Gender Normativity in Historical Fusion Drama: the case of *Moon Lovers*.

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1. Introduction

#escapethecorset[1]

This hashtag was trending on Korean social media late last year. Popular among women in their twenties, this hashtag was used to challenge the ideal beauty standards that were nearly unattainable and advocated acceptance for women's varied natural appearance.[2] This movement is just one sign of resistance to existing gender norms and roles,[3] which forces women to conform to narrow definitions of femininity while at the same time create an unequal gender structure that favors men.

Gender, in this paper, is understood as a social and cultural construct that is produced through various acts of stylization, including behavior, personality, career, and appearance. Gender is usually understood in terms of either feminine or masculine, which reinforce gendered stereotypes that associate specific characteristics with a particular gender, which are different from the other gender. Society has certain expectations of how one should perform one's gender, which are called gender roles.[4] When it adheres to or reinforces ideal standards of masculinity or femininity, it is called gender normativity.[5]

Gender is learned through socialization by parents, peers, school, and media, and these formal and informal institutions reinforce gender roles and norms. In general, mass media underrepresents women and limited their representations,[6] which reinforces stereotypes and frames them as normative. This can have a negative influence on young children who form their identities based on these representations.[7] Media can be a source for alternative representation of gender, but in general, it reinforces the dominant ideology.[8]

The field of gender and media studies is diverse because there is a triangulation of media production, representation, and consumption.[9] At each level, gender influences the outcome while at

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[1] In Korean this movement is named 탈코르셋 (t'alk'orŭset).

[2] Laura Bicker, "Why Women in Korea Are Cutting 'The Corset,'" *BBC News*, December 10, 2018.

[3] 손희정, "'느낀다'라는 전쟁 미디어-정동이론의 구축과 젠더," 민족문학사연구 62 (2016): 341–65.

[4] Susan A. Basow, *Gender Stereotypes: Traditions and Alternatives* (CA, United States: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1986); Judith Auerbach, "Gender as Proxy," *Gender & Society* 13, no. 5 (1999): 581–83.

[5] "Gender Normativity," Merriam Webster, n.d.

[6] Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, ed., *Gender & Pop Culture* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014).

[7] Rebecca L. Collins, "Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Media: Where Are We and Where Should We Go?," *Sex Roles* 64 (2011): 292; Joanna Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity in Contemporary South Korean Women's Literature* (Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2010), 4.

[8] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture*, 13; Sumi Kim, "Feminist Discourse and the Hegemonic Role of Mass Media," *Feminist Media Studies* 8, no. 4 (2008): 392-4; Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of Ideology: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," in *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed. M. Gurevitch et al. (London: Methuen Publishing, 1982), 63-4.

[9] Trier-Bieniek, 14; Yun Mi Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama: Gender, Nation and the Heritage Industry" (University of St Andrews, 2011), 7; Joo, Chaug Youn 주창윤, "역사드라마의 장르와 유형변화" [Genre Categories and Changes of Histrical Drama in Korea], *Hangugŏnŏmunhwa 한국언어문화* 28 (2005): 402; Yun, Sukjin, Sangwan Park, and Yanghyun

the same time, the outcome influences conceptions of gender. Studies regarding gender and media can occur at any of levels of analysis mentioned above.[10] Scholars in this field have concerned themselves over the limited and underrepresentation of women since the 1970s and in Korean since the 1980s.[11] Associated stereotypes and their relation to genres and reception by the audience have been extensively studied. More recent scholarship focusses on female empowerment and women's differences.[12] A change within the field has been found, with female characters becoming somewhat more diverse, stronger, and non-traditional.[13] However, there are not enough studies done that examine the capacity of mainstream media in providing alternative gender constructs within the media.

In this paper, I study the case of gender representation in Korean media. Korean society at large has made great sides forward in achieving gender equality in recent decades. Women's participation in the labor force had become common practice and government policies have been instituted to ban discrimination and protect women's rights.[14] Yet, inequality persists as Korean society remains strongly patriarchal and patrilineal with men in a privileged position to women.[15] As such, women in Korean media are often represented in a way that places them being outside positions of power and in limited traditional roles relating to housewife or mother.[16]

The genres of historical fusion and fantasy are specifically well-suited for the study of women's representation in media. Historical fusion has become popular since the 2000s and is known for combining historical facts with imagination and uses modern aesthetics to appeal to a young female audience.[17] Fantasy is similarly known for combining the familiar "real" world with elements of "otherness," such as magic.[18] Both elements of imagination and otherness can open up discussion on gender and represent gender in an alternative, more open, way. It addresses a contemporary issue yet is

Kwon 윤석진, 박상완, 권양현, "한국 텔레비전 장르드라마 연구" [The Study of Korean Television Genre Drama], *Kŏnjiinmunhak 건지인문학* 18 (2017): 160.

[10] Milly Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies: Progress and Challenge in a Vibrant Research Field," *Anàlisi Quaderns de Communicació i Cultura* 50 (2014): 10-21.

[11] Buonanno, 10-21; Yeon-Joo Hong and In-Hee Cho, "A Study on the Position Changes of Female through TV Dramas: With the Heroine's Role as the Center," *The Korean Entertainment Industry Association* 6, no. 1 (2012): 27.

[12] Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies," 10-21; Kim, "Feminist Discourse and Mass Media," 393-6; Amanda Lotz, "Postfeminist Television Criticism: Rehabilitating Critical Terms and Identifying Postfeminist Attributes," *Feminist Media Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001): 105–21; Amanda Lotz, *Redisigning Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

[13] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 111.

[14] Inchoon Kim, "Developments and Characteristics of Gender Politics in South Korea: A Comparative Perspective," *Korea Observer* 43, no. 4 (2012): 557–86; Seungkyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, "Gender Mainstreaming and the Institutionalization of the Women's Movement in South Korea," *Women's Studies International Forum* 34 (2011): 390–400; Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies," 18-9.

[15] Don Baker, *Korean Spirituality* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 43; Steven H. Lee and Yun-Shik Chang, *Transformations in Twentieth Century Korea* (London: Routledge, 2006), 293.

[16] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 13-22; Hye-jin Paek, Michelle Nelson, and Alexandra Vilela, "Examination of Gender-Role Portrayals in Television Advertising Across Seven Countries," *Sex Roles* 64, no. 3 (2010): 192–207.

[17] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama."

[18] Matthais Stephan, "Do You Believe in Magic? The Potency of the Fantasy Genre," *Coolabah*, no. 18 (2016): 3–15.

not bounded by the restrictions of today's society. This allows the voice to the marginalized of contemporary society, including women, to be heard.[19]

Taking the above into account, I will analyze the historical fantasy fusion drama *Moon Lovers: Scarlet Heart Ryeo* (hereafter *Moon Lovers*) (2016). In order to study the alternative representations within mainstream media, I have decided to study how the series' representation of gender is in line with gender normativity. My research question is: *Does Moon Lovers break gender normativity*?

This study will contribute to the existing literature in several ways. First, this study addresses a gap within feminist media studies by studying how gender normativity can (or cannot) be broken in mainstream media. It might give insight into the possibility of the genres to open up to more diverse gender representations. According to Collins, positive representations of women and their place in media has received too little attention.[20] Additionally, studying the representation of gender and gender normativity in this drama might shed some light on current gender understanding and its related issues in Korea.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review that discusses the critical aspects of gender and media theory. In the first part, I discuss gender and gender in Korean society and its link to media. In the second part, I study the genres fantasy and historical fusion and the possibility of counter-discourse in media. Chapter 3 discusses the methods used for data analysis. Chapter 4 analyzes the way in *Moon Lovers* breaks gender normativity. The first part discusses the influence of genre conventions on gender construction and the other part addresses the way *Moon Lovers* challenges or reinforces various ideas about femininity and masculinity. Finally, I conclude my research and discuss the limitations of this paper and suggest further areas of study.

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[19] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 2011; Stephan, "The Potency of the Fantasy Genre."
[20] Collins, "Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Media?"

2. Literature review

2.1 Gender

Gender has a clear definition that is accepted across various fields of scholarship, yet remains a complex issue that is cause for much discussion. Gender is the "behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex,"[21] whereas sex is biologically determined.[22] Gender is "organized through (among others) culturally available symbols of femininity and masculinity.[23] Theories on gender-related to biology (born) and psychologically (triggered in childhood), but current theories focus on the role of cultural institutions and norms in the construction of gender.[24]

Gender is socially constructed and as such is learned through a process of socialization, which happens through media, family, peers, religion, education, and other forms of social interaction.[25] This leads to specific social and cultural "expectations that individuals in a given situation are expected to fulfill," which are called gender roles.[26] These gender roles describe what is accepted masculine or feminine behavior, speech, career, appearances, and so forth.[27] When "adhering to or reinforcing *ideal* standards of masculinity or femininity,"[28] it is called gender normativity. People adhere to set gender roles because acting outside the norm can lead to social punishments, including discrimination and exclusion.[29]

The publication of Judith Butler's book *Gender Trouble* in 1990 radically changed the understanding of gender. She provided evidence for understanding the interrelatedness of sex and gender and introduced the terms 'gender performativity' and 'heteronormativity.'

[21] "Gender," Merrian Webster.

[22] Basow, *Gender Stereotypes*; Catharine R. Stimpson and Gilbert Herdt, eds., *Critical Terms for the Study of Gender* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014); Catherine H. Palczewski, Victora P. DeFrancisco, and Danielle D. McGeough, *Gender in Communication: Critical Introduction*, Third (Thoasand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018), 10.

[23] Stimpson and Herdt, *Critical Terms for the Study of Gender*. Based on their analysis of Scott's work: Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, No.5 (1986): 1053-1075.

[24] Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough, *Gender in Communication,* Chapter 2.

[25] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 4.

[26] Basow, *Gender Stereotypes,* 3.

[27] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 5; John Money and Anke Ehrhardt, *Man & Women, Boy & Girl: The Differentiation and Dimorphism of Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1972), 4.

[28] "Gender Normativity."

[29] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 11-4; Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 5; Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough, *Gender in Communication,* 7; Seungsook Moon, "The Production and Subversion of Hegemonic Masculinity: Reconfiguring Gender Hierarchy in Contemporary South Korea," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 79-83.

Performativity is key to understanding the fluid and dynamic nature of gender. Some scholars use the term 'gender identity' to indicate internal awareness or identification with a specific gender.[30] However, Butler finds that "[…] gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be."[31] Alternatively, Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough state, "gender and sex is something you *do*, not something you *are*."[32] Similarly, West and Zimmerman argue that gender is performed, through interaction and display.[33] This reinforces the constructed nature of gender and Butler reconfirms that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results."[34]

This performativity is produced through practices of 'gender coherence' that entails a unity between sex, gender, and desire.[35] Central to this notion is the concept of forced heterosexuality. Forced heterosexuality is a form of gender regulation that requires "symmetrical oppositions between 'feminine' and 'masculine.'"[36] In other words, a male body with a masculine gender should direct sexual desire towards a woman in order to conform to social norms.[37] This is naturalized and restricts other forms of sexual desire and is therefore called heteronormativity.

Altogether, Butler defines gender as "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."[38] Gender is additionally shown to interlink with other factors such as class, ethnicity, nationality, and occupation and can thus change depending on context and interpersonal relations.[39]

2.1.1 Terms masculinity and femininity

Currently available language and cultural experience limits the representation of gender. According to Butler, "[…] we come to understand that what we take to be "real," what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality,"[40] because there is no gender without language.[41] To be more precise, the current language links the feminine to the masculine and gender cannot be discussed outside of masculinity and femininity, with the two places in binary opposition to

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[30] Charlene Muehlenhard and Zoe Peterson, "Distinguishing Between Sex and Gender: History, Current Conceptualizations, and Implications," *Sex Roles* 64 (2011): 791–803; Money and Ehrhardt, *The Differentiation and Dimorphism of Gender Identity,* 4.
[31] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 34.
[32] Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough, *Gender in Communication*, 14.
[33] Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender & Society*, 1987, 126-7.
[34] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 34.
[35] Ibid, 23, 31, 34.
[36] Ibid, 24.
[37] Ibid, 26, 43.
[38] Ibid, 45.
[39] Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough, *Gender in Communication,* 6-8; Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 4.
[40] Butler, xxiv.
[41] Ibid, 10.

each other.[42] If masculinity is associated with culture, mind, and lightness, then femininity is nature, body, and darkness.[43] According to Beauvoir, women are the Other, the negative of men, against which masculinity is differentiated. Similar, according to Luce Irigaray, men are seen as persons, the universal standard, which are unmarked, whereas women marked in their reference to masculinity. [44] This universality and acceptance of masculinity is part of the reason why gender is often used as a proxy for women or feminism or femininity.[45]

Gender studies try to challenge this binary system because it leads to oversimplification and stereotypes, trying to fit people into one or another category.[46] Wrightsman defines a stereotype as "a relatively rigid and oversimplified conception of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labeled with the so-called group characteristics."[47] Stereotypes are both descriptive, which tell us something about what men and women are typically thought to do, and prescriptive, which contains belief about what men and women should do.[48] These stereotypes leave little room for alternative expressions of gender.

