

AN ECOCRITICAL
ANALYSIS OF HUMAN
– OTHERS AND
NATURE – OTHERS IN
POPULAR ANIMATED
FANTASY SERIES

A Master's Thesis

by

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Ankara

August 2021

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Bilkent University 2021

To us Others



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IN POPULAR ANIMATED FANTASY SERIES

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDIA AND VISUAL STUDIES

THE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

August 202

ABSTRACT

AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HUMAN-OTHERS AND NATURE-OTHERS IN POPULAR ANIMATED FANTASY SERIES

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August 2021

This thesis examines the representations of human-Others and nature-Others in popular animated fantasy series from an ecocritical perspective, and with an ecofeminist approach. The five animated series this thesis investigates, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018-2020), *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* (2020), *Disenchantment* (2018-), *Wizards* (2020), and *The Dragon Prince* (2018-), while all being fantasy texts, have environmentally conscious stories that revolve around characters who are framed as Others in most societies. These marginalized Others, as expected from the fantasy genre, are not always presented as Others we know from our reality, but as mythical creatures and humanoids. Through a close reading of the character designs, settings, and the narratives of these five animated fantasy series, this study aims to explore and uncover new territories where the voices of both human-Others and nature-Others are heard and made clear.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Animations, Fantasy, Other

ÖZET

POPÜLER FANTASTİK ANİMASYON DİZİLERDE İNSAN- ÖTEKİLER VE DOĞA-ÖTEKİLER’İN EKOELEŞTİREL ANALİZİ

Revna Altıok
Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar

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Ağustos 2021

Bu tez, popüler fantastik animasyon dizilerinde insan Ötekiler ve doğa Ötekilerin temsillerini ekoeleştirel bir bakış açısıyla ve ekofeminist bir yaklaşımla incelemektedir. Bu tezde araştırılan beş animasyon dizisi, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018-2020), *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* (2020), *Disenchantment* (2018-), *Wizards* (2020), ve *The Dragon Prince* (2018-), tümü fantastik metinler olsa da, çoğu toplumda ‘Öteki’ olarak adlandırılan karakterlerin etrafında şekillenen çevreye duyarlı hikayelere sahiptir. Bu marjinalleştirilmiş Ötekiler, her zaman kendi gerçekliğimizden bildiğimiz Ötekiler olarak değil, fantastik türünden beklenildiği gibi, efsanevi yaratıklar ve insansılar olarak sunulur. Bu çalışma, bu beş fantastik animasyon dizinin karakter tasarımlarını, mekanlarını ve anlatılarını yakın okuma metodu aracılığıyla hem insan Ötekilerin hem de doğa Ötekilerin seslerinin duyulduğu ve netleştirildiği yeni alanlar keşfetmeyi ve ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekoeleştiri, Ekofeminizm, Animasyon, Fantastik, Öteki

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful for my thesis advisors Professor Colleen Kennedy-Karpat and Professor Joshua Bartlett.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Professor Colleen Kennedy-Karpat. Without her assistance, her mentorship, and her tremendous support, this thesis could not be realized. Whenever the lights went off and I found myself in a cold and dark tunnel, she came with a torch to lighten up my map and steered me towards the right direction while also consistently allowing this thesis to be my own work. I am thankful for her guidance and will always think of her as a great source of inspiration in my academic life.

I would also express my sincere gratitude to Professor Joshua Bartlett, whose insightful feedback sharpened my thinking, for his excellent guidance and continuous support.

I am grateful to Halis Enis Dönmez, who encouraged me to keep writing, and helped me to see everything in a new light. I'm indebted for his patience, kindness, and existence which I hope will be forever.

I would like to thank my family both blood and chosen, specifically to the most beautiful woman and best mother ever existed. Even when she was far away, I have always felt her hand on my left shoulder that constantly gave me strength.

Lastly, I owe my deepest gratitude to all the human and nature-Others around the world for their presence always made me feel less lonely.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in”
(Leopold, 1966).

“Nature sends us a message” claimed Inger Andersen, executive director of the UN Environment Programme, while talking about the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing climate crisis (Carrington, 2020). While it anthropomorphizes nature itself, this statement is a great point to raise and emphasize among other problems — increased violence against women in Turkey reached its peak, people of color on the streets for equality, and ongoing social repression of queer folk— because it gives voice to the struggle of the non-human that people mostly tend to ignore.

