

Women: Masters of the Universe:

How the role of women has changed in the comic book community

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Introduction

In this essay I will discuss the role of women in comic books, specifically how their role has changed and developed since the first Captain America comic from World War 2 and their portrayal in the Marvel and DC cinematic universe. I will talk about how modern day problems (Trump/ Class wars) affect the story of the comic books and inspire new superheroes and villains along with brand new narratives and worlds. This essay will go over the gold (1938-1956), silver (1956-1975) and bronze-age (1970-1986) of comics along with comics from the modern era to focus on the way that they portray women differently in relation to the times they were published. I will cover the backlash many female heroes face from the public, more specifically the 'alpha males' gatekeeping the comic book community and how they show disdain for both the old and the new women superheroes for being tough, sure of themselves and fight better than the male heroes most of the time, which may seem 'arrogant' and 'made too powerful' to a select group of consumers.

History

Comics have been published since the 1930s. This decade is known as the Golden Age of comic books. The Golden Age brought to us and developed the different niches in comics. Mad Magazine was popular due to its dry and humorous comedy. Then,

creators started to experiment with storylines and genres. They brought out some of the most popular heroes ever which are the same popular characters we see today both in book form and live action films. This era is where the superhero archetype was created, giving us Captain America, Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. All of which have also made their big screen debut. According to multiple sources Batman, Captain America and Superman always have a place in the top ten rankings of the best and most influential superheroes, (Cartelli, 2019) / (McEntegart, 2013) / (*Top 10 Superheroes of All Time*, 2014). Wonder Woman however is the one that doesn't appear as often as the other three even though she was created during the same era, is even more powerful than Batman and in theory can kill Superman. Her sword is able to injure him and combine that with her army of earth's most fearsome warriors the Amazons who are portrayed as stronger and wiser than men after being created by Aphrodite, she could definitely take him out. Her stories are just as interesting and entertaining as her male counterparts so it confuses me as to why she isn't as celebrated. Even though Wonder Woman was a household name, people didn't seem to know much about her. But Batman and Superman on the other hand most people know plenty about let alone the comic book community. Women who were not classed as superheroes in this era were put down to secondary characters. Romance options and secretaries. After the war when women had assumed jobs as truck drivers and welders, women did not want to give up their new found freedom. This in return mirrored the new comic book archetype, The Femme Fatale, a deadly woman portrayed as sexually aggressive and didn't stay in her proper place as a woman. This was the only way a

woman could play anything other than the hero or a mother. Meslow, *The Week* (2016) suggests “When else could a woman play the villain? When else could a woman be overtly sexual? And when else could sex be depicted as such a blatant tool of power and pleasure, so utterly divorced from childbirth and motherhood?” Comic books reflected the times they were published in. Women during the 50s were the homemakers expected to be holding down the fort looking after household and the children all while maintaining a perfect body and kind attitude while the husband was at work. A perfect example is when Wonder Woman takes a break from fighting crime to work at her other jobs as a babysitter, model or her husband’s secretary. There is an issue where Wonder Woman envies a woman’s life as a wife and mother. This shows that the male creators either tried to appeal to the community of women by taking into account their interest in being the mother hen or make up fantasies, or the creators were trying to appeal to the male community by giving Wonder Woman, daughter of Aphrodite, the woman who commands an army and is stronger than most people, a job in between fighting serving men and babysitting.

The Silver Age of Comic books marks the age of new, relatable heroes and story arcs. The old (but newly revised) and brand new characters such as Spiderman, the newly revamped Flash and The Wasp started to take on characteristics that were more human and relatable to many of the readers. A much more dark and seemingly more realistic era for comic book character backstories. However, it was also a time where outer space

