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The Impacts of Dune and The Lord of the Rings on American Culture

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The middle third of the 20th century was a time of hyper-aggressive industry, invention, and progressivism. This portion of the 1900s was instrumental toward shaping modern popular culture. Two of the predominant works were J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy epic *The Lord of the Rings* and Frank Herbert's political science fiction novel *Dune*. Both works inspired massive cult followings upon their release and grew in popularity largely due to the anti-war movement of the 1960s and '70s. They have each inspired countless works of inspiration that include some of the most popular movies and games from the 1970's through the modern day. Their respective creations are so important because of this influence. These two masterpieces of literature have shaped our modern landscape of their respective genres. Thus, these two novels should be considered as the foundational pieces for our modern understanding of both science fiction and fantasy.

Tolkien's creation of *The Lord of the Rings* came about in a more unconventional manner than a lot of other pivotal works of fiction. The book was itself a product of other works that he created. In a letter Tolkien wrote in 1956, he writes how his greater legendarium of the world in which *The Lord of the Rings* is set started out as a way to create a mythology of the English world. He also mentioned that he knew that "'legends' depend upon the language to which they belong", so he began creating the languages for his world (Tolkien, Letter 180). In fact, the languages played such a large part in the creation of the world, that he goes so far as to say that "the 'stones' were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse' (Tolkien, Letter 165).

Along with these languages he began expanding upon the legendarium lore and started writing *The Silmarillion*, the work that he would spend the rest of his life trying to produce. Eventually, while expanding upon his legendarium and writing poetry, he ended up writing what became the beginnings of *The Hobbit*. As *The Hobbit* became more popular, his publishers wanted a sequel that further focused on hobbits. Tolkien began writing this work, focused on the ring that Bilbo finds in a cave. He expands the lore of this ring and begins writing an epic about the evil of this ring and how its heroes go on a journey to destroy it in order to overcome the darkness growing within Middle Earth.

Thematically, *The Lord of the Rings* is not especially foundational, using many "classic" themes that show up within literature. The most prominent of these themes is the struggle between good and evil, with the good ultimately overcoming the evil at the end. This is nothing new to Tolkien, but his work extrapolates on this largely through the creation of his characters. It is easy to see many characters as being polar opposites of each other - Saruman vs. Gandalf, elves vs. orcs, Frodo vs. Gollum. Despite the obvious polarity in many aspects of the book, Rutledge points out that this "line" between good and evil is muddled because "'good' people can be and are capable of evil under certain circumstances" (P.13). This is evident through the fall to evil that we see many characters face. Boromir attempting to steal the Ring, Denethor attempting to kill himself and Faramir rather than properly defend Gondor, and the overall polar dynamic between Smeagol wanting to help the hobbits and Gollum wanting to kill them to take the Ring are all critical plot points that indicate this blurring of the lines between good and evil. Along with this, it is often noted that none of the villains start out as evil. Though this often goes back further into the legendarium, Gollum, Sauron, and Sarumon all begin as creatures with at minimum inherent neutrality or even good, but eventually fall to evil.

Another major point of emphasis throughout the epic is death. Perhaps the most famous death in the novel is Gandalf in Moria. However, this death allows him to be resurrected as Galdalf the White. As Tolkien himself noted "[*The Lord of the Rings*] is about death and deathlessness" (Tolkien, Letter 203). The elves are immortal, but play a central role in the story and are jealous of Men for being able to go to a place beyond the plane of being because it is a place they cannot go. Along with this, Sauron's One Ring prolongs life and allows for immortality, as evidenced through Bilbo's long lifespan and Smeagol's ability to have lived for hundreds of years, to the point where he is basically no longer a Hobbit, but his own entity.

