



Women in Science fiction:

Effects of the feminist movements from the 1960's to 2020's

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<p>Sammandrag: Science fiction kallas ofta en genre skriven av men till men. I detta examensarbete vill jag undersöka om vi kan se en klar påverkan av feminism i science fiction-genren. Jag undersöker audiovisuella verk eftersom de är lättare att analysera för en nybörjare. Verken jag analyserat är: Star Trek (1966), Alien (1979), Star Wars Episode 1 – Phantom Menace (1999), Mass Effect (2007), Star Trek: Into Darkness (2013) och Returnal (2021). Teorierna som används är Molly Haskells teori om hur Hollywoodfilmer inte avbildar kvinnor på ett realistiskt sätt, Laura Mulveys male gaze, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichies ”Vi borde alla vara feminister” och Bechdeltestet. Jag kom underfund med att feminism har haft en positiv inverkan på science fiction-genren. Fast vi ännu ser moment av klar och tydlig male gaze på kvinnornas kroppar och karaktärer, kan vi också notera en klar och tydlig konstant ökning av kvinnliga karaktärer och deras roll i själva berättelsen. Speciellt videospel, som är ökända för deras problem med misogyni mot kvinnor och kvinnokroppar, har positiva kvinnliga protagonister. Efter MeToo-kampanjen ökade en klar och tydlig efterfrågan för förändringar i nöjesindustrin och i att skapa trygga områden för alla, inte endast för vissa få. Jag upptäckte också att Bechdeltestet är ett lätt redskap att använda, men lämnar utrymme för förbättring. Saker som ”manligt kärleksintresse” komplicerar undersökningen eftersom alla berättelser inte har ett manlig kärleksintresse/inget kärleksintresse alls. Metoden blir dessutom opålitlig om man vill undvika ytskrap och hellre dyka djupare ner i science fiction-genrens vidunderliga värld.</p>	
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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>Science fiction is often considered a genre written by men for men. In this thesis I will investigate if we can see a clear effect of the feminist movement in the science fiction genre. I study audiovisual works as they are easier for a beginner to analyze. The works I analyzed are: Star Trek (1966), Alien (1979), Star Wars Episode 1 – Phantom Menace (1999), Mass Effect (2007), Star Trek: Into Darkness (2013) and Returnal (2021). I use Molly Haskell's theory about Hollywood movies not portraying women in a realistic way, Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "We should all be feminist" and The Bechdel Test. I found out that the science fiction genre is positively affected by the feminist moment. While we still see recurrences of the male gaze on the female body, we can also notice a steady rise on female characters and their role in the story. Especially video games, which are constantly criticized for their blatant sexism towards women and female bodies, had positive female protagonist. Since MeToo, there is also a clear demand for change in the entertainment industry to create a safe space for everybody, not just for a few chosen once. I also found out that the Bechdel test is an easy tool to use, but leaves a lot to be desired. Things like male love interest complicates the research, as there is always not a male love interest/no love interest at all. This also makes the method quite unreliable if one would like to dive deeper than the very surface area into the wonderful world of science fiction.</p>	
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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	4
1 Introduction	7
1.1 Aims	8
1.2 Objectives	9
1.3 Delimitations	9
1.4 Method & Material	10
2 Key concepts and definitions	11
2.1 Representation	11
2.2 Feminism	12
2.3 Gender	13
2.4 Privilege	14
2.5 Definitions	15
3 Feminist cinema theory	15
3.1 Molly Haskell – Realistic portrayal of women	15
3.2 Laura Mulvey - Male gaze	16
3.3 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - We should all be feminist.....	17
3.4 The Bechdel Test.....	17
3.5 Feminism movements prior to the 1960's.....	20
4 Findings	21
4.1 1960's – “Star Trek”	21
4.2.1 Plot	22
4.2.2 Analysis	25
4.2.3 Bechdel Test Results	28
4.2 1970's – “Alien”.....	29
4.3.1 Plot	30
4.3.2 Analysis	31
4.3.2 Bechdel Test Results	33
4.3 1980's – “Dune”	33
4.4.1 Plot	34
4.4.2 Analysis	34
4.4.3 Bechdel Test Results	35
4.4 1990's – “Star Wars Episode 1”	36
4.5.1 Plot	36
4.5.2 Analysis	38
4.5.3 Bechdel Test Results	39

4.5	2000's – "Mass Effect"	39
4.6.1	Plot	40
4.6.2	Analysis	40
4.6.3	Bechdel Test Results	42
4.6	2010's – "Star Trek: Into Darkness"	42
4.7.1	Plot	43
4.7.2	Analysis	44
4.7.3	Bechdel Test Results	46
4.7	2020's – "Returnal"	46
4.8.1	Plot	47
4.8.2	Analysis	47
4.8.3	Bechdel Test Results	48
5	Discussion	49
5.1	Visual Ethnography	49
5.2	Old Star Trek vs New Star Trek	50
5.3	Male gazed nakedness	56
5.4	Uniforms sexy?	57
5.5	Changes after 1970's male gaze theory	58
5.6	Bechdel Test	59
5.7	Video Games and feminism	61
5.8	What the audience wants	63
5.9	Has feminism effected the science fiction genre?	65
5.10	Why does any of this matter?	65
6	Conclusions	67
6.1	Further work	69
7	Svenska sammanfattning	70
	References	75

TABLES

Table 1	The media text studied	9
Table 2	The Bechdel Test, example	15
Table 3	Star Trek	17
Table 4	Bechdel Test results - Star Trek	21
Table 5	Alien	23
Table 6	Bechdel Test results - Alien	25
Table 7	Dune	25
Table 8	Bechdel Test results - Dune	26
Table 9	Star Wars - Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace	27
Table 10	Bechdel Test results - Star Wars - Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace	29
Table 11	Mass Effect 1	29
Table 12	Bechdel Test results - Mass Effect 1	31
Table 13	Star Trek: Into Darkness	32

Table 14 Bechdel Test results - Star Trek: Into Darkness.....	34
Table 15 Returnal.....	34
Table 16 Bechdel Test results - Returnal.....	35

Thank you too each person who has supported me during the process of writing this thesis.
And remember, loving Princess Leia does not mean you're a bad person

1 INTRODUCTION

How many tampons does one woman need for a space journey that will last for one week? This question became a highly discussed topic after a new trend surfaced on the social media platform TikTok, where users would make reaction videos to Marcia Belsky's skit song 'Proof that NASA doesn't know anything about women'. The first line of the song goes: "Remember when NASA sent a woman to space for only six days and they gave her one hundred tampons, one hundred tampons, and then they asked, 'will that be enough?'" (Comedy Central Stand-Up, 2020). This trend sparked confusion in how NASA, where some of the smartest people humanity has to offer work, ask how many tampons one woman needs for a week, and could even suggest one hundred as a serious answer? After fact checking this skit song's claim that NASA sent a woman into space with one hundred tampons, I found this out.

Sally Ride is the first American woman to ever travel into space. During her first space trip, she was not equipped with one hundred tampons, even if Belsky's song claims otherwise. During her training at NASA, Ride was asked by one male engineer about what kind of makeup kit she would need for her journey. He was curious, because male astronauts often wanted a shaving kit for the journey to upkeep hygiene. Ride told the engineer that makeup would be the last thing on her mind during the trip. She instructed him that he could cut down the amount of tampons by half and she would be more than fine during her time in space (Wright, 2002, p. 36). Ride's first trip into space was June 18th, 1983. That's forty years ago. NASA engineers today, do most likely not ask their female colleagues if they would need one hundred tampons for a one-week journey. Since an awareness of women's right and bodies have been fought for, for a long time.

NASA did not in fact send the first woman into space with one hundred tampons as the song suggested. This raised the question if there are other similar misconceptions that are related to space and women? While misogyny and women's oppression are real issues and this thesis is in no way trying to deny these facts, the song claims was not true.

My interests turned quickly to science fiction. Science fiction is still today considered a male-dominated genre. Journalist Darren Beyer (2018) explained the relationship between women and science fiction as follows

Science fiction had traditionally been a male-dominated genre- mostly being written by men for men. One can hardly fault a genre for that. Throughout history, many, probably most, things have been by men, for men. As sci-fi had matured over the years, its female fanbase has grown and come out of the shadows. (Beyer, 2018)

While stating that science fiction content is created by men for men, excludes women from the get-go. The first media text in the science fiction genre was published in 1818. This was the horror novel *Frankenstein*, which was written by author Mary Shelly, who was a woman (Mitrofanova, 2021). As the creator of the genre was a woman, it seems unlikely a genre can be exclusively for one gender more than the other.

With these two facts in hand, the misinformation on issues that happens on social media, and the argument that science fiction is by men for men, I was interested in understanding how women are truly portrayed in science fiction media texts? Are they, as Beyer claims, for men which would lead one to assume that there would not be much female representation as it is not for women, or is the situation more nuanced, like with Ride and the question of her tampons?

With this research I want to look at female characters in various science fiction media texts and understand how they are represented and if feminism has had a positive impact on this representation. Do women in modern science fiction media texts feel more realistic and fleshed out than in earlier texts? Was accurate female representation ever an issue in science fiction to begin with? Can I as a cis woman relate to these women on screen, or do the characters feel hollow and empty? My hope is to see that feminism and general awareness of gender equality has made a difference on the characters we see.

1.1 Aims

The aim of my research is to investigate how feminist theory have developed since the 1960's and how the developing theories correlate with contemporary science fiction media texts from the same time periods. How does the history of feminism correlate with the changes we see in female characters in media texts?

At the end of my research, I hope to have concrete understanding of how the female characters we see on the screen have changed, and if there is no change, I aim to have a solid understanding why this is the case. It is reasonable to assume that for women to feel welcomed into a community, we need to see women also on the screen - even though the claim by Beyer (2018) above suggests otherwise?

1.2 Objectives

My objective with this thesis is to look at key moments in the history of feminist movement, decade by decade, starting from the 60's until present day. I want to reflect on those observations in relation to specific media texts within the science fiction genre from the same time period. My hope is to find correlations between feminist theories and the representation of women in the narrative on screen. In other words, can we as the viewer see a change between something released in the 60's versus the 80's in how women are portrayed in the story? If so, what kind of changes? Can these be linked to feminist theories of the very same time period?

Keeping the above objectives in mind my research question becomes:

How are feminist theories reflected in Science Fiction media texts from the 1960's until today?

1.3 Delimitations

My research will focus on media texts from the Science fiction genre. Adding other genres, like fantasy or contemporary romance, would derail the research from the core question of how feminism has affected female characters in science fiction.

For this thesis, I will investigate media pieces that have the trope of space travel in the story/the characters are in space at one point of the story. At least one character from the cast must be in space/a spaceship at one point of the story. It is not enough that the characters reside on alien planets like Mars. Spaceship travel counts, as no human in our current evolution point, can survive in space without any scientific help. Having a common trope makes comparing the

media texts more balanced. This research will focus on human or human looking women and how they are represented. It will only look at how cis women are represented. Furthermore, this thesis focuses solely on female characters, not the actresses behind the characters.

1.4 Method & Material

The methods I chose for this thesis is a combination of *thematic analysis* using different sociological and feminist theories and a version of *visual ethnography*. Analysing cinema and videogames in a reflexive way allows intersubjective meaning-making and the study of representation of women in Science Fiction (Pink, 2007).

The research was conducted using an ethnographic method. I compared my research of the history of feminism to the findings of my ethnographic findings to find correlations and differentiations. The material was chosen based on the media texts having similar themes and motifs, in addition to the trope of space travel in one form or another.

Table 1. The media texts studied

<i>Film/Game</i>	<i>Year released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Star Trek	1966	Marc Daniels	Gene Roddenberry ¹
Alien	1979	Ridley Scott	Dan O'Bannon
Dune	1984	David Lynch	Frank Herbert
Star Wars Episode 1	1999	George Lucas	George Lucas
Mass Effect (Game)	2007	Casey Hudson	Casey Hudson
Star Trek Into Darkness	2013	J.J. Abrams	Roberto Orci et.al.
Returnal (Game)	2021	Harry Krueger	Harry Krueger

Science fiction is a vast genre with tens of thousands of texts. It is impossible to analyse all of them or even half. I have chosen these specific texts because they fit in with the trope of taking place physically in space. This to cut down the potential research material, as actual space travel is not always seen in science fiction media texts.

¹ There were several writers for these three episodes, with Roddenberry in common for all three.

I wanted to broaden the research to look at more than just one specific series e.g., season 1 of Star Trek or the Star Wars saga as a whole, to get a better understanding of the genre instead of looking closer at one creator among many. Other common themes in these media texts are action, adventure, and horror.

In my review on feminism in Star Trek the original series, I will only be looking at season 1 episode 2: “The Man Trap”, episode 7: “Mudd’s Women” and episode 10: “Dagger of the mind”. The episodes were chosen at random from season one. I made this choice as the story of Star Trek the original series is that there is a new case every episode, so the characters change a lot. The story does not have a plot that carries on from episode to episode, as it follows the entire Enterprise crew on their five-year voyage. It would be impossible to review the series in this format without going into detail about every episode. That would require research of its own, as I would dedicate a significant amount of time just to look at every episode and review them, compared to the other pieces of media I am looking at. By looking at a few random episodes, I can get an overall feeling of the show and how it represents women, even if I do not see every detail it has to offer.

2 KEY KONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

In this section I will be presenting the key concepts used throughout this thesis.

2.1 Representation

Why does representation matter? Representation gives us a sense of possibility. It makes us believe we can be anything and that certain things in life are not reserved for a selective privileged few. It also helps us better ourselves as individuals. Seeing representation in media helps us fight our own biases and stereotypes that we have concisely and unconsciously (TEDxTalks. 2017).

“What if you do not see yourself anywhere? What if you do not feel any connection? Until society represents everyone, the question will always be; where do I belong? Do I belong?” (TEDxTalks, 2020).

Aisha Thomas's observations argue that lack of good diverse representation leads to people questioning their right of existence in society. If you never see yourself represented anywhere in the media as your authentic self, it is impossible to feel like your part of society. There is no space for you. You become isolated from most of the society because you do not feel welcomed (TEDxTalks, 2020).

Stuart Hall's representation theory argued that there exists no true meaning to things without mass media giving the thing in question meaning. Mass media tries to give the audience a fixed meaning of the events – the so-called truth. Anti-stereotypical approaches try as well to fix a meaning to the object of interest. We see this in our everyday life depending on what news sources we read, what media we consume, what images we perceive (Guildsborough Academy, 2019). Hall explains that traditionally the word representation is linked with things like presenting and depicting. The image of a spaceship represents the idea that something was there already, it re-presents us the idea. Everybody can't run politics, so we pick a candidate that we vote on that we feel like represents our ideas, morals, hopes and dreams (ChallengingMedia, 2007). The image gives meaning to the issue at hand. E.g., the mass population claim that the science fiction genre is male dominated, as it is mostly written by men for a male audience. The feminist movement, in this case the anti-stereotype movement, claims science fiction was originally created by a woman and has a female fanbase that has been shunned because of misogyny. Both statements can be seen as the fixed truth. You might have a very different idea on whom science fiction is written for than your neighbour or college, depending on what news channels and social media channels you personally consume. These media channels affect your opinion consciously and unconsciously.

2.2 Feminism

Before one can delve into the history and theories in gender studies and feminism, one must understand what the term feminism means. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines feminism as a belief of equality of the sexes (men and women). This is established by uplifting issues of women being oppressed by men because of the patriarchal system (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1).