Gradually, society progressed to accept that an individual can exhibit both masculine and feminine traits. The terms femininities and masculinities were introduced to draw attention to the highly diverse nature of gender identification. At the same time, researchers found tools to measure specific characteristics in an objective way, such as dominance, nurturing, or orientation towards self and others.[49] Scholars also use the term 'queer,' which intends to "defy all categories of culturally defined gender."[50] Thus, gender is a highly complex issue.

2.1.2 Gender in Korea

Gender in Korea is often brought into discussion with the topic of inequality. Korea continues to be strongly patriarchal and patrilineal, meaning a there is a gender system which places males higher in the hierarchy and acknowledges male descendants as family heirs.[51] Gender inequality can be found in many places, even though the government has officially banned discrimination in the workplace and created laws to protect women at home.[52]

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[42] Butler, 13-16.
[43] Stimpson and Herdt, *Critical Terms,* 5.
[44] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 13-16.
[45] Auerbach, "Gender as Proxy," 582.
[46] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture*, 4.
[47] L. S. Wrightsman, *Social Psychology* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1977), 672.
[48] Anne M. Koenig, "Comparing Prescriptive and Descriptive Gender Stereotypes about Children, Adults, and the Elderly," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2018, 2.
[49] Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough, *Gender in Communication,* 10-12.
[50] Ibid, 14.
[51] Don Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 43; Lee and Chang, *Transformations in Twentieth Century Korea*, 293; Fang-chic I. Yang, "Engaging with Korean Dramas: Discourses of Gender, Media, and Class Formation in Taiwan," *Asian Journal of Communication* 18, no. 1 (2008): 67.
[52] Kim, "Gender Politics in South Korea"; Kim and Kim, "Gender Mainstreaming."

The origins of gender inequality can be found partly in (Neo-)Confucian ideology and men's continued appropriation of its core values. [53] Confucian assumed that each person has to learn to follow a set of rules to govern their behavior in order to achieve a harmonious society.[54] The relationship between husband and wife was based on the "respect for gender differences in roles and responsibilities."[55] Husbands were to guide, and wives were to obey and support their husbands. This set the basis for patriarchy and women's subordinated position [56] and led to the public domain becoming male-dominated and the private domain becoming female-oriented.[57] At the same time, a woman was to be virtuous through being "a chaste mother able to bear sons, segregated from concerns outside the immediate family,"[58] which entailed domesticity, interiority and safeguarding the achievements of male descendants.[59] The woman's primary quality became reproductivity.

Traditional roles and inequality have been challenged in recent decades due to various societal changes starting in the late 1990s.[60] Between the 1960s and 1990s, Korea experienced rapid changes due to industrialization, urbanization, military authoritarianism, democratic reform, and social liberation. This led to a crisis of the patriarchal family and the reconstruction of gender and gender roles in Korea.[61] There was a shift from the extended to the nuclear family, from mother to wife, and a new consumer culture was on the rise which influenced gender.[62] Also, women became increasingly part of the labor force and this opened opportunities to create equal rights between male and female in Korea.[63]

At the same time, feminist movements fought for women's right to economic independence and personal autonomy.[64] Feminists cooperated closely with the government to install government policies and laws to ensure more equal gender relations, create female public positions, and ban

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[53] Joo-Hyun Cho, ed., *East Asian Gender in Transition* (Daegu, Korea: Keimyung University Press, 2013), 128; Eunkang Koh, "Gender Issues and Confucian Scriptures: Is Confucian Incompatible with Gender Equality in South Korea?," *Bulletin of SOAS* 71, no. 2 (2008): 347, 361; Yang, "Engaging with Korean Dramas," 1-2; Baker, *Korean Spirituality*; Moon, "Hegemonic Masculinity," 82.

[54] Baker, *Korean Spirituality,* 42; Heisook Kim, "Confucianism and Feminism in Korean Context," *Diogenes*, 2017, 1-7.

[55] Baker, *Korean Spirituality,* 44.
Neo-Confucian interpretation of yin and yang binaries provides a comparable basis for gender roles division. Although the original concepts of yin and yang might not have been meant to represent gender, the terms have been appropriated to imply masculinity and femininity in turn. Yang was considered superior and to achieve harmony within society, the positive masculine yang needed to negate the negative feminine yang (Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity 16-8*).

[56] Baker, *Korean Spirituality,* 44; Kim, "Confucianism and Feminism," 4; Koh, "Gender Issues and Confucian Scriptures," 346.

[57] Baker, *Korean Spirituality,* 44; Mi-Young An, "Economic Dependence and Gender Division of Household Labour in the Republic of Korea," *International Journal of Human Ecology* 12, no. 2 (2011): 51.

[58] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 18.

[59] Ibid, 18-20.

[60] Baker, *Korean Spirituality,* 43-53.

[61] Laurel Kendall, "Introduction," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 1; Haejoang Cho, "Living with Conflicting Subjectivities: Mother, Motherly Wife, and Sexy Woman in the Transition from Colonial-Modern to Postmodern Korea," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 187; Cho, *East Asian Gender in Transition,* 95; Lee and Chang, *Transformations in Twentieth Century Korea,* 305.

[62] Cho, "Living with Conflicting Subjectivities," 167-8.

[63] Seung-Kyung Kim and John Finch, "Living with Rhetoric, Living Against Rhetoric: Korean Families and the IMF Economic Crisis," *Korean Studies* 26, no. 1 (2002): 123.

[64] Kim, "Gender Politics," 559; Yang, "Engaging with Korean Dramas," 68.

discrimination. In practice, though, the government is criticized for not actively intervening in gender-biases and for promoting family and childbirth (restrictions on women).[65]

Women found new ways to express themselves and define femininity due to these social changes. They explored their individuality and autonomy through their bodies and sexual pleasure. Together with increasingly unattainable ideals of the feminine body, this added to the complexity of the feminine identity.[66] At the same time, lacking career opportunities, women redefined themselves through materialistic and status display. This shopping was a way back into the female domestic space, and consumerism became a new way to express modern femininity.[67] Some consider this to be a new form of the same old oppression.[68]

Gender inequality stems from power imbalances. Power helps establish the dominant gender hierarchy, or in other words, masculine hegemony, here meaning male domination over women in a social or political context.[69] Power becomes a tool to make women subordinate. According to Stimpson and Herdt, power is "practices of legal and familial restrictions on women's lives, […], the dismissal or silencing of women's intellectual and artistic capacity, and forced maternity and responsibility for children."[70] The current gender system in Korea maintains hegemonic masculinity through various means.

Men maintain their power and prevent women from gaining an equal position through patriarchal gender-related constraints, gender roles, and division of labor and gender discrimination.[71] In Korea, this can be seen through expectations for domestic labor and women's career opportunities. Women are expected (and still do) the majority of unpaid housework and raise children.[72] Discrimination in the workplace is commonplace, and close relationships among men limit women's career opportunities.[73]

Patriarchy is the existing system that solidifies this masculine power.[74] Han and Chun argue that the gender system in Korea is legitimized through institutional spaces of the family, military, and legal identification.[75] Regarding family, Moon finds that hegemonic masculinity is upheld by men's position as the family's breadwinner (opposed to women as dependent housewives) and distance from daily reproductive labor. The position as breadwinner provides men with domestic authority and

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[65] Kim, "Gender Politics," 549, 572.
[66] Yang, "Engaging with Korean Dramas," 68; Kim, "Feminist Discourse and Media," 398; Cho, *East Asian Gender in Transition,* 95; Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies," 20.
[67] Cho, "Living with Conflicting Subjectivities," 188; Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 25.
[68] Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies," 20.
[69] Moon, "Hegemonic Masculinity."
[70] Stimpson and Herdt, *Critical Terms,* 335.
[71] Kim, "Gender Politics," 575.
[72] Kim, 560-1; An, "Gender Division of Household Labour," 51.
[73] Louise Patterson and Brandon Walcutt, "Explanations for Continued Gender Discrimination in South Korean Workplaces," *Asia Pacific Business Review* 20, no. 1 (2014): 18–41; Kim, "Confucianism and Feminism," 4.
[74] Stimpson and Herdt, 337.
[75] JuHui Judy Han and Jennifer Jihye Chun, "Introduction: Gender and Politics in Contemporary Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 19, no. 2 (2014): 245–55.

dominance as well as patriarchal respect. The domestic tasks are left to women, as the work is indispensable but undervalue and considered unmanly and thus to be avoided.[76] Altogether, this system does not account for alternative ways of maintaining gender and limits both men and women in their gender acts.

Gender inequality is experienced differently by women due to dissimilarities across age, class, education, and employment.[77] Mainly the experience of respectively conservative and progressive women in Korea is interesting in terms of, sometimes inadvertent, support of hegemonic masculinity. Cho Joo-Hyun shows this particular difference occurs partly due to the simultaneous processes of *housewifization* and *de-housewifization*.[78]

On the one hand is a group of housewives who identify themselves through motherhood, marriage, and family. This group views the associated values, as reinvented through Confucian heritage, as tradition and maintain the gender division. On the other hand, there is a group who create a sense of self-hood through individuality. This group is often more educated and focus on a career as a form of self-empowerment and challenge traditional ideals of femininity. They dislike the current gender system because the values associated with traditional family and gender roles are limiting their chances in society.[79]

Especially this last group is discontent with gender normativity in Korea. Media play a role in maintaining the patriarchy, yet at the same time gender representation in media can provide a platform to address women's frustrations. I will now look at gender and media (representation).

2.2 Gender and media representation

Gender is learned through socialization, including through media.[80] It is essential that women are represented and portrayed diversely because people believe that it represents some form of truth.[81] Stereotypes are not just descriptive but prescribe behavior.[82] Stereotypical representation might cause young girls to internalize messages that may not be correct, and this then forms the basis of one's

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[76] Moon, "Hegemonic Masculinity."
[77] Cho, "Living with Conflicting Subjectivities,"; Kim, "Gender Politics in South Korea."
This is in line with Butler's findings (*Gender Trouble)* on the universalism of gendered experience. Butler shows women's oppression does not have a singular form because women are not a singular unit. She discredits the notion that "oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination" (p. 5).
[78] Cho, *East Asian Gender in Transition,* 98.
[79] Cho, 130-50; Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,,* 53
[80] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 112.
[81] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 14.
[82] Koenig, "Comparing Prescriptive and Descriptive Gender Stereotypes," 2; Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 301.

identity.[83] However, media representation of women, both in Korea and in the West, remains limited. Female characters remain a minority and when represented often in a negative manner as sexualized, subordinated, or stereotyped as traditionally feminine.[84]

2.2.1 Representation of gender in Korean media

In media, women are marginalized and trivialized as weak, submissive, dependent on males and helpless victims of male violence.[85] The men were portrayed as active agents of the narrative, whereas the women were supporting roles and dependent counterparts.[86] The female is considered to be immovable, static, passive, and complementary to male characters.[87] Women are punished when they take the initiative, and are marginalized from positions of power.[88] At the same time, women are valued for their bodies.[89] Gender relations may have changed since the 1990s, but the representations in media have barely.[90]

Women are still predominantly defined through their role as wife or mother, which places them in the domestic space.[91] Based on the Confucian "wise mother and good wife,"[92] female characters are portrayed as traditional women who are willing to suffer for male family, preserving amidst difficulties, morally strong, and giving unheeded good advice to husbands.[93] Filial piety remains an important concept in the dramas.[94] This leads to archetypes of female characters such as the dutiful daughter, faithfully wife, devoted mother, and sometimes also warrior woman who eventually returns to traditional roles once her exploits are over.[95]

Accordingly, Paek, Nelson, and Vilela found that women in Korean dramas are placed in roles associated with the traditional female, such as housekeeper, whereas men are professionals and office workers.[96] Jin and Jeong found only 15 out of 100 dramas focused on career or a carefree lifestyle.[97] If they had jobs, Lee and Park found their occupations were more visually pleasing and artistic yet

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[83] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 13; Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 4; Collins, "Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Media," 292.
[84] Collins, "Content Analysis of Gender Roles."
[85] Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies," 7-9; Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 105-6.
[86] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 107-10.
[87] Elfving-Hwang, 13, 22.
[88] Ibid, *Representations of Femininity,* 26.
[89] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 107, 110.
[90] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 27.
[91] Kim, "Feminist Discourse and Media," 393.
[92] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 13.
[93] Theresa Hyun, *Writing Women in Korea: Translation and Feminism in the Colonial Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 22.
[94] Myungkoo Kang and Sooah Kim, "Are Our Families Still Confucian? Representations of Family in East Asian Television Dramas," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2011): 308-9.
[95] Elfving-Hwang, 13, 22.
[96] Paek, Nelson, and Vilela, "Gender-Role Portrayals in Television," 295.
[97] Bumsub Jin and Seongjung Jeong, "The Impact of Korean Television Drama Viewership on the Social Perceptions of Single Life and Having Fewer Children in Married Life," *Asian Journal of Communication* 20, no. 1 (2010): 17–32.

provided the women with little authority and lower income.[98] Lee and Hong similarly confirm that the percentage of women in professional occupations in dramas remains much lower than that for men.[99] Career women are most often portrayed as evil antagonists.[100]

Career comes at a high price, namely the loss of women's ultimate goal: a family and children. Successful women should "have it all."[101] The best way to improving life in through a well-made marriage.[102] A good woman would be rewarded a good man, a scheming woman punished with a singleton's life.[103] Additionally, Lee and Park found that appearance, especially youth, was appreciated for women far more than professional accomplishments.[104] All characters were beautiful regardless of their role within the narrative.[105]

However, there is a rise in alternative representations. For example, families in drama have become more nuclear and single or single-parent households more present.[106] Recently there has been an increase in dramas with more diverse roles for female characters, and they are seen to pursue their dreams and overcome challenges in society, including traditional expectations.[107] These characters offer female viewers the change to possibly redefine and create new female identities, which would suit the Korean society.[108]

Thus, Korean media is full of symbols of traditional womanhood, while the shift in social understanding of gender has had some influence on representation. The next part examines more closely how Korean media incorporates gender ideologies, particularly in the context of the genres of historical fusion and fantasy.

