

Fig 2: Female Sexuality and Body Image in Fashion and Fantasy Illustration.

The green figure is a representation of orcs, goblins, and similar creatures with green skin and exaggerated musculature. Female characters of these species are often illustrated wearing revealing clothing, emphasizing their impressive physique and monstrous sexual appeal.

Usually, exaggerated musculature is a masculine beauty ideal, as muscles are associated with strength, and strength is associated with patriarchal ideas of masculinity. The sexualized depictions of these fantasy creatures are simultaneously pro-and counter-patriarchal, as they present an alternative beauty ideal, in which female sexuality becomes intertwined with depictions of strength, but at the same time still reproduces women as objects for sexual pleasure.

In many ways, the fantasy genre is counter-hegemonic. It is full of unique images of for example, Tolkien female dwarves have beards. For those interested in RPGs, the gender not affect their strength or intelligence. In D&D, humans represent a single race without ethnicity or skin color. This categorization rejects the crippling ideas of race that rule the so-order of North American society.

However, there are several racist archetypes within the fantasy genre. In the Fellowship of the Ring, the alliance in some video games) are commonly composed of humans, elves, and gnomes, and are often depicted as lighter-skinned, with European accents. An explanation for this is dwarves, elves, and gnomes originating from Norse mythology.

The enemy of the alliance is the horde, commonly comprised of orcs, goblins, trolls, and other monstrous creatures. The horde is often depicted with green, black, or darker skin. In The Fellowship of the Ring, the Men of Sauron come from the South and East of Middle-earth, corresponding with Asia and Africa in the loose connection between Middle-earth geography and that of the real world" (Tolkien Gateway). There are many other instances of these ambiguously ethnocentric motifs, so much so that white supremacist "have tried to claim the professor as one of their own" (David Itaba).

In World of Warcraft, orcs, have Jamaican accents and tote stereotypical African iconography like bones through nooses, and live among Aztec and Mayan architecture (Blizzard Forum).

J. R. R. Tolkien, however, has expressed anti-xenophobic sentiments throughout his carrier, as well as enounced Hitler, Nazi beliefs, "race-doctrine", and apartheid (Tolkein). Furthermore, he rejected the idea that the Fellowship of the Ring was an allegory. Although many aspects of his work have been extrapolated from problematic ideas of the real world, the goal of Tolkien's work was to create an imaginative space free from the constraints of the real world.

Considering whether these examples might be outliers, issues of moisturization of people wearing revealing clothing, and gaze. I love the idea of fantasy something more interesting. However, if the fantastic world perpetrates racist ideologies, the imagined world can become as dangerous and unoriginal as the initial problems that evoked the escape through imagination.

The standing woman is a fashion figure. In my third year at Parsons, I took a fashion illustration class and was taught to draw fashion figures at least 10 heads tall, which is the industry standard. The average human stands at about 7 - 71/2 heads, and the heroes and heroines of comics stand at 8. Although the fashion industry is not known for realistic beauty standards and has a divisive history of editing photographs of already tall and skinny models, the complete anatomical impossibility of fashion illustration surprised me.

Before photography took over, illustrations made up the visual part of every fashion advertisement. Whether the ads were for the everyday woman or the upper echelon, these fashion figures marketed ed impossible beauty standards as achievable through purchasing a product.

Within the fashion illustration course, students were instructed to draw figures with elegance and class. Although we learned how to draw racialized features, the body type, and famous Illustrator Antonio Lopez) centered on Eurocentric standards of beauty.

In questioning what "fantasy" looks like in illustrations of women, I juxtaposed these two contrasting figures. The green figure represents a sexual fantasy, and the fashion figure is a fantasy of body and class.

These two figures have distinct differences. The green figure, standing around 8 heads tall, is more anatomically similar to a human than the fashion figure. Additionally, the demure fashion waif may feel more alien to certain women than a green-eyed ball-eating orc. On the other hand, although fashion and fantasy illustrators have traditionally been male, the fashion girl has tailored an idealized beauty specific to the female gaze, rather than an objectification to illicit sexual pleasure.

In this illustration, the fashion figure is dressed modestly, wearing glasses to represent refinement and intelligence, and bearing a cross with her fingers. Despite her differences from the scantily clad fantasy figure, she leans over in nonjudgmental curiosity. The fantasy figure, sits confidently while being observed, and eats a human eyeball. In this illustration, I aim to create a disruption or shift of the imposed gaze on these women.

The imposed gaze

Overt sexuality

Fantasy aesthetics, green skin, exaggerated musculature

Twists: African iconography

Modesty: long skirt, covered skin

Delicacy, and wealth, and class