Feminism cannot be defined as one set thing, as it is a complex system that has many branches from the main tree, the idea that there can exist equality between the two genders. Feminism is not only about protecting cis gendered women, but also queer, trans and nonbinary people (Johnson, 2021).

The term “feminism” should not be mixed up with the term “radical feminism”, as these two are two separate concepts. Feminism, as previously stated, has nothing to do with man hate or female dominance. Feminism believes equality between genders can be achieved and should be fought for (Johnson, 2021). Radical feminism is an ideology that believes the patriarchy needs to be destroyed and society need to be built up from scratch, while feminism want to make changes in the patriarchal social system, not destroy it completely. Destroying the patriarchy does not mean all radical feminist are man-haters. They hate the patriarchy, not the men. Neither do all men who are part of the patriarchal system hate women, but the patriarchal system does not see women as equals (Johnson, 2020).

2.3 Gender

In the twenty first century, we have started to question what the words gender and sex mean. In the past, gender and sex have been used as synonyms for each other. You are born with the female sex and female chromosomes, so you are a woman. There have also only been only two binary genders: male and female which cannot be changed. After assignment of gender, society has norms how a person of a certain gender should act and be (Gender Spectrum, 2021). Classic examples of gender norms can look like these: women are expected to be feminine in every way, act polite and be quiet. Motherhood and having a nurturing personality are also strongly linked to womanhood. Men on the other hand are expected to be the breadwinners, physically and mentally be strong and aggressive (Planned Parenthood).

There was a study done where researchers had children do different tasks while wearing costumes. The costumes were either masculine, feminine or neutral. The tested-out things like how prosocial the children were when wearing different costumes. One hypothesis was that boys wearing feminine-typed costumes would be more prosocial compared to the boys wearing masculine-typed costumes. This hypothesis was proven correct, boys wearing feminine-typed costumes were more prosocial. This proves that children absorb gender stereotypes and can

understand what does represent. A princess is a girl aka she must be helpful and considerate of others, while superheroes are boys and must be strong and aggressive (Coyne et al., 2021) If children can absorb from a young age what gender stereotypes are from mass media, it does not seem like an impossible idea, that we carry these gender norms learned from childhood into our adulthood and reflect them back into the media we consume. Women are space princesses and men are dashing rogues or astronauts because that is how it has always been.

2.4 Privilege

“That’s how privilege works. Privilege is invisible for those who have it.” (TED, 2015)

Dictionary definition of the term privilege is that a particular group or individual person has special rights, advantages or even immunities over another group of people (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1 noun). Privilege can be something you're born with like being rich or being born a certain race. E.g., George Floyd tragic death in 2019 brought to light the massive problem of police brutality targeting Black and Bipoc² communities (Peeples, 2020).

Privilege can also be acquired by things we get in life like socioeconomic status, education level and who we are associated with. E.g., Rom youth struggle in Finland to get a solid workplace because of the prejudice they face from the hegemonic group of Finland and not often being encouraged to educate themselves in the school system. Even when a young person educates themselves, they struggle to get an internship and work opportunities because of their background and assumptions that their education level is not high (Hiikamo, 2019).

In a patriarchal society, the preferred and dominating gender is the man. Men have more opportunities compared to their female counterparts simply for the fact that they are male. This would be a gender privilege. Cis men are born with this privilege (Napikoski, 2020).

² Black, Indigenous (and) People of Color

2.5 Definitions

In both feminism and science-fiction there exists a lot of terminology specific to the topic. I've created this index that catalogues a few of these terms and how they are used in this work. The following terms are used in line with related definitions in the Merriam-Webster dictionary:

- *Cisgender*: a person's sex and gender identity match. Ex. a person identifying as a woman is born with the female sex (reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes) is considered a cis woman. The opposite of cis is trans. A trans person's gender identity and sex do not match (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1).
- *Character*: in video games, a character refers to the character you the player plays and operates as. E.g., if you played a Star Wars game and you played as Yoda, your character would be Yoda (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 2a).
- *Feminism*: in this work I will be using the term "feminist" as a sociology concept, not as a political one. Feminism stands for equality for all human beings (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1).
- *Privilege*: having special rights or benefits (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1)
- *BIPOC*: Black, indigenous, (and) People of color (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1)
- *RPG*: shortening of the term 'role playing game' (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition abbreviations 2).

3 FEMINIST CINEMA THEORY

In this section I present the key theories used in the thesis.

3.1 Molly Haskell – Realistic portrayal of women

Film criticism has always been a male dominated field of work. Movies were made by men for a mostly male audience so it made sense that the movie critics would also be men. Molly Haskell was one of the first female cinema critics in 1970's Hollywood (Hollinger, 2012).

During her time as a critic, she identified one major flaw in Hollywood movies. Hollywood movies were not intended for a mixed male and female audience but for a male dominated one. She argued that the women on the screen she was watching did not represent women in real-life. The women on screen were living lives that many women in real-life has had no part in. In the 70's, society upheld very strict gender norms on what was expected from women and men alike. Women were to be wed to a breadwinner husband, they would have children and the women would stay with them at home to be the nurturing parent. Being a so-called "career-woman" was unheard of (Hollinger, 2012).

While movies are meant to partially satisfy some fantasy, we as humans have, it is hard to relate to the characters if they are living completely different lives than you are. If the character lives in a completely different reality from you, it is way harder to relate to the character's emotions and motivations. Haskell argued that this fantasy was not an accurate representation of women's lives who live in our reality, not on the screen. Most women at the time were still heavily oppressed by society's misogyny and lived with it daily. When the male directors chose to completely erase the misogyny aspect of female lives and/or fetishized these experiences as something desirable, it does not reflect accurately on women's lives (Hollinger, 2012).

While Haskell has been later criticized for being very blue eyed and naïve in her studies and reports, this is one of the starting points of feminist theory in cinema and brings up important questions on how groups are represented, how it effects the general feel if the one calling the shots does not belong to this group (Hollinger, 2012).

3.2 Laura Mulvey - Male gaze

The term "male gaze" is a famous feminist theory. It was coined by filmmaker and scholar Laura Mulvey in 1975, in her famous essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (Loreck, 2016). The Male gaze theory argues that Hollywood movies objectify women to empower men (Hollinger, 2012). Why is objectifying an issue? The term objectify means to **"to treat as an object or cause to have objective reality"** (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1). Peter Franklin argues similarly to Mulvey in her time, that sexuality is not the issue at hand. It becomes an issue when women are objectified for the public (often associated with sex) it

affects how all women are viewed from the Queen of England to your own Grandmother (Franklin, 2020). Now that we have established why objectifying is an issue, we can return to the male gaze theory. As stated, male gaze argues that Hollywood films objectify women to depower them and to empower men in the movies and in the audience. The purpose of the woman in the film is to fulfil a sexual fantasy of the man. This is known as male scopophilia. Scopophilia is the act of getting sexual pleasure from looking. Voyeurism is another issue of male gaze, which has a more secretive tone to it. The male gaze is meant to satisfy three different male lookers: the male directors, the male characters, and the male audiences (Hollinger, 2012).

3.3 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - We should all be feminist

“We should all be feminist” is the name of the famous TedTalk lead by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, which was later turned into a book. In Adichie’s speech, she points out how women are not the only ones suffering because of patriarchal society norms and misogyny, she argues that men suffer too. She uses money as an example. In her home country Nigeria, it is always expected that the man is the breadwinner and the one with money. The women are supposed to be the ones who are provided for. With this norm, what happens to the men who come from less fortunate socioeconomic backgrounds? They often turn to stealing money so they can meet these expectations of them. This is a norm that harms both women and men. They both have a set of norms that the society expects them to fit in, even if that norm does not fit the person or is not even possible for the person to do so. It is still today shocking if the man is the one who stays at home with the children and the woman goes to work, even if this would be in their situation the most logical. Adichie’s views challenge us to look at how misogyny and patriarchy harms all humans’ beings, not only women (TEDxTalks, 2013).

3.4 The Bechdel Test

The so-called “Bechdel test” was created in 1985 by the cartoon artist Alison Bechdel, whom the test has been named after. The goal of the Bechdel test is to measure how women are represented and give the audience a simple tool to look at representation in film (Wilkins, 2020).

There are three elements a movie must have to pass the Bechdel test:

- There must be a minimum of two female characters
- They must both have names
- They must talk to each other about something other than a man

These are the only three criteria's a movie must fulfil to pass the Bechdel test. The first criteria look at if there are even any female characters. Having more than one character often indicates that the character is in the movie for plot devices and not to fulfil a diversity quota. The second criteria look at how developed the female characters are. If she has no name, she is usually considered an extra character that has no weight in the overall plot development. The third and final criteria looks at the dialogue between the women. Women discuss other things than men in their lives. There are two varieties of this last criteria. This depends on how the man is defined in the context. Some argue that the man refers to the main love interest, like Herman Wilkins dose in his definition (Wilkins, 2020)., while if you look up the definitions in a dictionary like Merriam-Webster, the man is defined as any man (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1 Notes). In this thesis we will be using the second definition of the word man, that being, any man. It gives a broader meaning to the word man. Plus, not every movie, video game or TV show has a defined love interest, or the love interest is not always male.

I've chosen to use this test format for its simplicity. It is easy for me as the writer to use in my observations and analyses as it is simple to observe if the three criteria are met. It is also easy for me to present my findings accurately and honestly to the reader throughout this method. It is noteworthy, however noteworthy, that the Bechdel test is not by any means perfect. The Bechdel test gets criticized because of this very reason that it is too simple (Smith, 2017). I am aware when choosing this method that the test does not look at the movie's nuances. If we imagen a movie that is set in a monk monastery, having multiple female characters would seem out of place when looking at the movie from an authenticity perspective. The Bechdel test is by no means perfect and should be looked at with the movie's plot in forefront. "Would it make sense to have women in this movie, in context to the storyline?" is an important question to ask yourself when using this test. The Bechdel test is not judging how good or bad these pieces are, it is simply used as a meter on how women are portrayed in them when we look at things like representation, dialogue etc.

The Bechdel test was originally designed with movies in mind. However, I see no reason it cannot be used for video games. The video games I have chosen for this thesis have similar elements like movies/Tv shows: cutscenes, dialogue). The one major difference between films/Tv shows and video games is that video games are active between the cutscenes and dialogues, while movies are passive. You cannot change how the character behaves in a traditional movie whatever you do, while you can choose what your character does in a video game because they are essentially you.

The Bechdel test will be conducted and reported in this thesis the following way:

The example of the table I will use for this research can be found below named Graph 1. There the three criteria will be presented: 1) are there two female characters? is **named two female characters** 2) do they both have names? is named **names** and 3) do these two female characters discuss something other than a man between each other is named **discussion**.

If the piece of media I am observing has the required elements to fulfil the criteria in question, I will tick in the box with an **x** to indicate that the requirement of this criteria has been met. If a required element is not achieved, I will tick in the box of the criteria in question with a **-**, to indicate that the requirement has not been fulfilled. After all the criteria have been reviewed and ticked in accordingly, we can say whether the piece of media passed or failed the Bechdel test.

Each media text I observe is accompanied with a table describing how it has performed:

Table 2. The Bechdel test, example.

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
x	-	-

Media name: pass/fail

3.5 Feminism movements prior to the 1960's

In modern sociology studies we talk about the “waves of feminism” when discussing the history of feminism. You can hear terms like ‘the first, second wave of feminism’. A wave represents a specific period in the feminist movement with defining issues for that period. We are considered to currently live in the fourth wave of feminism (Rampton, 2015).

The terms “feminism” was coined in 1837 by the French philosopher, Charles Fourier. Fourier coined this term to refer to the feminine characteristics of a female character. The term feminism has evolved from the 1800 century and does not have its original meaning attached to it anymore. Today feminist means equal rights for women and men (Dictionary, 2022).

Before the feminist movement started in the 1800's, there was of course trailblazers. Some thinkers argue that feminism has its roots in Ancient Greece with Sappho, other say the roots lie in the medieval times with people like Christine de Pisan. No one can argue that people like Mary Wollstonecraft Hilgard of Bingen and Jane Austen did not share views that fought against the patriarchal society they were brought up in, even if these thoughts happened outside of an official movement (Rampton, 2015).

What was a women's position in society before feminism? By law, women were classified as a man's property. She belonged first to her father and was given to her husband when the couple got married. We can see remnants of the pre-women's suffrage movement still in modern wedding traditions. The bride's father leading her down the aisle and giving her away to her groom, soon to be husband, is a tradition from this period. The father was handing over the daughter to another man (Krueger, 2021).

An ‘ideal woman’ pre-feminism times, was a woman who was a domestic person with a strong nurturing instinct. This instinct was crucial for her to be a perfect mother to the children she would be taking care of in the future. She kept her thoughts to herself and did not voice her opinions. She was to dutifully follow her husband's vision as he knew what was best for her and their family. A woman was also not supposed to seek a higher education. Education and knowledge were reserved for men only. It would have been wasted on women, as she was not

supposed to debate or pursue a career. As women were considered property themselves, they could not own property of their own like land or a house (Brukett, 2021).

The first wave of feminist officially started in the USA in 1848 in Seneca Falls Convention, where around three hundred men and woman from all around the country came together to discuss the issue of women's rights. Together they wrote the so called "Declaration of Sentiments", which argued that it was inhumane to deny women rights to things like owning land, right to vote and labour rights simple for being born women (Dictionary, 2022).

The right to vote is so important because that's how we make changes in our society. By voting we can choose someone to have power in our government who has similar values as us. Because their choices on how to use their power will ultimately affect us. Today we have election laws that are meant to protect a fair and just election system where everyone who wants to, has a chance to express their opinion. It should not be a privilege who has a say in how things are run in their area (University of Minnesota Human Right Library, 2003).

4 FINDINGS

In this section I will present the key finding starting from the 1960's until present day. I present the analysis in a chronological manner, per decade. These are the findings used for the research portion of this thesis.

4.1 1960's – "Star Trek"

The second wave of feminism started in the 1960's. The first wave of feminism fought for women's right to be individuals separate from the men in their lives, have own lives and be who they wanted to be. The second wave of feminism was characterized by civil rights and anti-war movements. People were tired of the Vietnam war. Now that individuality had been established for women, things like sexuality and reproductive rights were the dominating issues on the table. These issues were planned to be solved with the Equal Rights Amendment (Rampton, 2015).

The second wave was coloured more with issues of women's rights connected to her individuality. Issues on the table were things like reproductive rights and sexuality. Physical beauty was another issue. To be considered a 'good woman' by society, she was expected to wear makeup and feel a need to impress those around her with her beauty. Women's beauty ideals were measured with contest formats like Miss America. This beauty was only for her husband, as it was frowned upon to be a career woman. She would eventually settle down in the domestic house life with her children and her husband (Rampton, 2015).

The 1960's was a revolutionary year for the science fiction genre. The iconic hit series Star Trek aired its pilot episode in 1966. Star Trek was the first major TV show to ever cast a BIPOC³ women in a lead role. The role of Communications Officer Lieutenant Uhura was played by actress Nichelle Nicholas. Uhura is part of the engineering team and works closely with other lead characters like Captain Kirk and Officer Spock while they explore space on the spaceship Enterprise (Hare, 2021).

Table 3 Start Trek

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Star Trek	1966	Marc Daniels	Gene Roddenberry

4.2.1 Plot

The spaceship Enterprise travels around the galaxy looking for new places to explore. On their mission they meet new people and go on all kinds of adventures. For this research I looked at episode 2: "The Man Trap", episode 7: "Mudd's Women" and episode 10: "Dagger of the mind" all from season one.