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[98] Jiyeun Lee and Sung-yeon Park, "Women's Employment and Professional Empowerment in South Korean Dramas: A 10-Year Analysis," *Asian Journal of Communication* 25, no. 4 (2015): 393–403.

[99] Hyo Seong Lee, and Won Sik Hong 이효성, 홍원식, "드라마 속 여성 등장인물의 인구사회학적 변인에 대한 고찰: 2000 년대 초반과 2010 년대 비교" [A Comparative Study of Women's Socio-Demographics' Variables in Television Drama: Early 2000s vs. 2010s], *k'ŏmyunik'eisyŏnhakyŏngu 커뮤니케이션학 연구* 22, no. 3 (2014): 75–96.

[100] Lee and Park, "Women's Employment and Professional Empowerment," 396.

[101] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 112-5.

[102] Lee and Park, "Women's Employment and Professional Empowerment," 403.

[103] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 26.

[104] Lee and Park, "Women's Employment and Professional Empowerment," 403.

[105] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 26.

[106] GJ Park, "Familism in East Asia and Korea's Countermeasures against Low Birthrate and Aging Society," *Japanology* 26 (2007): 121–49.

[107] Kim, "Feminist Discourse and Media," 396; Yu-hee Park, "서사매체와 역사 속 여성의 허구화" [A Study On the Gender Appeared in the Historical Fiction], *Hangukkojŏnyŏsŏngmunhagyŏngu 한국고전여성문학연구* 15 (2007): 39–70.

[108] Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies," 22.

2.2.2 Genre

A genre is defined as "a series of intentions and conventions that are refined over time and respond to audience expectations."[109] These conventions mean that different genres have different freedom in and boundaries for gender representation. I will discuss this issue regarding two relevant genres: Korean historical fusion and fantasy.

2.2.2.1 Historical Fusion

Historical fusion drama is a subcategory of historical fiction drama, in Korean called *sageuk*.[110] Any drama set in the past is a *sageuk*, which makes the genre nearly all-encompassing and hard to distinguish from other genres.[111] The genre has been around since the 1960s, but since the 1990s the conventions have changed considerably, and the two types should be considered separately. The genre has become increasingly popular since 2003, partly due to the government promoting national heritage.[112]

Within the *sageuk* genre past truth/history and imagination/fiction compete with each other,[113] which Robert Burgoyne defines as the tension between 'history,' concerning historical events in the plot, and 'costume,' concerning iconography and aesthetic pleasure.[114] According to Chaug Youn Joo, the historical context is constructed in a meaningful way in order to explore contemporary societal issues or human emotions.[115] Likewise, Hwang affirms a drama "can articulate […] historicity through exploring issues of nation, identity, and gender."[116] Fusion dramas, however, do not have a stiff historical tone and recapture the lives of ordinary (unknown) people within the framework of macro-historical events.[117] This includes giving space to women, who were previously not acknowledged for their part in history as anything but passive.[118] At the same time, fusion blends modern visuals and lifestyles into the historical elements to appeal to viewers.[119] The imagination ranges from fictive

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[109] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 108.

[110] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," ii.

[111] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 4,10; Joo, "Genre Categories and Changes of Historical Drama," 402, 416; Yun, Park, and Kwon, "The Study of Korean Television Genre Drama."

[112] Joo, "Genre Categories and Changes of Historical Drama," 416; Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama"; Ik-Cheol Shin 신익철, "야담 문학의 활용과 TV 드라마 – 영화의 창조적 상상력" [Historical Story as a New Source for Creative Imagination of Television Drama and Film], *Hanguganmunhagyŏngu 한국안문학연구* 37 (2006): 337–54.

[113] Hayden White, "Historiography and Historiophoty," *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 5 (1988); Joseph Turner, *The Kinds of Historical Novel* (London: The John Hopkins Press, 1971); Joo, "Genre Categories and Changes of Historical Drama," 404-5; Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 6.

[114] Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

[115] Joo, "Genre Categories and Changes of Historical Drama," 404.

[116] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 5.

[117] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 78-82, 162; Eun-Ae Lee 이은애, "역사드라마의 '징후적 독해': 거대담론과 작은 이야기의 공존 가능성으로서의 역사 드라마" [A Signal Reading of Historical Drama: A Study of The Potential Capacity To Coexist in The Mainstream(Meta-Narratives) and Small Stories In History in Historical Drama], *Hangukmunyebip'yŏngyŏngu 한국문예비평연구* 30 (2009): 260.

[118] Mark Bould et al., *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Chapter 22.

[119] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 19.

characters and the plot, to spectator elements, including even background, historical reproduction (clothes and others) and sound.[120] Examples of modern aesthetics regarding costume and hair are shown in Appendix 1A.

2.2.2.2 Fantasy

Fantasy has been popular in Korea, especially since the 2000s.[121] However, the fantastical often remained more on the background until a spike in popularity in 2010.[122] Fantasy[123] continuously changes its boundaries, and this makes it a genre that everyone understands differently.[124] Nevertheless, it can be defined as follows:

> "Fantasy literature is fiction that offers the reader a world estranged from their own, separated by nova that are supernatural or otherwise consistent with the marvelous, and which has as its dominant tone a sense of wonder."[125]

Fantasy stands in opposition to the genre of realism, which is restricted by the boundaries of reality.[126] Fantastic worlds are based on the real, called verisimilar, to help the audience make sense of the world, but added are the nova, narrative elements that seem unreal or even impossible.[127] As standard when encountering wonder, fantasy is often presented in an optimistic overtone.[128] Some scholars criticize fantasy for lack of realism and claim that it is merely a form of escapism,[129] but this ignores the popularity of the genre and its realistic telling of the human experience, such as emotions.[130]

      Fantastical stories are often set in a historical setting, which offers familiarity to the audience and yet can be modified to suit the story's needs.[131] Fantasy focusses on the forces that created the past

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[120] Joo, "Genre Categories and Changes of Historical Drama," 404.

[121] Yu-Hee Park 박유희, "한국 환상서사의 매체 통합적 장르 논의를 위한 서설" [An Introduction for the Discussion of the Fantastic Narrative Genre based on Media Integration], *Hanminjongmunhagyŏngu 한민족문화연구* 51 (2015): 225-6.

[122] Kyung-Seon Baek 백경선, "한국 텔레비전드라마에 나타난 판타지의 유형과 의의" [A Study on the Type and Meaning of Fantasy in Korea Television Drama: Based on 2010s], *Hangukmunyebip'yŏngyŏngu 한국문예비평연구* 58 (2018): 236.

[123] Fantasy and science-fiction are very similar genres sharing many characteristics; the primary difference being science-fiction is more bound to the real through the limits of technological possibility (Stephan, 408). As such, I examine literature from both genres.

[124] Sharon Sieber, "Magical Realism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 167.

[125] Stephan, "The Potency of the Fantasy Genre," 4.

[126] Ibid, 6.

[127] Ibid, 7; J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," in *Tree and Leaf* (London: Unwin Books, 1964), 11–70; Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (London: Yale University Press, 1979); Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 167.

[128] Stephan, "The Potency of the Fantasy Genre," 6-13; Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories."

[129] Melissa Thomas, "Teaching Fantasy: Overcoming the Stigma of Fluff," *The English Journal* 92, no. 5 (2003): 62.

[130] Stephan, "The Potency of the Fantasy Genre," 7, 12-3.

[131] Ibid, 10-12.

(and by extension the future), and thus great politicians and soldiers are often the main protagonists and the stories can span centuries.[132]

This historic setting is especially relevant when studying the subgenre 'alternative history.' Through time travel, readers directly question the link between past and present and can provide alternative readings of the past. Linearity and determinism are placed into question by allowing the protagonist to act.[133] It plays into a well-known trope of the genre: prophecies.[134] With time travel to the past, a single individual has insight into the future, and this places him/her in a position of power.[135] Time travel within Korea offers the audience the chance to be proud of where they have come today and therefore encourage change in modern society.[136]

2.2.3 Resistance and counter-discourse in media

This creation of alternative worlds or moving back into the historical context opens up possibilities to discuss and challenge contemporary dominant gender ideology.[137] In her chapter on the fantastic and women's representation, Elfving-Hwang positions the "fantastic as a possibility of challenging the male-centered logic of the symbolic order through disturbing it in one way or another."[138] Although only within the bounds of the existing symbolic order, it can help understand the open-ended and complex nature of femininities.[139] In the words of Judith Butler, the fantastic open "a possibility of reverse displacement that can interrogate existing representation of the perceived real." [140] This displacement helps lay out inherent biases in a patriarchal society and create a space that is open to differences and that gives a place to marginalized voiced.[141] Fusion and fantasy can thus both address or question contemporary issues of gender through their genre conventions, which give them a place outside of realism, or in other words outside the contemporary gender discourse in Korean society.

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[132] Bould et al., *Companion to Science Fiction,* Chapter 20 and 45.

[133] Ibid.*,* Chapter 20 and 45.

[134] Kari Maund, "Reading the Fantasy Series," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 149-153.

[135] Bould et al., *Companion to Science Fiction,* Chapter 45.

[136] Yan Ma and TanSheng Lu, 중·한 시간이동 TV 드라마 비교연구 [Comparison between the characters of Time-Travel-TV-Drama in China and South Korea], *Dongainmunhak 동아인문학*(2016): 350.

[137] Stephan, "The Potency of the Fantasy Genre," 9; Bould et al., *Companion to Science Fiction,* Chapter 51; Edward James, "Tolkien, Lewis, and the Explosion of Genre Fantasy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 75; Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 168; Jack Zipes, "Why Fantasy Matters Too Much," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education,* 2009, 82.

[138] Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 10.

[139] Ibid, 10, 191.

[140] Judith Butler, "Bodies That Matter," in *Engaging with Irigaray*, ed. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, and Marageret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 158.

[141] Stephan, "The Potency of the Fantasy Genre," 6; Bould et al., *Companion to Science Fiction,* Chapter 22 and 51; Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 168.

Generally, media broadcasts and promotes the dominant ideology.[142] In the case of Korea, this still means the image of traditional womanhood and roles, as demonstrated earlier. Part of this is because producers aim to maximize financial profit and these representations, although limited, sell well.[143] Sometimes media is encouraged by government guidelines or support. For example, some groups in Korea want the government to promote marriage and child birth through limiting career dramas in order to challenge the low birth rate.[144]

Hall shows that media support the dominant ideology even when they incorporate modern resistance ideas. They do this in a way that makes these ideas compatible with the ideology but do not change the symbolic order. This wins consent, but the dominant class, here male, maintains its legitimate status.[145] Acknowledgment of gender equality is considered the right course of action, but the representations are coopted and altered or even contradicted to the extreme point that they are harmful to women's plight and position in society.[146]

This can be seen in a study by Sumi Kim, where counter-hegemonic meanings in the form of liberated female sexuality and changing gender roles were tolerated, but when the institution of family, the ideal, was threatened the characters became devalued and considered deviant.[147] Another example by Park Sangwan highlights the duality of such representation. The character Jeong Nan Jeong is represented as strong independent women on the one hand, while seen as a threat to history and its development and thus a force to be defeated rather than encouraged.[148]

On the other side, media does have the potential to articulate modern ideas and counter-hegemonic ideas and reflect societal transformations to a certain level. Even, it helps normalize emerging trends by placing them alongside the dominant ideological expressions.[149] Part of the success of a series depends on how well the cultural concerns and audience desires are anticipated and acknowledged.[150] In order to sell, the ideas need to match the audience's perspective. And modern ideas match well with the Fusion Fantasy genres.

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[142] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 13.

[143] Ibid, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 15-6; Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 146.

[144] Lee and Park, "Women's Employment and Professional Empowerment," 396-7; Elfving-Hwang, *Representations of Femininity,* 25.