and futuristic technology played a huge part during the story arcs. It was also a time where more female heroes and important characters were put into the mix. As well as The Wasp ('Tales to Astonish', 1963), there was Black Widow (*Tales of Suspense*' 1964), Jane Foster (*Journey into Mystery*' Sept. 1962), Mary Jane Watson ('*The Amazing Spider-Man*' 1965) and Scarlet Witch ('*X-Men*' 1964). During the 60's was the era of Hippies. They created their own culture that promoted free love, peace and drugs. Very anti-establishment and outraged by the Vietnam War, the hippie movement was about rebelling against society. As stated in 'The Oxford Companion to Canadian History' (Hallowell 2004) 'Their non-conformity captivated the media, which spent a great deal of time musing about exactly what a 'hippie' was. For some civic officials, the answer was clear: they were trouble.' Perhaps the non-conformity inspired comic book creators to create female heroes smarter and gifted with greater powers than the Golden Era's creations. The Silver Age of comic books marks the time during the controversy that comic books were to blame for adolescent violence. This was made up by a man called Dr. Frederic Wertham who wrote 'Seduction of the Innocent' (April, 1954). He drew up an imaginary correlation between crime committed by young people and comic books. All of his facts and proof turned out to be fabricated but that was not before he banded with other worried civilians and led a campaign which ended with The Comics Code Authority (CCA) in 1954 which lasted until the 21st century. The code, simply put, meant no questioning of authority figures, moral ambiguity and every story had to have a happy ending i.e bad guy gets caught and good acts are rewarded.

The Bronze Age is where comics started to bring in political issues to the stories making the realism and adult issues more relevant. It was more of the Dark Age of comic books because of the political issues coming into play for the first time since the Golden Age. Probably the most influential thing to happen to the comic book community during 1970 was Jack Kirby's exit from Marvel to work on DC projects. Stan Lee decided to defy the comic book code during this time when he had an issue of Amazing Spiderman (#96 and #97) published that did not cohere to the guidelines. After this, restraints loosened and comics could look into more dark and less lighthearted story lines like when Captain America found out the conspiracy that the Secret Empire was going to take over the United States Government that whose leader was a mirror of then president Nixon. Notable heroes from this age include Wolverine ('Incredible Hulk' 1974), Phoenix ('Uncanny X-Men' 1976) and Storm ('Giant-Size X-Men 1975). This age brought in a lot more people of colour into the stories as well as more women in powerful roles.



'Sensation Comics' (1942)



'The Vision and the Scarlet Witch' (1985)



'The Uncanny X-Men' (1980)

Present Day

Comic books now are more popular than they ever have been in the present day. As we live in the digital age we are seeing more and more adaptations into movies and tv shows make the comic community even bigger having those who have only seen the adaptations on screen and join the community. There is more acceptance of them because of mainstream media, but with copious amounts of shows and movies being put out the quality has diminished, more so with DC as they have always been behind Marvel in rankings since the beginning of the digital age “per-release average for Marvel and DC films is over \$200 million, with Marvel having a very slight edge — \$247 million to \$224 million” Brueggemann, T. (2017). With the current success of the comic industry, many female superheroes have risen to the top also. The Wasp was the first female superhero to have her name in the title of a Marvel movie in Peyton Reed’s film *Ant-Man and the Wasp* (2018). Then this year Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck directed *Captain Marvel* (2019) Marvel’s first female led movie. Captain Marvel is a controversial figure in the comic book world. The female Captain Marvel, once was Ms Marvel, was first introduced in 1967 and was originally a man in 1953 before publishing of the comic stopped because of copyright from DC. Marvel brought out the new Captain Marvel and quickly changed the name in 1967. Since the change and more specifically since the movie came out, Captain Marvel has faced backlash from male fans saying she is “too powerful” with too few flaws. She is comparable to Thor who no one really has a problem with so it seems as if their problem is with the gender, like there’s a problem with an extremely powerful female hero. In the words of the Captain Marvel writer,

“Being a woman in a male-dominated industry sort of sucks, but it doesn’t suck anymore than being a woman in the world. My advice? Be terrifying.” (Kelly Sue DeConnick).