Similar to the ways in which the Ring causes a lust for immortality, it also creates an obsession with power, another theme of the fantasy genre exemplified in LOTR. The central premise of the entire novel is Sauron's search for the Ring in order to maximize his power and carry out the ways in which he wants the direction of the world to go. It's this same obsession for power that spurs Sarumon to turn away from the direction of the White Council and side with Sauron. Sarumon does not choose the side of Sauron in order to help him in his ways, but in order to advance his own wishes until he is able to get ahold of the Ring himself, which he will then use to form the world to the ways in which he thinks it should be run. Thus, the two major villains of the entire book are focused on the power that comes with the Ring.

This power, however, is limited to the villains. In this way, it is telling how the story makes an emphasis to show how various heroes are tempted by but refuse the Ring's corruption. In this refusal, they gain a moral victory over the likes of Sauron and Sarumon. The aforementioned attempt by Boromir to steal the ring precedes his death almost immediately. In this way, it feels as though Boromir succumbing to the corruption of the Ring is what causes his death. However, Galadriel, Gandalf, Sam, and Aragorn all are either able to resist the temptation

of the Ring or refuse to even place themselves in the position to be tempted by the Ring. In each of these examples it is a significant point in the respective character arcs that they are able to deny the temptation in this way, and proof that they truly understand the danger of the ring and the addiction to corruption that comes with it.

The most intriguing point of resistance to corruption, however, is that of Frodo. He is able to carry the Ring for months on end without turning wicked as a result. His ability to put it on to help in certain scenarios and still be able to take it off is something we only see Bilbo do in *The Hobbit*. However, as shown at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings*, the Ring clearly has a hold on him to the point that he is barely able to give it up willingly. Frodo, on the other hand, does not give the Ring up willingly at the summit of Mount Doom. This should be forgiven, however, as the Ring pulls on Frodo stronger and stronger as he approaches the mountain. While there is no way of being sure, I believe Frodo resisted the power of the Ring better than anyone else would have in that scenario aside from Sam. This seems to stem from the lack of greed and desire for power that hobbits have. Thus Tolkien uses the Ring as a way to warn about the dangers of power and corruption, raising the hobbits on a pedestal to tell audiences that humility and simplicity should be considered virtues in this way.

While *The Lord of the Rings* may not be monumental in its choice of theme, it had massive impacts on the fantasy genre. As noted by Jane Yolen in *After the King*, fantasy became a marketable genre after Tolkien due to the highly positive reception of the public (P. viii). While famous pieces of fantasy had been written prior to *The Lord of the Rings*, it wasn't until Tolkien that this genre really started to blossom. Tolkien also very quickly became by far the most recognizable and marketable author of the genre. There was an explosion of fantastical novels

throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of which took direct influence from the style of Tolkien.

As Betsy Wollheim told *Locus*, the fantasy genre had for the most part surpassed science fiction in popularity by the early 1980s. A major part of this was because of the uptick in the genre as a result of publishers' demand for more fantasy in a post-Tolkien world. In a world where technology had yet to reach the boom we've seen by today's standards, fantasy thrived as a way to escape the fear of Communism and nuclear detonation.

Today's society, however, has seen a drastic increase in the interest in technological influence on our life. As a result, science fiction has thrived. Frank Herbert's *Dune* was a massive inspiration for the science fiction genre that has helped transform it into the massive cultural influencer that it is today.

Dune, despite being pointed out by many people as taking place on a planet that is an obvious allegory for the Middle East, was at first inspired by dunes that Frank Herbert visited in Oregon. According to his son Brian, Herbert was writing an article that ended up being scrapped in favor of *Dune* about a project by the US Department of Agriculture to control the movement of the Oregon dunes by implementing wild grass. "He sat back at his desk and remembered flying over the Oregon dunes in a Cessna. Sand. A desert world. He envisioned the earth without the technology to stop encroaching sand dunes, and extrapolated that idea until an entire planet had become a desert." To this extent, Herbert considered using the neighborly Mars as a setting for *Dune*. He decided against this, however, and decided to create his own planet and planetary system because he wanted to avoid readers coming in already having preconceived thoughts about the planet (Boyle). By creating Arakkis from scratch, Herbert created a world in which readers would have to learn everything new.