[145] Hall, "The Rediscovery of Ideology."

[146] Buonanno, "Gender and Media Studies," 20-1.
This co-optation is also called the trap of "the paradigm of misogynist media" (Buonanno, "Gender and Mainstreaming," 21). This means media is fundamentally embroiled in conservative gender ideologies that allow for representational politics that undermine and trivialize women's gains in society while pretending to take them into account.

[147] Kim, "Feminist Discourse and Media," 402-3.

[148] Sangwan Park 박상완, "텔레비전 역사드라마 <조선왕조 500 년-풍란> 연구" [A Study on the Television Historical Drama <The Joseon Dynasy 500>], *Hangugŏnŏmunhwa 한국언어문화* 48 (2012): 67.

[149] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 105-112; Kendall, "Introduction," 4.
Recent changes in television production make it easier to move away from stereotypes. Television has shifted to binge-watching, which allows longer narratives and more inclusive character development. At the same time, there are more series being produced than before, which leads to more diversity in the industry (Trier-Bieniek, 118-9).

[150] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture*; Kang and Kim, "Representations of Family in Dramas," 318.

In the case of Fusion drama, we can see that "the present reflects upon the past while the past illuminates the present in the *sageuk.*"[151] Here too, the past calls into question the modern and vice versa. Traditionally issues from the past were chosen that are relevant to current society, but now present issues are explored in a historical setting. It is needed to address contemporary and relevant issues in order to appeal to the modern audience, which can also be seen in the Fantasy genre.[152] Korean fantasy is a form of escapism, which does not address contemporary issues. However, with the genre becoming established, it is gradually changing to express concerns.[153] Kim Sae-Eun found in her study that Korean historical dramas are slowly changing to challenge the underrepresentation and trivialization of women on television.[154]

In the case of Korean dramas, the target audience is females between age 25-35.[155] In addition, the younger generation is more likely to be non-traditionalist[156] and their perspective on femininity and women's role in society has changed the most, as discussed earlier. This young non-traditional tendency of the target audience means media representation that shows this new understanding of the diversity of femininity and womanhood could strike a chord with these women. This is something to consider now that social media provide the audience, the women themselves, with easy access to critique traditional representations in media.[157]

Altogether, media has the potential to represent women positively and the historical fusion drama that combines with fantastical elements allows for a variety of alternative gender representations to be introduced. The next chapter introduces *Moon Lovers* and explains the methods used to analyze gender representation and gender normativity.

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[151] Hwang, 3. Originally found in Lee, Ho-geol, 'Korean Cinema in the 1970s', in *A History of Korean Cinema: From 1970s through 1990s,* ed. By Ho-geol Lee and others (Seoul: KOFA, 2006).

[152] Hwang, 83.

[153] Baek, Kyung-Seon 백경선, "한국 텔레비전드라마에 나타난 판타지의 유형과 의의," 246.

[154] Sae-Eun Kim 김세은, "역서 속의 여성을 다루는 미디어의 의도와 전략: 역사 드라마를 중심으로" [Women, History & Media – How are Women Represented in Historical Dramas?], *Hangukkojŏnyŏsŏngmunhakhoe 한국고전여성문학회* 15 (2007): 5–37.

[155] Hwang, "South Korean Historical Drama," 84.

[156] Lee and Chang, *Transformations in Twentieth Century Korea,* 305.

[157] Trier-Bieniek, *Gender & Pop Culture,* 118; So-Hee Lee, "The Concept of Female Sexuality In Korean Popular Culture," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 159; Collins, "Content Analysis of Gender Roles," 296; Yang, "Engaging with Korean Dramas," 76.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the possible space for positive gender representation in a mainstream Korean historical fusion fantasy drama. In order to do so, this paper tries to answer the research question: "Does gender representation in *Moon Lovers* break normativity?"

3.1 *Moon Lovers*: Scarlet Heart Ryeo

In recent years, numerous historical fusion dramas have been produced, but I chose to analyze gender in *Moon Lovers* for various reasons.

First, *Moon Lovers* has a time travel narrative that captures a fantastical element that fits well within the genre. The main character's transportation back into history gives her power through inside knowledge of the future. Also, the dislocation of a modern woman to a historical setting brings into stark contrast the (traditional) gender and gender roles.

Second, *Moon Lovers* falls in the middle between the two extremes of the *sageuk* genre. It provides a historical background and follows a more pressing political narrative with a few darker themes present, such as death, while at the same time adding trendy modern aesthetics.

Third, *Moon Lovers* has a female protagonist. As said before, gender is often studied from the perspective of femininity and in dominant discourse, femininity is represented by a woman. At the same time, a female protagonist could mean Moon Lovers is well-adjusted to progressive gender discourse. As Park Yu-Hee said, female-centered dramas are a sign of change within the industry.[158]

Finally, *Moon Lovers* proves to be an excellent case study for gender representation, as both the female and male characters are diverse. The Chinese version of Scarlet Heart was credited with breaking the gender paradigm in China.[159] The Korean version has the same potential.

Moon Lovers[160] is the Korean remake of the Chinese drama Scarlet Heart, which is based on the Chinese novel "Bu Bu Jing Xin." The drama was produced in 2016 by SBS and directed by Kim Kyu-Tae with a budget of 13 million dollars. The drama consists of 20 episodes, with an average viewer rating of 7.3% in Korea.[161] The drama was pre-produced with one version sold for countries airing outside of Korea, including China and Singapore, and one version to air within Korea. I have used the Korean version for my analysis.

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[158] Park, "A Study on Gender in Historical Fiction."

[159] Bok-Soo Cho 조복수, "중국 TV 드라마 속 '젠더' 패러다임의 변화 - 보보경심(步步驚心)을 중심으로" [A Study of a Paradigm Shift in Gender in Chinese TV drama - Focusing on <Bubujingxin>], *Dosiinmunhakyŏngy 도시인문학연구*7, no. 1 (2015): 185–218.

[160] The Korean title is 달의 연인: 보보경심 려 (Dalui Yeonin: Bobogyungsin Ryeo).

[161] Nielsen Korea, "Top 20 List TV Programs," 2016.

The remake had to make the original work for a Korean setting, which was quite challenging. The producers chose a Korean historical event which was similar to the Chinese narrative, namely King Taejo and the succession battle among his many sons. This meant the storyline could remain close to the original. However, this placed the setting 600 years before the Chinese version and caused tension between Confucian values which were present in the Chinese novel and series and the Korean setting, wherein Goryeo the idea of Confucianism was relatively unpopular at that time. In other cases, the Korean values were placed over the Chinese values. The source material for this drama is thus quite diverse. Image 1 compares the two promotional posters which show the similarities between the two.

Image 1: Left: Poster for Korean Moon Lovers (source: SBS). Right: Poster for Chinese Scarlet Heart (source: HBS). The posters share a lot of similarities. There is only one female lead dressed in a way that makes her stand out in the poster. She is surrounded by a group of men, all of whom are easily identifiable as royal princes. The left poster is dark with the throne in the background. The right poster is light with the palace visible at the bottom. The main differences in clothing, hairstyle, and accessories is due to differences in location and period.

The narrative follows a 21st-century woman, Go Ha Jin, who during a solar eclipse is transported back to the Goryeo Dynasty. She there ends up in the (much younger) 16-year-old body of aristocratic Hae Soo. She lives in the house of her cousin who is married to one of the sons of King Taejo. Hae Soo soon befriends several of the princes and becomes involved in the palace intrigues over the succession to the throne, despite her initial resistance. During the reign of King Taejo, Hae Soo aids the 4th Prince Wang So in his quest to become a recognized member of the palace. In this time, she falls in love with the 8th Prince Wang Wook. Hae Soo is forced to marry King Taejo, but she refuses and becomes a palace maid instead. Princess Yeon Hwa then plots Hae Soo's downfall by ensuring she is found responsible for the poisoning of prince Wang So. The beloved consort Oh then confesses to the crime to save Hae Soo. Hae Soo is alive but is banished to the harsh life of washing maid. After King Taejo dies, Hae Soo is liberated to take care of the new King Hyejong. A few years later, 3rd Prince Wang Yo murders King

Hyejong and takes the throne by force to become King Jeongjong. He murders 10th Prince Wang Eun, but goes crazy from guilt and eventually dies abruptly. 4th Prince Wang So then takes over the throne by force to become King Gwangjong. He solidifies his power through executions and marries Yeon Hwa. Hae Soo loves King Gwangjong but is unwilling to become a concubine in the palace and thus marries 14th Prince Wang Jung. Later, she gives birth to a daughter of King Gwangjong and shortly after dies of heart disease. A character diagram and their relationships can be found in Appendix 2.

3.2 Methods

Gender is often studied through a cultural theory lens, where cultural institutions and social norms are studied to understand the construction of gender.[162] Also, Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough argue, the study of gender cannot be done in separation from other phenomenon and gender should be understood through interaction, communication and context to understanding the range of gendered options available to a person.[163] They apply intersectionality theory to understand the effect of a multitude of identities. It combines identity and oppression and "approaches lived identities as interlaced and systems of oppression as enmeshed and mutually reinforcing"[164] Interlacing power and identity is particularly relevant when studying gender because the gender hierarchy does not place all identities on the same level.[165] This paper studies gender from both of the theories above. These theories enable me to qualitatively study various themes and gender acts, and the interaction between characters and the influence of other factors.

I study this from within a context of gender dynamics. As said before, gender becomes relevant specifically within an interaction. Also, gender is best studied from a feminine perspective, which in this case means the study of female characters. However, there is limited interaction between females and when it does take place, it is focused on male characters, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Therefore, this study focusses on the interaction between male and female characters.

Gender normativity is be studied by looking at gender ideals, or roles, how characters challenge these norms and the consequences of breaking the norms. This will be done in two parts. First, the genre conventions of fusion and fantasy dramas are studied to understand the context wherein gender is performed. Second, gender is analyzed through aspects of femininity and masculinity. The focus lies on how the characters perform these femininities and masculinities and adjust their gendered response in different interactions and contexts, particularly when confronted with power and social pressure.

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[162] Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough, *Gender in Communication.*
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid, 8.
[165] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 10-16.

During my analysis, I applied an open-ended approach where I note aspects of importance to gender while watching the series. Before examining with the source material, I established the most important aspects of femininity and masculinity, such as nurturing and dominance (see Table 1).[166] These descriptive social behaviorisms and their associated traits are studied through analyzing the social context, appearance, speech, and actions of the characters. At the same time, I consider associated gender roles through themes such as motherhood and breadwinner of the family.

Additionally, audio-visual analysis theory goes beyond this to consider background music and camera angles in setting the scene and the message that is being conveyed.[167] I keep this in mind while conducting my analysis. An audio-visual analysis is particularly well-suited to the study of semiotics, meaning the study of signs and symbols (here masculinity and femininity symbols) to see how meaning is constructed.[168] However, in this study, I go beyond just the symbols and also include the narrative, historical context, and the spoken text. I thus use various methods of analysis to form my findings.

Feminine		Masculine	
Communal	Warm, sensitive, orientation towards other, cooperative, nurturing, care-taker	Agentic	Assertive, competitive, achievement-oriented, leadership ability, independent
Weak	Insecure, yielding, easily frightened, submissive	Dominant	Dominant, aggressive, arrogant, intimidating, violent, rough
Emotional	Moody, melodramatic, sensitive	Intelligent	Intelligent, rational, analytical, competent
Shy	Reserved, nervous, soft-spoken, polite	Active	Active, energetic, athletic
Likeable	Likeable, cheerful, enthusiastic, happy, optimistic	Rebellious	Rebellious, stubborn, angry, orientation towards self
Helpful	Helpful, friendly, cooperative, dependable	Noisy	Noisy, boisterous, rambunctious
Wholesome	Wholesome, polite, naïve, gentle, innocent, delicate, modest		

Table 1: Table of commonly accepted traits of feminine and masculine behavior. Based on items found in the literature, modified from Koenig, Anne M. "Comparing Prescriptive and Descriptive Gender Stereotypes about Children, Adults, and the Elderly." Frontiers in Psychology, 2018, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01086.

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[166] I attempt to avoid placing the findings into narrowly defined gender categories and the usage of stereotypes. However, to understand how a gendered act might be challenging or breaking normativity, I do draw a comparison between the new and the traditional representations of female/male in *Moon Lovers.* I am aware that these categories are not exhaustive and that a person exhibits both masculine and feminine behavior.

[167] Marcella DeMarco, *Audiovisual Translation through a Gender Lens* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012).

[168] Karen Norum, "Artifact Analysis," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, 2012, https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.

4. Gender in *Moon Lovers*

The easiest way to check sexism in a television series is to perform the Bechdel's test. Bechdel's test has three requirements:[169]

1. It has to have at least two (named) women in it
2. Who talk to each other
3. About something besides a man

Only nine out of twenty episodes pass this test. This test is just a bare minimum for women's representation yet is not achieved in little over half of the episodes. There is a balance between female characters and male characters, with nine female characters and eleven male characters in this series, one female lead and two male leads. However, in most conversations, women directly or indirectly involve appeasing or pursuing a man. When they do talk, it is brief. This lack of female conversation indicates that masculine hegemony might be present significantly within this drama, will now be further examined.