Present day female fans seem to have a tougher time of being accepted into the club purely because of their gender. The term ‘fake geek girl’ surfaced, created by male fans to single out women who went to cons or perhaps didn’t live up to their expectations that fans need to know absolutely everything about a certain comic hero or story. Some even make fun of the fact that people are only fans of the movies and aren’t ‘dedicated’ enough to have gone through the time consuming hobby of collecting each comic in the series or sub series which is a very expensive hobby as most DC and Marvel comics retail for around £3.99 each so it’s a lot to assume someone would invest so much money into something just to impress someone or catch their attention. A fake geek girl is accused of only pretending to like comics to attract the attention and impress the male fans, it has even become a meme to degrade the women who actually enjoy the comics or are even just attending because they find the cons fun to be at. A select few of male fans act as if the comics belong to them and them alone and to have someone who couldn’t possibly love them as much. It also applies to women who seem sexually inaccessible to the male fan who sees this woman dressed as Batman or Black Widow and instantly thinks they did it for attention.



Captain Marvel (November 1973)



Captain Marvel (2019) #9

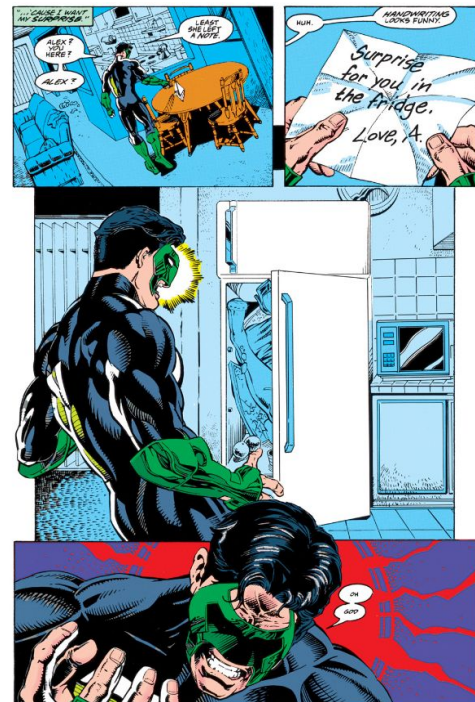
The Changing Role

Although roles for women in comic books has developed over time there still seems to be the notion that they are more of a background effect. There is much more diversity and a bigger attempt to appeal to a bigger audience and market of readers but still an uneven gender portrayal. The female heroes have not been treated well and as a result a page was created showing a long list of characters and what has happened to them. Be it depowered, killed, raped etc it is not healthy to be a woman in comics. This list is called 'Women in Refrigerators', named after the issue of Green Lantern (1994) where the hero came home to find his girlfriend has been killed by the villain and shoved in the fridge. The website is owned by Gail Simone who along with other feminist comic book fans have written down an extensive list of women that have been done wrong by comic

books. They are used as a plot device for the male star or de-powered to either eliminate the character or move the male character's story arc forward. To name a few; Betty Banner (abused, changed into a harpy, multiple miscarriages, dead). Christine Helvin of *Troublemakers* (victim of date rape, discovered she could never have children because she was no longer human). Illyana Rasputin (kidnapped and raised by demons, aged, de-aged, dead). Ms. Marvel I/Warbird (mind-controlled, impregnated by rape, powers and memories stolen, cosmic-powered then depowered, alcoholic). One such instance I remember is of the Joker shooting and paralysing Barbara Gordon (Batgirl) ('Batman: The Killing Joke', 1988) just to drive her father Commissioner Gordon and Batman insane. She was just used as a plot device.



('Batman: The Killing Joke', 1988)



('Green Lantern #54', 1994)

When they are not being tortured or murdered, they are scantily clad, large breasted then most of the time use their sexuality to get ahead in the game. Marvel have started to give actresses' playing the heroines more screen time with less spandex and more stealth suit type costumes which is a big thing in Black Widow's case as we see her suit develop from *Iron Man 2* (2010) film to *Avengers Endgame* (2019). DC however with their latest Suicide Squad (2016) saw Harley Quinn in short shorts, a background in gymnastics and also had her change clothes in front of all of her squad mates. Wonder Woman, although not so much thought less of, is one of the most sexualised heroes in existence. If DC are trying to appeal to the male comic book reading community through overly sexualising their female characters they aren't making it hard to figure out.