Herbert was also inspired by the idea of what a society would look like if our current world were destroyed. As noted by Immerwahr, Herbert was inspired by the ideas of a native American friend - Howard Hansen of the Quileute Tribe - who wrote about how the American logging industry was negatively impacting his reservation. Hansen told Herbert "White men are eating the earth. They're gonna turn this whole planet into a wasteland, just like North Africa." Herbert agreed, believing that if treated poorly the Earth could turn into a "big dune".

Part of what makes *Dune* so influential is that it tackles major themes focused on human society, especially of the mid-20th century. The Islamic religion and people not only helped inspire the worldbuilding of *Dune*, they helped inspire one of the book's central themes of Middle Eastern relations. The influence of Islam is incredibly direct in nature. As noted by Ali Karjoo-Ravary from CBC Radio's *Day 6*, many Islamic tribes in the Middle East and Northern Africa inspired the Fremen. This is clear in how the Fremen are often small tribes finding their ways to live despite the hot and dry conditions. The language of the Fremen is also highly inspired by Middle Eastern languages. More than anything, though, the religion of Arrakis and the Fremen is highly influenced by Islam - to the extent that, as noted by Karjoo-Ravary, Herbert even talks about Islam by name in drafts and letters to editors and fans.

It cannot be denied that *Dune* is heavily based upon the culture of Middle Eastern and North African peoples. Arakkis, much like many portions of the Middle East, is seemingly uninhabitable and covered in desert. Its major commodity, spice, is a resource that is desired by the rest of the known world and is essential for long-distance travel. The spice is clearly allegorical for the oil possessed so strongly by the US and other Western nations. Local tribes of Fremen band together under Muad'Dib, a ruler to whom they are so devoted that they follow religiously and attack under a "religious crusade" (Herbert, 658) known as *jihad* - one of the

many words taken directly from or inspired by Arabic. It should be noted that *jihad* in it's

original uses was used to refer to a holy war. Today, the word has become synonymous with

terrorism by ISIS and Al-Quaieda, but *jihad* would not have had this context during Herbert's

writing. Because of its current connotation, the most recent *Dune* movie chooses to remove the

world altogether, with Paul swapping it for "holy war".

It should also be noted that the Fremen are considered an afterthought by the Great

Houses for much of the novel. Just as many Western countries think of the Middle East

(especially in the time of Herbert's writing) as merely a way to support their need for oil, the

Imperium only considers the Fremen as a nuisance getting between them and their ever-needed

spice. Baron Harkonnen is a ruthless tyrant prone to killing everyone in his way. As such, he also

would prefer to kill the Fremen that prevent him from getting his much-desired spice. Despite

being one of the fallen heroes of the story, Duke Atreides even plans to exploit Arrakis by using

the Fremen as part of a plan to combat his enemies. This could be seen as an allusion to the

United States and other Western countries invading the Middle East and starting wars in order to

secure their oil reserves.

Similar to political ideology surrounding the Middle East being a major theme of *Dune*,

Herbert focuses much of his political allegory on the collapse of major world powers and the

liberation from Imperial Powers by Middle Eastern and North African countries. As pointed out

by Senior, the fight for power between the Atreideses and the Harkonnens is similar to the

political fight between America and the USSR. Just as America gains more influence over much

of the areas that they were fighting for influence over, Paul wins favor over the Fremen and

pushes out Harkonnen leaders.