4.1 Fusion, fantasy and gender

Any drama is limited in some way through plot and character archetypes (see Appendix 2). *Moon Lovers* is a historical fusion fantasy drama and as such demonstrates some main traits of the genres, including modern aesthetics, a star-studded cast, a focus on every-day life, and a historical setting. These three items will be shortly discussed to understand the framework within which gender is constructed.

Modern aesthetics include an upbeat soundtrack sung by the cast and an almost rosy filming filter.[170] The language is primarily modern, except for a few terms of address. The costumes in *Moon Lovers* are colored brightly and highly diverse, see Appendix 1B. The costumes are different from those traditionally worn and are used to differentiate between characters. A colorful dress can be an indication of femininity, happiness and, youth. The costumes help express emotions and set the scene.

The cast of *Moon Lovers* is star-studded and has an abundance of male (idol) actors. This has two effects. First, the male actors are used to appeal to a female audience, the target audience of fusion drama. The actors can be seen in various stages of undress several times. The female sexual gaze is here entertained by scenes that objectify the men through reducing them to their physical appearance as innate value. Mass media usually does the opposite to women to entertain the male gaze. Second, idol IU plays the female lead Hae Soo and idol Baek Hyun, a member of boyband EXO, plays prince Wang

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[169] Alison Bechdel, "The Rule," in *Dykes to Watch Out For* (NY: Firebrand Books, 1986), 22.
[170] The drama follows a more upbeat romantically themed plot for the first half of the series and then turns around to present some darker themes such as death. This shift also entails a change in tone of the series and visuals such as color, lighting and music, which all become more sober and serious.

Eun. Idols must maintain an innocent image. To that effect, Hae Soo and Wang Eun both appear younger than the rest. Hae Soo's costumes are bright and Wang Eun wears a teenage-like headband (similar to his younger brother). Their innocent image aligns with naïve and curious behavior and child-like interests, such as toys. This restricts their representation in the first half of the series, but they do mature over time.

Fusion drama tends to focus on the everyday life of ordinary people, and *Moon Lovers* does the same. However, Hae Soo is entirely ordinary. Various themes including filial piety, love, and jealousy explore everyday life. The palace is made to look like a family setting in which such themes can be brought up.[171] In the Chinese version, Ruxi shows joy, sorrow, anger, and pleasure in order to show the ups and downs in life.[172] Hae Soo similarly has a diverse personality that deals with a variety of situations. She is both rebellious and obedient, rude and polite, happy and depressed. Therefore, Hae Soo appears to be breaking gender norms, but the truth might be different.

Fantasy, on the other hand, focusses on pivotal societal events, such as the battle for the throne and political intrigue. This leads to a focus on the achievements of great men. Male characters are then more important to the plot. *Moon Lovers* focusses on Hae Soo, but many princes surround her. There is only one princess, yet eight princes. This all contributes to a power imbalance between the genders and reinforces masculine hegemony.

Moon Lovers takes place in the past, and this period forms the basis of social norms and regulations regarding gender and associated roles. However, as a fusion drama, it takes a liberal approach to historicity. The setting is recognizable as the "past," through both hanbok costumes and the physical setting of the palace or a *hanok*. The story supposedly takes place in Goryeo, yet is hardly definable as such and could pass for a (neo-)Confucian period as well. It does try to create a sense of the "past" through reimagining the historical events surrounding King Taejo and his sons' battle for the throne and envisioning a set of historical institutions that restrict the characters, such as class status that have been abolished in contemporary Korea.

Traditional gender norms and contemporary gender values are placed directly into discussion through the time travel motif. This motif places a modern woman in a Goryeo noble woman's body. This caused a deliberate values dissonance, where the values of the past (as currently understood) stand in contrast with present values. The Goryeo setting displays certain practices as "historically normative," which might reinforce or even amplify stereotypes. This can help Hae Soo stand out among the (traditional) characters and display her uniqueness. For example, Hae Soo is the only character that

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[171] Bok-Soo Choo 조복수, "텔레비전 드라마와 중국 대중문화의 성장" [A Study of TV Drama and the Growth in Chinese Popular Culture: Focus on Time slip drama <Bubujingxin(步步惊心)>], *Aseayŏngu 아세아연구* 56, no. 2 (2013): 328–58.

[172] Cho, Bok-Soo 조복수, "중국 TV 드라마 속 '젠더' 패러다임의 변화," 213.

voices discontent at social injustice due to the caste system of Goryeo and this attracts the attention of the princes.

This historical context is not something that is considered to be easily changed. The societal norms are set and only changeable by vast forces, not individuals. Resistance to cultural practices, and therefore gender normativity, has to take place within the setting of gender inequality and patriarchy. Hae Soo is the only one who wholly rejects a patriarchal institution, namely her arranged marriage to the king. However, Hae Soo, although not necessarily accepting as becomes clear later, does adapt and integrates into the existing society over time.

Goryeo (as represented) is a masculine hegemony which places power in the hands of the male members. Power is mainly granted based on social status. The greatest power is in the hands of the royal family. The political struggle takes place within the royal family and their power is uncontested. Second, age matters and the eldest member has the most authority and is expected to lead and make decisions. Thus, age is linked to leadership and highly valued. A female elder has to be respected but does not overrule a younger prince. Age does not displace the relatively high status of the male gender.

The above genre conventions impede on the fluidity of gender acts within the series. It sets the stage for gender roles and gender acts. The remainder of this chapter looks at idealized expressions of masculinity and femininity and how they are enforced and adhered to in order to analyze whether *Moon Lovers* breaks gender normativity.

4.2 Passive & active

Active entails being capable of action, whereas to be passive is to be "acted upon by external agency."[173] Agency is here defined as the "capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power."[174] Being active goes hand in hand with other character traits such as assertiveness, competitiveness, achievement-orientation and leadership abilities (combined defined as agentic). Agency is often associated with masculinity and the male gender. All male characters in *Moon Lovers* have the agency to make their own choices. In contrast, female characters have less agency and passivity is a valued feminine trait.

Agentic men strive for achievement, which is this case relates to status and the throne, as that is portrayed as the most powerful position. This is the basis of the political intrigue plot and excludes women from the domain of achievement due to social regulations limiting women in public roles. Likewise, failing to ambition or fight for the throne as a man results in a lack of status and power. Wang Wook first let his brothers fight among themselves without taking actions himself. This is a sign of

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[173] "Passive," Merriam Webster, n.d.
[174] "Agency," Merriam Webster, n.d.

passivity and was not rewarded. Interestingly, the expression of masculinity through ambition does not relate to morality. Although certain characters are more likable than others, striving for the throne is a worthy pursuit for a man even if immoral actions are taken to get there.

At the same time, actions by men are considered to be more important and men are accorded with more responsibility and have to have the consequences of their actions. The case of Hae Soo's servant Chae Ryung and the poisoning of the king is a good example of this. Chae Ryung willingly poisoned the king, but it was encouraged by Prince Wang Won. Her crime is attributed to foolishness due to love, whereas Won's actions are seen as treason. Her faults were seen as consequences of Won's actions and therefore Won later gets executed for this crime. Afterwards, Chae Ryung does get beaten to death but for the crime of spying on Hae Soo, the beloved female lead. Among females, her actions do count, yet when in the masculine domain of politics, they do not. Rather it seems the king is blamed for lack of own death through lack of actions to prevent this. This makes women appear passive even when they do perform actions which complicates the situation.

The passive-active dichotomy leads to specific gender roles, such as the male characters are considered the saviors of the damsels in distress. This limits the female gender to a position of weakness whereas the men are seen as strong and capable of protecting themselves and others. Altogether, passivity in women is encouraged. This can be seen by men telling women to not do anything and wait (scene 1). But the female characters also confirm this by asking men to take action (scene 2).

Scene 1: Episode 15, time stamp 14:39. Hae Soo talking with Wang So.
Hae Soo is concerned for Wang So after learning she is being used as a hostage to ensure his cooperation. Her eyebrows are pulled together and the corners of her mouth are pulled down while looking directly at So. This indicates she is concerned for him. However, tells her "Just leave the matter to me." He then places his hand on top of her head and rubs her hair. This intended to comfort her in an almost child-like manner regardless of her ability. Agency is thus placed with So.

Scene 2: Episode 2, time stamp 59:19. Hae Soo is held captive by an assassin.

Hae Soo is held tightly by the assassin. The knife the assassin holds cuts into her neck. She does not attempt to run from his grasp nor fights him. Her tight fists, open mouth and wide eyes suggest she is petrified. She can be seen trembling. She then asks, "please save me" to Wang So. This scene is shot using an over-the-shoulder frame, which places So with his back to the camera. This makes him appear large, whereas Hae Soo seems small. He does not offer help. Only after he refuses does she take action and bite the assassin thus freeing herself. She thus can herself but instead prefers to present herself as passive.

This trait of femininity appears at first glance to be the ideal, or norm, for women in *Moon Lovers*. However, Hae Soo can be seen to challenge traditional norms since her arrival. Furthermore, according to Cho, Ruxi, the female lead in the Chinese version, is represented as an ideal woman through challenging the traditional gender paradigm.[175] That would mean that Ruxi is not defined by passivity. Indeed, Cho argues she is differentiated from other women through her ability to make her own choices, an agentic trait.

Hae Soo initially appears as a strong female character who has agency. She is seen making her own decisions particularly in the context of refusing orders. She decided to cut her wrist in order to prevent having to marry King Taejo. She also chose not to marry King Gwangjong out of resistance to the demands of being a concubine in love with a king. Hae Soo additionally came up with and enacted a plan that led to Prince Wang So becoming a favorited prince, thus paving the way for him to become king. Other characters even credit her actions as the cause of history.

Cho found Ruxi's trademark included choosing hardship. Hae Soo does work hard and even is seen asking for tasks or helping out servants. But Hae Soo does not consider this hardship, but rather makes her feel useful. In the case of hardship, she does not choose it, but rather complies to it out of social pressure. Her status does not allow her to resist doing what she is told by either princess Yeon Hwa or king Taejo. When forced into such a situation, she does try to make the best out of it. For

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[175] Cho, Bok-Soo 조복수, "중국 TV 드라마 속 '젠더' 패러다임의 변화."

example, Hae Soo expresses happiness at being able to get a wage after being demoted to the position of a palace maid as punishment. Rather than this being a sign of her agency, I would consider an enduring personality trait. After all, women typically are seen to preserve among difficulties in order to be considered as a "sacrificial" wife or mother and this is a play on that.

But this ability to make choices and enact them does not mean that passivity is automatically not the ideal trait of femininity. Her choice to help Wang So might be credited through words, but analyzing the resulting actions of other characters tells a different story. Hae Soo is affected by palace affairs and the political intrigue, but she does not get to change anything. It is her femaleness, her attractiveness as a woman, that causes historical change. Hae Soo motivates the men and they fight over her and her love as much as over the throne. Even though Hae Soo chose to help Wang So become accepted, he did not become motivated to want the throne until he was threatened with losing Hae Soo. Like most women in history and myths, Hae Soo is portrayed as being fought over by men, like a price or treasure to be won, the very definition of passivity and objectification. Hae Soo is thus portrayed in a dual-manner with the masculine trait of agency and placed in the role of female motivator at the same time.

Princess Yeon Hwa also demonstrates agentic masculine traits. Yeon Hwa is the sole princess within this drama and dresses very feminine with bright colors and lots of accessories appropriate to her rank. Yet she becomes known for her masculine trait, namely ambition. Yeon Hwa is ambitious and will fight in her way to get what she wants. She actively works for it and has the power to achieve it as well.

The social conventions of Goryeo limit her power. She must bound her ambition to gaining a position of power relative to a king, either as sister, wife or a mother. Although she persists and succeeds in gaining power and using it to better herself, she thus remains strictly within the domain of female activity. Thus, her ambition does not place the male hegemony into question for she never challenges the superior (public) position of men. At the same time, ambition is considered a harmful trait for a female. For example, queen Yoo warns her son Wang Yo,

QY: "She is dangerous.
            She has more ambition than any man.
            Keep your distance from her."
YO: "That is what makes her fun, though." [176]

Yo here seems to accept her ambition. Indeed, he reaffirms this sentiment several times. However, once he becomes king he refuses to marry her because he will not allow his wife to have more ambition to him because it threatens his authority. In the same vein, king Gwangjong rejects her ambition. Yeon

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[176] *Moon Lovers*, Episode 12, time stamp 12:59.

Hwa ends up marrying him and bearing a son, thus achieving her goal as queen. Yet, she cannot obtain his love. Who, after all, would marry an ambitious woman out of his own free will? King Gwangjong says her ambition has driven everyone away and a loveless life is her punishment.