Bias

There is no doubt that comic book creators tend to lean more to satisfying the male readers more than the female readers. They are biased to their main consumers: white men. Women are ridiculously under represented in comic books and when they are they tend to be beautiful white women instead of women of colour. It is as if the comic book creators are reluctant to make female counterparts to go alongside their male characters. It is not just the lack of females in the stories themselves but also the lack of women actually creating and designing the comics as well. The whole world of the comic industry is male dominant inside and out. Recently there has been the rise of female comic book creators and even more female comic book readers who see little effort from the industry to be all inclusive and put out brand new content created by

women that aren't spin offs of the male heroes' sidekick or love interest. There is a lack of original and creative comics for women in the Marvel and DC universe that are created by women. Many female creators publish webcomics that turn out to be successful but aren't put into print for fear of not doing well on the shelves in shops. The newest growth in female readers can be linked with the fact that there is a rise in female comic book creators like Gail Simone (DC's Birds of Prey), G Willow Wilson (Ms. Marvel) etc. As well as the rise in female characters; Spiderwoman, Gwenpool and even an all female avengers. Many readers neglect the fact that The Wasp was a founding member of the original Avengers when it was first published but recently she has only found popularity as Ant-Man's love interest on the big screen but did have her name under his on the second installment of the movie franchise.

Diversity

Diversity in comics has improved over time. Black Panther and Luke Cage have become household favourites since first being published and one could even call them mainstream but that does not take away their importance in the comic book world. For a long time creators were catering to a straight, white, male audience as they were the main target audience. However now, there is a strong mix of fans from different backgrounds but it seems as if there is no real push to create new and interesting characters with different skin tones or different genders. But, one breakthrough character is Kamila Khan a muslim teenager and the new Ms. Marvel created by G. Willow Wilson (2013) who is also of Muslim faith. The series won The New York Times

bestseller proving how good the series really is and how much fans enjoyed this fresh new perspective on a hero. The editor Sana Amanat (also of Muslim faith) noted “authentic storytelling is powerful” Ms. Marvel works because she’s well rounded. She wasn’t meant to be a Token character” (2013). However often new stories get brought out with a new character mirroring the reader there is always a chance that the series will get cancelled due to low sales because a larger group within the community has no interest. The chance is increased if the hero is of colour or a female. People want to read what they like to see themselves as, so they mirror themselves through the comic as the main character. Because the main audience seems to be straight, white males, that is what sells the best even if it hurts a minority audience. Despite all the downfalls, Wonder Woman had great success in the 2017 film directed by Patty Jenkins bringing in \$821.2 million at the box office and was also the highest grossing film directed by a woman. Captain Marvel (2019) Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck brought in \$1.128 billion at the box office. That is proof enough that there is a market for those characters and that and they do have a large audience. Also confirmed for the big screen next year is the Birds of Prey film directed by Cathy Yan (2020) which has an incredible amount of hype already because it includes many actresses of different ethnicities portraying beloved comic characters such as Black Canary and Cassandra Cain.



('Ms.Marvel' 2019)



Poster for 'Birds of Prey' (2020)

The Anti-heroine

The Anti-hero trope has always been one of my favourite types of characters. They tend to lack the normal heroic characteristics. A hero does the right things for the right reasons. An Anti-hero only sometimes does the right things for the right reasons which to me is more interesting and more fun way to portray the protagonist or sometimes even the antagonist such as Loki and Catwoman. An Anti-hero is not to be confused with the Anti-villain. The Anti-hero does the right things for not always the right reasons whereas the Anti-villain will fight against the protagonist for an almost noble reason that will have the viewer sympathising with their motivation and cause. Anti-heroes tend to outline the most basic instinct people have which is to act for themselves and their