Paul, after escaping death at the hands of Baron Harkonnen, flees to the desert. He begins to work with and lead the Fremen and work toward building an army to fight back against the Harkonnens once again. If Paul is to be compared to the American powers in the 20th century, their movement to the desert and influence over the Fremen can be seen as the attempt of Americans attempting to influence control over the Middle East and other parts of the developing world at this time in order to get a step ahead of their political rivals. This analogy is not perfect, as Paul's influence of the Fremen is seen in a positive light, while the US's upon the Middle East is driven by imperialist ideas. The Harkonnens, however, do take over this role of the major power attempting to subjugate the residents of this world with their political ideals. Perfect, acknowledging not a 1:1 pairing was the best way to fix it.

The subsequent revolt against the Harkonnen by the Fremen led by Muad'Dib, Paul's Fremen name, can be seen as a twofold metaphor. First, it is a continuation of the allegory of the collapse of major powers. *Dune* makes a lot of predictions of the events of the 20th century. One of these events predicted the fall of the Soviet Union. Continuing with the comparison between the Harkonnens and the Soviet Union, the Harkonnens continually dismiss the Fremen as no people to be feared. Additionally, they were inadequately prepared for revolt of the citizens under their rule, just as the Soviet Union underestimated their annexed states' ability to leave the Republic. Another point of similarity from the books is the US's invasion of Vietnam. Just as the US drastically underestimates the people of Vietnam, so too did the Harkonnen underestimate the Fremen. Secondly, the Fremen revolt is comparable to the development of Middle Eastern countries as they kicked out their European occupiers, though the Fremen disperse the Harkonnen much more violently than the ways in which the Middle East has developed. Senior quotes an article by Edward Friedland, Paul Seabury, and Aaron Wildavsky that tells how in the

1930s, the Middle East was essentially "property" of various European nations - mostly France and England - and that it would have been extremely hard to imagine an uprising by those Middle Eastern countries serious enough to affect the influence of those European countries. Thus, the Fremen dismantling the Imperium through the use of guerrilla warfare is similar to the ways in which colonies, whether by name or by practice of western powers in the 20th century sought to gain autonomy. Just as the Fremen's fighting of the Harkonnens resulted in a shift of power balance in the Imperium, these colonies dramatically decreased the global influence of the major powers.

Along with the politics of empires and people of power, *Dune* makes it clear that this book is about interpersonal relationships by virtually removing technology. Sure, there are electromagnetic shields, spice miners, flying ships, and other tools that do not exist in the real world, but the idea of technology-centered societies as we have come to know them in science fiction novels is completely non-existent. This was completely intentional, as Herbert wanted to focus on the people of this fictionalized future (Michaud). By removing computers from the equation, Herbert is able to focus on the logistics of how people are able to survive and adapt to living on this unlivable planet. This is especially true with the latter half of the book which focuses largely on Paul and Lady Jessica's adaptation to living among the Fremen. The Fremen truly have no technology aside from the suits that retain nearly all their water to make surviving entirely in the desert possible. By focusing on people rather than technology, Herbert forces the solutions to the problems he proposes being solved not by war machines and high-performance computers, but human agency and a little bit of psychedelic sand magic.

Along with major societal themes, *Dune* has had a major impact on the genre of science fiction. Asking any scholar on science fiction or *Dune* specifically will note that audiences

reading *Dune* upon its publication in 1965 and the subsequent years after had never read any piece of fiction before. Science fiction usually did not exist in epic novels, typically favoring short stories or novellas. Science fiction at the time also typically tended to focus on suspenseful plots rather than the exploration of new worlds (Brinkoff). *Dune* was really the first piece of science fiction to focus on a reality centered around non-Earth-dwelling humans.

There are many branches of science fiction, many of which take no influence from *Dune*, like the alien invasion subgenre or more recent dystopian novels set in various post-apocalyptic versions of Earth. However, one popular branch of science fiction deals with space travel and interplanetary colonization. This is really where *Dune* stands out as a major influence. Additionally, although the idea of an oppressive great empire ruled by a tyrannical governor was not new to *Dune*, this idea of a space council governing multiple planets and collecting resources from each planet to aid the ruling classes (see Star Wars's Empire and multiple empires within Marvel comics) comes from the mind of Frank Herbert.