Men who divert from the masculine ideal of achievement appear to be less confronted with this. Yet the ideal of an active man remains the same. The crown prince was born into power rather than work for it and as such is depicted as weak with a more feminine body. He is ill and has little muscle to show, although he does possess some fighting skills. He is portrayed as a less desirable man than his ambitious brothers. Similarly, when Wook loses the battle for the throne he is banished to his house outside the palace and becomes gravely ill and weak.

Interestingly, prince Baek Ah and Wang Eun do not display a strong need for achievements either. However, they are not encouraged to become more competitive. On the one hand, this is to decrease the complexity of the narrative by preventing too many main characters within the story. On the other hand, these two characters are less involved in the political intrigue with the first being more concerned with the feminine arts and the second is still too young.[177] *Moon Lovers* thus allows male characters to be masculine without being highly achievement-oriented. It is a symbol for masculinity, primarily within the domain of the public, here the palace and involving the competition for the throne.

Altogether, male characters are idealized through agentic traits and women through passivity. Particularly when the two genders interact does this difference become noticeable. A woman can have strong agency and be ambitious, but cannot use that power to threaten the existing masculine order. It is not depicted as a bad trait in Hae Soo, but it is depicted as undesirable in Yeon Hwa who uses it outside of her own feminine space. A man will always have agency, but a lack of masculine traits within the public domain can result in a decrease in desirability. This suggests it is preferred to possess these traits while admitting that not all women are passive or all men are active.

4.3 Submissive & dominant

Power, in any context, is unbalanced and relates to aspects of dominance and compliance. In turn, normatively being submissive, such as being docile and obedient, is considered a feminine trait whereas being dominant is a masculine trait. Dominant traits are aggressiveness, intimidation and arrogance. To be dominant it is to be powerful and controlling. In *Moon Lovers* both men and women are seen to be dominant and submissive. Gender theory states dominant and submissive traits should be equally desirable in both female and men,[178] but this is not the case in *Moon Lovers*.

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[177] Prince Wang Eun is theoretically older than two of his brothers, but is very childlike in manner and interests. He does show a competitive streak but this relates to games and boisterousness and is not applied for the purpose of actual achievement.
[178] Koenig, "Comparing Prescriptive and Descriptive Gender Stereotypes about Children, Adults, and the Elderly."

Among men, dominance is established through (willing) violence and combat. Fighting is critical to manhood as it is seen as a rite of passage to becoming a man. A boy must learn how to fight and then apply those skills in the military in order to be considered mature and gain recognition. Wang Eun is presented as a child and therefore does not possess great combat skills, but is nevertheless seen fervently practicing. Wang So is initially ridiculed by his brothers because they believe he cannot fight. When they learn they were wrong, Wang So is given more respect and his relationship with his brothers improve. Both Baek Ah and the crown prince know how to fight yet do not use their skills often. Yet, in critical times the crown prince wears armor to protect the nation and Baek Ah takes up a military position to protect former Baekje slaves from violence. Here they get a hero-like status and their manhood is reaffirmed. This relates to the earlier mentioned stereotype of protecting men and vulnerable women.

Fighting skills places men in a position where they can demonstrate their aggressiveness and control their environment through violence, both for the sake of something/someone (preferably the female lead) and for personal entertainment. Violence makes men appear aggressive and intimidating, causing people to fear and therefore submit to their power (see scene 3).

Wang So is the most dominant character in the series, as is reinforced through scenes similar to the above. His nickname is 'wild wolf' to indicate his animal violent nature. When he becomes king, Wang So demonstrates even more traits of dominance in order to validate his leadership position and maintain his royal authority within the public masculine domain. To be a king, one must be ruthless and dominant.

Scene 3: Episode 1, time stamp 16:25-. Wang So kills horse.

Wang So has just taken his sword and cut down a horse. The horse symbolized his return to his adoptive family and rejection out of the palace, which he detests. The death of the horse mirrors the desired deaths of the adoptive family that has abused him. Here, Wang So is seen covered in blood on the right side of his face. The extreme close-up shows his eyes intently focus on the dying horse and his mouth curls up slightly, indicating his pleasure at the dying horse. His face is half covered in a metal mask to hide a scar across his left eye and he is dressed entirely in black, which helps enhance the image of his violent nature. In the scene, several soldiers stand around him in a semi-circle. After Wang So's act of violence, they are seen bending over (second image) and taking a step back. Whereas So stands with a tall back, the soldiers fold their shoulders forward to appear smaller. The captain (third image) turns half his body away from Wang So and looks to the ground. His eyes are wide open and he stutters when telling Wang So he is not allowed to use his sword on the premises. Wang So then thrusts his sword handle at the captain, who noticeably flinches at the contact. These are all signs that So's act of violence inspired fear among the soldiers and in response the soldiers positioned themselves in a more submissive manner. Violence thus helps set a position of dominance.

Dominance can be used in a neutral or even positive manner, for example through protecting as mentioned earlier. However, it is most often associated with adverse human behavior as the needless violence accentuates. This is particularly the case when looking at the relationship between Wang So and Hae Soo and So's asserting dominance.

Wang So uses his dominance to suppress Hae Soo on several occasions. Wang So threatens Hae Soo's life several times during the first few episodes (scene). When So becomes intrigued by Hae Soo, he claims her as his, like a possession to own. He steals a kiss from her and in doing so, he completely ignores her consent. He orders the death of Chae Ryung and banishment of Jung, which hurts Hae Soo and isolates her from others. So demands Hae Soo be always on his side regardless of his actions. The above are all signs of an unhealthy relationship that romanticized aggressiveness and lack of consent, which is common in Korean dramas. This makes it appear as though it is accepted to use this dominant behavior to control one's partner.

However, the opposite also occurs within their relation. So encourages Hae Soo to make her own decisions. This puts control back into her hands, at the expense of So's chance to act dominantly.

For example, So lets Hae Soo decide whether she goes to marry the king or not. He will aid her if she wishes to leave, but does not act without her approval.[179]

> WS: "If you go now, it will be hard to ever leave the palace.
> HS: I must go.
>
> That is the only way no one gets hurt.
> WS: You really won't regret it?
> HS: Don't worry.
>
> I'll go and try to talk to him [the king].

At the same time, Hae Soo does not merely let herself be placed in a position of submissiveness when with Wang So and she does offer her resistance to his acts of dominance. First, she openly criticizes Wang So's claim.[180]

> HS: "[…] Do not say I "belong" to you ever again. [181]
> WS: Why?
> HS: I am a person, not an item or an animal.
>
> How can you say I belong to you or anyone else?
> WS: Then, should I call you my person?
> HS: That is not it either.
>
> Let's refrain from using these burdensome titles.
>
> Think of something else."

She here establishes that woman should be valued for more than their being, their femaleness. She will not be reduced to merely an item (which can be seen as a symbol for complete objectification) by any man, no matter how dominant. The critical scene representing her rejection of So's dominance is when Hae Soo leaves the palace to marry another.[182] Dominance got Wang So his position as king but lost him his true love. It is a desirable trait in public (among men), but when used to suppress the female gender and encourages masculine violence against women, it is criticized. Dominance is here depicted negatively, even for men.

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[179] Episode 6, time stamp 22:23.

[180] Episode 4, time stamp 35:35.

[181] This is a liberal translation. The exact term used is 내 것이다 (nae gŏsida). In sentence 4 she uses the terms 내 것이 네 것이 (nae gŏsida, ne gŏsida). In sentence 5 he changes it to 내 사람 (nae saram). The term is here changed but not 네(nae) to indicate property.

[182] This is also partly due to Hae Soo's concern over status differences and her wish to live in freedom, not locked up in a palace and bound by stifling palace rules that cause her to be wary every minute of the day. She rejects not just him, but the entire institution of the palace and kinghood.

Submissiveness is not solely achieved through dominant forces but one can choose to conform to social expectations with little resistance. Hae Soo does this by yielding to Wang Wook's preferences and wishes.

With Wook, Soo is shown happy and outgoing, with lots of *aegyo* movements and facial expressions. For Wook, she is a breath of fresh air and he likes her for her innocence and directly tells her this too. This establishes his role of protector and places the power within this relationship with Wook, to whom she looks up as a savior and she does what he tells her to do. Her role is to cheer him up, to be a distraction from the hardships in life and demanding palace life. She hides being tired and pretends to be energetic to ensure he does not worry. It places her in a situation where she can merely express herself in feminine terms in order to appease him and does not challenge him, instead yielding to his expectations. This forces her to be submissive in order to fulfill his expectations, but she is willing to accept this easily.

Submissiveness for women has the same effect as fighting does for men, a girl is considered mature when she is (or has become) submissive. This can clearly be seen in the case of Hae Soo. With Wook her submissiveness is willing since she is in love with him and wants to show him her best side, which is feminine. She still talks back and remains stubborn in another situation and has not adapted entirely to the social requirements of being female in Goryeo. Her cousin Lady Hae even expresses concern for her 'uncontrollable temper.'[183] After a few years though, her demeanor becomes much more docile as she has learned the consequences of acting outside of the norm.

Dominance relates closely to the strict social status hierarchy. Before the king, any must be submissive. The sole time Hae Soo bows to the ground is in front of the king (see scene 4).

Scene 4: Episode 5, time stamp 22:48. Hae Soo bows to King Taejo.

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[183] Episode 5, time stamp 52:05.

Yeon Hwa is mainly submissive to her brother and father but is dominant in other cases. Particularly when interacting with Hae Soo is Yeon Hwa shown to be dominant. She is a princess and her regal heritage makes arrogant, and she uses her power to bully other people (see scene 5).

Scene 5: Episode 1, time stamp 45:42. Princess Yeon Hwa and Hae Soo meet for the first time.
Yeon Hwa here is wearing social accessories and has a hairstyle that matches her rank as princess. Yeon Hwa looks down her nose and has a right smile and slightly raised eyebrows, which are signs of her arrogance. She is filmed in a low-angle shot, which enlarges her position and reinforces her importance. She has a group of servants standing at her back, looking at Hae Soo. Hae Soo stands there with just one servant. Within the frame, Yeon Hwa is placed higher (real physical height difference is considerably less). This makes Hae Soo seem smaller and more vulnerable and thus demonstrates Yeon Hwa's intimidation.

However, this dominance only goes so far. When confronted with someone higher in the hierarchy (her mother) she yields. But more importantly, male princes outrank her and she must always submit to their authority. For example, Yeon Hwa is punishing Hae Soo for alleged theft when prince Wang Wook shows up to halt the beating. Yeon Hwa does not want to let Hae Soo go but has no choice in the matter. Within this series I have not found a case where female dominance ranks higher than male dominance, even in the most severe case of a strong woman and a relatively weak man, which I will discuss now.

Moon Lovers presents one case of reversed gender roles, concerning the general's daughter Soon Deok and prince Wang Eun who later get married. Wang Eun has primarily feminine personality traits, such as being naive, childish, likeable and energetic, which he maintains throughout nearly the whole series until his death scene where he shows courage and tries to protect his wife. Within his marriage to Soon Deok, he is the "breadwinner" of the family, or in other words the head of the household via his status as prince. But he is not seen to hold any function or perform any acts that would suggest his status provides benefits. Rather, it is Soon Deok and through her connections to her father, general Park, that builds social connections and even organizes their escape route when needed.

Soon Deok exhibits more masculine traits, including strong fighting skills which are a sign of dominance. Soon Deok is introduced wearing traditional soldier armor with her victor's spoil of a bear

skin hanging over her shoulders (scene 6). This is a play on the cross-dress motif, where a person wears clothes typically associated with the opposite sex. Soon Deok does not do this for comfort, but out of necessity. While occupying a masculine role such as soldier, she must appear as a man. While wearing the masculine outfit, she is confident in her skills and easily claims the position as best fighter among the soldiers (see scene 6 right image). She is then seen easily in contact among men as well, while she does not have any female in her life (neither friend nor mother). She also shows an uncultured side by failing to comply to palace rules, which is another stereotypical domain of masculinity. Her personality here is rough, which matches the image of a soldier.

Scene 6: Soon Deok arrives at the palace. Soon Deok fights with Wang Jung and wins.
Soon Deok arrives on horseback together with her father and is greeted by a group of soldiers. She wears a typical general's outfit comparable to that of her father, which indicates her status. The color of her armor is gold, whereas her father only has gold accents on his armor and regular soldiers wear metal/silver-colored armor. She carries the skin of a bear that she slayed. These things make her stand out, indicating her excellent fighting skills. Her long hair is hidden behind the helmet and she does not wear visible signs of make-up. Her head is tilted backwards and her shoulders are squared, given her a look of confidence. Altogether, she here appears masculine.

However, this changes when she enters marries Wang Eun. She then dons female clothing to highlight her identity as a wife to Wang Eun (see scene 7). Her personality changes to a calm demeanor and she obeys the words of her husband. She even shows a more feminine side by taking a beauty mask to ensure she is pretty enough to stand by Wang Eun. Here, she showcases submissive behavior. She thus is dominant when wearing a masculine outfit, but reverses back to a submissive feminine behavior when wearing dresses.