morals outline our own. They are flawed characters that we always want redemption for, all because they reject societies unjustified ways and even though they fight against the law, something right is being done. They fight for themselves. Female Anti-heroes are very popular for a few reasons. The most sought after female characters include Cassandra Cain (Batgirl) , Black Cat and probably the most popular of all, Catwoman. All three of these characters tend to be drawn in skin tight costumes and have a gift for the more acrobatic and bendy type fighting style. They are used as the male hero's enemy turned love interest turned enemy again and back to love interest. Blackcat is famous for being a recurring figure in the spiderman comics where she started out as a supervillain, fell in love with Spiderman, fell out of love with him and then returned to her criminal ways but always returns to ally with the hero when it counts. Catwoman is renowned for her very complicated love hate relationship with Batman. She does the wrong things for the right reasons making her one of the top candidates for the Anti-hero stereotype. Catwoman helps Batman achieve goals they have in common and despite all of the love interests Batman has, he always seems to have a powerful attraction to Catwoman. It shows in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns* 1992, Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises* 2012 and the TV show *Gotham* developed by Bruno Heller 2014-2019. In every new installment of a comic book story or a movie franchise, as we've seen, the Anti-hero can swap roles at any time to suit their needs or if it helps the main character's development. We have yet to have a movie including an Anti-Hero main character who is also a woman. However there have been plenty of male ones; *Deadpool* 2016 Tim Miller, *Deadpool-2* 2018 David Leitch, *Venom* 2018 Ruben

Fleischer, *Ghost Rider* 2007 Mark Steven Johnson and *Blade* 1998 Stephen Norrington along with countless others. This proves again, how far behind these movie companies are when it comes to casting roles and bringing a comic book to life. However, it should be known that Marvel has started to create much more interesting female antagonists such as Nebula, *Guardians of the Galaxy* 2014, who is half cyborg and the adopted daughter of Thanos. She is a skilled fighter and originally portrayed a less important antagonist but fought against him during Endgame and now resides with the Guardians of the Galaxy. Nebula has been in a total of 4 Marvel movies. Another example is Ghost, *Ant-Man and the Wasp* 2018, throughout the whole film she played one of the main villains and justifiably so when we learn of her circumstances and then switched sides when help for her condition. We have yet to see her in more than one movie. So although many female Anti-heroes maybe popular in the comic book community they have yet to be given the chance to be part of the cinematic universe like their male counterparts.

The Mary-Sue and her male counterpart Gary Stu

The term Mary-Sue is used to describe a female character from any comic, film, TV series, video games or even fanfiction that seems to be too powerful, good at everything and has no understandable flaws emotionally or physically. Basically if she is competent then she is deemed a Mary Sue For example, the female Captain Marvel is 'too powerful' and does not convey emotions in a correct way. Many say she is full of herself when actually she just knows her worth and her power, this could be seen as a threat to

a comic book fan's devotion his hobby. Mary Sue comes from the name of an original character created by Paula Smith in 1973 for her Star Trek parody fanzine 'A Trekkie's Tale'. The character was the youngest lieutenant in the fleet and was deemed a protegee. This marked her as the first Mary Sue. Gary Stu is the male equivalent of Mary Sue. Because most of the time these terms are directed at fan fiction writers, and most fanfiction writers are women, Gary Stu is much less common to see than Mary Sue. This time the term is used to describe a male character with no flaws. Many people regard Superman as a Gary Stu but no one decides to publically boycott the superman movies like they did the Captain Marvel (2019). One Youtube video (Captain Marvel is an Extremely Flawed and Unnecessary Movie, 2019) said that there are "feminazi easter eggs all throughout" in regards to Captain Marvel's back story of her being oppressed by men and that the platonic bond between Captain Marvel and her female friend was "a totally overrated piece of crap". Nobody ever makes the same remarks or upload videos to Youtube about Thor God of Thunder even though on countless occasions he has been arrogant and selfish because he is able to lift Mjolnir (a hammer gifted to Zeus by his father Odin who spoke the words in Thor 2011 directed by Kenneth Branagh, "Whosoever holds this hammer, if he be worthy, shall possess the power of Thor"). Iron Man is another case of being held up on a high pedestal even though he is a show off and bad sportsman even bragging about being a "Genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist." in Avengers 2012 directed by Joss Whedon. More recently, people have labelled Arya Stark from Game of Thrones as a Mary Sue because she was the one to defeat the Night King, the main antagonist for the entire 8 seasons. Even though Arya

had been training for 7 seasons of the TV show and overcame many barriers including men trying to push her aside and her being a master swordswoman even when she went blind for a season. There is no doubt in my mind that the majority of the audience wanted Jon Snow, the most popular character of the programme to be the one to deal the killing blow. The majority of the audience announcing that Arya is a Mary Sue are men. Men who diminished a female character's story all because she is competent enough to take down the villain instead of the male hero. In regards to the fandom side to the comic community, Mary Sue is a term used to shame and punish female authors and creators who are trying to have fun with playing around with their own original characters (also known as OCs) just because the creators fantasise about having a female hero or protagonist who is strong and powerful like many other male heroes and characters. It is traits that most male characters such as an abundance of wealth, tragic backstory or a certain type of attractiveness that could not possibly take form as a female character that produce a Mary Sue. The term is masked as a way to 'critique' characters and 'help' the creator when in actual fact it is a hurtful way of trying to police female characters. This is what makes women and girls not want to try and publish or even go in to the comic book field because of people demeaning their work and publicly calling them out by branding their heroes as 'Mary Sues'. It makes people afraid of writing female characters. Batman can be considered as one of the biggest Mary Sues in the history of comic books and yet he isn't called out as one. He has on multiple occasions overpowered Superman which is extremely unlikely. Superman has a huge variety of superpowers at his disposal whereas Batman's superpower is being rich and

yet he is able to take down a god dressed like a man. The fact of the matter is, characters called Mary Sues these days are women who are too good at stuff and can hold their own against their male counterparts. Women who are capable, skilled and independent just do not exist in most comic book fan's opinions. It is not fair for people to have a problem with the way a character is written just because it goes against their ideals of what a character should or should not be. Women are the Mary Sues and the men get to be the chosen ones.

Gatekeeping

In the comic book world, gatekeeping is one of the biggest problems surrounding the community. In regards to the topic, it is most common to see male comic book and movie fans who are unwilling to share their precious stories and content of which they think were made specifically for them and them alone. It may be because of their insecurity that they dismiss women who have jobs surrounding comic books and the female fans that seem to be growing in number. The majority of these people could have been persecuted for loving comics whether it be by a parent, sibling or maybe even childhood bullies, and they would rather continue being isolated than let anyone new into their little world. This group type of people are known as geeks or nerds. Perhaps they grow up and think no one likes them because of their interest and love for comics and the world surrounding it, when in actual fact it's because they turn on people

they deem as unworthy of the hobby. The people who get the brunt of this force are the women and girls who share this hobby. They become intimidated by the amount of men who demand they share all of their knowledge on a subject so minimal and obscure to the comic they share fondness for and if they fail to produce the correct facts then they are cast out and branded as a 'Fake Geek Girl'. These men believe that a woman who has a genuine interest must meet these unrealistic expectations of knowledge and understanding before they are allowed to join the club, even if they have only recently become interested in comic books. Zina (2015) explained "Getting in my face about what I'm buying or what you think I should know isn't going to help anybody." Which is relevant to all women exposed to this type of attack. "There is a growing chorus of frustration in the geek community with - and there's no other way to put this - pretty girls pretending to be geeks for attention. San Diego Comic-Con is the largest vehicle, but it's hardly the only convention populated with "hot chicks" wearing skimpy outfits simply to get a bunch of gawking geeks' heads to turn, just to satisfy their hollow egos." (Joe Peacock 2012). Peacock also goes on to say "Flaunt it if you got it – and if you're a geek, male or female, and you're strikingly handsome or stunningly beautiful, and you cosplay as a handsome or beautiful character, more power to us all. Hot geeks are hot." So as long as you have passed the geek test and proved yourself, you are a true fan. This whole mindset makes people uncomfortable in the community and the fact that men protest against women joining in on the fun makes women not want to go anywhere near them or the community. I myself have felt intimidated when walking into a comic book shop because as soon as I open the door all the chatter from the boys

and men inside seems to stop completely. I was once standing behind a man in the line for the till to buy a comic and I overheard the male cashier make conversation to the male customer for about 5 minutes discussing the newest Swamp Thing installment. As soon as I walked up to purchase my comic, the cashier made no attempt to talk to me like he did with the previous customer, I didn't even get a Hello. I wouldn't have minded if me and the other customer weren't buying the exact same copy of the latest Swamp Thing comic. I understand the way girls feel when they go into a comic book shop and most of the time leave empty handed because the atmosphere was way too intense and the easiest way to stop it is to remove yourself from the situation, this ultimately gives people bad experiences with the comic industry, then leads to girls and women not wanting to be apart of the community any longer. Male fans are doing the most damage to the comic book industry because of their ways of isolating themselves as if they are protecting the characters and stories. It's like they've grown up and this hobby was all they had to cope so it has become a male dominated industry. However this is changing. According to Noah Berlatsky (2014), his local comic book shop owner said after working in comic retail for 25 years, he said, "especially in the last six or seven years, he's seen a major growth in women comics buyers." So perhaps soon in the near future, the industry will have an equal ratio of male and female fans. Stan Lee, the most well known comic book creator who was loved by all in the industry and fandom was a huge advocate for inclusivity and yet some decide to completely ignore the fact that Stan Lee wanted to include not only more women but people of colour and different sexualities as well. Clara Tan (2018) put it best when she wrote, "In all senses of the

word, Stan was a progressive. He would have been deeply disheartened by the current trend within geek culture to bar and remove the influence of women, people of colour, and the LGBTQ+ community from comics.”

The Future

The comic book industry have made progress to show women in a better light, regardless of how little they have actually done. But still they are not up to date with the times. It seems like they're going at a snail's pace which is not good enough. Only recently have women content creators become recognisable and praised for their work for comic books when there are still many more that deserve the same treatment. It's as if people will find one female creator and hold her to such a high standard that female creators will see it as an impossible feat to achieve themselves because of the standard they have been put against. This puts girls off the whole industry. However, I feel like women have started to make a stand for themselves and break out of the boundaries they have been set by the male community. Now we have lead female superheroes, superheroes of colour and different sexual orientations and even the film franchises have started casting the appropriate actors and actresses' for the roles of beloved comic book heroes and heroines.

Conclusion

In conclusion, women have evolved in comic books since the very first one published. They have gone from super heroines wanting to be mothers and secretaries to their husbands in between fighting crime to the scantily clad antihero using their sexuality to get ahead in the game. The female characters have been abused, killed, paralysed and cut up and left in a refrigerator for the male heroes storyline to progress at their expense. In modern society, the female heroes have started to become more powerful and have more character development just like their male counterparts which is shown in the movie franchises as well as the new installments of comic books. Even though many female characters are still oversexualised and are not thought of being in the same league as the male heroes, there is at least some attempt to include more women even if it is a poor one. Despite the progression of women in comic books, the same can not be said for the female comic book fans. Many are accused of being 'fake geek girls' looking for attention of the male comic book fans and are shunned by them because they can't possibly be interested in comics so are shunned by those who dominate the industry. These girls and women can be seen as a made up threat to the boys and men who hold comic books so dear to themselves so they dismiss them. One of the greatest advocates for women's rights in comic books was Stan Lee. He created and helped pave the way for female characters he didn't create to success. "Mr. Lee started creating female characters who played second fiddle to no one and had agendas besides getting the guy — like conquering evil and saving the world, no biggie — and unparalleled powers like shape-shifting, telekinesis and invisibility." (Salam, 2018).

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