Though based on very different ideas, both Tolkien and Herbert were masterminds in world-building. In this way, they both went extremely in-depth into the creation of their worlds. Tolkien spent the majority of his adult life dedicated to the creation of Middle Earth as well as the entire history of Arda. He took many precautions to ensure that the world he was creating could be a believable one, with an explanation for how everything came to be for the characters he writes in his magnum opus. Tolkien also created within this world many new races and creatures like hobbits, Ents, and orcs. Herbert took a different approach. He decided to jump thousands of years into the future, with the only history coming through the appendices telling us about the destruction of computers and a little bit about the history of the Bene Gesserit and their religion. However, he does develop upon the history of an already-existing universe. Rather than

inventing new races and a new Earth, he creates ways to travel space, mine for a new resource, and use this resource to see the future.

Inherent to the importance of *The Lord of the Rings* is how expansive its lore is. Though *Dune* and its sequel also create an extremely deep lore, the work is not known for its lore in the same way not because of its lore. The world building of Tolkien had to be vast and expansive in order to be the pivotal work of fantasy that it is. Without the in-depth creation of Arda, the work would not be as foundational as it is. While the lore of *Dune* is expanded upon in its sequels, *Dune* itself lacks the lore that *The Lord of the Rings* contains, instead choosing the focus of its story on the immediate conflict, leaving much of the world-building as minor details to serve the greater story or hidden away in annexes and dictionaries. *The Lord of the Rings* is often praised due to its expansive world building, but *Dune*'s praise is largely directed as its political and environmental allegories. This difference in world-building between *Dune* and *The Lord of the Rings* is inherent to the respective genres of these works. Works of fantasy exist in alternate worlds with magic and imaginative creatures, while science fiction expands upon our current history while focusing on the ways in which the science of the world is different than our own.

The two works also share similar themes - one of these being religion. While it is less obviously important to the plot (and entirely excluded from the movies) the impact of religion on each novel is an important note of distinction. *The Lord of the Rings* actually has no inherent religion involved. There is no discussion of any gods, or any focus on spirituality (although there are gods within the greater Tolkien legendarium, but they do not play the same role as gods as are typically considered). However, there are more than a few hints on themes of Christianity throughout the novel. One of the most noteworthy influences of Christianity on *The Lord of the Rings* is the idea of a Messianic figure. Though there is no one single character that is an obvious

single example of Christ's manifestation in this world, Gandalf, Aragon, and Frodo are all figures who represent various different aspects of Christ - including each having their own symbolic deaths and resurrections. Other notable Christian iconography within *The Lord of the Rings* is the Lady Galadriel as the Virgin Mary and the elvish *lembas* as Eucharistic bread. Similarly, Christian themes such as repentance, penance, and baptism appear throughout the book's pages (Olar).

Unlike *The Lord of the Rings*, religion is directly addressed within the pages of *Dune*. The Orange Catholic Bible is the religious text produced by the Imperium that "contains elements of most ancient religions" that holds the core tenet "Thou shalt not disfigure the soul" (Herbert, 662). As noted by Brinkoff, "Its spiritual teachings, a collection of common themes taken from both monotheistic and polytheistic religions, serve as guiding principles for how citizens of the galactic empire should behave and approach the concept of progress." After the destruction of computers in the Butlerian Jihad, the Bene Gesserit was established as a "school of mental and physical training" and although this is not religious in the sense of worshipping gods, it is spiritual and reflective on many Eastern religions. Additionally, the Fremen are a very religious people. Not only do they have their own mythology, but the way they view Paul Muad'Dib as a fulfillment of religious prophecies and as a leader of devout followers towards the end of the book is clearly similar to the ways in which early religious followers view their religious leader. So, like *The Lord of the Rings*, religion is not a direct plot device, but it is so much more important to character motivations than within Tolkien's work.