Scene 7: Episode 14, time stamp 27:16. Soon Deok in feminine clothing.

Soon Deok is here wearing a traditional-inspired hanbok in pastel blue and bright pink, both of which are traditional feminine colors. She has her hair in a complex hairdo at the back of her head and wears matching accessories.

There are social pressures which appear to force them to perform a gender they are not comfortable with. Soon Deok may be a soldier but cannot hold an official rank due to her gender and thus can solely find a place in society through marriage, for which she has to appear feminine in order to be accepted as a partner. Eun is a prince and has duties to fulfill in order to be granted his privileges and this includes being able to fight.

However, contradictory to how the two are first introduced into the series, they are expressing signs of being comfortable with their gender. Soon Deok is happy to return to a feminine role once she enters the palace. She has dreamt of marrying and becoming a housewife since she was a little girl and fell in love with Eun. At the same time, she felt comfortable enough to be masculine in a masculine surrounding, but when entering the palace Soon Deok was confronted with expressions of femininity. This might have influenced her decision to change into a more feminine appearance. Eun might lack masculine qualities, but he is embarrassed by that. His lack of masculine qualities relates to his wish to remain a child, free from responsibilities.

Their construction of gender is thus complex in nature. Nevertheless, Soon Deok's transformation into the domain of the feminine suggests that masculine traits such as dominance are accepted when taking on a masculine role, but outside of this a woman should submit to a man. Soon Deok can defeat Eun but chooses not to do so to prevent embarrassing him for his lack of dominance within their relationship.

Altogether, it can be seen that the male characters exhibit more dominant traits than the female characters. Dominance can be a trait of a female character but is not associated with femininity. Dominance is represented as a desirable trait for men, but an undesirable trait for women.

4.4 Sensitivity & lack of emotions

Being sensitive is a stereotypically feminine trait that is associated with being emotional as well as caring for others. Sensitivity is defined as being "highly responsive or susceptible," both in terms of own emotional hurt and awareness for the "attitudes and feelings of others."[184] Masculinity, on the other hand, is characterized by a lack of emotions in *Moon Lovers*.

Men do not show their emotions and seen with stoic expressions, not smiling nor showing anger. Wang Jung is very expressive, but this changes as he becomes a man. This supposedly makes men ruled by logic to contrast them to the hysterical woman, as seen when Hae Soo is upset and Wook tries to comfort her (scene 8). When men do show emotions, they are often not capable of handling them well. For example, after the death of his wife Lady Hae, Wook's emotions erupt like a flood and it takes him time to recover from the intensity.

Scene 8: Episode 3, time stamp 6:05. Wook comforts a crying Hae Soo.
Hae Soo starts crying and collapses to her knees. Wook kneels next to her and pats her right shoulder lightly. He laughs and shakes his head. Hae Soo starts crying louder. Wook bends forwards and embraces her in a hug. He is still seen smiling and is in control of his emotions. He says 'shhh' and asserts that everything is all right in an attempt to calm her down. He pats her back like one would pat a baby and looks around him, indicating he finds the situation awkward and is not good at comforting.

There are some exceptions. At first, it seems Wang So is a stereotypical representation of emotionless men. He shuts himself off from the rest of the people. However, when together with Hae Soo he changes. With her, he becomes emotionally expressive. He confides in her about his traumas and discusses his weaknesses. He is even perceptive of Hae Soo's difficulties of life in Goryeo. They provide each other with emotional support. So here demonstrates a feminine side to Soo.

However, this is limited to the private sphere, especially between Wang So and Hae Soo. In the public area of the palace, he is very stoic, especially after he becomes king where he cannot be seen as

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[184] "Sensitive," Merriam Webster, n.d.

irrational. This means that although *Moon Lovers* displays a male character with the feminine emotional trait, this is only accepted when dynamically interacting in a private setting. This might be an indication that the man at home should care for his partner through being sensitive, but that this should stop at the door.

4.5 Nurturing

Nurturing is an essential feminine trait. It is often described using the term 'communal' to include caring and cooperative behavior. Women are seen performing traditional feminine tasks and leisure activities that match such a character trait, such as preparing and carrying food to male characters. Nurturing relates closely to family and motherhood.

Family is the cornerstone of society, both then and now, yet the series does not idealize the concept of the family.[185] Instead *Moon Lovers* shows how families are inherently riddled with conflict and even addresses darker themes such as child abuse and spouse neglect. However, the drama does express a wish for a harmonious family. No one can abandon their (imperfect) family, or wishes to do so, as is shown through filial piety. Filial piety is strongly present in this drama regardless of the parents' earlier crimes. Even after suffering physical and mental abuse at the hands of his mother, Wang So craves her recognition and works to please her. This suggests the institution of the family remains the ideal.

Within a family, the husband-wife relationship and the mother-child relationship are essential. A woman in Goryeo is defined in relation to a man, so either as daughter, wife or mother of a son. Therefore, marriage is of utmost importance to every woman and forms the basis of their identity. Table 2 shows that every relationship also ends in a (promise of) marriage.

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[185] The ideal in modern Korea is the nuclear family. *Moon Lovers* complex social order means that children are often shown either with their mother or their father. There are two cases where a child has only a single parent: Soon Deok and Hae Soo's daughter are both raised by only a father (-figure). This would suggest a more diverse composition of family as a unit, to include single-parent households.

Female Character	Male Character	Outcome relationship
Hae Soo	Wang Wook	Promise to Marry
Hae Soo	Wang So	Promise to Marry
Won Hee	Baek Ah	Promise to Marry
Hae Soo	Wang Jung	Married
Yeon Hwa	Wang So	Married[186]
Consort Oh	King Taejo	Married
Seon Deok	Wang Eun	Married
Lady Hae	Wang Wook	Married
Queen Yoo	King Taejo	Married

Table 2: Romantical couples and their respective outcomes.

Like family, marriage is not portrayed as harmonious. The (often arranged) marriages are riddled with unrequited love.[187] However, the drama represents marriage as a reward for morally righteous characters. The fact that Hae Soo does not marry her beloved Wang So is portrayed as a tragic event. Whereas Yeon Hwa forced her marriage and is punished by becoming an unwanted spouse. Marriage as a reward is thus closely linked to the feminine concept of love.

For Hae Soo, too, marriage does not provide happiness nor does she seek happiness through marriage. Hae Soo did not want to marry but has to marry to escape the palace and therefore ends up conforming to social norms while expression discontent. When Hae Soo refused to marry King Taejo even when it could result in her death, she completely rejects the concept of marriage. She thus offers resistance by rejecting an offer and voicing her disagreement.

Yeon Hwa, although focused on getting married, also offers resistance to marriage. She wants to make marriage a feminine choice and change gender roles after marriage to give women more control. She is frustrated that marriage is her only means of gaining power.

Motherhood is another closely related concept to family. A wife's primary task is providing heirs to continue the male family line. Failing at this task can be detrimental to the relationship and brings social shame upon the woman. For example, Queen Yoo and Queen Hwangbo judge Lady Hae for her lack of children:[188]

> QY: "You have a very good daughter-in-law, Queen Hwangbo.
>
> Too bad you do not have children. [addressing Lady Hae]

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[186] A controversial theme within this series is the incest between Yeon Hwa and Wang So who are half-siblings. This can be shocking for modern audiences but portrayed as accepted during the Goryeo dynasty.

[187] Most wives and children of the princes are not shown. They are mentioned on a few occasions, but the viewer is made to forget the princes are married and look at them as single men. This makes the wives seem completely irrelevant to their husbands.

[188] Episode 5, time stamp 21:29.

There would be no flaws, otherwise."

Male heirs are privileged over daughters, which relates strongly to their ability to gain power through public positions. Queen Yoo rejects Wang So several times and this reinforces her image as evil matriarch. In the scene below Wang So had just explained the abuse he endured at the hands of his adoptive family and asks his mother for recognition as a good son since he hid her crime of treason:[189]

> QY: "What about it?
>   A mother only recognizes a son who will make her shine.
>   You are my shame, disgrace, and flaw.
>   That is why I sent you away."

Queen Hwangbo places the value of Yeon Hwa, her daughter, over the value of Wook, her son, when confronted with having to make a choice. The whole story she supports only her son, but when his position in society is threatened due to his foolishness, she switches allegiance to her daughter to ensure her family remains in a good position. This choice reflects modern ideas the equal value of sons and daughters.

Motherhoods defines women. This becomes clear when Queen Hwangbo states: "Forget you are a woman; remember you are a mother."[190] Even when one does not have children, one engages in similar nurturing tasks. Lady Hae and Consort Oh both take care of Hae Soo as if she was their substitute daughter. Nurturing is portrayed as if a natural task for women to engage in.

Related to this nurturing is the stereotypical representation of a sacrificial mother. A sacrificial mother is willing to do anything and give up everything to protect one's child. Queen Yoo exemplifies this through willing to commit mass murder to ensure her son sits on the throne. Consort Oh gives up her life so Hae Soo may live. This defines them as excellent mothers,[191] regardless of other crimes.

Hae Soo places the individual above motherhood, which symbolizes the modern woman's desire for independence and individuality. She did not even consider having children until King Gwangjong reminded her of a queen's task to provide heirs.

She did not wish to get pregnant, but ended up with child anyhow. Hae Soo cannot escape motherhood. However, she is happy to have a daughter and cares for her deeply. Her concerns move immediately from herself to her daughter's (future) well-fare. This suggests a transformation from individual to mother (see scene 9 for Hae Soo with her daughter).

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[189] Episode 4, time stamp 06:23.
[190] Episode 13, time stamp 36:02.
[191] In the case of Queen Yoo this concerns only her son Yo and her son Jung.

Scene 9: Episode 20, time stamp 13:46. Hae Soo holds her baby daughter.

Hae Soo looks at her daughter and holds her gently with two arms. They both wear white to represent innocence and purity. This long-shot frame shows the house interior and creates a sense of intimacy. This places Hae Soo inside her home, positioned similar to a family picture.

Nurturing is thus naturalized for women and primarily focusses on care for the husband and children. It is not only expected by society but also forms part of a woman's identity. Although nurturing is a feminine task, the institutions of marriage and motherhood are patriarchal. As said before, hegemonic masculinity maintains its power by restricting womanhood to such roles and suppressing their individuality. This is why marriage and motherhood are criticized and devaluated by Hae Soo and Yeon Hwa. However, they have no choice but to conform to social pressure.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the representation of gender within the historical fusion drama *Moon Lovers.* The historical reimagination and the fantastical element of time travel were considered to provide an opportunity to represent alternative forms of gender within the dominant production framework. Gender was studied by analyzing the associated values of femininity and masculinity and the way these values were enacted by various characters to look at how *Moon Lovers* breaks gender normativity.

Moon Lovers shows a clear ideal standard for masculine and feminine behavior and associated gender roles. Masculinity is defined through agentic and dominant traits, whereas femininity is formed in terms of passiveness, submissiveness, and nurturing. The two genders are placed in opposition to each other. The majority of the masculine traits are seen as undesirable for females and the feminine traits as undesirable for men. Stereotypes relating to these concepts are abundantly present. The gender norms are ideals that one should strive for to be considered both good and 'perfect.' Failing to adhere to the gender roles and norms was seen to result in social ostracization, particularly in the form of a decrease in social status or exclusion from the public domain of the palace. Altogether, women in *Moon Lovers* are underrepresented and kept outside of positions of power.

Moon Lovers showed the inherent bias present in a patriarchal society. Power was imbalanced and institutions such as motherhood and military tried to keep everyone in their proper place. These institutions were seen as the foundations of the nation and could not be challenged. All forms of resistance took place within these limits. A woman might be ambitious but never was seen to threaten the masculine order.

Moreover, all female characters have to lose what makes them unique and return to their rightful feminine place. To be accepted a woman has to be feminine. That means action girl Soon Deok has to give up fighting and Hae Soo has to give up her rebellious nature. This is also the case with unique male characters. Immature Eun is killed off and sensitive Baek Ah is forced to become a general, thus returning to his appointed masculine place of violence and dominance.

The above reinforces traditional concepts of femininity and masculinity but that does not mean that there is an open acceptance of all forms of masculine hegemony. Women were shown to be empowered and fought for what they wanted and made their own choices. Their power was limited and so they were forced to return to their rightful place. But this was not done happily. They did express disagreement and frustration at certain gender roles. This discontent is a sign they resist the norms and wish to see change.

Also, the cultural norms of "Goryeo" are traditional and were juxtaposed with the supposedly modern values of Hae Soo. This gets people to question the naturality of gender constructs and systems

in contemporary society. If a society has already changed so much from the past, does the future not hold more change?