Episode 2: "The Man Trap": The Enterprise is required by Starfleet regulations to go do medical examinations on researcher Robert and Nancy Crater, who live isolated on the planet they are researching on. They work for Starfleet and Starfleet wants to know they are in good

³ Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

health, as they have no access to medical care beyond what they can provide themselves. When Captain Kirk, Doctor McCoy and crewman Darnell land on the planet, it turns out Nancy Crater and McCoy have shared history. They find Nancy, who is very happy to be reunited with McCoy. Something is off about Nancy. She appears different physically to all three men. Crewman Darnell tells Nancy she looks just like a prostitute he has spent time with on another planet. McCoy scolds Darnell for his actions and Darnell leaves to apologize to Nancy.

While McCoy is doing the examination on Robert Crater, Nancy starts screaming. The men rush off to see what's going on. Darnell has been killed. Kirk senses something is off, and the crew go back to their ship to think about the next step. They return planetside the next day, where more crewmen die. It turns out the real Nancy has been killed over a year ago. The Nancy they are seeing is an alien impersonating her. Robert Crater explains that the alien is the last of its kind and needs salt to survive. It can extract salt from anything, even human bodies. McCoy ends up killing the alien when Kirk's life is in danger.

Episode 7: “Mudd’s Women”: The Enterprise is chasing an unidentified ship. On the ship they find Harry Mudd and three beautiful women. The women are Harry Mudd's cargo, as he plans to sell them as wives on other planets. Harry Mudd is a criminal and Kirk arrests him. Simultaneously the Enterprise's lithium crystals are damaged. They need to make a detour to get new crystals. This will prolong their travels.

During this time Kirk notices the woman has a mysterious effect on the male crew. It is almost like they are hypnotized by the woman. It turns out Mudd feeds the women pills that make them seem more beautiful and magnificent. Magda and Ruth are happy with the pills and get distraught when the effects start to wear off, while the third lady, Eve, does not want to take the pills. She thinks the pills are a cheat and anyone who finds her attractive after eating them is attracted to a lie and not the real her.

The miners are visiting the Enterprise during the negotiations on the lithium crystals. During the visit, it is discovered that the lithium miners are also affected by the women's mystical allure. The situation escalates, until the lithium miners refuse to give Kirk the crystals they desperately need, if he will not give the miners the ladies. Captain Kirk refuses as he sees it is

morally incorrect to trade the women for the lithium crystals. This leads to a wating game for who will break first, Kirk or the miners.

The atmosphere is tense between the miners and the crew of the Enterprise. A fight breaks out over one of the ladies, Eve. This is the last straw for her. She rushes out of the ship with the leader of the miners. After the pills effect start to wear off, the leader of the miners is shocked how the real Eve looks. She tells him off and scolds him for falling in love with a lie. Kirk shows up and mends the situation. Eve stays on the mining planet and Kirk gets his crystals.

Episode 10: “Dagger of the mind”: a dangerous inmate beams himself up on the Enterprise, hidden in a box. The inmate is named Simon Van Gelder. He demands asylum from Tantalus, the planet from which he escaped. Captain Kirk does not promise Van Gelder anything but decides to investigate. Tantalus is known for its mental hospital. Captain Kirk requests a crew member who is specialized in psychology to join him on the mission. Doctor Mccoy sends Doctor Helen Noel with Captain Kirk. It turns out quickly that Doctor Noel and Captain Kirk have shared history.

When the duo gets to Tantalus everything seems to be in order until they find a machine called the neural neutralizer. Dr Adams, the leader of Tantalus, explains that it is an experiment gone wrong and they do not use the machine. Kirk does not believe Dr Adams' whole story, but lets it go. On the Enterprise, Spock mind melds with Van Gelder, to get an understanding of what's going on. They find out Dr Adams has been using the neural neutralizer on inmates to empty their brains of every thought, leaving only the feeling of loneliness behind. On Tantalus, Kirk and Noel decide to test out the neural neutralizer on Kirk. They find out it is much stronger than they were led to believe.

While testing the machine, Dr Adams finds them and takes both Kirk and Noel hostage, Kirk in the machine and Noel in her room. After Kirk gets a break from the neural neutralizer, he sends Noel into the ducts so she can find the main power source and cut it off. This will hopefully lower Tantalus's protection shield and get help from the Enterprise. Helen manages to cut the power and Kirk escapes the neural neutralizer. One of the workers of Tantalus manages to put on the power again while Dr Adams is in the radius of the neural neutralizer, which leads to his death.

4.2.2 Analysis

When a new female character is introduced in the Star Trek series, her depiction resembles something of a magical creature's. As the character is introduced, the camera zooms in on the woman and all other sound seems to exist, except for a joyful tune playing in the background. The camera zooms in on the woman who stands frozen in place as the camera, as the audience and the other characters can get a good look at her. It feels like the audience is meant to be shocked "oh look! A woman, in space! How shocking". This can be seen especially well in episode 10 'Dagger of mind', where McCoy talks about Dr Helen Noel as 'Dr Noel' to Kirk. When Kirk finds out Dr Noel is in fact a) a woman, and b) a woman he has slept with, he is shocked.

After it has been established that Dr Noel is in fact a woman, she becomes instantly simply Helen, not Dr Noel, Doctor or Dr Helen. Dr Noel suddenly becoming simply 'Helen', feels strange, as it is custom in American culture to address Doctors by their title (Professional Title Etiquette: When to Use Your Dr Title). We can see the opposite of Haskell's theory (Hollinger, 2012) here, as we can argue that Kirk dismisses the right etiquette to address Dr Noel with her Doctor title.

It has been research that in medicine, women get called by their first names more than men, even if etiquette and social norms demands that someone is addressed by their academic title. Kirk has no other relationship with Dr Noel, except his one-night romance with her, so he does not seem to be entitled to be familiar with her the same way he is with for example, with Dr McCoy, whom he is close friends with outside of work hours. On the other end, Dr Noel is in a disadvantage, as Kirk is her captain and her boss, putting her in a power disadvantage. She cannot demand that Kirk to use her proper title and not talk so familiar with her, as he is her commanding officer.

Names and titles are inconsistent in Star Trek. Most of the male characters get referred to by their last names, while the female characters are referred to by their first names, apart from Uhura, whose first name is Nyota, and Spock, who does not have a last name. The name does not seem to be tied to rank, as Kirk outranks everyone on the ship, him being the captain, and could technically call everyone familiarly by first name. If we look at Ngozi Adichie's

(TEDxTalks, 2013) theory, this puts a power rift between men and women, as they are not treated equally. It would make sense for Kirk to be familiar with his friends, but it is impossible for him to be close with everyone on the crew. To show that he respects his crew, he should address them by their appropriate titles and name, as he is referred to by his title as captain. The only difference the audience is shown between e.g., Uhura and Noel, is that Kirk has had a sexual relationship with Noel, which instantly puts her in a familiar category, while simultaneously Uhura is shown to have a more familiar relationship with Kirk.

While Star Trek has its moments of misogyny and clear power imbalance between the men and women, we also see clear signs of feminism. In episode 10 'Dagger of the mind', Kirk is brainwashed to believe he is in love with Dr Noel. Kirk makes multiple attempts to profess his love to her. Noel is concerned with taking advantage of Kirk, as he cannot consent in his state, he is in. She tells him multiple times that his feelings are not authentic, and this is not the real him. This is a huge step forward, as Dr Noel confirms in this scene that men can be taken advantage just as women can be.

Usually on screen, we see women as the victims of sexual harassment, unwanted sexual advances and ultimately rape. While women are statistically more likely to experience sexual violence than men (Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics, 2022), this does not mean men cannot be victims of sexual violence. On the flip side, there is a myth a man cannot be victims of sexual violence, as it goes against gender stereotypes (Men cannot be raped: the systematic silencing of male victims of sexual violence in conflict, 2017). On the contrary, 1 of 10 victims is in fact a man (Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics, 2022).

With Dr Noel being concerned of taking advantage of Kirk in his brainwashed state, she establishes that his consent is as important as hers and him being a man has nothing to do with it. We can argue that Dr Noel rejecting Kirk's advances are motivated by selfish reasons. She tells Kirk before he is brainwashed, that she would rather know his true feelings, even if they hurt her, than have him be dishonest for her benefit. As this establishes that Dr Noel values honesty. This does however not take away Noel's respect for Kirk's boundaries, and these two motives can exist in the same plane. Dr Noel's aligns with Ngozi Adichie's (TEDxTalks, 2013) theory, as it puts a man's and a woman's consent on equal ground. Dr Noel acting out on her desires for Kirk without his consent would be assault.

Another trailblazer character is Eve from episode 7 'Mudd's women'. Eve struggles with her identity, as Mudd feeds her pills to make her more attractive. Eve's desire for a good husband is authentic and something the audience is shown that she truly desires. However, the means with which she tries to achieve this, by faking her looks, makes her feel disgusted with herself. She even tells Mudd she hates him, because he makes her feel her only value is how attractive she can be and without his pills she would essentially be undesirable. When the miner who kidnapped her finds out her looks come from the pills, he is distraught as she is not as attractive as he wanted Eve to be. Eve snaps and goes on a long monologue about how the pills are a cheat. She chastises the miner for basing his desire on only looks, as there is more to women than just their beauty. She argues that if looks are the only thing you are looking for, you are not looking for a real partner, but a lie.

If a man bases his desire for a woman simply on her looks, the man does not want a real wife/woman, but a lie. We can see the progressive ideas of feminism in the 60's, when it was questioned why women should look beautiful all the time (Rampton, 2015). Eve's ideas align with Laura Mulvey's, as male gaze can be seen as a criticism of only seeing outer beauty and not who the person is inside.

When Star Trek was released in the 60's, one thing raised a lot of questions: the female crew's outfits. The men on the Enterprise are dressed in slacks and loose long-sleeved shirts. The women are in similar long-sleeved shirts (a skintight model) and a mini skirt. Many in the audience in the 60's, felt outraged by the female crew's uniforms. They argued that the uniforms were inappropriate for women to wear. Nichelle, Uhura's actor, personally reported that she felt quite uncomfortable in her costume and did not consider herself inappropriately dressed. She said that the miniskirt was a symbol for the start of women's sexual liberation. Nichelle argued that Star Trek focuses on what individual people can do, their talents and abilities. These things are in no way directed by what one wears (H&I Staff, 2017).

The miniskirt argument takes an interesting spin in the male gaze theory (Hollinger, 2012). Theoretically we can argue that the women's uniforms are sexualized by the male creators considering the entire male crew are completely covered by their uniforms. It is highly unlikely that we would see a real astronaut get ready for a five-year space mission in a mini skirt and a long-sleeved shirt.

On the other hand, the actors themselves like Nicholas argued that they felt comfortable and even liberated in their outfits. If we start categorizing what women can wear and what they cannot wear it becomes a double ended sword. Slut shaming is when society deems something like a miniskirt “dirty”. The assumption is that the person wearing these types of “dirty” clothes are easy to take to bed and crave sex. Things like “what were you wearing” or “did you provoke the other person” are questions rape victims can hear to justify the violence they have experienced, as if it should matter if you wore a mini skirt or a full-length one. As Nicholas herself said, one’s abilities should not be assumed based on outside appearances and how one decides to express oneself in things like clothing.

Nicholas herself felt very comfortable in her costumes while others were offended by her. Here we can see a clear example of the second wave of feminism: female sexuality and reproductive rights. These are topics that go hand in hand for people with the female sex, as being sexually active brings the risk of pregnancy. If your access to abortions and precautions like birth control is limited, your right to be sexually free is limited as there will be consequences you cannot escape from if something happens. Arguing that the female outfit being sexy is a negative says that being sexy is a negative. It can be argued that the women’s outfit does not seem realistic or very practical, but should it be an issue that is sexy especially if the character and actor like it? On the other hand, we have the male gaze theory arguing why is the women’s outfit sexy in the first place if not to satisfy the male audience's need for attractive women to look at. Whose experience is the right one?

4.2.3 Bechdel Test Results

Table 4. Bechdel test results – Star Trek

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
x	x	-

Star Trek: failed

These three episodes combined do not pass the Bechdel Test. While there are multiple women with names, they do not discuss anything outside of men.

4.2 1970's – “Alien”

The 1970's were considered part of the second wave of feminism. During this decade we got ground-breaking theories like the male gaze theory (Rampton, 2015). Feminism had become a known movement by the 70's and was commonly discussed in politics, media and at home. It was not only the issue of those in academics, but also the everyday people participated, as Title IX, which was to get more women to get financial aid from being good in an educational program (Napikoski, 2019).

The term “male gaze” was coined in 1975 by scholar and filmmaker Laura Mulvey in her famous essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’. The male gaze theory boils down to women being objectified in movies to serve as voyeuristic sexual pleasure for heterosexual men. Instead of her own feelings, thoughts and ambitions having any weight, she exists merely as an object for the male audience to objectify and sexualize. Male gaze doesn't only affect how female characters are portrayed as characters, but also how the female actress's body is shot. In many traditional Hollywood movies, we see a lot of camerawork that focuses on the women's body. Mulvey also points out that the women must always be seen as sexy and desirable for her to be valuable to the story. The female character lacks a storyline, she acts as a prompt for the male leads to lean on and to boost their masculinity (Loreck, 2016).

The 70's was a historical year for the movie industry. Roman Polanski is a revered director, known for his movies like *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *The Pianist* (2002). On February first, 1978, Polanski fled the USA to France while awaiting the final sentencing on the charges of him having unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor. Polanski has pleaded guilty to the charges. More allegations against Polanski from his 70's era have risen over the years, all involving women who were minors. Since then, Polanski has been living in France, as he cannot step on US soil. Hollywood is torn with the Polanski case: many judge his actions but have still worked in his movies or have argued that Polanski is an artistic genius and should not have been judged so harshly for having unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor.

Polanski's probation report described the victim as physically mature and her being willing to sex. The victim was at the time 13 years old. Polanski himself has had a clear explanation for his actions: he likes younger girls (Freeman, 2018). When he was arrested based on claims of

unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor, Polanski was shocked, as he saw no issue with him being 43 years at the time, giving alcohol and having sex with a 13-year-old. Polanski's case has gotten new heat as a biproduct of the Woody Allen and Weinstein case (Freeman, 2018).

The 1970's were a big decade for the science fiction genre. We saw movies like Star Wars: Episode IV – New Hope (1977) and Alien (1979) come out. Star Wars: Episode IV – New Hope is the first movie released in the now infamous Star Wars saga. Alien is a cult favourite in the horror genre. These movies have a very different vibe to them. Star Wars is a family centric movie that focuses on themes of justice, finding one's destiny and good vs evil. Alien on the other had taken a twist on the 'first contact with aliens' trope that is very popular in the science fiction genre.

Table 5. Alien

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year Released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Alien	1979	Ridley Scott	Dan O'Bannon

4.3.1 Plot

Alien is a cult classic in the horror science fiction genre. It follows the crew on the Nostrum spaceship. During their voyage back home from their mission, they hear a distress signal on their radar. Nostrum's Captain, Captain Dallas, decides they must investigate the signal. They track the signal down to a small, deserted planet. While the ground crew explores the planet, Kane, one of the crew members, finds a pod. Kane informs the rest of the ground crew that the pod seems to be alive. Soon after Kane is attacked by the pod and an organism latches on to his helmet. Captain Dallas and Lambert take Kane back to the ship to receive medical care.

Ripley, the main character of Alien, argues with Captain Dallas that it is not safe to bring Kane onto the ship without going through the mandatory quarantine procedures. She agrees that Kane might die but if he doesn't go through the quarantine procedure, they could all die. Captain Dallas and Ash (a crew member) ignore Ripley's warnings and go against her command and bring Kane straight onto the ship. During the physical examination, they determine that the organism latched on Kane's helmet is indeed alive. They remove the organisms successfully and Kane survives.

When the crew is celebrating Kane's recovery, he abruptly dies when one of the alien organisms' punches through his chest. The organism, named only Alien, leaves Kane's carcass, and hides on the ship. Now the mission becomes finding the Alien and killing it. One by one the Alien kills off the crew members while it physically grows. In the end, Ripley and the ship's cat Joe are the only one who survive in an epic showdown between the Alien and Ripley in the escape ship where Ripley throws the Alien out through the airlock and torches it with the heat from the thrusters.

4.3.2 Analysis

Alien's bread and butter is the atmospheric horror. The atmosphere starts off light with lots of whites, beige, soft yellow shades that give the beginning of the movie an almost ethereal feeling. The crew looks angelic as they wake up from their sleeping pods in their white outfits and almost cloud like sleeping quarters. The atmosphere gets gradually darker and more grotesque, with the progression of the Aliens growth. The Alien starts off being smaller than a human head and bone white. At the end, the Alien has become completely black and grown bigger than a human male.

Alien has two female characters, Ripley, and Lambert. In a traditional Hollywood way, Ripley and Lambert are opposites. While Ripley is cool and collected and the black sheep of the crew, Lambert is a traditional female character who succumbs the most to hysterics. She is always ready to back up the ideas of the male crew, while fighting against all of Ripley's ideas. Lambert is behaving opposite to Haskell's throaty (Hollinger, 2012), as studies show that women tend to be more comfortable working with women than with men (Qian, 2018). It would make more sense for Lambert to cling to Ripley in her anxiety over the Alien, as Ripley is the most level-headed of the crew. On the other hand, Lambert's distaste for Ripley can be a sign of internalized misogyny, where Lambert's tries to win the men's approval by putting Ripley down and elevating her own status in the crew's hierarchy in the process.

Ripley's turbulent relationship with the rest of the crew is realistic. Partially, Ripley must have a problematic relationship with the others to build suspense and to add conflict. If Captain Dallas had listened to Ripley from the very beginning when she argued that bringing Kane (and

the Alien attached to his helmet at the time) aboard the *Nostrum*, the Alien would not have had a way to enter their ship and the whole plot would not exist. The only options for the Alien to enter would have been a) the crew not knowing that the Alien had latched on to Kane or b) Captain Dallas would go against quarantine procedures and thus dooming everybody.

A horror movie needs conflict and the characters to act illogically for it to be interesting for the audience. The audience is meant to root for Ripley's survival, and this is done by making everybody else of the crew on the *Nostromo* be unkind to Ripley. The rest of the crew members consistently question and berate Ripley, even when she is the only one who has logical arguments that are not based on her emotions. E.g., Dallas acts as if Ripley wants him to kill Kane when he is infected with the Alien, while Ripley is looking out for the rest of the crew and their safety. The dynamics of the crew go against Haskell's theory (Hollinger, 2012), as it is common for women to feel ridiculed by men in male dominated fields and lower levels of support and higher chances of hostile work environments (Qian, 2018). In this sense *Alien* paints a realistic picture, as it is common for men in power to question their female colleagues (Qian, 2018).

At the climax of *Alien*, we get a what is today considered a classic example of male gaze. Ripley has just in the nick of time escaped the *Nostromo* as the ship is self-destructing, into an escape ship. Ripley thinks the nightmare is finally over and she can relax. She puts the cat, Jones, into one of the sleeping pods on the ship and decides to get changed herself. From the moment Ripley starts getting undressed, the audience gets an almost three-minute-long scene of Ripley getting undressed. These three minutes are heavily focused on Ripley's (Sigourney Weaver's) body. Ripley strip's down to a comically small shirt and underwear seem sized wrong (Hoch, 2016). Lathers (2012, page 16) argues that Ripley's nakedness is symbolic to her humanity and vulnerability, while Hoch (2016) says that the scene is awkward and off putting from the grand scheme of the movie, as it serves no purpose for the general plot. Could Ripley's vulnerability have been shown to the audience with other means than throughout ill-fitting underwear that force the audience against their will to look at Ripley through a voyeuristic lens?

While Ripley is a trailblazer for the female characters, being a strong scientist who has no issue going against the men in her crew, for the viewer it is important to see this scene and try not to

see Weaver's body as anything but an object. The viewer can clearly see what Mulvey means in her male gaze theory in *Alien*. No other character is shown as vulnerable/nude as Ripley.

4.3.2 Bechdel Test Results

Table 6. Bechdel Test results - *Alien*

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
X	X	X

Alien: pass

Alien does pass the Bechdel test. We have two female characters with names: Ripley and Lambert and they do discuss with each other something other than a man. Towards the end of the movie when Ripley, Lambert and Parker discuss their plan on killing the Alien, Ripley, and Lambert converse with each other.

4.3 1980's – “Dune”

The 1980's was a calmer decade for the feminist movement. While core issues from the second wave of feminism were still fought for, they had started to become more widely accepted and recognized by the masses as issues to take into consideration. This led to nothing major happening in the movement itself. Problems of this magnitude take time to be worked on and need a certain space so that they get dealt with properly.

In 1984 *Dune* was released. Originally *Dune* was a book series written by Frank Herbert in 1965. Herbert has won many prizes with the *Dune* saga like Nebula Award for Best Novel and Hugo Award. There are also multiple adaptations of *Dune* into film and video games. The newest movie is the 2021 adaptation directed by Denis Villeneuve. We will be looking into the original movie version from the 80's.

Table 7. *Dune*

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Dune	1984	David Lynch	Frank Herbert

4.4.1 Plot

Dune is set in a world where the most valuable substance is called “spice”. Spice has many properties: it allows safe space travel where the person does not have to move, extends lifespans and consciousness. The main character is Paul Atreides, who is the son of Lady Jessica and Duke Leto Atreides. Lady Jessica was only supposed to give birth to daughters, but she had Paul. The rivalling family is the House of Harkonnen. The plot revolves around the fight for the planet Arrakis, which is the only planet that has the famous spice.

The Atreides family controls Arrakis and the Harkonnen family tries to overthrow the Atreides family by murdering Duke Leto Atreides. After the coup, Paul Atreides and Lady Jessica must hide on Arrakis to save their lives. While they are hiding, they meet the Fremen people, the natives of Arrakis. The Fremen take Paul and Lady Jessica under their protection. In exchange Paul must teach the Fremen how to fight. In the big showdown between the Atreides and the Harkonnens, Paul is victorious in a duel to the death. When victory has been taken, it turns out Paul becomes the Kwisatz Haderach, a super soldier who will lead the Fremen.

4.4.2 Analysis

The main plot of the movie revolves around Paul and his journey to become the Kwisatz Haderach, thus all the other character’s storylines revolve around Paul, women included. Lady Jessica is connected to Paul as she is his mother, him being the son she was not supposed to have, Gaius Helen Mohiam, Lady Jessica’s mentor and the person who despises Paul the most as he was not supposed to be by her instructions, Chani, Paul’s lover, Alia, Paul’s little sister. Gaius Helen Mohiam is the character who breaks the character mould in Dune the most, as she has a stronger connection to Lady Jessica than to Paul.

In Dune we can see the effects of Mulvey’s male gaze (Hollinger, 2012). Lady Jessica, even as a concubine, represents elegance and motherhood. The audiences and the characters see her

in various regal outfits that are modest. There is great focus on her maternal side, as she dotes on her two children. Gaius Helen Mohiam seems like the ultimate product of anti-male gaze.

Gaius Helen Mohiam has a shaved head and is clearly older than Lady Jessica, a more spiritual character. She's the one who chastises Lady Jessica the most for going against the Bene Gesserit breeding program. She raises her voice many times when arguing with Lady Jessica. Gaius Helen Mohiam is the opposite of Lady Jessica. Gaius Helen Mohiam represents the traditional side, a religious older lady who looks vice with the combination of her shaved head, age and covered clothing that looks like something a space nun might wear. Lady Jessica is the youthful opposite, who's soft and loving. She becomes more powerful during the progress of the movie, but never lets her loving heart harden. These two represent two sides of the same coin, while never becoming as petty as Lambert in Alien.

Dune aligns with Haskell's theory (Hollinger 2012), as the women do not have any storylines of their own. They simply exist as extensions of Paul and his journey, guiding and supporting him but never becoming alive as independent characters. The women do not have any motivations beyond wanting to either help Paul or stop him. This makes the characters seem hollow and two dimensional. If Paul ceased to exist, so would these women also.

4.4.3 Bechdel Test Results

Table 8. Bechdel Test results - Dune

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
x	x	-

Dune: fail

The 1984's Dune does not pass the Bechdel test. While there are multiple female characters in the story with names, they all discuss between each of Paul. Paul is the main character and the backbone of the story. In the beginning the discussion revolves around why Lady Jessica should not have had Paul and how his birth has doomed them all. As the movie moves forward, the focus shifts to what Paul could be, a beacon of hope.

4.4 1990's – “Star Wars Episode 1”

1990's saw the birth of the third wave of feminism. The feminist of the third wave were privileged due to the work that the first and second wave had done for them. The first and second wave had focused on things we would today consider closer to basic human rights, like the right to vote and the option of choosing your own path in life. 90's feminism forced on redefining what women were. She was neither prudish nor easy. She could be powerful and in control, speak her mind and be respected. Feminist wanted to take back language. Change concepts that had been used as slurs into something that one could be proud of (Rampton, 2015). 90's feminism was the most inclusive time in its history. The main issues of feminism were not anymore only the problems plaguing the hegemonic female group, white women. In the 90's BIPOC women were allowed their space in the feminist movement (Rampton, 2015).

Star Wars Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace is the first part of the prequel series. This trilogy takes place before the original trilogy and explains the set up for the original theology. We will be looking into the first part of this trilogy.

Table 9. Star Wars Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Star Wars Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace	1999	George Lucas	George Lucas

4.5.1 Plot

The movie starts with the Federation trying to seize control of a small planet Naboo, as a protest the tax trade. The Galactic sends two Jedi knights, Qui-Gon Jinn and his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi, to solve the situation. The negotiations go sideways from the beginning and the Jedi must escape Naboo with Naboo's Queen, Queen Amidala, and her entourage.

The ship they are escaping in is damaged during their getaway and needs spare parts. They land on the planet Tatooine, a no-man's land where there is no government and only the strongest survive. Qui-Gon and Queen Amidala's handmaiden Padme leave to go find the parts while the rest stay and guard the ship. They find Watto, a ship part dealer. Watto refuses to make

any trade with Qui-Gon, as they do not have anything they could trade the parts for, as there is no currency on Tatooine except useful objects.

While trying to figure out how they will get Wattoon to trade with them, a sandstorm hits Tatooine. Anakin Skywalker, Wattoon's slave, invites Qui-Gon and Padme to come over to his house and wait out the storm. Qui-Gon can instantly tell there is something special about Anakin. While waiting for the storm to pass, the group continues to plot. Anakin offers to race in the pod driving race if they can get Wattoon to bet the pieces on the race. The only problem is that Qui-Gon must sign Anakin up for the race, as Wattoon will never do it. Shmi, Anakin's mother, forbids her son from entering the races in fear for his life. Qui-Gon convinces her to change her mind after confirming with her that Anakin is indeed a Jedi. His aim is to take Anakin elsewhere to live a better life where he can live as a Jedi knight instead of a mere scrap slave.

Qui-Gon strikes a bet with Wattoon for the parts and for Anakin's freedom. Wattoon has a gambling addiction and cannot resist when Qui-Gon bets his whole ship and crew into the race. Anakin faces many challenges in the race but comes out victorious in the end.

Anakin says goodbye to his mother and the crew leaves Tatooine to travel to Coruscant, the capital.

After their arrival, the Jedi will plead their case to let Anakin join the Order, and Queen Amidala seeks help for Naboo.

The Jedi council does not want Anakin to join because he is too old, even if he shows signs of being Force-touched. Qui-Gon argues that Anakin could be the Jedi who has been prophesied to bring balance to the Force. Anakin is allowed to become Qui-Gon's new apprentice, but Yoda warns Qui-Gon that there is a great risk of succumbing to darkness. Simultaneously, Queen Amidala's pleas for help do not fare well, as she finds only corruption in the ranks of people looking to grab power. She decides finally she has had enough and decides to go back to Naboo to her people.

The Jedi are sent to investigate the rumours on the Sith returning, the agents of Darkness, whom the Jedi Order has thought to be gone for a millennium. They join up again with the Queen's

entourage and they leave Coruscant to go back to Naboo. The crew go to the Gungans to plead for help. Padme reveals to the Gungans that she is the Queen of Naboo and Amidala her trusted body double. The Gungans agree to help them in their fight against the Federation.

While the Naboo and the Gungans are fighting against the Federation, Darth Maul, the Sith they have been tracking, attacks Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan. Qui-Gon loses his life in the fight. Because of his grief, Obi-Wan is able to use the Force on his fallen master's lightsabre, the Jedi's weapon, and defeats Darth Maul. Qui-Gon tells Obi-Wan to look after Anakin, as he still believes Anakin will be the one to bring balance to The Force. The Naboo and Gungans are victorious against the Federation with the help of Anakin and R2D2, a friendly droid. While peace is restored, darkness lurks in the shadows in the form of now senator Palpatine, Naboo's representative who was elected. It turns out he was Darth Maul's master, making him one with the Sith.

4.5.2 Analysis

Star Wars Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace has three distinguished female roles: Padme, Anakin's mother Shmi and Queen Amidala. Padme is young woman who is curious about the world around her, and whom the audience gets to explore the world surrounding Star Wars. Padme sometimes stumbles in her own ignorance believing everyone has the same lived experiences as her. Padme believes Shmi's and Anakin's situation is horrible, and she quickly has strong opinions opposing slavery. When arguing her point, Padme claims that if the Galactic Order was on planet Tatooine working as a government, things would be better.

Shmi tells of Padme, that things are different on Tatooine, as there is no government to protect the weak and bringing in the Galactic Order would not solve the issue at hand. Shmi's storyline of being a single mother goes against Haskell's theory (Hollinger, 2012). Single parenting, as anything is an individual experience, however Shmi's story is a relatable one. Shmi must work extra hard to protect Anakin, leading to Anakin having to spend a lot of time alone, as she does not have the time to spare for him, being a single parent. It is clear Shmi loves her son a great deal, and makes the ultimate sacrifice, staying on Tatooine and letting her son go with the Jedi. She knows he will have a better life with them than he will ever have if he stays. Shmi sacrifices her own happiness for Anakin's. Any parent can relate feeling like you would give anything for

the happiness of your children. Many parents experience having to step back from their child's life to let them pursue their dreams.

The men and women are treated quite equally in Star Wars. While the men have more action scenes in general, the women have more political struggles. They follow quite well Ngozi Adichies theory (2013), where gender does not seem to define if you can be powerful or not. However, gender does play role in whether you can be a handmaiden or Jedi. The lack of female Jedis stands out, as it is never explained why there are no female Jedis.

4.5.3 Bechdel Test Results

Table 10. Bechdel Test results - Star Wars Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
x	x	x

Star Wars, Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace: pass

Star Wars, Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace passes the Bechdel test. There are three female characters: Shmi, Padme and Queen Amidala. Padme and Shmi discuss politics, Queen Amidala tells Padme to take care of R2D2 after he saves the crew (R2D2 is categorized as a droid in this research). It is canon that droids have gendered pronouns in the Star Wars universe. However, this research sees droids as their own category, separate from the humanoid male category. If Queen Amidala had told Padme to clean up Obi-Won, it would not have counted as a pass, because Obi-Won is a human male)

4.5 2000's – “Mass Effect”

The 2000's was still part of the third wave of feminism. Professor Catherin Holston says research shows intersectionality became a strong point of feminism in the early 2000's. Individual narratives showed how different women were from each other, not just when compared to their male counterparts (Pileberg, 2018).

Table 11. *Mass Effect 1*

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Mass Effect 1	2007	Casey Hudson	Casey Hudson

4.6.1 Plot

Mass Effect is the first game in the mass effect trilogy. Humanity has unlocked the power of space travel and are taking the galaxy with leaps. The other races either implore the brave but rash humans or see them as a threat. The player plays as Commander Shepard, an extraordinary soldier. Because of Shepard's reputations, they are considered by the galactic leaders to be the first human specter (special military rank that goes over the galactic government). During Shepard's coronation, Saren, the villain of Mass Effect, alien's himself with a machine race called the Reapers. The reapers want to destroy all intelligent organisms. It's up to Shepard and her crew to save the galaxy.

4.6.2 Analysis

Mass effect is a classic rpg⁴. The player scan freely choose if they want to play as male or female Shepard. This choice affects Shepard's physical looks, voice and certain aspects of the game like certain dialogue options and whom they can enter romantic relationships with.

Female Shepard feels like a breath of fresh air. In the beginning of the game when looking for Garru's, a security guard, Shepard runs into Harkin, Garru's colleague, at the bar. Harkin tells Shepard how beautiful she is and suggests she takes a seat on his lap. The player can choose to reject him in varying ways, from a simple no to threats of bodily harm. In no instance can the player choose or be forced by the game developers to accept this kind of behaviour from Harkin. It is rare to see a female character who instantly stands up for herself. Here we can see Mulvey's male gaze (Hollinger 2012), turned the other way. Shepard sees what Harkin does, he male gazes her, and tells him this is not acceptable behaviour. By doing this she is telling Harkin, but also the players, that this kind of behaviour is not acceptable. Shepard also tells the victims of

⁴ Role-playing game

sexual harassment that it is okay to stand up for yourself and set clear boundaries that are not acceptable to cross without the person's consent.

Shepard exist in a utopic version of the universe where, according to Ngozi Adichies theories (2013), ones gender does not determine what one can be. No one questions if Shepard can get the mission done because she is a woman. The bigger issue here is her being *human*, instead of pointing out that she is not a *man*. Shepard's superior officers Hackett and Anderson never tell Shepard they wish she was a man or ridicule her opinions because she is a woman. They believe her to be professional, gender playing no role. The player gets to experience freedom of not having to constantly prove oneself just because one happens to be a woman (and not a man). The men of Mass Effect are not either put on a pedestal. They make mistakes that Shepard calls them out on, and they try to do better.

Feminism can be seen in effect especially well in female relationships. If in *Alien*, Lambert and Ripley are pitted against each other in a war of internalized misogyny, Mass effect represents an opposite view. Ashley and Shepard are both human females with varying military backgrounds. Ashley feels uncomfortable with all the aliens being free to move around the ship as they please. She feels that the presence of aliens on Normandy (the ship that primarily is aimed for humans) involves a big security risk, as she is afraid the aliens will betray them. Shepard reminds Ashley that the Normandy was in fact built in cooperation with the Turians.

Shepard tries to understand Ashley but explains also that the aliens onboard are allies and must be treated with trust and respect until there is solid proof of that trust being broken. Alliances are not built on mistrust and false accusations. Ashley is still uncomfortable with the aliens, but trusts Shepard judgment. She tells Shepard she trusts her judgment, and if she tells Ashley to kiss the aliens on the cheek, she will only ask which cheek. Here we can see the opposite of internalized misogyny. Ashley does not feel like she has to challenge Shepard's opinion to win points with the male crew. She cares about Shepard's opinions and trusts that Shepard has what is best for them all in mind.

4.6.3 Bechdel Test Results

Table 12. Bechdel Test results - Mass Effect 1

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
X	X	X

Mass Effect 1: pass

Mass effect does pass the Bechdel test. There are multiple women part of the crew: Liara, Ashley, Tali. They have names and Shepard can discuss multiple topics with each and everyone. Some of the topics Shepard can discuss are military training, family, religion etc. She can have similar discussions with the men on her crew.

No one tells Shepard she cannot do certain things because she's a woman. Although she is criticized by some crew members for being a human and making certain moral choices, the male version of Shepard gets equally criticized for the same issues.

4.6 2010's – "Star Trek: Into Darkness"

The 2010's is a historical period for the feminist movement. This is the decade that gave birth to terms like the MeToo movement and Weinstein effect.

Harvey Weinstein is a famous director and producer in the film industry. He's been involved in projects like Pulp Fiction (1994), The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) and Kill Bill Volume 1 (2003) and Kill Bill volume 2 (2004). On October 5th, 2017, The New York Times published an article of allegations of sexual harassment Weinstein had committed against multiple women he had worked with throughout his carrier. The sexual harassment allegedly took place over multiple decades. Weinstein had allegedly asked women he worked with to look at him when he was naked, messages and in exchange for sexual favors he would help women advance in their carrier (Kantor. Twohey, 2017).

Weinstein apologized that he had hurt any once feelings but denied any sexual harassment had happened (BBC employee, 2021).

After this article was published more women came forward with their allegations raging from sexual behaviour to rape. Weinstein kept deny that he had committed any sexual harassment. The 24th of February 2020 Harvey Weinstein was found guilty of criminal sexual act in the first degree and third-degree rape. On March 11th, 2020, Weinstein was sentenced to 23 years in prison (BBC employee, 2021).

This scandal led to a widespread movement known as the Weinstein effect where women who work in the film industry have come forward about sexual harassment they have been subjected to.

Table 13. *Star Trek: Into Darkness*

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Star Trek: Into Darkness	2013	J.J Abrahams	Roberto Orci et.al.

4.7.1 Plot

Star Trek: Into Darkness starts off with the Enterprise crew being on a mission to save an alien species from certain death because of an active volcano. During the mission Spock's life is endangered when he falls into the active volcano. Kirk makes the choice to save Spock's life, however this choice exposes the Enterprise to the alien species. This goes against Star Fleet rules. Their mission is to explore different galaxies and species, not interfere with their destiny. Spock exposes Kirk's choice to expose the Enterprise to Star, who takes the Enterprise away from Kirks, as they feel he is unfit to be a captain.

Simultaneously and again, John Harris goes rogue and kills a lot of people. After Kirk's mentor, Chris Pike, is one of John Harris's victims, Kirk gets his ship and crew back and is sent on a mission to kill Harris in Klingon space (a franchise favourite enemy spice). In Klingon, Harris surrenders himself to Kirk. John Harris is not a human, but a super soldier who has his whole crew smuggled in cry pods on Kirk's ship. Khan betrays Kirk because he hates humans and wants to destroy all species, he deems inferior to him. The movie goes from

a man hunt to a game of wits as Khan and Kirk have a battle of strategy of who has what. When Khan's ship destroys the Enterprise, Kirk sacrifices himself by exposing himself to radiation to fix the engine core. The crew is saved but Kirk dies. Spock goes after Khan for revenge, until Spock finds out Khan's blood can save Kirk.

Some of Star Trek: Into Darkness main themes are family and respect. Kirk doesn't respect his position as a captain. He enjoys being in charge and sees his crew as family but sees himself as above the rules. Rules are meant to be a bent type of situation. He's angry when he must bear the consequences for his choices. While saving Spock might seem like the morally right thing, he risks his entire crew and the alien species simultaneously only to save one man. The needs of many outweigh the needs of one. During Kirk's mission to find Khan, Kirks learn to be humble and respect his position. He does everything he can to save his crew, to the point of ultimately sacrificing himself.

4.7.2 Analysis

Star Trek: Into Darkness has two important female characters: Nyota Uhura and Carole Marcus. Uhura is a language specialist who is part of the original cast. She's in a relationship with Spock, which has hit a rocky patch as they cannot agree on Spock being ready to sacrifice himself in the volcano in the beginning of the movie. Spock wants to follow Star Fleets deceives and sees himself as replicable. Spock admits he chose not to feel fear in that moment so he would not be overcome by the sadness of losing Uhura. Uhura argues that Spock does not consider her feelings. If he were to die, it would cause her great grief and sadness. After they talk about their feelings, they come to understand each other better. They both fear losing each other.

Uhura is part of the Klingon mission as she is the only crew member who speaks Klingon. She even demands Kirk; he lets her negotiate with the Klingons when they get surrounded. She argues that he brought her on this mission because of her language skills, so let her use them. While the negotiations with the Klingons saucer quickly, Uhura is shown as a strong woman. She does not back down from the Klingons intimidation and stands up for herself when her captain tries to protect her against her will.

If we look at Uhura from the male gaze, she is a typical female character. Her outfit is the same as the one used in the original Star Trek series. This choice might have something to do with wanting to respect the original source material. Uhura's outfit on the Klingon mission is like the one once used by male crew. It looks practical and something she would have an easy time moving around in.

The large issue is Uhura herself. While she has some strong moments of arguing her skills, most of her dialogue revolves around Spock and their relationship. She is not shown discussing much else. This makes her seem more like an extension of Spock than a person herself.

Carole Marcus has a classic male gaze moment. Marcuse's identity is exposed as Admiral Marcuse's daughter (Admiral Marcus is one of the leaders of Starfleet). She's a weapons expert and explains that she snuck on board to investigate the torpedoes that were put on Kirk's ship. While discussing this, Kirk and Marcus go to Marcuse's quarters. Marcus demands Kirk turn around. Kirk turns around for a while. When he turns around to look at what Marcus is doing, she is getting changed. Marcus is offended and demands that Kirk turns back around. From a plot perspective, it makes no sense for Kirk to go to Marcuse's quarters and for her to choose this moment to change. It would be more logical for Marcus to explain to Kirk that she will go to her quarters and get changed and be back later. The viewer and Kirk are meant to find Marcuse's body desirable.

If we compare Uhura and Marcus on being a relatable character as women, they both have common issues. Uhura struggles in a relationship that lacks communication. Instead Uhura and Spock assume the other thinks one way or another. Marcus's issues have to do with her father. Marcus thinks her father has done wrong in trying to start a war, but the viewer is shown that she still cares a lot about her father. When Admiral Marcus attacks the Enterprise, Marcus calls her father and tells him she cannot see her father murdering in cold blood a ship full of innocent people.

When Admiral Marcus transports his daughter onto his ship against her will, she tells him she is ashamed to be his daughter. Later when Khan attacks Admiral Marcus' ship, Admiral Marcus only fights against Khan when he threatens his daughter. Marcus is horror struck

when Khan murders her father. While most of us never have to experience the horrors of our fathers planning mass murder on a spaceship and later getting murdered by an alien, many of us can relate to the issue of having different values than our parents. Carol Marcus and admiral Marcus clearly love and care about each other deeply as daughter and father, but their relationship is strained by admiral Marcus' need for war. Carol Marcus only wants her father to stop. Most of us have experienced having different views on issues with our family.

4.7.3 Bechdel Test Results

Table 14. Bechdel Test results - Star Trek: Into Darkness

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
X	X	-

Star Trek: Into Darkness: fail

Star Trek: Into Darkness false the Bechdel test. It does have two female characters (three if we count Christin who we find out about in conversation between Kirk and Marcus, but she's never seen on screen) with names. Uhura and Marcus do not converse once during the whole movie, even if they're on the same ship for 1/3 of the movie. This means they do not fulfil the criteria of having a female discussion with something else than men.

4.7 2020's – "Returnal"

2020 is part of the fourth wave of feminism. The year 2020 has so far been plagued by many historical events like Covid pandemic, Ukraine war etc. There has so far not yet been a defining ideal behind feminism this decade. We have seen more women in political positions of power, fighting to get equal pay in fields like sports and giving power back to identified people, especially women (UN Women, 2020).

Table 15. Returnal

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year released</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Screenplay</i>
Returnal	2021	Harry Krueger	Harry Krueger

4.8.1 Plot

Returnal is a survival RPG game. The player plays as scout Selena. Selena works for a space organization Astra. During one of her voyages, Selena's ship Helios crashes down on a deserted unknown planet. Selena survives the crash unharmed, but her ship is destroyed. Her only option is to venture out and explore the planet. While exploring, Selena discovers a badly burned body with Astra's space suite. When Selena goes to identify the body, she discovers to her horror that the serial number on the body is her own. Selena keeps on exploring the hostile planet to find answers and to find a way to get off the planet. Later, Selena uncovers audio logs made by her. The only problem is that she has no memory of ever recording these logs. The Selena on the audio log claims there is a stage between life and death where she is pulled down by vines. This action makes it so Selena cannot die. Audio log Selena calls this stage the "returnal". Selena brushes this off as some mad woman who just sounds like her. Until the real Selena dies for the first time. To her surprise she doesn't die, but like the audio log Selena claimed, gets pulled down by vines. When real Selena comes back to consciousness, she crash-lands on the planet again with Helios. It's like she is living in a loop, where only the planet changes around her. Selena's mission is now to find out what causes this loop and how she can break it.

4.8.2 Analysis

All of Returnals storyline revolves around Selena and her inner monologue. There is barely any interaction between Selena and other characters in the game. This gives the player a unique uninterrupted look into Selena as a character. Having no input from other characters limits how we can compare Selena as a character to the surrounding area and its people.

Selena is most definitely not male gazed (Hollinger, 2012). Her outfit is a standard space suite that looks easy to move in and practical for her job. She wears a helmet most of the game, as it would not make sense for her to expose herself to a hostile environment with air that most likely is not compatible with her lungs. If Sally Ride was asked what kind of makeup kit, she

would have had liked, Selena did not have one. Selena is very ‘natural’ looking through the whole game and never shows any concern for her looks beyond medical worries.

Dialogue-wise, Selena’s vocabulary is science heavy. This way the game makers are not only telling the player Selena is a professional scientist but showing it. E.g., Selena makes detailed observations about the fauna she’s discovered in the planet. Selena takes a new twist on Haskell’s theory (Hollinger, 2012). She is a realistic portrayal of a scientist, but an uncommon one in video games/films.

4.8.3 Bechdel Test Results

Table 16. Bechdel Test results – Returnal

<i>Two female characters</i>	<i>They have names</i>	<i>They discuss something else than a man</i>
-	-	-

Returnal: fail

Returnal does not pass the Bechdel test. As its solely focuses on Selena and her inner monologue, there are no other human female characters. We see Selena talk about her mother in different segments of the game, but we don’t get any interactions between these two characters in human form. This is one of those cases that shows the weaknesses of the Bechdel test. Selena does not have diverse dialogue with other characters, her inner monologue is high quality. Selena feels like a real professional character who always tries to think rationally. In many horror/explorer movies and games women are often the ones who fall into hysterics first, like Lambert in Alien. Selene feels more like Ripley, both calm and collected who use their education and skills to their advantage and do not let their feelings take over in tough situations.

5 DISCUSSION

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I have investigated feminist history and feminist theories, how these two correlates in media text that fall under the science fiction category that includes the trope of space travel/part of the plot taking place in space. In this section I discuss what the findings mean and imply.

5.1 Visual Ethnography

I've used the visual ethnography theory to conduct my observations of the media texts, as this method embraces the observers (in this case my, the writers) own biases and background and encourages the observer to rather observe natural what they pick up rather than strive for a falls "neutral" that cannot exist, as one is always bias on one way or another, especially when we look at sociological issues.

In my observations I've tried to include varying perspectives like how the women are dressed/undressed, how they speak, whom do they speak to, what topics do they discuss, what issues do they face in the stories plot, how are the women compared to the men, what kind of stereotypes can we observe. This way I hope the research is more rounded, as the issue of women being victims of misogyny or objectification goes beyond a woman being naked on screen. It's her always being the "beautiful love interest", the healer, the mother, the one character who never does anything wrong, who has no real issues of her own.

The visual ethnography theory worked well for this thesis, as it requires no previous skills from the observers beyond the capability to observe what one sees and deciphering why one sees these things.

Visual Ethnography frees the observer from trying to remove once lived experiences from once observations, as this is impossible ultimately. We cannot stop being ourselves. Someone from a completely different background will most likely observe completely different things from the very same media texts that I observed. That is the nature of observation. Complete objectivity is an illusion, as it would mean the person conducting the research would

somehow lock away their emotions and memories. This is not humanly possible. But that is the beauty and the curse of this method.

Nichelle Nicholas's mini skirt is a great example of this. Some believed her skirt was scandalous and highly inappropriate, while Nicholas herself felt sexually empowered and strong in her costume. Similarly, one observer can believe Nicholas's skirt was a clear male gaze move to sexualize her body, while another might see an empowered woman. What is the correct answer? Visual Ethnography frees use from debating which is right and which is wrong answer, as they both are depending on the observer.

5.2 Old Star Trek vs New Star Trek

'Star Trek' the original series came out in 1960's and 'Star Trek: Into Darkness' came out 2013, that's fifty years in between. Can we as the audiences see a change?

One major difference between the series and the movie that I have already touched upon is how the female characters are introduced. In the original series, when a new female character comes on screen for the first time, the camera slowly zooms in on her, and we sometimes get a happy/sexy tune playing in the background to set the mood. The women smile at the men, who are shocked at the woman being beautiful.

The audience is also supposed to be shocked "a woman in space? certainly not". After this the men go introduce themselves and the moment is over. In the movie the introductions are not as extravagant, however Marcus's first appearance feels like a montage to the female introductions from the 60's, while Uhura is introduced just like all the male characters. We can see that the introduction of characters has certainly calmed down, even if they can seem awkward and stilted at times.

Female characters are in support roles in the 1960's version and the 2013 version. There are strong female characters in the 2013 version, but they both act in support roles and their storylines revolve around a man, Uhura's around Spock, and Marcus's around her father. While both women have their moments to shine, where they defy a man's orders/whishes', they still fall into very side characters arcs. Spock and Kirk have more complex storylines

where we see both characters be in the wrong, realize they are in the wrong and make a change to become better people.

Khan, even if he is the villain of the story, has a touching motives, as he is motivated by the want to protect his species. Uhura's and Marcus moments feel minuscular beside the men. Uhura has two moments: the first one is her being upset with Spock for sacrificing himself planeside and not understanding why she would be devastated at the loss of her love aka him. The other one is when Uhura tells Kirk that he brought her on the mission because she speaks Klingon, and he should let her do her job however dangerous. Kirk sends McCoy and Spock often on life threatening missions (both McCoy and Spock go on a life-or-death mission during the course of the movie which Kirk order them on) and they do not get coddled, why should she be?

Marcus's moment is when she tells her father that the father she knows and loves would never commit mass murder on innocent people, and if he is truly going to commit the act, he is not the father she knows and loves. Many of us have been in the uncomfortable situation where you must confront and question your parents, whom you have seen since childhood as your hero's, only to realize in adulthood that they are just as human as you are, capable of making mistakes and choosing 'wrong'. Do we ignore them? Judge them in silence? Confront them head on? While most of do not have fathers who plan space mass murder and possible genocide, we can relate that to the feeling of taking the imaginative throne from under our parents. Marcuse's father makes the experience even worse when he forces Marcus on the ship against her will, saving her because she is his daughter and thus had selfish motives.

While both moments are great for the character, we do not really see any aftereffects. The same goes for Uhura's and Spock's incisal disagreement that is plotted in the very beginning of the movie. When Spock sacrifices himself for the mission, Uhura is upset with him because she felt he was selfish and did not take into consideration her feelings about his death. They argue, are cold to each other until they crack on Klingon and spill their feelings.

Spock confesses that the destruction of the Vulcan planet, his home planet, where his whole race and very own mother were killed, left such deep trauma in him that he cannot bear the idea of experiencing that kind of grief and anguish again. So, he lock's away from his feelings

(a Vulcan trait that Spock can activate as he is a human, half Vulcan) to protect himself. He knows that the idea of losing Uhura would crush him. Uhura accepts his expiation, and they make up. Later, in the final act of the movie, Kirk has one of his character growth moments, when he selflessly sacrifices himself by rushing into the radioactive core of the ship, to save his crew and prove that he is worthy of the captain title.

As Kirk is dying in the reactor core, Spock shows up to see what has happened. Kirk tells him there is no way they can save him. He confides in Spock that he is absolutely terrified of dying and asks how Spock can choose not to feel. Spock tells him that he is failing in that moment, and he does not know how to not feel. This is also a double-edged sword. On one hand, the moment itself is important. We often see men “tough it out” and choose not to feel because emotions are weakness and reserved for women as they are the feeling gender example Spock is the man who chooses not to feel while Uhura as the woman feels too much about the issue of Spock sacrificing himself for the mission at the cost of his life.

We need more positive male figures who can openly talk about their fears and worries, especially to each other. Often when men in the media have a “breakdown” it’s after a long monologue where they explain the backstory to why they behave/feel a certain way and then breakdown, usually in the arms of either their mother or female love interest.

In Star Trek: Into Darkness, we see too strong men discuss their fear of death and grief and try to comfort each other the best they can. Spock even offers the comfort of physical toughness, even if he cannot touch Kirk as he is on the other side of the glass door. Kirk puts his hand up against Spock’s hand in recognition of Spock’s efforts. Men are beings with similar feelings to women’s and should not be thought to fear these feelings. But we do not see this type of action towards Uhura, the one who was originally hurt by Spock’s lack of feelings that kick started this character arc for Spock’s character.

While Spock (and Kirk) grow as characters from this moment, Uhura does not receive the same growth. She accepts Spock’s expiation on Klingon because he chooses not to feel, and then the matter is left on its own. The plot line would have had a fuller circle if in the beginning Uhura and Spock fight because they have different views on feelings, to them meeting each other in the middle. Uhura supports Spock when he wants to go after Khan to

kill him, and she's the one to stop Spock when McCoy finds out Khan's blood is the only thing that can save Kirk. But we never see Spock accept uncomfortable feelings towards Uhura. They reach a mutual understanding on the issue of Klingon, yes, but we never see it in action.

What if Uhura was the one who went after Khan after finding out Kirk had died? Spock would have had to face the fear of losing her, as Uhura's possibilities of winning against Khan in a brawl would be highly unlikely because of Khan's super strength. This way Spock could have had a taste of how Uhura felt when he tried to sacrifice himself for the mission. He could sympathize more with her feelings and would be forced to either stay in his old ways and lock away his feelings or face his fear and admit that he is terrified that he could lose her, thus showing character growth towards Uhura also.

As the movie progresses, the issue between Uhura and Spock gets buried after their discussion on Klingon in the first third of the movie and is not touched after that. Uhura remains as a mere love interest.

Marcus starts off as a traditional female character. It is used as shock value that Dr. Marcus is in fact a woman, like how Dr. Noel's womanhood is used as shock value in the original Star Trek series. We do not get the music and slow zoom on her, but Spock and Kirk plus the audience are supposed to be supposed that the doctor could in fact be a woman and not a man. After everyone has collected their jaws, Kirk asks Marcus to sit with them because he is a infamous womanizer and cannot resist asking a beautiful woman to sit with him plus he knows this will annoy Spock. Spock reveals later that he has uncovered that Marcus is not who she claims to be and is in fact Admiral Marcuse's daughter.

When Kirk asks for her motives, she explains that she did not believe her father's explanation for the torpedoes loaded on to the Enterprise and set out to investigate herself. As they talk, they come to Marcuse's room. Instead of explaining to Kirk to wait outside while gets changed, they both enter Marcus's private room. Instead of explaining to Kirk that she wishes to change in privacy, she asks him to turn around while they talk. Kirk cannot resist the urge to speak and sees Marcus in her underwear. Marcus seems shocked and tells Kirk to turn around. Why would Marcus not ask Kirk to wait outside or at the very least explain to Kirk that she is going to get changed?

This should be something adults can communicate to each other, especially when it seems like Marcus did not in fact want to be looked at by Kirk? Does Kirk turning around when told to look away make him the bad guy for not expecting his female subordinate to strip in front of him? Or Marcus for changing in front of her superior officer? The topic about Marcuse's identity does not seem like something they could not have wanted to talk about after Marcus has changed. Kirk never tells Marcus she is under arrest for lying about her identity, so him guarding her does not seem like a possible answer. Kirk does not behave in a guarding/hostile way towards her during the conversation, mostly just curious as to why she lied about her identity. So why have her strip?

Seeing Marcus uncovered does not bring out any new plot points, nor does it have the same impact as Nicholas's miniskirt, as seeing women uncovered is not such a taboo thing. Some will slut shame a woman still today for being uncovered and acting inappropriately, but most do not put much thought in what others wear. Being comfortable as the wearer of clothes is what matters. Marcus does not seem empowered in this moment, only objectified by Kirk and the audience. We instantly assume this attractive woman must be Kirk's future love interest, as Uhura the obvious choice is already taken by his best friend. This is indeed an instant of clear male gaze, where the audience is forced to objectify Marcuse's body

So how does the original Star Trek series compare to the modern movie version? Can we as the audience see the effects of feminism in the women that the story portrays?

Star Trek the original series was a trailblazer at its time. We see many female characters, mostly love interests and side characters but they are still there. Every journey must start somewhere. Star Trek was also the first major TV show to cast a Black woman into a lead role. Just ten years before Star Trek was released, Betty White was largely ridiculed for having Arthur Duncan, a Black tap dancer, on her show 'The Betty White Show' (Campione, 2021).

Before the feminist movement, we would not have seen Nicholas in the role as Uhura, because she would not have been offered the chance to even try out.

The debate over how appropriate Nichola's skirt is a sign of the positive effects of feminism. While there will most likely always be someone who has an opinion about what is appropriate for a woman to wear and what is not, having a debate and someone disagreeing publicly, shows that there has been created a so-called safe space for this opinion to be voiced. A safe space is an environment where opinions and thoughts can be shared freely without fear of harm (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1).

Before feminism, someone, especially another woman, saying she is comfortable being a sexual being and dressing how she wants to, would have been shut down. As we have established before, women's voices were largely silenced before (aka no voting right), as she was seen as an extension of her father/husband and was not to have an opinion of her own (Rampton, 2015). It was not seen as appropriate behavior for a lady. After feminism became a large-scale movement, we see women standing up for themselves and saying no, that is not how I personally feel, and that is what matters to me. All human being, sex, and gender expression alike, should be allowed to feel comfortable in their skin, and not have outsiders ridiculing them for not fitting a norm that society has created about what a "proper person" looks like.

While one can argue that Uhura's mini skirt does not standard space fair outfit, which I would guess Sally Ride would agree with, if Nicholas felt empowered in her outfit, as a strong woman, why should we take away that? The endless debate is should fiction reflect reality? This is one of the arguments journalist Kyle Smith brings up in his article why he thinks the Bechdel Test is a poor metric for how diverse a movie is. Smith argues that a movie can be poor story quality wise and pass the test, while other movies do not pass the Bechdel Test but are great stories (Smith, 2017).

While I disagree with Smith's way of articulating himself in his article, he does bring up a fair question about reality vs fiction. We often consume media as a form of escapism, to get out of our everyday lives and be someone else. Why not a scientist specialized in language who wears a miniskirt and fights evil doers in space? I think it has a lot to do with what kind of atmosphere the piece is trying to build up. Seeing Selena from the Returnal video game in a miniskirt while she is fighting through the terrain of a hostile alien planet, would destroy the atmosphere for me. What would be the purpose of having a serious scientist woman, who is

never even seen wearing a hint of makeup during the whole game, suddenly in an impractical miniskirt that offers her no protection from the hostile planet?

Returnal has a serious atmosphere that makes you think what if this happened to me? Seeing Selena in a miniskirt would just be a wired reminder that she happens to be a woman.

Selena's whole deal (to me) seemed to be that she could be a man or a woman, her gender does not define her. What defines her is her curious mind. Uhura's character on the other hand makes more sense to be in a miniskirt. She is mostly on the ship and works in communication and other activities on the ship that do not require her to wear "practical" gear, stuff she could potentially fight in like leggings and a t-shirt. Neither of these women are "less or more" of a woman because of what they wear. They are both competent space fearers who know how to take care of themselves.

5.3 Male gazed nakedness

If Nicholas's miniskirt raised questions in the 60's, so did Ripley's undressing scene in *Alien* a decade later. Throughout the whole movie, Ripley is shown as this almost gruff, tomboy who prefers practicality over style. Then suddenly we get to see her very naked at the very end of the movie, which causes an almost whiplash effect to the audience. The audience cannot avoid feeling like a voyeur in the scene, especially when the shot is shot from the aliens' perspective, when it is hiding/sleeping on Ripley's ship.

The other side of the argument is Marie Lathers' take on the scene. In her book "Space Oddities: Women and Outer Space in Popular Film and Culture, 1960-2000" she describes Ripley's nakedness as the director's portrayal of Ripley's vulnerability in that moment. She is the sole survival who has given it her all and is laying her weapons down (Lathers, 2012, page 16). We see the woman under the armour. While Lathers does raise a good point, yes, the audience does see a much softer and more vulnerable side of Ripley in this scene.

Ross Hoach raises a good point in his blog post "Mulvey's Theory of the Male Gaze in *Alien*: Does it Hold Up?", why is Ripley in ill-fitting underwear? It's clear to the viewer that the underwear does not fit Ripley, thus looking strange and uncomfortable on her (Hoach, 2016).

The viewer also gets a close shot on Ripley's butt-crack. Does the audience truly need to see that for them to sympathize with her?

When Kirk and Spock are discussing Kirk's fear of death in *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, none of the men need to get naked for the audience to sympathize with his fear. Same thing with Paul in *Dune*, Obi-Won in *Star Trek* etc. The audience can surely sympathize with the female character without her stripping to her underwear.

Even more out of the blue is Marcuse's undressing in front of Kirk in *Star Trek: Into Darkness*. There was never no reason she could not have simply told Kirk "Could you wait outside a moment; I need to get changed?". If your superior officer will not let you change in peace, one would believe Star Fleet would like to exchange a few words with said superior officer. The scene only meaning is for Kirk, and the audience, to voyeur on Marcuse's naked body for no other reason than simply the pleasure of looking. While there is not inherently wrong with sexiness itself, Marcus goes from being the lady who sneaked onto the ship to investigate the mysterious torpedoes, to the sexy lady who the captain now has an interest in. When Khan is brought in the same movie onto the ship as a prisoner, he stays fully clothed and the only skin the audience sees is his naked forearm. Why is it important to establish Marcus as sexy but not Khan, even if they are both new characters to this movie?

5.4 Uniforms sexy?

Strippers often dress up in different uniforms like police, nurse, or firemen. While an outsider might find a uniform sexy because of what it represents or how it looks, the wearer themselves usually just find it mundane, as it is what they wear daily. The same can be said about all the women's costumes in all these media texts, especially *Star Trek*, *Dune*, *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, *Mass Effect 1* and *Returnal*, as characters in these media texts have clear uniforms at one point. While the audience might find these uniforms sexy because of their own taste or bias, the characters themselves probably think of their uniforms as just that.

While the mini skirt in *Star Trek* universe seems a bit unpractical, it is not outlandish, when we compare to characters like Kitana from *Mortal Combat* games, who runs around in a small top and booty short in a fighting game (Taguiam, 2021). As discussed before, showing of skin

can either be an act of empowerment or objectification, and not all nakedness is automatically male gazed. Just because one finds a nurse outfit sexy, does not make the outfit itself evil. It has more to do with how the character acts in the uniform, than the uniform itself. If we compare Uhura and Marcus, one we see undress, the other we do not, Uhura is seen strictly as Spock's love interest and as Kirk's translator, while Marcus becomes more of a mystical sex symbol for Kirk to pursue than an actual scientist on the team.

5.5 Changes after 1970's male gaze theory

After Mulvey's male gaze theory was published in the 1970's, the audience can see a clear shift in how the female characters are costumed. In the 1980's *Dune*, all the women are mostly covered from head to toe throughout the entire movie, except in moments where it makes sense for the character to be naked, like when Paul and Chani sleep together. Here both the characters are naked, and it makes sense for the setting that they are, so there are no power dynamic stirrups.

Gaius Helen Mohiam resembles a space nun, with her dark long dress, covered arms and even wearing a long black veil with a futuristic twist of her head being completely bald. Her bald head brings a revered sense to her character, as a wise all-knowing woman who guides Lady Jessica on her path. Lady Jessica is regal looking in her long dresses and complicated updos. We see the trend continue into the 90's in *Star Wars*, where Queen Amidala is a step up from Lady Jessica. Queen Amidala is easily recognizable, with her doll-like painted face and large dress with layers upon layers of fabric in vibrant colours and intercut designs woven into the fabric. The crown of her outfits is the hair. It is always in some geometrical shape like arcs, balls, and ovals. The audience instantly recognizes that she is someone from a higher status and not just a common peasant girl.

Padme, as she is posing as Queen Amidala's handmaiden to hide her own identity, looks like a religious pilgrimage who follows Queen Amidala, with simple long robes and head scarf in bright orange colour. When Padme is waiting for the sandstorm to pass on Tatooine with Qui-Gon, we see her in long grey robes, like Shmi, to blend in with the locals. We barely see any uncovered skin in thirty years until *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, where we see Uhura and Marcus in similar uniforms like Nicholas and the rest of the female crew wore in the 60's. This most

likely comes from Abrahams, the director of the movie, wanting to respect the original source material.

The Star Wars uniforms are well loved by the fandom, and it would not be accepted to change them. While male gaze has a tone more depth to it than just how naked is the female body is on screen, I believe this is one of the easiest for the producer to change. If the demand is to not sexualize women, cover them. While sexuality and so called “sexiness” goes beyond naked vs clothed, it is one of the easiest changes to make. Would Ripley’s undressing scene be such a popular example of male gaze if she instead of her being in a small top and underwear that show most of her behind, was in shorts and a short sleeved?

5.6 Bechdel Test

The Bechdel Test results were interesting. Out of the seven pieces of media I observed four did pass the test (Star Trek, Alien, Mass Effect 1, and Star Wars Episode 1) and three failed (Dune, Star Trek: Into Darkness and Returnal).

This is a great opportunity to show the flaws of this test. As I stated in the beginning of this thesis, I chose this method fully knowing this was no fool proof method. The Bechdel Test is simple to conduct, anyone can do it. However, because of this simplicity, it does not look at the nuances of the movie.

As I stated in my observations, Alien has a very standard male gaze moment when Ripley is undressing, however the Bechdel Test would see Alien more diverse and representing women more accurately than the game Returnal. I would disagree with this data. Selena from Returnal seems like a relatively believable character. Haskell’s theory argues that women are not shown as they are in the real world. While Selena’s situation cannot be considered normal, most do not have to survive on hostile alien planets, she seems like a utopic female character. No one wants to “dress her down” to show she can be vulnerable. This can be established by her monologues and how her voice patterns change when’ she is in distress. The player understands that Selena is in moments scared for her life, without showing an inch of her waistline or bottom. Aliens’ big vulnerability moment has a big focus on Ripley’s nakedness in front of the superior being. Would the scene have been less impactful if Ripley had been more covered? Was the impact bigger on the audience? I would argue that Selena is

a great female character who shows players that women can survive on hostile planets, fight with guns, show a wide range of emotions that they can control when needed and not show an inch on waistline, while *Alien* would argue that it is important to establish Ripley's womanhood to the audience.

It is also important to remember that the Bechdel test is very subjective. What is a "big enough" conversation for the woman to have about another topic than a man that can be considered to pass the last criteria of the Bechdel Test "two women discussing something else than a man". *Dune* was one that I struggled with. I believed *Dune* did not pass the Bechdel Test as the conversations always revolved around a man in some way (Bechdel test movie list, 2010-2017) reviewer James argues that *Dune* could consider passing these criteria as Alia tells Ramolla to tell the emperor who Alia is. I would argue that *Dune* does not pass the test having women discussing someone else than a man at this moment, because Alia demands Ramolla tell the emperor (who is a man) who she is. The emperor's knowledge of Alia's identity is the centre of this discussion. So, a man is the topic in a roundabout way. This shows that passing the Bechdel Test depends a lot on what the observer deems "enough". There also seems to be two versions of the test floating around, where one defines the man as the love interest and the other as any man. Not every movie has a love interest/not every main love interest is a man but should the piece of media pass if there is no love interest but all discussion the woman does revolves around a man, example two sisters and a mother who only ever talk about their father and brothers with each other.

Then again, while *Dune* does not pass the Bechdel Test in my opinion, I cannot say what the woman should be talking about. The whole plot of *Dune* revolves around Paul and his destiny. All the women in the movie are connected to him in one way or another, so it makes sense that they would talk about Paul. Sure, they could discuss spice or politics, but having one simple conversation with no meaning to the plot just to pass the Bechdel test would also not serve no purpose. The conversation would feel forced and nonorganic and thus being the other side of the issue.

While I would caution anyone who is interested in the Bechdel Test to research into the topic, I'm still happy I used this method. While it is a flawed method, it is simple for a beginner to

use. The categories are simple to analyse if you as the reviewer establish clearly for yourself what counts as a pass.

Especially the last category: “women talking to each other” can be interpreted differently depending if you put weight on the women talking to each other about anything other than a man or them talking about something else then the love interest. I chose the first, as the love interest does not always have to be a man/there is no love interest. For example, in Star Wars Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace, there is no clear love story. Anakin, Padme, and Queen Amidala are all children and Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon are focused on their Jedi mission and are not shown having romantic feelings for anyone. There is no love interest for the women to talk about. Should the movie pass the test if the women only talked about Qui-Gon and his mission? I do not feel like the matter is that simple. In Star Wars, even with a lack of a love interest, we see the women portray different motifs, emotions, and motivations for their actions that have nothing to do with a man. If they were stripped from these layers, we would have characters that would feel flat and hollow, even if they would never talk about a love interest, as the movie lacks one.

The Bechdel tests showed the positive effects of feminism in science fiction genre also, as majority of the test subjects passed the Bechdel test. And even the ones that did not, like *Returnal*, that had strong distinguishable female characters.

5.7 Video Games and feminism

Mass Effect 1 and *Returnal* are both single player games. While this takes away the need for social interaction that multiplayer games require (and where a lot of misogyny happens), both games feel welcoming to a female audience. The female characters feel authentic, are never made fun or made fools because of their gender. No one tells them they cannot do certain things because “it is not suitable for a woman”. Both Selena and female Shepard are treated as professionals, by other characters and the game developers.

The only misogyny we see in *Mass Effect 1* is in the beginning of the game when a side character Harkin, makes some snide remarks at female Shepard. There is no option for the player to accept this behaviour. The player can either tell Harkin to stop this behaviour and

get to the point, or that she would rather swallow acid and razor blades than sit in his lap. This is one way for the game developers to encourage the players to not accept this kind of behaviour, and that you do not have to accept this either. You have the right to stand up for yourself and tell someone of if they are making you uncomfortable. If we think back to the 1960's, it would have been unheard of to have a woman stand up for herself, even if Star Trek did start some good changes.

Sakari Hällfors wrote an article in Helsingin Sanomat under the "Mitä Nyt" section under the title "seksuaalisuutta tai seksualitointia" [sexuality or sexualization, 2022]. In this article, Hällfors discusses if the hyper sexualization of women that we see in video games is encouraging for women in real life to explore their sexuality and be comfortable in their sexual nature where they can explore this aspect of their lives throughout video games, or if the women are depicted in a sexual tone to satisfy the male audience (Hällfors, 2022), which would put video games in the male gaze category.

While exploring sexuality is important for women, it often falls into the male gaze category. Hällfors bring out the character Quote from the newest Metal Gear Phantom Pain game. Quote is seen in a bikini top and some ripped up pants while fighting bad guys in the desert sand. She is in very revealing clothing because she cannot breathe throughout her lungs because of an accident, but throughout her exposed skin. The explanation seems weak as this would not happen realistically, while other aspects of the game is set in a realistic setting. Mass effect has a similar character, Tali. Tali is a quarian, an original species of Mass Effect universe. Quarrians were driven away from their home world and live on spaceships, forever on the move. Because of their isolated lifestyle, the quarian race has developed a weakened immune system. They can get deathly ill very easily, cannot handle bacteria or even air that has been polluted by someone else breathing the same air. Because of their immune systems, quarian live in their own space suites 24/7 to keep themselves safe. The player never gets to see things like Tali's face as it would risk killing her. Tali's disability is never portrayed in a sexualized way, but neither does it take away from her femininity. Tali's design is feminism and beautiful. Her suite is mostly purple, pinks and gold with complex designs on her suite. While she is sad her immune system limits her in some aspects of life, that doesn't stop her. She is free and curious to experience life. She could even be considered a romantic. But Tali's disability is never used to make her sexy, neither does it take away her sexuality. Tali can be

romanced by male Shepard in later instalments in the series. She brings out the idea of sharing suite air with Shepard. This is done however after Shepard has been in a longer committed relationship. It's shown to the player that this is not something Tali did as an afterthought, but something she had to think about long and hard and Shepard must earn her trust that she feels safe sharing this experience with him.

Tali's condition is realistic in the space setting as anything could be possible a few hundred years in the future for an alien species vs a realistic woman fighting in an earth desert. Same goes to say for the rest of the female crew of Mass Effect. Liara, Ashley, and female Shepard all have similar space suits to the male crew, and their outfits on the spaceship Normandy are also appropriate for the environment. None of them seem forced to be sexy just to be sexy. They can all flirt and tease each other, but it feels organic and like something the characters would do. We do not get any seemingly random naked/undressing moments where we must see their bodies to establish that these are in fact women. That does not mean they do not get to explore their sexualities. Both Liara and Ashley can be romanced by Shepard.

If the player wants, they can sleep with both women. Especially Ashley, a human woman from a small space colony, is a traditional military woman. Her military background and beliefs do not take away her sexuality. She can still flirt with male Shepard or make sexual toned jokes at female Shepard.

Selena is not disabled, but her outfit makes sense for the plot. Her space suit is probably not the most comfortable to run around in for many hours on end but taking it off on a hostile planet would certainly kill her.

5.8 What the audience wants

The effects of feminism can also be seen in audience behaviour. UCL does annual research into consumer behaviour when regarding what movies are sought after. In 2021, they discovered that movies with casts that were at least 21% minority representation, were the most sought after by the age group 18-49 (Wolf, 2021).

We can see a shift in what the audience wants to see in media texts. They want more diverse casts that does not only represent the western beauty ideal or the hegemonic group. We can

assume science fiction media texts enjoy similar effects of sought-after diversity. Feminism stands for bringing equality to all people, so this is a direct effect of feminisms. Seeing media text be made more diverse and the audiences seeking them out to support this diversity.

Eternals is one of the newest MCU movies that falls into the superhero, science fiction genre. It also has the most diverse cast in all of MCU history. The feedback on Eternals falls into two categories: those who praise MCU for finally having a movie with a diverse cast, and those who argue that diversity does not make a bad movie better, like Elishama Marmon. Marmon argues that people do not care about diversity in media texts, the media texts plot just must be good (Marmon, 2021). While Marmon is right, diversity cannot carry a story on its own, dismissing the importance all together does not seem like the right step to take.

Like Thomas pointed out in her Ted talk “Why representation really matters” (TEDxTalks, 2020), when you do not see anyone on screen who even mildly represents you, or even worse only representation of some negative stereotypes, you as a person start feeling isolated and question your place in society. While for a hearing person it might not matter much if Eternals has a actual deaf person, acting as a deaf superhero, for someone who is actually deaf, this might be a big deal. That something does not affect you head on, does not mean someone else cannot be affected and feel seen. Do their feelings matter less than yours? Is their sense of being recognized less worth? While diversity itself cannot carry a plot, striving for better diversity pool in cast cannot be a bad thing. This experiment with Eternals will hopefully lead to more studios and directors opening their doors to actors, characters, storylines that do not fall into the hegemonic cis hetero narrative.

Diversity not being important is also questionable when taken into account that Eternals is banned in at least three counties because of its LGBTQ+ representation (Ritman, 2021). Is it more important to preserve sales and “the plot”, than try to make media texts that make feel everybody seen and like they have a place in this world? While media texts are not reality, we want to be seen as we are.

Stuart Halls representation theory states that mass media needs to give meaning to the thing for it to have meaning (Guildsborough Academy, 2019). If we brush of the importance of having diversity, it will never have meaning in the eyes of masses.

5.9 Has feminism effected the science fiction genre?

Feminism has had a positive effect on the science fiction genre, especially single player video games. We see more and more female leads like in Gravity (2013), Interstellar (2014), Passenger (2016), Arrival (2016). There is a clear try from the directors, game developers and such to be more respectful of female bodies and bring forth more authentic female characters. Women are not simply anymore there as the main male leads arm candy, but as respectful, strong women with complex stories and worries of their own.

The future of science fiction will incorporate the exploration of women's sexuality. Most humans are sexual beings, and this is completely natural. Showing the audience random moments of undress where the characters and audiences are supposed to find the female character attractive is not exploring sexuality. Having the women talk and express their sexual side, this is exploring it. Another important part of this is who instigates it? The women? Or are we peeping on her?

One missing thing is female villains. The villain is almost always male, which upholds the stereotype that women must always selfless and serve others around them to be "a good person". While it would be lovely if one gender was inherently always good, it is not so. Let there be more female villains in the future who put their selfies motifs before others.

5.10 Why does any of this matter?

One might ask, why does any of this matter? Is it so bad if women are portrayed in a "certain stereotypical manner?". As the Coyne, S. M., Rogers, A. (2021) research stated, children already associate inanimate objects, in this case costumes, to gender norms. This is what they have learned from the society they live in from media texts, adults, and children around them, school etc. Strong princes save the princesses. It does not seem so far-fetched to assume that adults have similar gender norms in their day-to-day lives.

Media texts feed these gender norms in adults similarly to children. If we are thought our entire lives that this one way is the only correct one to live by and everything else is wrong, we start living in societal boxes. Ngozi Adichie (TEDxTalks, 2013) touched on this topic in

her Ted talk. She talked about how men in Nigeria feel pressure to have money, as they are supposed to provide for the woman. This pressure leads many young men into a life of crime as they see no other way to get money that they are supposed to have. A man who cannot provide for his family is seen as lesser.

There exists no possibility for the woman to be the provider or even for the man and woman to earn the same amount and be equals. Similarly, Ngozi Adichie states women have a huge pressure to get married, even if she herself would be interested in focusing on career or just doesn't care for marriage. An unmarried woman is seen as lesser.

How does this all apply to science fiction? If we only see women in science fiction as love interests, support roles or even worse they are not there at all, it colours our image of the genre. That's how illusions like science fiction is written by men for men are created. A genre is not gendered to one gender or another because as we distinguished earlier, sex and gender are two different things. We need more female characters in this genre to break these stereotypes, so that future generations will say that science fiction is written by people to people. So that we can get passed using a woman's gender as shock value, to see her as an asset for the team just like any man.

It's good to remember that femininity is not the enemy of female characters. Being feminine is not a bad thing or less than compared to masculinity. Femininity is the other end of the gender expression spectrum, where masculinity is the other end of the spectrum. Femininity and masculinity are just ways to gender express. Men are not either the enemy. As Ngozi Adichie pointed out, gender norms plague both genders. There are no winners in a patriarchal society that tries to convince one that to live a good life means fitting into a box one is not meant to fit. In the future of science fiction, we need less male gazed Ripley and more Doctor Nolen concerned for Kirks right of consent, men being vulnerable with other men like Kirk and Spock and Qui-Gon and Obi-Won, be it in a platonic or romantic context, more characters like Selena, who is released from her gender box and allowed to be human and do what she is passionate about.

Femininity is not either the issue. The issue is not resolved with having characters completely erase their femininity. Femininity is the other end of gender expression, opposite of

masculinity, where a lot of grey exists between these two. Hällfors touched on this in his article *seksuaalisuutta tai seksualitointia*” [sexuality or sexualization, 2022]. The future need to let femininity and sexuality live in a harmony where femininity is not instantly male gazed or objectified when sexuality is brought up, and femininity is not associated with weakness. Feminine people have weaknesses, but so does everybody. It is not because of femininity itself, but more because of our humanity.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I looked at how feminism has affected the science fiction genre and media texts that fall under that category. The media text had to also include the trope of part of the plot happening in space. Before feminism women were seen as objects owned by her father or husband. The women had no rights of their own and heavily realized on how lenient the man in charge of her was.

After the women’s suffrage movement got women voting rights and other basic rights, we can see a change on the screen. Star Trek came out in 1960’s. The show was a trailblazer at the time, casting the first ever BIPOC woman in a main lead role, having women question the men around them and debating consent for men. However, the show is heavily weighted by male gaze as women’s gender is often used for shock value.

In 1980’s Alien we see one of modern cinnamon classic moments of male gaze, where fearsome Ripley is stripped from her armour to parade around in ill-fitting underwear that seems like a moment grabbed from another movie. In the 1980’s and 1990’s we see drastic changes, where the female characters go from being there on the screen but mostly to satisfy a male gaze, to the women fulfilling a more mystifying and maternal roles.

In the 2000’s we get video games like Mass Effect, where we see strong female protagonists and side characters who are not chained by gender roles and are free to be whomever they are.

In 2010’s we get a new spin on the original Star Trek franchise in the ‘Star Trek: Into Darkness’ adaptation. While the women are feminist, their storylines are relied strongly on the men around them. In 2020’s we get another video game, Returnal. Returnal’s protagonist

Selena is freed from traditional female stereotypes. Her first and foremost character trait is that she is a scientist, and that is what the game focuses on, not that she happens to be a woman.

Out of the seven media texts, four passed the Bechdel Test (1960's: Star Trek, 1970's: Alien, 1990's: Star Wars Episode 1 – Phantom Menace and 2000's: Mass Effect 1). While the Bechdel test is an easy tool to use, as it requires the media text to fulfil three requests: 1. there must be more than one female character, 2.

My research question was: *How are feminist theories reflected in Science Fiction media texts from the 1960's until today?* We can absolutely see how feminist theories have affected media texts in the science fiction genre. Mulvey's male gaze theory has had a lot of impact, as it is one of the most famous once today. We start in the 1960's Star Trek where women's gender is used as shock value, to 2020's Returnal, where Selenas gender is a secondary characteristic to her character. Molly Haskell's theory was before it's time, as discussion on intersectionality was not yet a recognized concept. It is impossible for a character to represent all women, as each one is her own person. However, it can be argued that throughout history of science fiction, female characters have always been brave and most of them have been trailblazers for future change. Stuart Hall's representation theory can be argued to hold true in the question can we see feminist theories reflected in Science Fiction? As mass media has given more value to women's suffrage and the issue of misogyny, so have things improved on screen. While misogyny still exists in the 2020's, it is not as blatantly obvious anymore. Steps have been taken forward. A big thanks goes to the fight women did in the 1960's and continued to fight. With more mass media coverage, more people have become aware of gender inequality and want to make changes. Now the female character is no longer just the love interest, she can be the main character with no love interest of her own. Ngozi Adichie argued that both women and men suffer under gender norms which is true. While science fiction media texts have made big leaps in freeing characters from gender stereotypes, there is still more to be done. Men can be manly and still soft, loving, and gentle and women can be strong, evil, and unloving, and still not lose their gender. Once gender is not tied to who one must be.

Claiming a genre to one gender, especially when today gender is not seen as a box but rather a spectrum, seems impossible. There have always been female characters in science fiction media texts, and there will be more in the future. Today, those characters are not there only to satisfy a man's sexual desires. She's there as her own person. Her gender can be an important part of her character that the media text can explore, or it is a minor detail that has no effect on the storyline. The important part is that female characters are not lumped together as a group anymore to be extensions of men, but their own people.

6.1 Further work

Visual Ethnography worked well for this thesis, as it embraces the observers' biases and encourages the observer to naturally observe what one does, instead of trying to force a neutral that does not exist.

There are endless possibilities for how visual ethnography can be applied to different media texts. Future study ideas: looking how femininity has affected different genres like fantasy, action, romance. Action is a genre catered to men while romance is traditionally to women. Can the observer see this, if so, how? It could be interesting to compare romance and action to each other and look like stereotypes. Other topics ideas: investigate male stereotypes, LGBTQ+ representation, BIPOC representation, Nonbinary or trans representation. One topic I excluded was the issue with AI and machine life forms. One could investigate this if you have an interest in question like what is life or what is a soul? How do we determine what is human and what is not?

Visual ethnography works well with most media text formats you could choose from. You could choose a traditional root like in this thesis, where movies and video games are looked at. You could look at only sound-based pieces like music, podcasts, dialogues. This way you focus 100% on what you hear and what you do not hear, rather than what you see. Or you could take the complete opposite and look at written pieces like novels, manga, comic books. Base your thesis question on something you have a passion for. Remember that visual ethnography does not believe in 100% no bias. You could observe a media text and have someone else look at the same text and interview them to compare what you two observed to bring forth the idea that live experiences matter/do not matter

7 SVENSKA SAMMANFATTNING

I mitt slutarbete har jag forskat kring hur feminism har påverkat science fiction-genren. Arbetet började med att jag såg en TikTok video med Marcia Belskys sång 'Proof that NASA doesn't know anything about women'. Användarna på TikTok plaformen reagerade till sångens lyrik på videorna. I sången 'Proof that NASA doesn't know anything about women' påstår Belsky att NASA skickade första amerikanska kvinnan till rymden utrustad med hundra stycken tamponger (Comedy Central Stand-Up, 2020). Detta kände konstigt till mig. Några av mänsklighetens fiffigaste människor jobbar på NASA. En hälsosam kvinna skulle inte normalt behöva hundra stycken tamponger för en veckas utfärd. Om hon inte var i bra hälsa, har jag svårt att tro att hon skulle få åka på utfärden.

Efter lite undersökning kom jag fram till detta. Sally Ride var den första amerikanska kvinnan som sickades ut på rymdfärd. Under Rides skolning, frågade en manlig ingenjör om hundra stycken tamponger skulle räcka för en veckas utfärd. Ride tackade nej till hundra stycken tamponger och sade att han skulle kunna skära ner mängden av tamponger med hälften och hon skulle vara bekväm hela veckan (Wright, 2002, p. 36). NASA sickade alltså inte egentligen den första kvinnan till rymden med hundra tamponger som sången påstår.

Denna undersökning fick mig att undra om det finns andra saker som påstås vara värre än de är egentligen. Belskys sång 'Proof that NASA doesn't know anything about women' är faktuelet fel, i och med att NASA inte egentligen sickade Ride till rymden med hundra tamponger.

Man talar ofta om att science fiction är en genre som skrivs av män för män, som Darren Beyer säger i sin artikel (Beyer, 2018). Men science fiction genren skapare var en kvinna, Mary Shelly, med boken Frankenstein (Mitrofanova, 2021). Frankenstein anses som den första media texten inom science fiktion genren. Hur kan en genre vara endast för ett specifikt kön? Speciellt när genren i fråga är originellt skapad av en person från det andra könet. Hur kan en genre, ett icke levande koncept, vara könsrollad?

I min undersökning ville jag undersöka hur kvinnor avbildas i science fiktion media texter. Hur har feministrörelsen påverkat vad vi ser på skärmen?

Jag tittade på media texter från 1960-talet ända fram till 2020-talet. Jag valde en mediatext per årtionde. I min undersökning går jag kort igenom vad som har hänt under det specifika årtionden på feministrörelsen fronten, sedan presenterar jag media texten för det årtiondet och ger en analys om själva berättelsen för kontext och sedan en slutlig analys vad jag såg i media texten. Slutligen gjorde jag en större

Jag använde mig av en kombination av teorier i detta arbete. Jag använde mig av *thematic analysis*, analysering av teman från olika sociolog och feminist teorier, samt en version av *visual ethnography*. Visual ethnography focuerar mera på vad tittaren naturlig ser och observera, istället för att tittaren försöker upprätthålla en falsk illusion av objektivitet (Pink, 2007) . Detta ger mig mera friheter att göra mera meningsfulla observationer av kvinnorna i mediatexterna, då fokuset ligger på det jag naturligt ser och observerar vs vad jag tror jag borde observera i namn av objektivitet.

Jag valde dessa sju media texter för mitt arbete: Star Trek (60), Alien (70), Dune (80), Star Wars Episode 1 – Phantom Menace (1999), Mass Effect 1 (2007), Star Trek: Into Darkness (2013), Returnal (2020).

Alla dessa media texter faller under så kallade audio visuella media texter. Jag ansåg att jag som en person som drabbas av dyslexi, är det bättre för mig personligen att fokusera och analysera texter var jag kan fysiskt se på skärmen vad som sker och höra, i stället för att jag skulle ha läst böcker.

Science fiction är ett brett ämne var flera olika media texter faller under. För att minska på media texter jag kunde välja från, valde jag att alla mediatexterna skulle ha med element av 'rymdfärd' inbakat in i berättelsen. Genom att ha liknande berättelseelement i mediatexterna liknar själva berättelserna mera varandra. Då är det lättare att jämföra dem sinsemellan, i och med att det finns liknelsers som kan jämföras på så sätt: i mediatext A gör man på ett sätt, medan i mediatext B gör man dessa saker olika.

Jag använde mig av dessa teorier:

1. Molly Haskell – Haskell är en av dom första filmfeminist teoretiker. Hennes teori var att kvinnor inte föreställs realistiskt på skärmen vs hurdana liv kvinnor lever i realiteten. Med Haskells teori vill jag fundera kring är kvinnornas berättelser realistiska och sådana som riktiga kvinnor kan relatera till (Hollinger, 2012).
2. Laura Muvleys – Male Gaze teori: Enligt Mulvey existerar kvinnan på skärmen alltid för att roa mannens öga. Hon finns inte där för att vara sin egen individuella person, utan för att utvidga mannens karaktär, oftast på ett sexuellt plan. Med Mulveys teori vill jag se hur vi fysiskt ser kvinnan på skärmen (Hollinger, 2012).
3. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – We Should All Be Feminist. I Ngozi Adichies TedTalk talar hon om hur kvinnor och män drabbas av social press att passa in i en viss social låda som inte är realistisk och uppfylla. Med Ngozi Adichies teori hoppas jag och jämföra hur kvinnorna ser ut på skärmen i jämförelse till männen (TEDxTalks, 2013).
4. Bechdel Test – Bechdel Testet frågar dessa tre frågor: a) finns det mera än en kvinnlig karaktär, b) har dom namn och c) talar de med varan om någonting annat än en man. Om alla tre kriterier uppfylls, kommer media texten igenom Bechdel Testet. Om inte, kommer media texten inte igenom testet. Bechdel testet vill analysera hur många kvinnor det finns i berättelsen, hurudan roll de har och vad de diskuterar om (Wilkins, 2020).

Detta arbete fokuserar på kvinnor av mänsklig bakgrund. Arbetet fokuserar på biologiska kvinnor, i och med att trans-representation är ett ämne i sig själv och är värd ett eget arbete.

I mitt arbete kom jag underfund med att feminism har haft en positiv inverkan på science fiktion genren.

Star Trek (serien) var en regelbrytare av normer för sin tid, var kvinnor fick stå upp för sig själv och karaktärer visar oro för varandras kroppsliga autonomi, vi har en bipoc kvinna i en stor roll. Dock är kvinnans kön ännu använt som ett överraskningsmoment. Karaktärerna samt tittaren ska vara chockerade när de kommer underfund med att en av karaktärerna egentligen är en kvinna.

Under 70-talet kom Laura Mulveys 'male gaze' teori ut. Samma årtionde kom den kända skräckfilmen Alien ut. I filmen finns en klar och tydlig 'male gaze' stund, var huvudpersonen Ripley klär av sig framför kameran. Tittaren får en obehaglig känsla, som man skulle titta på någonting man inte egentligen borde se. Detta är ett exempel på Mulveys male gaze teori, var tittaren tvingas objektifiera kvinnan kropp.

Efter att Mulveys teori kom ut och blev populär, ser vi en definitiv ändring i 80-talets och 90-talets media texter. Kvinnorna är fysiskt mera heltäckta med olika slags klädesplagg. I Dune (1980-talet) och Star War Episode 1: Phantom Menace (1990-talet), ser tittaren oftast kvinnorna i stora klänningar med högre kragar, långa ärmar och olika frisyrier.

2000-talet med Mass Effect 1 (2000-talet), Star Trek Into Darkness (2010-talet) och Returnal (2020-talet) ser vi kvinnor få mera meningsfulla roller, var de är sina egna personer istället för en försättning av manen.

Videospelen överraskade positivt i jämförelse till filmerna. I videospelen var kvinnorna mera fria från stereotypiska könsnormer. De får vara autentiska personer var tittaren kan se hennes personlighet skina igenom.

I framtiden hoppas jag att andra studerande tar liknande teman eller element till sina slutarbeten. I arbetet kan man klart och tydligt framföra vad man själv tänker och tror, samtidigt som man kan bli positivt överraskad över saker man kommer underfund med under undersökningsprocessen.

Några exempel på vad man skulle kunna skriva om i framtiden:

En annan genre till exempel fantasy eller skräck och hur de är kopplade med feminismen. Man kan också titta på andra ändor av spektrumet, med hur genre x spelar män eller icke-binära personer.

Man skulle kunna välja en helt annan underforsknings media som till exempel litteratur, var undersökningen tar en mera litterär form. Möjligheterna är oändliga.

Kom ihåg om du använder dig av visual ethnography som din metod, att den inte skall vara 100% objektiv. Två personer kan analysera exakt samma media text. Om de skulle intervjua varandra och jämföra vad de observerade, skulle observationerna kunna skilja stort från varandra.

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