Another major theme present in both novels, and perhaps the most important, is that of environmentalism. Though through very different means, both books warn about technological and industrial development and their effects on the planet. Each novel is inherently centered

around the desolation of a planet and the subsequent struggle of the worlds' residents to adjust to a new world.

  The Lord of the Rings addresses Tolkien's fears of industrialization and man-made destruction of Earth. Mordor is the representation of this. If we are to take the Shire and the Hobbits to be a place and people most free from sin, we should also consider the Shire to be the most representative of Tolkien's beliefs about what the best version of the world should look like - free from the corruption and industrialized business of bustling cities. As previously mentioned, throughout the novel, we see many examples of man being changed because of war and greed. The war itself is a product of greed. Thus, it would be logical to assume that the destruction of the Ring would cause the end of the war, and allow for the world to begin the process of rebuilding. As the heroic hobbits return to the Shire, however, they find that much of the Shire as the characters had left it had been ruined. Gates were erected and factories replaced mills. This shows the effects of industrialization caused by greed and lack of respect for the Earth. The most pure region in the world had been corrupted. They, however, were able to rebuild the Shire and halt the effects of war and industrialization. The modern world cannot return to an age before modernization in this way.

  Dune does not criticize industrialization, but rather imagines what it looks like for humanity to live in an unlivable world. The Leto family's movement from a planet of water to one of desert and subsequent adaptation to said desert planet is allegorical for the way in which humanity will need to learn how to adjust to a new planet if we strip our planet of the ability to host life. In this way, it imagines what would happen if humanity were to be forced to either colonize a new planet or adjust how we live on a barren Earth. This is Herbert's warning to humanity - respect the planet we live on, because we live in a unique ecosystem that allows us.

As stated by Immerwahr, "[B]y publication Herbert came to see [planetary ecologist] Dr. Kynes as the problem more than the solution. He shrank the character's role, made him half-Fremen, and, even still, felt that Kynes was an imperfect hero. In *Dune*, Kynes dies in the desert, cursing science as he does. This was the 'turning point of the whole book,' Herbert explained, the moment when 'Western man,' living 'out of rhythm with nature,' got what he deserved."

There are many themes within each respective novel that were not discussed above. However, each follows similar ideologies. These ideologies are where the thematic differences between *The Lord of the Rings* and *Dune* are most evident. With the former, themes focus largely on internal struggles, while the latter focuses on political / interpersonal struggles. This is evidently where the biggest inherent difference between the two novels lies, especially regarding religion. Tolkien decides to focus more on spirituality and self-introspection influenced by religion, but Herbert decides to focus on how religion influences people and society.

Given how influential both *The Lord of the Rings* and *Dune* have been in their respective genres it only makes sense for them to have influenced other works. Beginning with Tolkien's influence on pop culture, the most obvious culture impact the books had was the creation of Peter Jackson's blockbuster trilogy. This brought the already famous books to an entire new level of fame. Not only did it bring in hundred of millions of dollars of revenue, it also entered pop culture through famous scenes and quotes. "You shall not pass!", "One does not simply enter Mordor", and Gollum's "My precious" have entered meme lore and are famous even among non-fans. Aside from the movies, countless games have been based on the LOTR book. Tolkien had a major influence on people of his time too, inspiring the hippie mantra "Frodo lives!" and even rock music - particularly in lyrical imagery (Hawkins).