Moon Lovers goes beyond the limited stereotyping shown above. The ideals remained the same, but characters showed much diversity in how they defined themselves as masculine and feminine. It is better here to speak of masculinities and femininities. The diversity of the cast demonstrates the open-ended structure and complexity of gender. Some characters reinforced stereotypes, while others challenged them. Two male characters and two female characters showed characteristics of or performed duties typically assigned to the other gender. These characters showed no problems in their interactions with other characters. One even was the most beloved character, thus improving acceptance of such display. It helped debunk gender stereotypes and demonstrated that bodies can be ascribed both feminine and masculine traits at the same time. At the same time, the changeability of gender acts, particularly as a result of becoming more mature, could be studied due to the extended timeframe within which the series took place.

So altogether, *Moon Lovers* does not break gender normativity but does challenge traditional stereotypes through modern expressions of gender, which is progressive relative to the existing discourse on media representation in general. It offers alternative expressions of gender that can help normalize outlying gender expression within Korean society and thus aid the acceptance of diverse gender expressions. However, the patriarchal institutions were reinforced and the series does not go beyond these to image a more liberating place for women. The potential that the diverse characters offered was not realized fully by placing them in highly restrictive social structures. The restricting forces were framed as "Goryeo" historical characteristics, yet the historical setting could just as well have been elsewhere. It is partly a reflection of modern ideas about gender and thus shows the complexity of redefining womanhood within the current masculine hegemony. Altogether, it thus seems that *Moon Lovers* has incorporated counter-discourse in the sense of the empowered woman, but remains strongly supportive of the dominant gender ideology.

This study was limited in various ways. First, as with all audio-visual analysis, this study is very open to interpretation. My selection of relevant elements and interpretation of the situation and the character's emotion might be different from other people. Together with the complexity of gender makes this study highly subjective.

Second, the scope of this research is limited. The study analyzes just one drama series, whereas there are many series with similar characteristics. To be able to draw any conclusions about the representation of gender within the historical fusion drama genre or the fantastical drama genre, more series need to be studied. Also, I recommend studying representation across various genres within a specific year. This could provide insight into whether it is a genre convention or a general trend within society.

Third, fusion and fantasy were deemed to provide an opportunity to challenge the existing gender ideology, yet failed to achieve this. Although fantasy in Korean television has a peripheral role, here the temporal displacement played a role in ensuring the narrative but did not add to a significant value dissonance due to Hae Soo's quick adaption to Goryeo. A drama with fantastical elements that grant the main characters special abilities might prove more in line with my original expectations.

Additionally, further study is needed on the link between the everyday life representation and gender. In order to show everyday life (which is the domain of women in the past), all emotions have to be shown at some point to dramatize situations. This does not necessarily mean that the drama is more diverse in representation, although it can be. The effect of this on gender needs to be studied before being able to draw conclusions concerning gender in a specific genre.

Finally, the various themes within a genre require more research. For example, the political intrigue plot was found to prioritize male characters because only men are allowed to hold a public position in a traditional patriarchal society. What are the other effects of choosing such a plot? Also, romance is important to gender and ended up being a key factor underlying even the political plot, yet its effects were not studied. A study by Lee Hwa-Jeong found that the melodrama genre, which focusses on romance, is more likely to represent traditional images of women than other genres regardless of social change.[192] This is the opposite of what fusion and fantasy were set out to do, yet its effect has not been studied. This requires further attention.

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[192] Hwa-Jeong Lee 이화정, "멜로장르 TV 드라마에 나타나는 여성 주인공의 전형성(1992 년부터 2012 년까지)" [Typicality of Female Main Characters Appearing in the TV Melodrama Genre -From 1992 till 2012], *Hangukk'ont'ench'ŭhakhoenonmunji 한국콘텐츠학회논문지* 13, no. 12 (2013): 604–13.

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Appendix

1.A Modern aesthetics in fusion drama costumes

	전통복식	『장희빈』(2002)		『동이』(2010)		『장옥정, 사랑에 살다』(2013)	
		장옥정	인현왕후	장옥정	인현왕후	장옥정	인현왕후
대표 이미 지							

The above image shows how the traditional outfit has been adapted for the same two characters in three different fusion dramas to incorporate modern stylization. To be noted are the differences in length, width of the skirt and top, embroidery, and color. The difference between the 2002 version and the later trending 2010 and 2013 drama is significant. The latter focus on being sensational and explicitly use the costumes to express status to make it easier for the public to recognize social differences.[193]

Source: Kim, Ga Hyun, Chun, Jae Hoon, and Ha Ji Soo 김가현, 전재훈, 하지수. "2000 년대 이후 사극드라마에 나타난 복식 비교 연구 - 드라마 『장희빈』(2002), 『동이』(2010), 『장옥정, 사랑에 살다』(2013)를 중심으로" [A Comparative Study on the Costimes of Fusion Historical Dramas Aired after 200 – Focused on "Jangheebin," "Dongyi," and "Jang Okjeong," "Living in Love"]. *Hangukp'aesyŏndijainhakhoeji 한국패션디자인학회지* 15, no. 3 (2015): 115–31.

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[193] 김가현, 전재훈, and 하지수, "2000 년대 이후 사극드라마에 나타난 복식 비교 연구 - 드라마 『장희빈』(2002), 『동이』(2010),『장옥정, 사랑에 살다』(2013)를 중심으로," 한국패션디자인학회지 15, no. 3 (2015): 128.

Hae Soo's costumes can be divided into three different categories. The first category is dresses from when she was younger (see upper row). Here she wears bright and pastel colors. The dresses are flowy. Compared to the article results mentioned above, it is clear that Hae Soo's clothes represent her youth and are made to look trendy rather than historically correct.

The second category is from when she is older and lives in the palace (see the second row). Except for a few accents, the dresses are relatively muted in color or just plain white. White symbolizes innocence and purity and this stands in stark contrast to the black that the princes are often seen wearing. She wears little accessories regardless of her rank. Her higher social status can be seen through the multi-layered-ness of the dress.
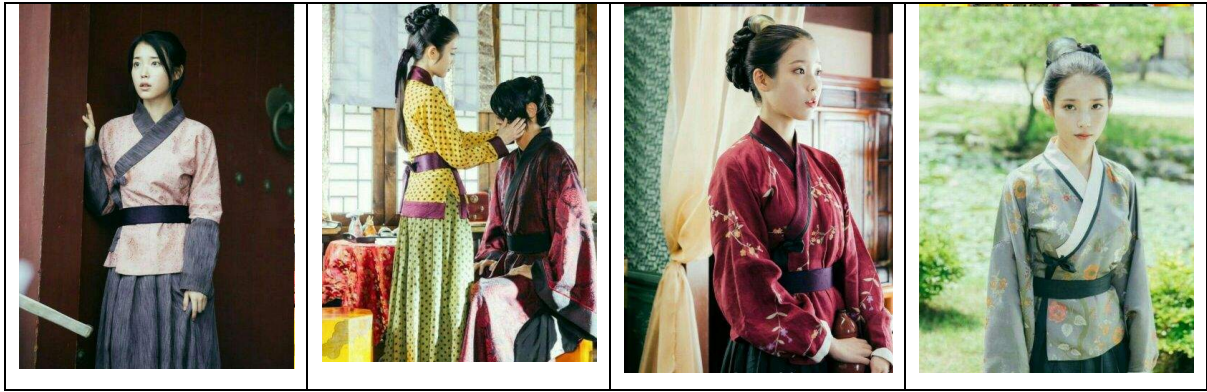
The third category shows Hae Soo's work clothing. From left to right, her rank increases and outfit changes. Noticeable is the colors of her costume and the quality of the material. Whereas her maid is only seen wearing rough brown clothing, Hae Soo does not. The second outfit is bright yellow. She wears this outfit in a period when she is happy to work at the palace. Again, the last outfit is more muted in color. She wears this outfit when she is older.

2. Character archetypes

Female		Male	
Hae Soo	*Female hero*	Wang So	*Antihero*
Yeon Hwa	*Antagonistic princess*	Wang Wook	*Gentleman turned bad*
Queen Yoo	*Evil matriarch*	Wang Yo	*Evil prince*
Soon Deok	*Action girl*	Wang Jung	*Manly man*
Lady Hae	*Proper lady*	Baek Ah	*Sensitive guy*
Won Hee	*Fallen princess*	Wang Eun	*Innocent younger sibling*
Consort Oh	*Proper lady*	Wang Moo	*Nice guy*
Queen Hwangbo	*Caring matriarch*	Wang Won	*Smug snake*
Chae Ryung	*Servant girl*	King Taejo	*Strong ruler*
		Ji Mong	*Eccentric mentor*
		General Park	*Righteous general*

This table shows the character archetypes. Each character has a few defining traits which help differentiate their roles within the narrative and make the story interesting. Each character is a typical representation of a type of person. Hae Soo, as the female hero, is innocent yet righteous and inspires loyalty and teamwork. Wang So, as the antihero, likes to break the rules and cause conflict yet is definably like-able, and his actions end up being for the greater good. Certain characters are used to dramatize the plot by opposing the female her. Here the malicious princess and evil matriarch queen fulfill that role. These archetypes limit how the characters could have been constructed and thus enacts barriers to fluid gender expressions and roles. There can be change over time, but the female hero does not present herself as anything but "good." The question now is what is this "good" concerning gender, or what social norms should she conform to in order to be considered good? Chapter 4 discusses this.

3. Character diagram
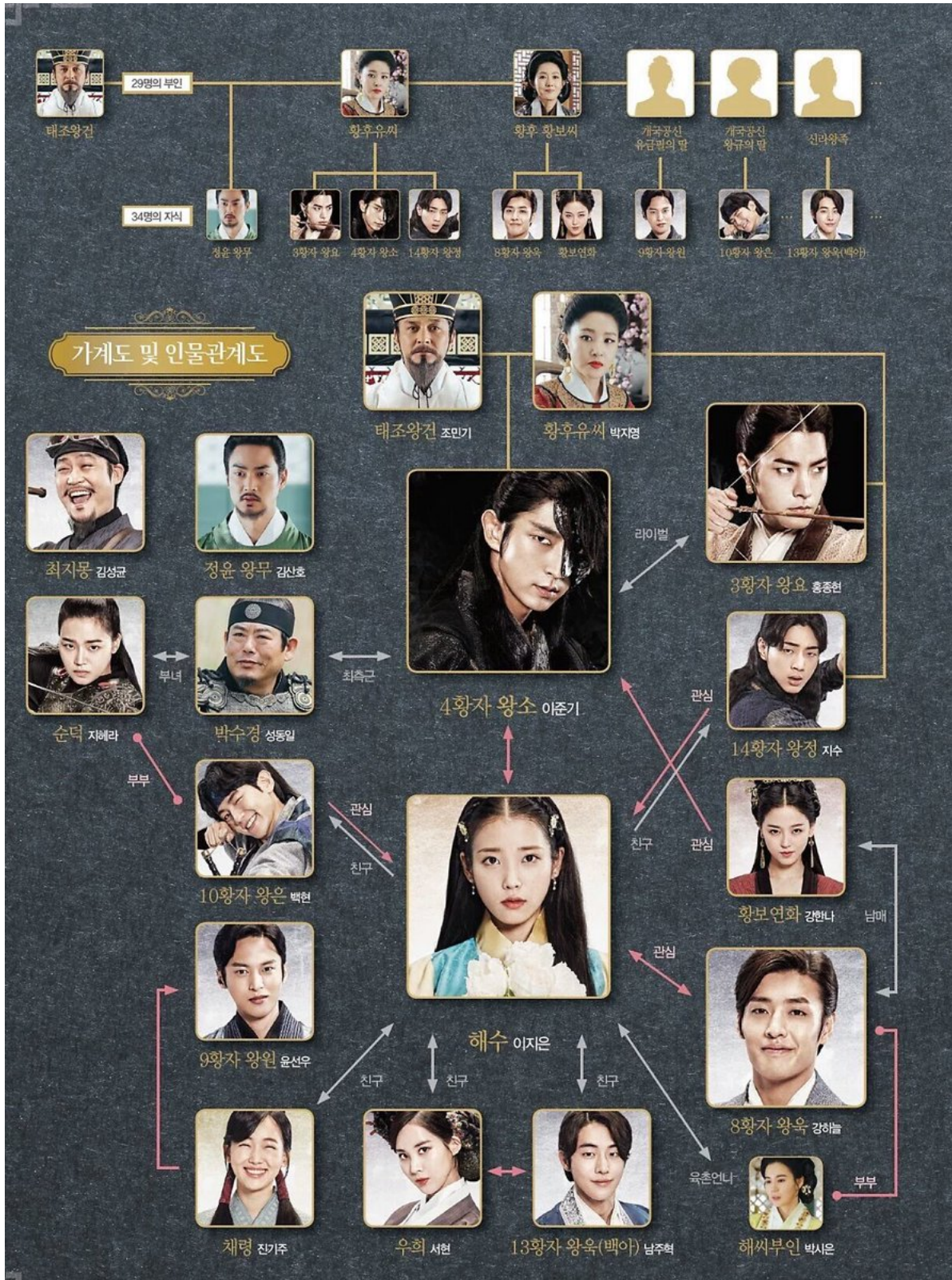
Source: Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS).