. A sees guiltless anger without consequence as a direct trait of masculinity. Chodorow theorizes that this anger is the result of her adolescent years of struggling with her father. Ms. A constructs her idea of gender around a male-female polarity and her own desire to possess masculine traits. Through the consultation, Ms. A revealed that she had never fantasized about marriage and children as her friends married and started families. Instead, she fantasized about being a young boy. She experienced herself as not grown up and not female. Therefore, marrying and having children would have ruined this fantasy. Additionally, she fantasized about being a boy because of the security it could provide. In her eyes, a boy was much less vulnerable than a girl or a woman. She sees men and boys as freer than women and girls, remembering playing ball with the other boys in the neighborhood. Boys, in her mind, do not need to worry about the thoughts of others, as they do not need to worry about how they look or dress, and they are able to take up as much space as they want. Chodorow sees these fantasies as a defense against "Ms. A.'s notion […] that a woman or girl should grow up and fulfill a powerless, dependent feminine role"[80].

The second example given will be referred to as Ms. B[81]. Ms. B has an issue with arriving late for her sessions with Chodorow because of meetings with her male employer which she arranged herself right before her scheduled appointments. While she chose to see Chodorow, she acts in a manner that makes it seem as if the appointments are an obligation that pull her away from her meetings with her employer. The comparison is made with her childhood experience of weekly goodbyes with her father as her parents were divorced. She found these goodbyes painful and difficult.

Most of her daily hours were spent dealing with her employer's issues, while the appointments were relegated to the background. Chodorow was, admitted by Ms. B, seen as a nagging female figure who only wanted to talk about lateness and boring topics.

Ms. B felt that she needed a strong and powerful man in her life. A man who would come to her

[80] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 528
[81] Chodorow, Nancy J. "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction." p. 529

rescue and make her feel wonderful, instead of rejecting her as she blamed her father of doing. Whenever she thought back at previous relationships which failed as well as her attempts to rekindle the same relationships, she "falls to pieces" as she puts it.

While Ms. B idealized men, she saw her mother as well as the concept of maternal femininity in a different light. Her mother is described as "weak" and unable to care for her family. When Ms. B compared Chodorow to her mother, she was no longer a nag or boring. Instead, she sees Chodorow as good and pure.

Ms. B makes use of a version of psychological defense known as splitting. She constructs fantasies of herself and other as well as gender. The good parts of the other goes to one person or one gender, in this case her father or men in general, and the bad qualities go to her mother and women. When comparing Chodorow and her mother, she instead splits them so Chodorow is the good, and her mother is the bad. Additionally, Ms. B splits in her sense of self. She kept secret "good" wishes that she did not wish to tell, because if she did then they would not come true. She wanted to keep these wishes away from the bad, the feminine, because they would make things difficult. She described her experiences with women to be difficult, while she saw her experiences with men, all the way back to her childhood, as positive, as men could make her feel desirable.

In a sense, Ms. B idealized the idea of male rescue, making out men to possess all the good. This in turn made her ashamed to be a woman, as femininity in her mind was a trait connected with the bad.

Additionally, she had political issues with these thoughts, as she did not think that a woman in her time should think like this. She therefore had trouble acknowledging these traits and ideas in herself.

Different from Ms. A, Ms. B did not want to be a man. Instead, she had a wish for a man. Through emotion and conscious fantasy, she expressed heterosexual femininity. Her idealization of men involved the wish for a man to rescue her.

Where Ms. A connected anger to gender differences, Ms. B instead centralizes emotions of shame and excitement. Where Ms. A's issues stemmed from a strained relationship with her father and her rejection of feminine traits, seeking masculine ones instead, Ms. B instead rejected her mother and other women, developing a heterosexual femininity.

The concept of emotionally created transferences as seen in the clinical experience serves to prove how an individual's gendered subjectivity can be specific to certain factors.
The emotional tones, gender transferences and fantasies vary for the individual over the course of their lives, sometimes even from hour to hour. At one moment, especially in clinical situations, an early trauma with gendered undertones might be the focus, while at others, the individual's relationship and feelings toward one parent, and then at other hours, their feelings towards the other parent. This serves to prove the moment-to-moment shifting nature and development of gender and its complexities as different aspects in the individual's sense of gendered self becomes important.
The cases shown by Chodorow present a number of recognizable social and cultural factors. Divorce, the elusive father or a rejected girl who believes that her father will come to make everything better. A common theme among clinical examples is the theme of gender inequality within the gendered subjectivity of the individual. The individual's personal animating femininity and masculinity, the development of a fantasy-imbued and emotional gender identity relates to some form of difference in perceived value or power. Often these differences take the form of male dominance, superiority or privilege. When these personal meanings are created in the individual's sense of gender, they are combined with certain emotions and fantasies of self.
When examining a work of fantasy literature and how it portrays gender, it is important to examine the power dynamic between women and men. We then need to examine how these dynamics affect the specific identities and behaviors of the characters in the story.
Do men have more power? Do they more easily portray anger or take up more space, both in the narrative and in the portrayed culture? Are the women passive or do they take equal or more action? How are parental relationships portrayed? Do mothers give more to their sons than their daughters? Is the same expected of daughters as is of sons? These factors all contribute to the character's personality and their role in the central conflicts of the story.

Portrayal of Gender in Video Games:

With the rising popularity of video games among both adolescents and adults in recent years, the representation of certain characters becomes more important than ever in the identity

construction of the players. The debate about female characters and the revealing outfits they are often put in has been had time and time again. The same attention has not been placed on the male characters as they are portrayed, however. In their article *Virtual Muscularity: A content analysis of male video game characters* however, Nicole Martins, Dmitri C. Williams, Rabindra A. Ratan and Kristen Harrison attempted to analyze the 150 top-selling video games at the time with a focus on how these games portrayed their male characters.

if we accept the idea that body dissatisfaction is related to exposure to idealized media images, then we have to examine cultivation theory. This theory states that: "the media's perpetual depiction of certain values, themes and ideals molds people´s views of social reality."[82]

In short, this theory suggests that people's attitudes and expectations of the real world are molded by what they are presented with in mass media. In the case of the male body as portrayed in video games, this theory suggests that media messages emphasize unrealistic strength and muscularity as attractive, thereby influencing players to think the same about the male body. These expectations are then in turn used to make real-life decisions. If applied in this context, cultivation theory would suggest that the cumulative exposure to this male ideal would result in either an obsession with reaching this ideal, possibly by going to extreme lengths such as steroids to build muscle mass, or that it would lead any male not following this ideal to feel a sense of emasculation, and to not feel socially or sexually worthy.

Studies have found that cultivation effects occur within game play. Harrison and Bond found that readers of video game magazines were more likely to become exposed to cultivation effects than readers of sports, fashion or even fitness magazines.[83] While this study did not focus on exposure to male video game characters during game play, the results still suggest that the medium carries the possibility of body-related cultivation.

Another study by Barlett and Harris however, showed that college-aged males who played video games featuring hyper muscular characters for at least 15 minutes presented with significantly lower body esteem than those who did not.

While most early studies tend to claim that video games are uniform in their presentations across different platforms, the variation of machines and game types make it clear that there is more

[82] Martins, Nicole, et al. "Virtual Muscularity: A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters." Body Image, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2011. p. 44

[83] Martins, Nicole, et al. "Virtual Muscularity: A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters." p. 44

nuance in video games than some might think. An example of this is differences in computing speed. Newer game systems come equipped with faster processors and increased bandwidth, allowing for more realistic and immersive game play experiences. This difference in realism is an important variable, as realistically rendered characters are more prone to become idealized than the blocky and cartoonish characters presented with earlier gaming systems.

The study conducted by Martins, Williams, Ratan and Harrison found that the male characters portrayed in high photorealism games, while large than the average male, did not conform to the idealized male body of other forms of media. Meanwhile, characters in games with lower levels of photorealism, while still larger than the average male, appeared in a way that made the characters seem almost cartoonish in appearance. When compared to game ratings, the study found that hypermuscular male characters were more likely to be found in games rated for children than in games rated for adults.[84]

Another reason why I have chosen to make use of video games in this thesis, comes from the fact that video games have had a long history of gendered separation. For many years, video games have been a mostly male-oriented interest, especially in adolescents, leading to the explosion in popularity of games such as *Call of Duty*, or the classic fantasy images of *World of Warcraft* with its revealing female armor and male-oriented imagery.

In the case study *Gender Identity Construction through Talk about Video Games*, Sara M. Cole seeks to study the effects of video games on the participants´ personal understandings and representations of masculine identity.

In this study, Cole interviewed male participants of similar ages and professional backgrounds, exploring the ways language expresses conceptions of identity as well as the ways in which childhood play activities with violent themes, influences later tolerance to real violence.[85]

Throughout the study, the participants discussed their experiences growing up, playing traditionally male-oriented games. One participant explained that when he was a child, he:

[84] Martins, Nicole, et al. "Virtual Muscularity: A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters." p. 47

[85] Cole, Sara M. "Gender Identity Construction through Talk about Video Games." CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, vol. 16, no. 5, 31 Dec. 2014. p. 2

> "did not feel his play habits were gender specific. However […] when you look at it now and you give it a label […] there were lots of things that were more male-oriented as opposed to "gee, did you have tea parties," "did you play Barbie, Chutes and Ladders," "you know, whatever! My Little Pony. None of that stuff"[86]

This participant continues on for some time, often making use of the term "guy play" when referring to the video games he played. Franchises like Star Wars and G.I. Joe are were at the time marketed directly towards younger male audiences, with male protagonists being at the front, as well as narratives that mirror classic Western stories of the hero. Analysis of conversations like these reveals two important facts. Firstly, it is revealed that there are hegemonic expectations, and secondly, that the participants of the study were aware of gendered stereotypes, even at a young age. The language used by participants in the study implied that the participants experienced a form of introspection and acknowledgment that masculinity required discussion in regard to its complexities and in regard to gender identity.

Additionally, participants were aware of gendered stereotypes as well as gendered discourses existing within their society. Despite their acknowledgment of the cultural impact on the individual's identity, the language used by the participants served to reaffirm certain stereotypical biases through their specific speech patterns[87].

The Lord of the Rings

J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* novels are widely seen as one of, if not the first true fantasy novel. Set in the world of "Middle-earth", the narrative can be classified as a portal quest fantasy according to Mendlesohn's sets of fantasy. The story starts in the peaceful and mundane Shire, home to the equally peaceful and jovial Hobbit race. The only encounter the Shire has had with fantastic elements is through visits by the wizard Gandalf, whose only displays of the fantastic in the Shire comes in the form of fireworks. When protagonists Frodo and Sam are exposed to the fantastic in the form of a magic ring, they decide to leave home and enter into the fantastic world outside the Shire. Even as the Hobbits spend more time outside of their home, the fantastic world

[86] Cole, Sara M. "Gender Identity Construction through Talk about Video Games." p. 2
[87] Cole, Sara M. "Gender Identity Construction through Talk about Video Games." p. 3

of Middle-earth seems outlandish and dangerous to the two, as they never fully integrate into their new surroundings. Instead, the goal is always to return home to the Shire and return to their mundane life.

The novels are heavily inspired by western European folklore and fairytales, and as such, most characters we are introduced to are described as light skinned. As discussed previously, the only characters introduced, who seemingly were inspired by different cultures come in the form of the Haradrim, a nation of people seemingly heavily inspired by Middle Eastern culture. The Haradrim live in desert lands which border the homelands of the heroes and are shrouded in mystery until the point of pledging their allegiance to Sauron, thereby becoming antagonists.

The reader is not given a lot of information about gender differences in the novels, they do provide a number of examples which can serve to provide a certain view on the female and male roles within the world of the novels.

The first character we can examine is Arwen, daughter of Elven lord Elrond and at the end of the series, the wife of protagonist Aragorn. During the events of the books, Arwen forsakes her immortality as an elf to marry Aragorn. Throughout the series, Arwen becomes the goal of Aragorn's journey, and his motivation to do whatever it takes to defeat Sauron. While Aragorn was at war, Arwen stayed home and wove him a banner, which, when given to him, inspired him to take a more dangerous but ultimately more dangerous path.[88] After the war is over, Aragorn rules as king for many years, before dying. Arwen dies of "a broken heart" no more than a year later.

The second character I will examine is the niece to the king of Rohan, Éowyn. Éowyn and her brother lost their parents at an early age, and were taken in by the king of Rohan, Théoden. When the war against Sauron was nearing its climax, the warriors of Rohan joined the armies of the light. Éowyn expressed her wishes to join the armies, as she dreamt of winning fame in battle. However, as Éowyn was a woman, her duty was to take care of the capital of Rohan until the king returned. So she disguised herself as a man and rode with the armies to face Sauron's forces. There, she fought against and killed the infamous Witch-King of Angmar, Sauron's second in command. As they fought, the Witch-King taunted Éowyn, stating that no man could hinder him,

[88] J.R.R. Tolkien. The Return of the King : Being the Third Part of the Lord of the Rings. London, Harpercollins, 2012. p. 33

after which she answered that she was no man, driving her sword into his head, killing him. This act mirrors the death of the title character of Shakespeare´s *Macbeth*. In this story, a prophecy had been told that "no man of woman born" could kill Macbeth. The character Macduff is able to circumvent this prophecy because he was delivered by Caesarean section.

Wheel of Time

The Wheel of Time by Robert Jordan and later finished by Brandon Sanderson, are set in a nameless world. The novels can be characterized in two ways according to Mendlesohn´s sets of fantasy. The first novel can be identified as a form of intrusive fantasy, as the main characters Rand, Perrin and Mat live in peace in the secluded village of Emon's Field. This peace is broken however, as the fantastic intrudes in the form of the Trolloc hordes on the same day as an Aes Sedai, a female wielder of magic, arrives in the village. The boys are found to be the targets of the Trollocs and must leave with the Aes Sedai to spare the village from further attacks. The group then enters into a fantastic world by leaving their home, opening up to the possibility of encountering a number of fantastic elements, and even a number of fantastic traits themselves, thereby transforming the novel into a portal quest fantasy instead.

The following novels however become more akin to immersive fantasy, as the group learns to navigate the fantastic elements of their new reality, forsaking the possibility of returning home, instead gaining new roles in this new fantastic world.

The novels, although spread over several nations, is focused mostly in the area known as the "Westlands". Within the Westlands are fourteen nations, all of which play a part over the course of the novels. In this thesis, I will primarily focus on the nation of Andor, the Aiel Wastes, the exotic land of Seanchan and the mysterious Shara.

The nation of Andor lies in the middle of the Westlands and is the largest country in the west. Most of the main characters of the novels were born or raised in Andor.

The lands of Andor clearly resembles medieval Europe, being characterized as a monarchy, although, opposite of medieval Europe, Andor is a matriarchal monarchy. Otherwise, the country holds gender standards similar to those of western Europe during the Middle Ages, with women required to care for the household and men traditionally being the ones to join the army in times of war. Smaller villages in Andor are ruled either by a local noble, or by a system of two councils, the Village Council, consisting of seven men from the village counseling the mayor, and the

Women's Circle, a group of women of no set size, lead by the village "Wisdom" a form of wise woman who acts as the village healer. The Women´s Circle was founded to balance the decisions of the Village Council, and the two groups often end up struggling for political control. It is however commonly accepted that the Village Council sets economic and security policy, while the Women's council handles social issues and the older and more knowledgeable members advice the villagers on when to plant and harvest crops.

Women in these smaller villages are characterized as adults by the way they wear their hair. When a woman is considered old enough to marry, she will be sought out by the Women's Circle and be allowed to braid her hair in a long, single braid. The women wear their hair this way for the rest of their lives, as unbraided hair is seen as a sign of immaturity, and is often looked down upon, as seen when protagonist Rand sees his childhood friend Egwene with her hair unbraided, even months after they left their home village: "her hair suddenly made him angry. He had never seen a grown woman with her hair unbraided until he left the Two Rivers. There, every girl waited eagerly for the Women's Circle of her village to say she was old enough to braid her hair."[89]

The Aiel wastes lies to the east, separated from the Westlands by the "Spine of the World" mountain chain. The wastes are characterized by consisting mostly of desert. The wastes are infamous for being inhospitable, allowing only the native Aiel people to live there for extended periods of time. When readers first hear of the Aiel, they are described as the mysterious and exotic "other", known to kill most people who cross into their territory, except for a select few. The Aiel are known to never hurt merchants, gleemen or any member of the group known as Aes Sedai whom the Aiel are known to show great respect. Adding to this poor reputation, the Aiel are feared across the Westlands after the event known as the Aiel War, where four clans from the wastes travelled west to avenge an insult to their honor by one of the western kings. This war is known as one of the bloodiest events in the history of the Westlands.

When the reader is finally taken across the mountains and is introduced to the Aiel culture, the desert people are significantly demystified. While their culture is different from that of the Westlands, Jordan goes into great detail in describing the differences and the details, making the reader intimately familiar with the culture.

The Aiel have very strict divisions of gender. In most clans, only men can join the Aiel "warrior

[89] Jordan, Robert. The Great Hunt: Book Two of the Wheel of Time. London, Orbit, 1992. p. 37

societies" or become clan chiefs, but only women can own property. The only warrior society that accepts women into their ranks is the group known as the "Maidens of the Spear". These warriors swear off marriage through a ritual performed upon joining referred to as "wedding the spear".[90] When it comes to marriage, the Aiel practice a form of polygamy, in which a man is allowed to have multiple wives, but women are not allowed to have multiple husbands. The wives of the same man are referred to as "sister-wives" and usually share a close bond, as all parties must agree to the polygamous marriage.

As discussed previously, the Aiel appear to be heavily inspired by middle eastern culture. The Aiel are presented as a nomadic people, wandering the desert. Similar to Muslim culture, the Aiel go on a religious pilgrimage to a holy city under special circumstances.

The nation of Seanchan is mostly unseen during most of the series. Instead, the Seanchan presence in the novels comes in the form of an invasion force attacking nations in the Westlands, forcing those cultures to accept Seanchan traditions and customs. The Seanchan see themselves as the true rulers of the Westlands, having descended from the children of a former emperor of the area. The Seanchan are another of the "other" nation, seen as hostile invaders, coming from across the ocean to take the Westlands and remove their culture. Additionally, the Seanchan bring slavery with them, enslaving those that they see as unfit to be free.

The mysterious land of Shara stands as a constant unknown throughout most of the series, with people from there only arriving in the Westlands in the final battle between light and dark. While little is known about the mysterious nation, except that only a few merchants are allowed there, bringing home silk and ivory, rare wares exclusive to Shara. The Sharan people are described as dark-skinned, with musical voices and their rulers are according to rumors beautiful beyond belief.[91]

The people of Shara are, like the Aiel and the Seanchan, seen as the mysterious "other", however they are the only nation to not invade or war with the Westlands before the final battle between light and dark. Ironically, they are also the only one of these nations to join forces with the dark in the final battle, swearing themselves to the Dark One, while the Aiel and Seanchan allied themselves with the light.

[90] Jordan, Robert. The Shadow Rising. London, Orbit, 1993. p. 570
[91] Jordan, Robert. Lord of Chaos: Book Six of the Wheel of Time. London, Orbit, 1995. p. 175

The world of the *Wheel of Time* novels also contains a very clear division between genders in the divisions between the men and women with access to the magic of the world otherwise known as the one power. This power is divided into two parts, "saidin" the male half, and "saidar" the female half. In the past, the male half of the one power was corrupted by the darkness, leading to a cataclysmic event, and damning all men who wield the one power to go insane. These men are hunted down by the female wielders of the one power, known as Aes Sedai, and either executed or "gentled", having their ability to channel the one power removed in a process reminiscent of a lobotomy. The involvement of people channeling the one power in almost destroying the world ha given female wielders of the one power a reputation of being witches, and their involvement in global politics in the Westlands have given them a reputation as schemers and manipulators. Male wielders of the one power, are instead seen as nightmarish monsters and servants of the dark.

The Stormlight Archive

The *Stormlight Archive* books by Brandon Sanderson are set on the world of Roshar. The world of Roshar contains several nations, but the main nation portrayed in the books is Alethkar. While other nations are featured prominently in the books, most of them follow the same religious ideals as Alethkar with very minor differences, and as such, our examination of this fantasy world will be focused primarily on the societal structure of Alethkar as well as a number of different characters.

The nation of Alethkar is a part of the Vorin religion, a religion that is seemingly, closely inspired by Christianity. Vorinism teaches that mankind was created by "The Almighty", an omnipotent force of good, often presented as a ten-faceted prism. Each of these facets symbolize a Christ-figure known as a Herald. There is an equal amount of male and female heralds, who each represent different aspects of culture, magic and science.

The religion also features its own version of Hell called "Braize", or more commonly "the Damnation". The Damnation is thought to home to demonic creatures known as "Voidbringers", who, according to myth descend onto the world once every few hundred years, provoking a form of "second coming" of the Heralds, who will build an army of believers to fight them back. Additionally, Vorinism features its own version of Heaven, titled "The Tranquilline Halls", described as a version of Paradise, in which humanity was created and lived until chased out by the Voidbringers.

The basic teachings of Vorinism tell followers to choose a "Calling", a specific trade or talent that they are to practice for their entire lives. Those who master their Calling are then chosen to join the Heralds in the fight to reclaim the Tranquilline Halls. The place the chosen person receives in the Tranquilline Halls depends on the Calling. As such, a farmer would spend their afterlife making sure that the armies of the Heralds have food, and a warrior would join the fighting. In Alethkar, the Calling to be a warrior is considered to be the most well-respected Calling, as it is directly responsible for the reclamation of the Halls.

The Vorin religion also provides very clear guidelines for proper behavior for both male and female followers. Women are expected to completely cover their left hand from the time they begin puberty, as the left hand is considered intimate or obscene. Women are however permitted to learn how to read and write and are therefore expected to manage the household and a possible business. Wives of military officers are expected to serve as scribes to the army. Positions which contain a measure of confrontation, such as politics or the military are however considered masculine, but it is looked down upon for a man to learn to read or write. Vorinism also set a cultural difference in the type of food eaten by men and women, as men are expected to eat spicy food while women eat sweeter foods. The priests of Vorinism are exempt from this division, as they are considered genderless by society. They are therefore allowed by tradition to learn any trade while in service in a temple.

The last big divide set by the Vorin religion is the divide between the so-called "lighteyes", those born with a lighter shade of eye-color, and "darkeyes", those born with darker eyes. In Vorin culture, a person is considered nobility, or at the very least a high standing merchant or tradesman, if they are born with a light eye color such as blue or green. By contrast, a person born with darker eyes such as brown is considered a peasant and can never reach the same social standing as a lighteyes.

The story of the Stormlight Archive novels would in Mendlesohn's sets of fantasy types be classified as an immersive fantasy, as we are introduced to fantastical elements from the very first pages of the first book. While displays of magic are surprising to most characters, we are introduced to fantastical races and creatures such as the indentured servants "Parshmen", their cousins the "Parshendi" and the fairy-like spren. Additionally, Sanderson makes a point of defining strict rules for the magic systems of his world. As early as the prologue of the first book, the

abilities of assassin Szeth-son-son-Vallano are made clear as he makes use of them, teaching us about the rules of the so called "Surgebinding" powers he wields.[92] The same applies every time a point of view character gains a new ability, very quickly demystifying the fantastical elements of the magic system.

The main characters I am going to examine from the *Stormlight Archive* books all show some facet of one or more of these Vorin traits, either by following those traits or by purposefully defying tradition. The first of these characters is Kaladin, an apprentice surgeon, turned soldier, then slave. Kaladin serves as the main protagonist of the first book of the series *The Way of Kings*, detailing his journey from slave to burgeoning hero wielding mythical powers. The main personal conflict in Kaladin's story is focused on his shifting opinions of lighteyed nobles from childlike naiveté, to betrayal and later reluctant acceptance.

Kaladin's story begins during his childhood living with his parents and younger brother in their small hometown of Hearthstone. Even during his early years, we get a connection between Kaladin and his future relationship to lighteyes, as he prefers to shorten his name to "Kal" as Kaladin feels too much like a lighteyed name. Because of his father's position, Kaladin grew up as a higher ranked darkeyes, and coupled with the work his father did and the fact that Kaladin was training to become a surgeon himself, he was often avoided by the rest of the village youth. Kaladin did however grow close with the citylord's daughter Laral, with his father and the lord discussing marrying the two when they came of age. Laral spent most of their youth trying to persuade Kaladin to become a soldier so he could win one of the mythical "shardblades" after which, as the legends told, he would become lighteyed and by extension a noble, making the marriage more viable and attractive to the citylord.

The decision of whether he should become a soldier, or a surgeon is a major turning point in Kaladin's life. His father wants to send him away to train as a surgeon and tells Kaladin that "There are two kinds of people in this world […] those who save lives, and those who take lives.[93]"

For most of Kaladin's story, these words are referred to when he thinks about what the lighteyes, in his own mind, took from him.

In the end however, the choice of whether to pursue a future as a surgeon or a soldier is once

[92] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. Book One, The Stormlight Archive. 1st ed., New York, Tor Fantasy, 2010. p. 24

[93] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 155

again taken by a lighteyes, resulting in the death of Kaladin's brother on the battlefield.
As a soldier, Kaladin defines himself as a talented fighter, making a point to take younger soldiers under his wing, seeking to care for them in place of his brother.
The divide between darkeyes and lighteyes comes to a head in Kaladin's mind when he slays the wielder of a shardblade. As tradition states, Kaladin is by right granted a noble title and is to be treated as a lighteyes. Yet he chose to give away the blade to his commander, who in return had Kaladin's remaining men killed and Kaladin himself sold off as a slave, branded as a deserter[94].
As a character, Kaladin exemplifies the typical male protagonist. As we are introduced to the character, he is already a talented warrior, and is described as handsome and muscular.
It is only later, through flashbacks, that we are presented with the truth about his past, and through these flashbacks, have the truth about his hatred of lighteyes revealed.
Kaladin's character holds many of the traits of an "us" versus "them" mentality. In the mind of Kaladin, there is a clear distinction between the lighteyes and the darkeyes, almost to the point of the two belonging to two different nations, with the lighteyes belonging in the larger cities, their manors and their castles, and the darkeyes belonging in the slums, the villages and the army camps.
While this hatred of lighteyes is softened with time through positive experiences with lighteyes, Kaladin still holds on to these grudges and this bias, instead stating that the lighteyes he likes are the rare good ones.

The second main character I have chosen to examine is Shallan Davar, a young, lighteyed noblewoman from Alethkar's neighboring country Jah Keved.
Shallan serves as a secondary protagonist to Kaladin during the first book of the series, then becoming the main point of view character in the second book *Words of Radiance*.
As a character, Shallan is complex, as she suffers from something that resembled dissociative identity disorder as a result of killing her mother at the age of eleven and her father just before her seventeenth birthday.
While these events traumatized the young Shallan, she kept her sanity by repressing the memories, seemingly forgetting everything about the events, telling herself instead that both her mother and father died of illness.

[94] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 704

Shallan sees herself as a firm believer of Vorinism, having been part of the religion since childhood. As such, she fully accepts her place in the world as a woman, pursuing scholarly and artistic goals. When Shallan was young, her father chose for her to follow a specific Vorin devotary, a smaller group of priests who would instruct the people on certain "proper" forms of behavior. Shallan was chosen to follow the Devotary of Purity, a group with the specific focus on "teaching one to emulate the Almighty's honesty and wholesomeness"[95].

After her mother's death, Shallan's father grew to be more and more aggressive, abusing the servants and Shallan's brothers. After an unfortunate encounter between her father and one of her brother's creditors, Shallan's father decided that he had been too lenient with her, deciding to punish the servants whenever she crossed him, declaring that: "I've found a way to control myself, […] I just have to let the anger out. I can't blame myself for that anger. Others create it when they disobey me."[96]

Growing up with an abusive and tyrannical father left its mark on Shallan. She came to act as the perfect daughter to her father, coming to embody the perfect Vorin noblewoman.

After killing her father to protect her brother, Shallan and her brothers developed a plan to restore the family's wealth and keep their creditors satisfied. Part of this plan involved Shallan becoming the ward of the sister of the king, Jasnah Kholin.

Her time with Jasnah is uncomfortable for Shallan, as Jasnah is a known atheist, a trait which is strongly looked down upon in Vorin culture. While studying under Jasnah, Shallan is exposed to logic opposing the religion she has accepted her whole life for the first time. While reacting with apprehension towards Jasnah questioning her religion at first, their relationship helps Shallan look on her religion with a measure of skepticism.

Throughout the novels, Shallan enters into situations which require her to pretend to be another person in order to fit into different environments and situations. To do this, she combines a magical talent for creating illusions with the adoptions of different personalities. Over the course of the first three novels, Shallan comes up with three distinct personalities, all of which exemplify the traits she believes women in specific situations should possess.

[95] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 508

[96] Sanderson, Brandon. Words of Radiance : Book Two of the Stormlight Archive. 1st ed., New York, Tor, A Tom Doherty Associates Book, 2014. p. 563

The first personality is Shallan herself. While some characters argue that this personality is her real one, Shallan believes that it is as much a disguise as the other two. Shallan is the timid daughter of a nobleman, dutiful and proper like a lighteyed woman should be, falling in love with the prince as she should. Shallan herself sees this personality as the weakest, as it, in her head, does not make sense for a young noblewoman to wield swords and fight evil, or to spy and gather information among the common folk.

The second personality is Veil. Veil is a lowborn, rough, darkeyes spy and con artist. Shallan takes on this personality when she needs to move among lowborn people, and when she needs to gather information from the common folk. Unlike Shallan, Veil shows a distinct sexual interest in Kaladin, favoring the soldier over Shallan's betrothed prince.

The third personality is simply called "Radiant". Radiant was created in response to increasing attention being placed on Shallan after her betrothal to the crown prince of Alethkar as well as her joining the order of the Knights Radiant, mythical heroes who fight against the Voidbringers. Radiant appears like Shallan, however with a larger chest. Her personality was modelled after Jasnah Kholin, regal and respectful while still demanding more respect by her bearing. She easily dismisses those she deems as unintelligent, while not caring what others think of her, the complete opposite of Shallan.

The third character I have chosen to examine is Jasnah Kholin, the sister of the king of Alethkar. Jasnah is both a famous scholar and infamous atheist in Vorin culture, having been at the forefront of a number of sciences for most of her adult life while openly denouncing the Vorin religion. Jasnah shows a very brusque personality with little patience for people she finds foolish. Her one most defining feature, however, is her single minded commitment to protect her country and her family from outside threats, possibly caused by the assassination of her father and later the murder of her younger brother.

Another possible reason behind Jasnah's brusque personality lies in a hinted trauma of having been locked in a dark room as a child, sick and suffering from hallucinations.[97]

Although Jasnah is an outspoken atheist, she has expressed a willingness to retract her denunciation of the Vorin religion if she is ever proven wrong, grounding her atheism in a belief in science and logic rather than stubborn refusal to believe as she argues that: "A true scholar must

[97] Sanderson, Brandon. Oathbringer. 1st ed., New York, Ny, Tor A Tom Doherty Associates Book, 2017. p. 478

never close her mind on any topic […] no matter how certain she may feel. Just because I have not yet found a convincing reason to join one of the devotaries does not mean I never will".[98]

When we are first introduced to Jasnah, she seems to embody all the Vorin ideals of womanhood, except for two points. She does not seek to marry, and she is not religious. She does however pursue womanly pursuits such as science, she covers her left hand, she acts with grace and dignity, and she acts as a scribe to the male members of her family. This does not however, mean that she is reluctant to perform more male actions such as fighting, as she shows when she brutally executes a group of street thugs attacking her and Shallan.[99] When questioned why she killed the men, she simply asked: "Did I just slaughter four men, or did I stop four murderers from walking the streets? […] Did I have a right to defend myself? Or was I just looking for an excuse to end lives?"[100]

The last character I have decided to study in detail is Renarin Kholin, youngest cousin of the king of Alethkar and Jasnah as well as the son of the most famous general in Alethkar.

Renarin is described as the polar opposite of his older brother Adolin. Where Adolin is the perfect example of the Vorin male, Renarin is quiet, thoughtful and non-confrontational.

Renarin has been confirmed by Brandon Sanderson as being autistic as well as suffering from epilepsy. Renarin also shows a fascination with less masculine interests such as engineering, often asking about the functions of several new engineering projects carried out by the scholars of his home. Despite this, he has repeatedly rejected the idea of becoming an ardent to become an engineer.[101] Despite his physical weakness, Renarin is quick to rush into danger if his family is in danger, seemingly valuing their lives over his own. This does however mostly lead to seizures, immobilizing him and placing him in danger.

Throughout the novels, Renarin's driving motivations are, his wish to prove himself a worthy son to his father, his relationship with his older brother and his idealization of Kaladin and his soldiers. It is with Kaladin, that Renarin finds an outlet for this drive. Being the son of a surgeon, Kaladin

[98] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 469
[99] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 533
[100] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 535
[101] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 847

understands Renarin's sickness, allowing him to train with his soldiers without treating him differently.[102]

When it comes to the representation of ethnicities in the *Stormlight Archive* novels, it is easy to assume that the main nationality, the Alethi, is another Caucasian-inspired fantasy people. Sanderson is often hesitant to describe the physical appearances of his characters, at most describing hair color, eye color and body type as well as distinguishing features such as scars or glasses. Most Alethi are described as black-haired with tan skin, with eye color determined by whether the person is highborn or lowborn. Shallan Davar however, is described as having auburn hair, pale skin and freckles.

Although the Alethi are described as being tan skinned, the reader might not immediately see them as anything more than tan Caucasians, perhaps Mediterranean. It was not until Sanderson was asked directly that he revealed that almost all human races in the world of the *Stormlight Archives* were inspired more by Asian appearance traits, stating that: "Normal eyes on Roshar are those with an epicanthic fold."[103] While Sanderson stresses that none of the people of Roshar specifically resemble any ethnicities from our world, the combination of black hair, tan skin and the epicanthic fold would relate to people from Asia or native Americans among others.

The reason why some might at first view the people of Roshar as standard Caucasians could be argued to be a side effect of recognition as well as simple habit.

When it comes to the inclusion of sexual minorities in the novels, there is only one reference. During training with his men, Kaladin is approached by his clerk and assistant Sigzil, who shows concern that one of the men in the army has taken a male lover. While Kaladin sees no issue with this, Sigzil, a citizen of the nation Azir, wonders why the man has not been reassigned to a position away from the battlefield, as is the custom in Azir, a system based on a similar system from India during the middle ages, where a homosexual person would be reassigned, and expected to act and exist as person of the opposite gender. Kaladin simply laughs at him and tells him that the Alethi see no issue with homosexuality.

[102] Sanderson, Brandon. The Way of Kings. p. 474

[103] /r/fantasy AMA 2013 - https://wob.coppermind.net/events/190-rfantasy-ama-2013/#e4079

Final Fantasy:

The final fantasy series is among one of the longest running series of video games, with the first game having been released in 1987 and the latest installment at the time of writing *Final Fantasy XV* was released in 2016. The series was created by Japanese game developer Hironobu Sakaguchi, and was published by Square Enix. The series holds consistent elements throughout most games, mixing science fiction and fantasy, while featuring recurring gameplay elements such as fantastical characters and weapons throughout the series. For this thesis, I have chosen two games in the series, in order to examine the evolution of certain story elements. The first game I have chosen is *Final Fantasy IV* the fourth game in the main series published in 1991, and *Final Fantasy X* the tenth game in the series, published in 2001. Additionally, I will examine *Final Fantasy X-II*, the direct sequel to the latter, published in 2003.

Final Fantasy IV focuses on the story of the former dark knight Cecil, who serves as main protagonist through the game, as well as a number of other characters who will join and leave the main group as the story progresses. *Final Fantasy IV* can be classified as an immersive fantasy, as the main protagonist and most companions are already deeply integrated in the fantastical world, The main group consists in total of twelve characters, three of which are female, all of whom take a more supportive role as medics or "summoners", as opposed to the close combat male members such as Cecil.

The first character I have chosen to examine is Rydia, a young girl whose mother protected the village they lived in through her bond with the mystical Mist Dragon. However, when Cecil and his friend Kain come to the village to deliver a magic ring and slay the dragon, Rydia's mother dies as well, as her life is bound to that of the dragon. The ring the two delivered then summons magical bombs to destroy the village, burning it to the ground.

After the attack on the village, Rydia is wounded, so Cecil and Kain hide her until she is healed, despite her hatred towards them. She soon learns however, that they did not know that killing the dragon would kill her mother, and their continued efforts to keep her safe lets her form a bond with the two. Later, Rydia is separated from the group and taken to a fantastical realm where time moves faster, allowing her to grow older before rejoining Cecil and the rest of the group. With this increase in age comes a decrease in the amount of clothes she wears, as she exchanges her children's clothes for a revealing dress and knee-high boots.

The second character I will examine is Rosa, Cecil and Kain´s childhood friend and Cecil's love interest through the game. Rosa takes the role of team healer through the game, following in the footsteps of her mother, who became a healer to support Rosa's father in battle. Rosa decides that she will fulfill the same role with Cecil, disregarding his attempts to have her stay home in safety, stating: "Without me along, who will heal you when you're hurt?"
After Cecil does not return to their home after the attack on Rydia's village, Rosa leaves to find him. She falls ill on the journey, and when she is finally reunited with Cecil, he and Rydia have to find the cure for the disease.
While Rosa and Cecil are lovers through most of the game, and are married in the end, Kain also has feelings for her, which leads to tensions and rivalry between himself and Cecil. This is only made worse when Kain is possessed by the antagonist Golbez who turns Kain against the group multiple times.
Rosa appears as a beautiful blonde young woman, wearing spiked armor on her shoulders, but with revealing bright clothes, and see-through tights. The only modesty provided comes in the form of tiny blue underwear making sure she does not reveal anything too indecent.
The Final Fantasy games very often divide the in-game world into a clear "us" versus "them" by defining nations or groups as very distinctly good or evil. It is a recurring theme of the series that a nation or being appears to be the main antagonist until around the latter half of the game, where it is revealed that an evil mastermind was hiding in the shadows and pulling the strings the entire time. In *Final Fantasy IV*, the first antagonist comes in the form of the king of Baron, Cecil's homeland. In the medieval setting of the game, the nation of Baron has progressed to a technological level far beyond that of the other nations, allowing them to become a dominant force in the world. The king remains the primary antagonist until it is revealed that a demon under the control of the royal advisor Golbez had killed the king and taken his place. It is then later revealed that Golbez himself had been under the influence of an alien race who wants to take control of the world.

The last games in the series I have chosen to examine are *Final Fantasy X* and its sequel *Final Fantasy X-II*. The tenth game in the main series, takes the classic formula of having an evil group or nation be puppeteered by someone else, and flips it, beginning as the evil godlike being known only as "Sin" destroys the home city of main protagonists, Tidus. Tidus is then seemingly

transported through the creature into a different, more fantastical world. Here, he meets a group of others interested in stopping Sin, led by the young woman Yuna, who is destined to sacrifice herself to defeat Sin and give her life to force the creature to sleep for some time. For Tidus, the narrative of the game functions as a portal quest fantasy, as he was taken from his home and is on this journey to return there again. It is, however, revealed that the religious order which controls the world, preaching that Sin comes after them for relying on technology more than faith, has lost faith in their mission and simply attempt to keep power.

The game is mostly seen from the perspective of main protagonist Tidus or the other main protagonist Yuna, as the two come to terms with, and deals with the consequences of their mission to stop Sin. Tidus is presented as a young, famous athlete who, when sent to the medieval world of Spira, joins the group sworn to protect the summoner Yuna to find the truth about why he was sent to this world. Unlike the soldier Cecil from *Final Fantasy IV*, Tidus is a naïve young man who seems to rebel against the system when he decides that the rules are in the way of doing good, with little concern for the consequences. Additionally, Tidus is shown to be selfless and sometimes even reckless when he decides that something is the right thing to do. Through the game, he matures to become more levelheaded and mature. Appearance-wise, Tidus resembles the stereotypical surfer from the early 2000s, with longer blonde hair, shorts and an open jacket. He is physically fit without appearing overly muscular and his clothes are decorated with several silver chains and crosses.

Yuna, is presented as a more conservative and quiet religious young woman, dedicated to her duty as a priestess and summoner, and somewhat resigned to her fate as a sacrifice to stop Sin. Throughout the game, Yuna grows to question her fate more, due to both the influence of Tidus, experiencing the church she previously had unquestionable faith in, perform acts that seemed counter to their core tenants, and her budding romantic interest in Tidus making her realize that she has something to live for. Appearance-wise, Yuna is more conservatively dressed than most other female characters in the game, wearing a somewhat concealing dress of a traditional Japanese-inspired kimono style. During the events of the second game, *Final Fantasy X-II*, Yuna has left the church behind, joining a group of treasure hunters and adopting a more liberal style. In this time, she wears short shorts, and a skirt which only covers her left leg, with a very open shirt which expenses the entire middle of her torso, barely covering her chest. Additionally, she has

switched her weapon of choice from the religious summoning magic to a pair of handguns which were formerly banned by the church.

The final game of the series, *Final Fantasy X-II* is the first game in the series to feature an all-female group of main protagonists, with a three person team, which the player controls through the entire game. Taking place two years after the events of the first game, it tells the story of Yuna and her friends working as a form of treasure hunters, looking for a way to bring back Tidus after his death at the end of the first game. While the game features many of the medieval elements of the previous game, the advancements in technology after the defeat of Sin creates a mixture of fantasy elements and science fiction elements to parallel the maturing of Yuna herself.

Both of the *Final Fantasy* games I have examined in this thesis have prominently featured light skinned characters, with little to no characters of other ethnicities.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

The video game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is the third installment of a video game series based on the book series of the same name, written by Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski. The third installment was published in 2015. The video games take place after the ambiguous ending of the books and have been declared non-canon by the author as per the licensing agreement with developer CD Project Red. In an interview with Eurogamer Poland, Sapkowski stated that: "The game – with all due respect to it, […] is not an "alternate version", nor a sequel. The game is a free adaptation containing elements of my work; an adaptation created by different authors"[104].

Widely recognized as one of the best video games of its time, the game received over 800 different awards by august 2016.

The game is set in a medieval world heavily inspired by Slavic mythology, and follows the story of professional monster hunter Geralt of Rivia. Set during a period of political unrest in the regions of the Northern Kingdoms and Redania, which have recently been invaded by the nation of Nifgaard. The game can be considered an immersive fantasy when examined with Mendlesohn's set of fantasies, as Geralt is part of and deeply familiar with the fantastical elements of the world he exists in. The story of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* begins with Geralt searching for his old lover Yennefer, and upon finding her, revolves around the search for his adopted daughter Ciri.

[104] https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2012-11-06-ever-wondered-what-the-author-of-the-witcher-books-thinks-about-the-games

I have chosen to examine four characters from the game, Geralt of Rivia, Yennefer, Triss Merigold and Ciri. These four make up the main characters of the game and Yennefer and Triss are both former lovers of Geralt, with the possibility of reigniting either relationship. I have chosen to examine Ciri as well because of her status within the story, as she is the prophesized hero who will save the world from the enigmatic "White Frost".

Geralt of Rivia is the main protagonist of both the books and the games. Having gained the benefits of a prolonged lifespan from the magical experiments that gave him his powers as a witcher, Geralt is estimated to be somewhere around 94 years old by the time the game begins. Geralt's personality can be described as apathetic, cynical and threatening when it comes to strangers or those that irritate him, however his closest friends refer to him as one of the most loyal people they know. When in the company of friends, Geralt's cold outer shell fades somewhat, revealing a good-humored man. Additionally, Geralt is not indifferent to the suffering of others, often going out of his way to help those he sees as mistreated, although he makes it a habit to follow the witcher code of requiring payment for his help.

While Geralt is shown as a rugged and scarred white-haired man, he attracts the attention of many beautiful women throughout the games, most notably Yennefer and Triss Merigold. While Yennefer was Geralt's main love interest in the book series, the games tell the story of Geralt suffering from amnesia and briefly falling in love with Triss, becoming her lover for a time before regaining his memories. While Triss' age is never revealed, she is mentioned to be the youngest of her group of sorceresses. Yennefer however has been revealed to be over 100 years old, using magic to make herself appear younger than she is.

Yennefer takes the role of Ciri's adoptive mother and one of Geralt's two love interests in the game. An ancient sorceress, Yennefer makes use of magic to make herself appear younger than she is. In the opening cinematic of the game, a brief shot shows an old woman drinking a concoction from a cauldron, transforming into a beautiful black-haired woman. This woman could possibly be Yennefer due to the similarities in their appearance, but due to the artistic style of the cinematic and the fact that the woman is not named, this cannot be confirmed. In the books it is revealed that Yennefer was even born as a hunchback and uses the same magic to appear more beautiful. In the past, Geralt had received a number of wishes from a creature known as a djinn. Geralt used his last wish to bind himself and Yennefer together forever. In the game, Yennefer

seeks out another djinn to break this bond, fearing that the reason she and Geralt love one another is because the first djinn's magic compels them to. After finding the djinn and having the magic removed, Yennefer finds that she still has feelings for Geralt, but it is up to the player to decide whether Geralt kept his feelings for her.

Triss Merigold is the other of Geralt's possible love interests. The youngest sorcerer of the group known as the "lodge of sorceresses", Triss is known as one of the strongest sorceresses of her time. Taking a keen interest in politics, Triss is often found advising kings and nobles on behalf of the lodge. During Geralt's period of suffering from amnesia, he mistakenly thinks that he and Triss had been lovers before, remembering only that he had loved a powerful sorceress.

At the time of the game, magic has been outlawed in most of the world, and magical beings are being hunted and burned at the stake. Triss is in hiding when Geralt encounters her again, but the player can choose to help her get to safety in the witcher keep Kaer Morhen.

There, she meets Yennefer. The two sorceresses are cold towards one another, as they both have feelings for Geralt, yet they both agree in helping protect Ciri.

Ciri, or rather Cirilla Fiona Elen Riannon is the adoptive daughter of Geralt and Yennefer. Ciri acts as the prophesized hero of the main conflict in the series, travelling around the world to fulfill her destiny, while Geralt follows behind, almost never catching up to her. Throughout the game, Geralt visits places Ciri has been in her journey, and the player relives the events that transpired there through flashbacks from Ciri's point of view. While it is Geralt's mission through the movie to find and save Ciri, their delayed reunion serves to show us that while Ciri is not as experienced a monster slayer as her adoptive father, she is more than capable of handling herself. When Geralt finally reunites with Ciri, the one major role he plays in her plot which will, in the game's system of multiple endings, help her stay alive, is to be a father to her, making sure that the responsibilities placed on her do not break her. While Geralt actively helps fight against the Wild Hunt, his main goal is to remind his daughter that once she has fulfilled her destiny, there is somewhere to return to.

Being set in a medieval Slavic inspired culture, the Witcher series do not feature any characters of other ethnicities that Caucasian. While some have criticized the series for this choice, others have applauded their dedication to staying true to both the source material and the supposed time and place of the novel.

Additionally, the novels and games have been criticized for the focus on heterosexuality, while giving little to no attention of other sexualities. *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* features a single gay male in the form of a non-player character, or npc, called Mislav, whom Geralt seeks out to help him track a griffin. When meeting Geralt, Mislav lives in a small village called White Orchard, working as a hunter. While tracking the griffin, he and Geralt talk, and Mislav mentions his past serving as the local lord's hunter. However, when he was found in the stables with the lord's son, he was exiled to live alone in the woods. Mislav shows great regret and sadness when telling his story, showing the plight of the gay man in medieval western Europe.

Undertale

The game *Undertale* was published by indie developer Tobey Fox in 2015.
Set in the underworld, home of the monster race, the player takes the form of a young child named Frisk who falls into a cave and gets trapped in the underground. While in the underground, Frisk will meet a number of sentient monsters, most of whom are eager to capture them and use their soul to destroy the magical barrier which locks them in the underground. Frisk however, can choose to not fight and kill any monsters in the underground, instead befriending them all and finding a new home with the monsters.
When applied to Mendlesohn's model of fantasies, the video game would be seen as a mixture of a portal fantasy and an estranged fantasy. We are repeatedly told that the world above the underground is our mundane world. However, when Frisk passes through the portal and into the fantastical underground, they show no signs of panic or confusion at the fantastical elements of this new world.
Not much is known about Frisk as a character, allowing the player to more easily recognize themselves in the character based on their own choices. We are at no point given a gender for Frisk, as all other characters refer to them as "they". The game additionally features a large number of characters of different genders, each with their own set of pronouns.
Additionally, many of these characters are shown to come in a wide variety of sexualities, with the player able to choose the sexuality of the main character, the soldier Undyne being shown as lesbian and in love with scientist, Alphys who is also presented as lesbian.
The game additionally does not show any characters of a specific ethnicity, with the main character Frisk being shown as a brown-haired person with yellow skin. This skin color seems to be

an artistic choice and not a reference to a specific ethnicity, as the purpose of Frisk is to invite recognition. The monsters too are referred to as one single race or ethnicity, yet they come in all shapes and sized, from ghosts to mermen and mermaids to an airplane wearing a wig.

Discussion

With the theory I have gathered and the novels and games I have examined in this thesis, the parallels between the two forms of media in regard to the evolution of representation can be examined. When it comes to the issue of gender in literature, we can see a clear evolution of gender roles in both video games and literature.

The *Lord of the Rings*, features two major female characters, Arwen and Éowyn. Arwen's role in the story is to serve as motivation for Aragorn, and to provide a stable home to return to once the war is complete. Éowyn on the other hand, is expected to take the same role, yet she defies this and, while disguised as a man, travels with the army and ends up killing the second in command of Sauron's armies. With these two examples we can clearly see two sides of the same story. One in which the woman is expected to stay in the home and await the man's return. We also see the two different outcomes of this, as Arwen is married to Aragorn, has his children, and then dies of heartbreak the year after he passes away. Éowyn on the other hand, subverts this gender role and travels with the army, killing the Witch-King of Angmar, helping the protagonists secure victory over Sauron, but she is gravely injured in the process.

In *The Wheel of Time* the gender roles are more equally divided, with female magic users holding an important role in the politics of the world, as well as in the land of the Aiel wastes. Additionally, the nation of Andor is ruled by a matriarch exclusively. Additionally, the village of Emond's Field, in which most of the story's protagonists were born or raised, employ a system of two different governing bodies, the male Village Council and the female Women's Circle, both of whom carry an equal amount of power in governing the village.

In the *Stormlight Archive* series, we see both female and male protagonists from different backgrounds, most of whom have motivations and stories centered around their past and their goals without exclusively being focused on their status as women.

Additionally, we see the religious requirements of both men and women, and how the main characters manage to adapt to or circumvent these requirements. Like Jasnah Kholin, who, while not religious herself, conforms to the ideals of womanhood, such as grace, curiosity and dignity,

still manages to take part in more masculine activities such as fighting. Or like Shallan Davar, who struggles with finding her place in the world, adopting personalities who, in her head, fit into different parts of the world around her as needed, each with their own adaptation of these religious beliefs and habits.

On the video game side, we can see a somewhat but not identical pattern in the portrayal of gender. While some video games allow the player to create their own avatar in order to provide easy recognition and identification with the character, the games I chose provided set characters made to serve a specific purpose and hold a specific place within the narrative of the game.
In the *Final Fantasy* games, we examined two games, with the sequel to *Final Fantasy X* used to provide a broader perspective in the narrative sense. In the older *Final Fantasy* games, we can see a pattern of male characters taking the lead, taking the active role in combat, while the female characters took more of a supportive role. Additionally, we can see a pattern in the roles of the female characters in the narrative, as both Rydia and Rosa at one point or the other take the role of victims, whom the other characters have to rescue. Even when examining the appearances of the different characters, we can see that the female characters such as Rydia, once she reaches a certain age, and Rosa are portrayed in far more revealing clothing than the male characters who tend to wear full-body armor.
In *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, we see a more involved role being given to the female protagonists. The character Ciri is given the role of chosen hero in the overall narrative of the game, although she is not the main point-of-view character. Geralt of Rivia instead serves to trail behind Ciri and learn about her journey, before finding her and supporting her as both a warrior and as a father figure. Yennefer and Triss Merigold are also presented as strong and capable characters, yet their autonomy is somewhat discredited by their relationship to Geralt, as well as Yennefer's insistence on using magic to transform from an over 100-year-old woman into a beautiful one, apparently hinging her self-esteem and sense of self on how attractive she is. Additionally, the wish Geralt made to the djinn ensured that the two spent years in deep love before Yennefer broke the spell. And although she admits to still love Geralt, the inclusion of player choice in the decision of whether Geralt still has feelings for Yennefer after the spell is broken undermines the entire story of their previous relationship, tainting it by making it an artificial creation.
Finally it is possible to see a clear evolution in the game *Undertale*, as there are not only powerful

male and female characters who are given equal time in the spotlight, but the player also controls Frisk, a non-binary gendered person while navigating the underground, a fantastical world filled with persons of all genders.

When it comes to the representation and presentation of ethnicities in these works of literature, there is also a pattern to find.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, we see a clear image of nationalistic medievalisms. The protagonists are all Caucasians from nation inspired by western European cultures. These nations are bordered by enemies on all sides, in the form of Sauron's armies. These enemies either come in the form of inhuman orcs, or the Middle Eastern inspired Haradrim. These nations are locked in battle over territories and control. The battle against these forces functions as a defense of the homeland against outside, malevolent forces with different values and ideals, which the more "civilized" nations of the world band together to push back and defeat.

The Wheel of Time takes this topic a step further, beginning with the same nationalistic approach as Tolkien. However, these bordering and invading nations prove to be allies to the protagonists once a sufficient amount of information has been gathered about their society and a particular understanding has been gained. Protagonist Rand travels between most of the nations in the world, learning about the cultures of each and creating connections between them. The only nation originally seen as a mystery that remains a threat to the united world is the country of Shara, the only country Rand does not connect with or learn much about. This leaves the nation open for corruption by the forces of the Dark One, thereby making them an enemy.

The *Stormlight Archive* novels, while not complete yet, tells a similar story to that of the *Wheel of Time* novels. What began as a small group within the Alethi military, is starting to spread beyond the borders of Alethkar, making allies with other nations. Sanderson, however, makes sure to show the reader that this alliance is not a purely good one. There are independent groups within each nation seeking their own gains, helping the main group for now, but planning against them in the future. With this method, Sanderson gives the reader an image of a world, not controlled by nations, but by the individuals that make up that nation. The governments of the nations are still in power, but they are unable to control the direction their country is going completely.

Additionally, Sanderson introduces another set of differences in perceived value grounded in genetics. Through the division between lighteyes and darkeyes, Sanderson creates a division in

class and race not determined by the color of skin, but rather the color of the individual's eyes. The idea that one person is supposed to rule over another because of genes, mirrors the real life issues faced when slavery was an issue in our world, when some people decided that they were more fit to be on top because of a genetic trait, making the excuse that the color of someone's skin determined their intelligence and physical prowess, as well as their place in the hierarchy created by one side of this spectrum.

Lastly, the native peoples of Roshar are all vaguely described through most of the novels, with only references to hair color, eye color and bearing, with any possible descriptions of skin color being presented as vaguely as possible, such as "tan" or "fair". It was only until asked online, that Sanderson revealed that the characters from Roshar all have genetic traits reminiscent of real-world Asian genetics in the form of an epicanthic fold. Once this knowledge has been learned, the image the reader has of the characters in their head would possibly change to reflect this. It is very possible that Sanderson is vague in his descriptions in order to allow the reader to better identify with and recognize themselves in the characters. Whether the reader saw these characters as Caucasian or as another ethnicity could either relate to this recognition and identity, as the reader would project their own self-image onto the characters on the page, rather than some other image. The perceived ethnicity of the characters could however also relate to a general habit of seeing fantasy protagonists as Caucasian due to overwhelming precedent. We as readers are simply not used to a main protagonist resembling someone from an Asian country as much as we are used to fantasy characters resembling Western Europeans.

On the topic of ethnicities in video games, the idea of "us" versus "them" becomes even more clear, as the player takes a direct role in the conflict, rather than being a passive observer.

The *Final Fantasy* games reflect this conflict through a small group of characters rebelling against a larger institution being secretly manipulated by a darker entity, or the other way around, a dark and mysterious entity being controlled by or accepted by an evil organization.

In *Final Fantasy IV*, the main protagonist Cecil parts ways with the kingdom he previously served after destroying a village on the orders of his king. Instead, Cecil works to take down the king, and when he does, it is revealed that the king was an imposter.

Although the game presents the idea of multiple nations, no character we are introduced to show any other skin color than white.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt is the same, on the topic of portraying ethnicities other than Caucasian, however there is good reason. The game is based on the novels by the same name by Andrzej Sapkowski and is set in a world inspired by medieval Slavic mythology. The decision not to include characters of color was made because they would not fit within the confines of the world. The question however, then becomes whether the story written by Andrzej Sapkowski, set in a fantastical world of his own creation, should include people of color, and whether the games, meant to take place after the ending of the last novel, should stay true to the source material, or make sure to represent other ethnicities than Caucasian. These questions however are in the realm of ethics and sociology. When it comes to the question of nationalistic medievalisms, the game makes use of the standard issue of a foreign power invading the homeland. The player's place in this conflict is limited however, as Geralt chooses to not get involved in politics because of the code of the witchers. There is another question of "us" versus "them" however, as the fantastical threat in the form of the White Frost is approaching, becoming the reason for Ciri's journey. This threat, however, takes the form of a force of nature rather than a more physical threat, and therefore has no bearing on the question of nationality and threats from the outside. *Undertale* however, tackles the issue of representation of ethnicities by not including any specific ethnicities at all. Instead, the game introduces the player to a race of so-called monsters, creatures who take a number of different shapes, yet all act like people. The term monster is instead used to define them because of their difference in appearance to humans. This portrayal of the monsters does mirror what we see in both *The Wheel of Time* and *Stormlight Archive*, at first introducing the monsters as being dangerous beings living in a world bordering "our" world, but later revealing them to possess remarkably human traits and customs, such as the desire for acknowledgment, laziness, love and even the tradition of celebrating winter holidays, even if the underground has no concept of seasons.

The main protagonist Frisk is even shown in with unnaturally bright yellow skin and brown hair, in order for them to appear less like belonging to any specific ethnicity, instead allowing the player to recognize themselves within the child and better identify with them.

There is not much to say for either *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Wheel of Time* on the topic of representation of sexuality, as they both only feature heterosexual characters. *The Wheel of Time* however, does portray a non-traditional custom of polygamy in the Aiel. The main protagonist

Rand also, after learning of his own roots as being half-Aiel, recognizes that he is in love with three different women, ending the series by marrying all three of them. These women have the choice of whether or not to agree to the marriage, choosing to take the roles of sister-wives to one another.

Stormlight Archive has yet to introduce an LGBTQ main character, yet there are references to how homosexuality is viewed in the world of Roshar and the different opinions on the topic in different nations. The Alethi, the main nation of the novels, sees no issue in homosexuality, merely seeing it as love. The nation of Azir however, holds an opinion that homosexual individuals should be socially reassigned to exist and act as a person of the opposite gender, a system inspired by the real life medieval Indian system which argued for the same reassignment.

In regard to video games, we see the same pattern repeated in the *Final Fantasy* games. These games do not feature any LGBTQ characters. Just as Tolkien and Jordan, these games choose to instead focus on the more classic fantasy ideal of the romantic and heterosexual destined love story.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt also fails to include any LGBTQ main characters, with the only representation of one being a minor character in a small village. This character, however, works to present us with the view of LGBTQ characters within the world of the game. This opinion mirrors that of medieval Europe, with homosexual individuals being ostracized if found out.

The only game on this list which includes LGBTQ characters in a major capacity is the game *Undertale*. In *Undertale*, the player character can actively flirt with characters that are both male and female, and several of the major supporting cast of characters identify as either gay, lesbian, bisexual or asexual. This inclusion of both non-binary genders as well as heavily featured LGBTQ characters alongside heterosexual characters makes sure that whomever plays the game is able to identify with and recognize themselves in a character, no matter how they self-identify.

Conclusion

In this thesis I chose to examine the way fantasy literature had represented gender, ethnicity and sexuality in the past, and how these representations had changed in contemporary fantasy as well as how these changes could have been caused by or inspired similar changes in video game narratives. I examined a number of books and video games on the basis of these factors, making use of theories on recognition, gender identity construction, nationalism and how gender is

portrayed in video games.

On the topic of gender, it became clear that the role of the female protagonist had evolved greatly over the course of the genre's lifetime, going from staying at home to provide motivation and support to male protagonists, or rebelling against the responsibility of staying at home to instead join the men in fighting against the antagonistic force in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* published in 1954. By 1990 when Jordan's *Wheel of Time* had been published, the role of women in fantasy had evolved to let female characters take a more naturally active role in the development of the narrative, introducing both politically influential women as well as female warriors. In Sanderson's *Stormlight Archive* first published in 2010, the female role had once again changed to include actively fighting on the front line, while still maintaining a sense of femininity, instead of casting aside the feminine aspects of the character in favor of a more masculine attitude.

In video games we found a starting point in 1991 video game *Final Fantasy IV*, in which female characters were presented as supporting units to the male protagonists, even if the female protagonists engaged in combat together with the males. By examining the way these female characters were portrayed, we also found that they were often dressed provocatively, in revealing outfits, as opposed to the practical armor of the male characters. Additionally, it became clear that the female characters more often took the role of the victim, requiring the male protagonist to save their lives on multiple occasions. By 2001, in the video game *Final Fantasy X* we saw an increase in the importance of the female character to the plot, with the character Yuna taking a central part in both *Final Fantasy X* and direct sequel *Final Fantasy X-II*. Additionally, we saw a change in the way characters like Yuna were portrayed, changing from revealing clothes to a more conservative and traditionally Japanese style of dress, more in line with the religious background of the character.

In the game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* published in 2015, we saw women taking an active role as powerful magic wielders, as well as the character Ciri becoming the central heroine of the narrative, with main protagonist Geralt taking more of a supporting role as protector and father figure to Ciri. We did however also find that the other two most important female characters, Yennefer and Triss, were portrayed mainly as potential love interests for Geralt himself, developing a rivalry for his affection, while making use of magic to appear more attractive to him. Finally, we found that the indie game *Undertale* published in 2015 portrayed a large variety of

differently gendered characters with a measure of importance to the central narrative. Additionally, the main character, the human child Frisk, was themselves portrayed as a non-binary gender individual, in order for the player to more easily identify with and recognize themselves in the character.

On the evolution of the representation of ethnicity, we found a number of changes over the course of the examined works. In Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* we found that the protagonists and supporting characters were all portrayed as stereotypical Western Europeans, with bordering nations, taking the role of the invading force, being portrayed as resembling stereotypical Middle Easterners.

In *The Wheel of Time*, we found that the inclusion and representation of ethnicities other than Caucasian had evolved into a more positively inclined portrayal, while still retaining cultural elements significantly different than those of the main protagonists, all of whom resembled the same stereotypical Western European. We also found that the only foreign culture which ended the series as enemies of the protagonists were the only ones which the protagonists never tried to understand and befriend.

Lastly, we found that Sanderson's *Stormlight Archive* series made an effort to distinguish the main protagonists ethnicity from the otherwise common Western European appearance, instead resembling people of Asian descent. Additionally, the nation in which most of the series takes place takes the role of the invading army instead of the typical narrative of having their ownj home invaded.

In regards to video games and ethnicity, we found that both *Final Fantasy* games featured only people resembling Caucasians amongst their main cast of characters, while instead of nationalistic tendencies, following the story of small groups of rebels fighting against a larger malevolent nation or organization.

In *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* we found no portrayal of characters of other ethnicities than Western European. This however, can be attributed to a desire to stay true to the source material on which the game is based, that being a novel set in a fictionalized version of Slavic mythology.

In *Undertale* however, we see the main character travelling to an underground land of creatures known as monsters, that are revealed to possess human-like personality traits and cultures, with the term monster resembling a name given to the creatures by an outside force that lacked

understanding of their culture. Additionally, we theorized that the use of monsters instead of humans eliminated the idea of recognition based on ethnicity, opting instead for recognition based on character traits and ideals.

Lastly, we examined the evolution of the representation of sexuality in our chosen works. While neither Tolkien nor Jordan features any LGBTQ characters, Jordan did portray an alternate culture concerning marriage, putting a focus on polygamy as the goal of the main character. Sanderson too, did not include any LGBTQ characters in the *Stormlight Archive* series, but did make an effort to show the reader how homosexuality was perceived in the different nations of the world of Roshar.

On the subject of representation of sexuality in video games, we did not find any portrayal of LGBTQ characters, or anything beyond traditional heterosexual relationships in the *Final Fantasy* games.

We did, however, find representation in the form of a minor story character in *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, with the inclusion of Mislav, the gay hunter who was exiled from his home for being intimate with his lord´s son. While not a large portrayal, this one character does serve to establish the views on homosexuality within the world of the game.

Finally, we found that *Undertale* provided a large amount of representation of LGBTQ characters within the world of the underground. We meet both homosexual story characters in the form of scientist Alphys and soldier Undyne, as well as a bisexual main protagonist in the form of Frisk, whom the player can choose to have flirt with and date a number of differently gendered characters.

Whether or not I have confirmed my thesis statement and proven that the representation of gender, sexuality and ethnicity has evolved in recent literature, I can say for certain that there has been a marked increase in said representation in both the literary and video game medias. Whether these evolutions are connected and inspired by one another is harder to say, yet the two follow one another closely, showing similar patterns in their evolutions. Therefore it can be safe to argue that the two are connected.

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