In terms of games, dozens of video games across decades and systems are readily available for any willing fans. From EA's classic *The Lord of the Rings* games, to Lego parody games, to modern Shadow of War games, fans cannot seem to get enough of fighting in the world of Middle Earth. Perhaps *The Lord of the Rings*'s greatest influence, however, is on tabletop and role playing games - *Dungeons and Dragons* being the most famous of these. It's obvious there was influence on DnD from Tolkien's legendarium, as many of the races or classes that characters have the options to play as are those same character aspects that we see within the pages of *The Lord of the Rings*. According to DnD creator Gary Gygax in Dragon Magazine Issue #95, the popularity of Tolkien is what inspired him to create his own work within the fantasy realm. However, he found the books rather boring and non-adventurous as far as fantasy goes. He claims that (aside from hobbits) many of the creatures of Tolkien's world that appear in Gygax's game is merely building upon similar myths and legends of various cultures. It is true, that he notes, that the worlds of D&D are nearly completely distant from Tolkien's Middle Earth and that it is quite hard to play a LOTR game in D&D. Many modifications or other fan-made adventures attempt to make D&D more able to be playable as a Tolkien adventure, but through Gygax's game itself, there is very little inherently Tolkien-esque. It should be noted, however, that in 1977 many names of creatures in D&D had to be changed due to a cease-and-desist from a firm that had licensed *The Lord of the Rings* - changing "hobbit" to "halfling" and "ent" to "treant" among others (Ricketts). So, while much of *Dungeons and Dragons* is original or inspired by similar source material as *The Lord of the Rings*, it's clear that without Tolkien's pivotal work the game would likely either not exist or look extremely different than how it is today.

Dune has had a much less direct influence on pop culture than *The Lord of the Rings*. There are not *Dune* games, TV series, and other pieces of culture that are directly famous because of *Dune* in the same way that is seen from LOTR. The book has emerged to prominence again because of Denis Villenueve's *Dune* movie, the first part of which premiered in 2021. However, the influence *Dune* has had on popular culture comes more through influencing the creation of other works. While Tolkien has clearly had influence on literature and cinema, this largely goes only so far as to the extent of the progression of fantasy as a genre because of *Lord of the Rings*. There has not been much, though, to come from the fantasy epic that has had direct influence on other works to the extent as *Dune*.

Many of the most famous science fiction works of the 20th century were directly influenced by Dune. As noted by 2021 film adaptation director Denis Villeneuve, *Star Wars* has so much that was nearly directly influenced by *Dune*. Tatooine is nearly a direct rip-off of Arakkis, an evil Empire with large ships looks to have power over the galaxy, the Jedi have an inner power similar to that of the Bene Gesserit, and, of course, space travel all come from *Dune* directly into *Star Wars*. Additionally, it spawned the movement of the psychedelic space science fiction that is seen throughout the 1970s and '80s, particularly in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Taylor-Foster).

It's clear that both *Dune* and *The Lord of the Rings* are two of the most important genre-defining novels of the 20th century. They were both massively influential in promoting and changing their genres, discussed many similar culture themes, and impacted pop culture greatly. The influence they have at large is inherent to the influence their respective genres have had on popular culture in our modern society. Tolkien did not promote much discussion about society at large or dramatically change the genre of fantasy as a whole. However, *The Lord of the Rings*

greatly influenced the way society thought of fantasy. It transformed the genre from being old

and rather boring literature to an accessible genre that can be experienced in many different

forms by a large variety of audiences. *Dune* has certainly been influential in how the science

fiction genre has changed since its release, but its influence comes mostly through its predictive

nature of the changing political landscape of Western powers and humanity's role within nature.

As stated by Senior, "Herbert foresees many of the issues that face us most insistently today:

production and price of oil, environmental threats, the escalating instability of the Middle East,

Muslim fundamentalism, the erosion of monolithic world powers, the failure - or abandonment -

of diplomacy, and the staggering cost in lives, money, and matèriel." Thus, these two novels

have helped shape the context in which we see these genres. Fantasy allows an opportunity to

create an entirely new and expansive world full of make-believe creatures generally featuring

people wielding Iron Age equipment and enforcing pre-industrial ideas. Meanwhile, science

fiction allows creators to imagine different near-or-distance futures of our universe facing

problems adjacently or directly related to mankind's relationship to technology.

<p style="text-align:center">Works Cited</p>

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