The pressure on the natural world through things like habitat loss, climate change, and pollution has increased in the last 50 years due to the explosion in global trade, consumption, and human population growth (WWF, 2020). All this harm humans have caused to the environment is undeniably one of the most debated but also ironically one of the most ignored issues in today’s society. Some

believe that nature is strong enough to heal itself, even if humanity goes towards extinction while others suggest that the important thing is that nature is suffering right now and problems such as climate change and global warming need to be obviated. The rise of global temperatures, the warming and acidification of the oceans, the shrinking of ice sheets, the glacial retreat, and the extreme weather events are all evidence that climate change is taking place right now and that the environmental crisis is real (NASA, 2018).

Using this overwhelming evidence from expert sources, this thesis recognizes the dire scope of today's environmental problems and takes global warming and climate change as factual and scientifically proven. However, it also recognizes the ignorance and indifference of humans towards this natural crisis has not only made the emergency obviously in need of visible action, but it has also revealed some connections between women, various human Others, and nature – all of whom are also desperate to make their voices heard.

While Andersen urged us to listen to nature's warning during the coronavirus pandemic, there was something else that never stopped giving us messages: the media. According to data (see Appendix A) gathered by Reelgood, a platform that combines all the subscription-based streaming platforms, animation is the genre that gained the most streaming share during the pandemic lockdown, together with comedy, sci-fi, and fantasy (Christiansen, 2020). This result encouraged me to look at animated fantasy series and whether or not they had something to say about the relationship between humans and non-human nature.

Blending all of this with the ecofeminist notion of “nature as Other” (Warren, 2000; Plumwood, 2002), in this thesis, I will explore the relationship between and the portrayal of the human-Others and the nonhuman Nature-Other in popular animated fantasy series through ecocritical analysis with an ecofeminist approach. I will analyze the chosen animated series from three different angles. By analyzing the representation of human-Others and nonhuman nature-Others in these animated fantasy series, this thesis aims to find revelatory answers to these research questions:

- How are the human-Others and the nonhuman nature-Others portrayed in popular animated TV series in the fantasy genre?
- How is the relationship between the characters and their wider environment reflected in the character designs?
- How is ecocritical thought embodied in the settings of the animated fantasy series?
- Who started conflicts regarding environmental issues? Who bears agency and responsibility for resolving environmental issues?

To answer these questions, CHAPTER II looks into relevant concepts such as ecocriticism, ecofeminism, animation and fantasy, their histories and previous research. I also explain my corpus selection criteria step by step and will introduce the close reading method that was employed in this study. Then, in CHAPTER III I focus on character designs, and how ecocritical and ecofeminist thought is embodied in the designs of certain characters. CHAPTER IV analyzes the settings of the animated fantasy series through the examination of fantasy maps and certain setting conflicts created in fantasy narratives. Lastly, in CHAPTER V, I investigate the

animated series' narrative structures through Victoria Schmidt's Heroine's Journey model and Claude Levi- Strauss' theory of binary oppositions.

After concluding the study, some patterns have revealed themselves regarding the animated series and their treatment of the human Other and nonhuman nature Other. Although there were lots of important points, which are discussed thoroughly in the following chapters, the most striking discovery is how these animated fantasy series introduce changes in the alignments of some social values. While in traditional narratives, anthropocentric (human-centered thinking that assumes the superiority of humans over nature) and androcentric (male-centered thinking that assumes the superiority of men over women) ideals were usually aligned with the good, the narratives of the animated fantasy series that form the corpus of this thesis, reverse some of these binaries. The animated fantasy series frame "feminine" ideals as more valuable and show both nature and human Others as capable of winning core ideological conflicts.

Considering the target audiences for these animated series, this thesis works as a reminder of their educational power. Their narratives also play out some ecocentric debates in ways that might guide and encourage people to grow a more Other-centric and nature-centric point of view. While raising awareness for a better future, in which the nonhuman nature and humans (as a part of nature) live in harmony, I hope that my work invites the animation industry to recognize their impact, to strengthen their messages even further, and to adjust misrepresentations and vague messages so that there is no room left for andro-anthropocentric ideologies to win.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

AND

METHODOLOGY

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. Ecocriticism

Many agree that modern environmentalism began with *Silent Spring* (1962) written by Rachel Carson (Eisler, 1987; Garrard, 2004; Brereton, 2005; Clark, 2011; Marland, 2013). Carson's poetic language, apocalyptic tone, and bold statements about pesticides attracted attention and launched an interdisciplinary field, fusing together environmental science and literature. Although it is often seen as a relatively new field in academy, the word "ecocriticism" was first used by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* (1978). The exact word finds itself a place only in the title of the essay, however, what Rueckert (1978) means by "ecocriticism" is "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (p. 107). Glotfelty (1996), in the introduction of *The Ecocriticism Reader*, defines ecocriticism simply as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (p.

18). Just like feminist criticism examines a text from a gender-conscious perspective and Marxist criticism from a class and production-oriented perspective, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach (Glotfelty, 1996). According to Slovic (2000), first president of *ASLE* (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) ecocriticism is “the study of explicit environmental texts from any scholarly approach or [...] the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary [...] [or artistic text]” (p. 160). Opperman (2006) while noting it has no field defining theoretical model, states that ecocriticism’s aim is “to promote ecological awareness, to bring ecological consciousness to the study of literary texts and other cultural productions, and to understand the place and function of humans in relation to the nonhuman world” (Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010, p. 2). Gomides (2006), takes a more activist approach and claims that it is “the field of enquiry that analyzes and promotes works of art which raise moral questions about human interactions with nature, while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations” (p. 16). Although I find Gomides’ definition the most appealing, I believe that ecocriticism is all of these definitions combined. Ecocriticism is ecology, philosophy, sociology, feminism, environmental justice, queer theory, and an attempt to build and understand the intimacy of humans and nonhumans (Cohen & Duckert, 2017, p. 2).

In “Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism” Ursula Heise (2006) suggests that ecocriticism works “as a convenient shorthand for what some critics prefer to call environmental criticism, literary-environmental studies, literary environmentalism or green cultural studies” (p. 506). Among those people who do prefer the term ‘environmental criticism’ is Lawrence Buell (2005), who claims that “environmental

criticism” is a much more appropriate term than “ecocriticism”. His claim comes from his belief that the word ‘ecocriticism’ carries a cartoonish undertone and excludes anything that is not ‘natural’, while ‘environmental criticism’ includes the ‘constructed’ as well and better captures the interdisciplinarity of the field (Buell, 2005, p. viii). I believe that the word “environment” cannot escape being anthropocentric because it seems to me that it takes humanity as the center and refers to its surroundings, thus I decided to use the term “ecocriticism” throughout this thesis. Buell (2005) and several other ecocritics have divided ecocriticism into two waves. While the first aimed to “speak for nature” (p. 8) and focused on “nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction” (p. 138), the second wave concentrated on “social ecocriticism that takes urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as natural landscapes” (as cited in Buell, 2005, p. 22). For the first wave of ecocritics, environment was synonymous with a ‘natural’ environment. With an extreme distinction between human and nonhuman nature, the main aim of the first wave was to preserve the biotic community (Coupe, 2000). The second wave arrived when the ecocritics started to engage with cultural studies (Buell, 2005). According to Buell (2005), it has concentrated heavily “on locating vestiges of nature within cities and/or exposing crimes of eco-injustice against society’s marginal groups” (p. 24). Slovic and Adamson, however, “hailed the arrival of ecocriticism’s third wave in 2009 – a development which ‘recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries,’ exploring ‘all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint’” (as cited in Marland, 2013, p. 854). Today ecocriticism concerns itself with many different topics:

[it] includes the study of nature writing as a genre; it examines the role of the physical setting in literary productions, the values expressed in relation to the

environment, and the correlation between what a culture says about the environment and how it treats it; it conceives of *place* as a critical category; it looks for correspondences among gender, class, ethnicity, and nature; it asks how culturally produced texts affect our relationship with the natural world; it traces changes through time in a culture's concept of environment; and it examines representations of the environmental crisis in literature. In short, ecocriticism acknowledges that the world is composed of the social sphere and the ecosphere, that the two are interrelated, and that the former cannot be considered outside the context of the latter (Wiloquet-Maricondi, 2010, p. 3) (emphasis in original).

Having in mind everything that has been said about ecocriticism, the main objectives of ecocritical study are to encourage “a new way of seeing and understanding the consequences of the destruction for the natural world, humanity's impact on the environment, and the possible solutions to environmental degradation” (Baratta, 2012, p. 3). Michael P. Cohen (2004) also notes that other than praising the existence of the environment or nature in the narrative an ecocritical analysis must also question “the nature of environmental narrative” (n.p.).

2.1.2. Ecofeminism

As I mentioned in the introduction this thesis takes an ecofeminist approach to popular animated fantasy series. The main reason for adopting an ecofeminist point of view is that “nature is a feminist issue” (Warren, 2000, p. 1). Ruether (1975) explains this by stating that “women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination” (p. 204). The term “ecofeminism”

was first used by Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974) to call attention to women's potential to bring about an ecological revolution (as cited in Warren, 2000, p. 21). In her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), d'Eaubonne stresses that ecofeminism sees an undeniable relationship between the oppression of all marginalized groups such as women, people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, children, older adults, and domination of nature including nonhuman animals (Warren, 2000). Warren (2000) explains that not all 'oppression' involves 'domination' because oppression limits choices and options. She assumes "that from a Western philosophical perspective trees, rivers, mountains, communities of flora and fauna, species, and ecosystems are not the sort of things that make choices or have options" thus, she believes that "they cannot be oppressed" but they can be dominated (Warren, 2000, p. 55). I don't agree that all species besides humans are lacking the *ability* to make choices or have options¹, thus I only agree in instances where the subjects cannot make choices or have options.

For ecofeminism to be what it is today, influential texts like *Women and Nature* (Griffin, 1978), *Gyn/Ecology* (Daly, 1978) and *The Death of Nature* (Merchant, 1980) all shaped the understanding of modern ecofeminism. Griffin (1978) was one of the first ecofeminists to point out that feminizing women, animals, nature and other human Others has always been a way to vindicate their inferiority and subordination in a patriarchal society. Daly (1978), on the other hand,

exposed the historical and cross-cultural persecution of women as legitimized by the various male-dominated institutions of religion, culture, and medical science (that is, Indian suttee, Chinese footbinding, African genital

¹ Some examples could be; a dog paying attention to traffic lights before walking across the Street; or a monkey who chosers between different kinds of food.

... mutilation, European witch-burnings, American gynecology, Nazi medicine), linking the physical health of women and the environment with the recuperation of a woman-centered language and thought (Gaard, 2011, p. 28).

Merchant (1980), in *The Death of Nature*, reviews the history of the interconnections between the oppression of women and domination of nature and traces its roots, its science, and capitalism. Merchant (1980), by carrying the ecofeminist discussions in the 1970s one step further, introduced a strong activist foundation for the 1980s and the future ecofeminists.

Some ecofeminists claim that women and nature have an innate connection. This ecofeminism (spiritual ecofeminism) is grounded “in a conception of woman as nurturer and caretaker” while also reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes (Glazebrook, 2002, p. 20). Simone de Beauvoir (1984) saw this spiritual ecofeminism as a “renewed attempt to pin women down to their traditional role” (p. 103). This essentialist thinking “(the notion of pure unchanging, and often biologically based qualities)”, that Norgaard (1998) criticizes

[...] has been a particular problem in ecofeminism, in which two commitments meet: recognition of the socially constructed power dynamics of gender, race, and class and recognition of the ‘more than human world’ as a presence beyond human social construction (p. 492)

Carolyn Merchant (2005) suggests that cultural (spiritual) feminism “celebrates the relationship between women and nature through the revival of ancient rituals centered on goddess worship, the moon, animals, and the female reproductive system” (p. 202). While there may be merit in reclaiming the value of these aspects

of femininity, this approach is often criticized because of its essentialism, its extreme focus on a mystical connection between women and nature and its neglect of more serious issues, such as abortion rights and various experiences of women all around the world. This thesis also has sympathy for these criticisms and will avoid making biologically deterministic analyses.

Ecofeminism focused also on dualities and dichotomies. Many ecofeminists brought to light the fact that dualities are extremely interlinked (Ruether, 1975; Griffin, 1978; Cixous and Clément, 1986; Plumwood, 1986; 1990; 1993; Warren, 1990; 2000).

Plumwood (1993) argues that “western culture has treated the human/nature relation as a dualism and that this explains many of the problematic features of the west’s treatment of nature which underlie environmental crisis, especially the western construction of human identity as ‘outside’ nature” (p. 2). For this reason, I believe that the women-nature connection does not come from conceptual essentialism or biological determinism that suggests “women are biologically closer to nature than men” but from the fact that both women (and other human Others) and nature are oppressed and dominated because of andro- and anthropocentrism.

According to physicist Vandana Shiva (2014) women’s special connection to nature is mostly about their place in the society and mostly related to socioeconomic backgrounds (p. 164). Shiva’s claim has a powerful and also a scientific stance since Gaard and Gruen (1993) in their article introduce important data that shows that women in less developed countries suffer from deforestation, water pollution, and environmental toxins more acutely than men in their countries and women who live in more developed countries. The Chipko Movement, a perfect demonstration of this

relationship between women and nature, is “a movement whose activities in its two decades of evolution have been extended from embracing trees to embracing living mountains and living waters. Each new phase of Chipko is created by invisible women” (Shiva, 1993, p. 416). The movement was ignited when the Indian government decided to allocate a forest area in the Alaknanda valley to a sports goods company. The activists have showed that the forest policies of the Indian government had an extremely negative effect on the environment and have caused the indigenous people to uproot despite their dependence on forests for survival and their work in preserving the forests (Jain, 1984). Jain (1984) says that some people remarked the Chipko as not a women’s movement while others pointed out how the participation of women in Chipko boosted its success. “Seemingly contradictory facts are not actually so because as a social movement [...] the Chipko movement is certainly not a women’s movement and it does not seek change in the traditional social structure” (Jain, 1984, p. 1789). However, it is undeniable that there was a collective mobilization of women for the preservation of forest, an effort that revealed a conflict regarding women’s status in the society.

Women, being solely in charge of cultivation, livestock and children, lost all they had because of recurring floods and landslides. The message of the Chipko workers made a direct appeal to them. They were able to perceive the link between their victimization and the denuding of mountain slopes by commercial interests (Jain, 1991, p. 2).

As a Chipko movement activist herself, Shiva, thus, believes that there are important “socioeconomical interconnections between the exploitation of women, women’s bodies, and women’s labor, and the exploitation of nature” (Warren, 2000, p. 25). Maria Mies (1994), similarly, uses a Marxist-feminist perspective and draws

parallels between women's bodies and labor and nature in the sense that all of them are colonized by 'capitalist patriarchy'. Warren (2000) explains that this term emphasizes "the ways in which capitalism, as one version of the gender division labor, gives men control over, and access to, resources not given to women" (p. 26). Mellor (1997), too, stresses that even though both women and men mediate between culture and nature (Warren, 2000), the concepts of suppression, domination and exploitation affect women and nature differently than they affect men and culture (p. 86).

In this thesis, however, like almost all ecofeminists I am taking Warren's and Plumwood's understanding of ecofeminism, which focuses more on the relationship between intra-human domination and dominating nature while still taking androcentrism and the inequality between women and men as the core problem. Warren (1987) suggests that ecofeminism is based on the following claims: "(i) there are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; (ii) understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; (iii) feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and (iv) solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective" (p. 4-5). She also focuses on "women-other human Others-nature" connections in her later works. The fact that she repeatedly uses the concept of *Other* "highlights issues of domination, exploitation, and colonization of certain groups ("Others") who have subordinate status in institutions and relationships of domination and subordination" (Warren, 2000, p. xiv). Warren (2000) claims that there are ten different women-other human Others-nature interconnections which are "historical (typically causal),

conceptual, empirical, socioeconomic, linguistic, symbolic and literary, spiritual and religious, epistemological, political, and ethical" (p. 21). In her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective On What It Is And Why It Matters*, Warren (2000) calls attention to the need to connect "environmental issues as deforestation, water pollution, farming and food production, and toxins and hazardous waste location [...] to an understanding of the plight and status of women, people of color, the poor, and children", in this way one can understand "how mainstream environmental practices and policies often reflect, reinforce, or create practices and policies that devalue, subvert, or make invisible the actual needs and contributions of women, people of color, the underclass, and children" (Warren, 2000, p. xiv- xv). Glazebrook (2002) suggests that once these two notions are connected feminism can be expanded through recognizing the intersections between all kinds of oppressions while also providing a space for women's experiences through theory, rejecting the logic of domination and patriarchy and rethinking the meaning of 'human' (p. 16).

In 1993, Warren suggested that spiritual ecofeminism has the potential to provide a space for women and nature to heal from the wounds inflicted by patriarchy.

Although I have already stated my thought on spiritual ecofeminism, Warren's support comes from a more strategic logic that encourages a change from "unhealthy, life-denying systems and relationships to healthy, life-affirming" ones that should not be attributed solely to biological essentialism (Warren, 2000, p. 200). This means that her initial claim that patriarchy is an oppressive logic of domination remains, and she suggests changing all of society to be run by a life-affirming logic.

Glazebrook (2002) believes that

both men and women can think according to such an alternative logic – the fact that it has historically been associated with femininity, or at least maternal ethics, simply means that better parenting practices are called for in which the task of nurturing and caretaking is shared between genders (p. 20).

Plumwood (1993) asserts that there is a need “for the critique of both human domination and the domination of nature—integrating nature as a fourth category of analysis into the framework of an extended feminist theory which employs a race, class and gender analysis” (p. 1-2). As Warren does, Plumwood (2002) also sees a connection between the nature and Others and in fact claims that nature, “the sphere of the non-human, including animals, plants and the biospheric cycles,” is primary among the Others (p. 28). She focuses, however, mostly on the concept of ‘rationalism’ and sees the main problem as the power that is given to reason which elevates humanness over nonhuman nature. Plumwood (1991) argues that the major value dualism (which is the human-nature dualism) has given birth to other harmful dualisms such as masculine-feminine, reason-emotion, and body-spirit. One of Plumwood’s main arguments, which is also a core idea for this thesis, is that these dualisms should not be seen as only anthropocentric but also androcentric. As Warren (2000) also mentions “Plumwood criticizes environmental philosophy generally for its failure ‘to engage properly various positions within the rationalist tradition, which has been inimical to both women and nature’” (as cited in Warren, 2000, p. 23).

The failure to observe such connections is the result of an inadequate historical analysis and understanding of the way in which the interiorization of both women and nature is grounded in rationalism, and the connections of

both to the interiorizing of the body, hierarchal concepts of labor, and disembedded and individualist accounts of the self (Plumwood, 1992, p. 22).

Plumwood emphasizes that it is vital to see the connections between anthropocentrism and androcentrism. As Plumwood (1991) claims, it is also one of the aims of this thesis that showing that “the effect of ecofeminism is not to absorb or sacrifice the critique of anthropocentrism but to deepen and enrich it” (p. 22).

2.1.3. Ecocriticism and Media Studies

According to Armbruster and Wallace (2011), expanding the boundaries of ecocriticism so that it can “address a wider spectrum of texts” is one of its most important tasks (p. 2). Although it first arose as a critical point of view applied to literary texts, it has exceeded this initial purpose, and is now used in a range of fields. Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) also recognizes that “ecocriticism has expanded beyond the area of literary analysis to embrace the study of other forms of cultural production, including theoretical discourse, music, photography, virtual environments, and film and video” (p. 1). While literary ecocriticism has several decades of history, ecocriticism in visual media is still in its infancy (Alex, 2014; Ivakhiv, 2008). Still, because ecocriticism does not have widely known set of assumptions within the academy or a field defining theoretical model, it is functional to apply its findings to other fields such as media studies (Barry, 2017; Opperman, 2006).

The visual components of texts are especially important. “Humans are particularly visually oriented animals, and visual media play a powerful and prevalent role in shaping contemporary human culture” (Soles & Chu, 2015, p. 24). Cognitively,

visuals are important “because they are easily comprehensible and can provoke emotional and affective responses” (Höijer, 2010, as cited in Culloty & Brereton, 2017, p. 1). Soles and Chu (2015) claim that it is essential for us to analyze how visual texts “frame the world” and how they portray ecocritical ideologies because they “can be used to develop nonspeciesist ways of living and prospering on planet Earth” (p.24). However, Michael McDowell (1996) claims that when ecocriticism attempts to recast the voices of nature, in literary or filmic texts, it automatically becomes anthropocentric: “It’s our language, after all, that we’re using, and we inevitably put our values into the representation” (p. 372). Because of the impossibility of representing something out of the boundaries of human cognition and influence, it is important to recognize both how representation itself functions and what kind of effects it can have on the audience. Anthropocentric representations do not directly affect or “shape nature but [...] they shape our perceptions of nature, perceptions that in turn inform and pattern our actions in relation to nature; our actions, in turn, shape nature by preserving ecosystems or by despoiling them” (Willoquet-Maricondi, 2010, p. 7). Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) also notes that the relationship between nature and the audience is influenced by the tone of the media they are consuming and how those media represent nature more than their own experiences with natural settings or environmental threats.

2.1.4. Ecocriticism and Animation

Since my research question is about the human Others and the nature-Other, animation is a great meeting ground for such representations, though animation is a marginalized field in both media studies and ecocritical studies. Starosielski (2011) says that “many animated films have implicit ecological themes” however,

“environmental animation” immediately directs our attention to the environment as a subject, “typically one that needs to be saved, and references environmentalist messages circulating in the public sphere” (p.146). Because the scholars who have applied ecocriticism to visual media are mostly focused on cinema, there are a few studies applying ecocriticism to animation, mostly Disney films. One key example is Murray and Heumann’s (2011) *That’s All Folks? Ecocritical Readings of American Features*, one of the few books that deals with animation and ecocriticism specifically, and the authors argue that animations are amazing sources to track the different phases of American environmental movement. In their book, starting from the 1930s, they touch upon animated films and animated shorts, calling them “enviro-toons”, and examine the changes in the genre through an ecocritical analysis. As most of the sources about animation and nature do, they focus on Disney animations, however, they also evaluate live action films and works from studios like DreamWorks. Murray and Heumann (2011) do not neglect to indicate that “animated features primarily serve as moneymakers on multiple levels, especially as broad-based family entertainment and conveyors of consumer products” (p. 6). As it is obvious in Disney’s case, “framing nature as entertainment” has reinforced a tourist and recreational economy, which has in turn led to increasingly frequent depiction of the environment in media (Ivakhiv, 2008, p. 3).

Bruckner (2010), in a book chapter where she discusses the representation of nature in children animations *Bambi* (1942) and *Finding Nemo* (2003), claims that the impact of such successful animated films on children and their perception of the nonhuman nature should not be underestimated. “For Henry Giroux, for example, ‘animated films operate on many registers, but one of the most persuasive is the role

they play as the new ‘teaching machines’” (as cited in Bruckner, 2010, p. 187). As it will be discussed in the later chapters, animated works contain anthropomorphic and theriomorphic representation, both of which can be problematic. While anthropomorphism attributes human traits and emotions to the nonhumans, theriomorphism is the practice of attributing nonhuman characteristics to humans. Bruckner (2010) suggests that anthropomorphism needs to be balanced with true knowledge of animal behavior. Because “when it incites a generation to see nature as a living system of which we are only a part, then it has the potential to undermine the very anthropocentric perspectives it necessarily entails (Bruckner, 2010, p. 189). It is also important that animation, as a medium, announces overtly its staging and artificiality. Bruckner asserts that “unlike spectacularized illusions of nature untouched, animated films foreground their manipulation of the nonhuman world, pointing up rather than obviating how nature is framed and produced for human visual consumption” (p.189).

2.1.5. Fantasy Genre

The imagination required to produce animation also lends itself to the fantasy genre of narrative. Rosemary Jackson (1981), in her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, claims that the fantasy genre has always been free from the restrictions and conventions of other, more realistic genres: “they have refused to observe unities of time, space, and characters, doing away with chronology, three dimensionality and with rigid distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, self and other, life and death” (p. 1). As the notion of “real” and the conventions of “realism” have changed throughout the years, the fantasy genre, too, changed its character accordingly; however, still, it would not be wrong to say that modern fantasy has its root in

ancient myths, fairy tales, and folklore (Jackson, 1981). While the debate over the exact definition is still ongoing, however, Mendlesohn (2008) believes that the fantastic “is an area of literature that is heavily dependent on the dialectic between author and reader for the construction of a sense of wonder, that it is a fiction of consensual construction of belief” (p. 18). In her book *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Mendlesohn (2008) argues that there are four categories within the fantasy genre: “the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal. [...] In the portal-quest we are invited through into the fantastic; in the intrusion fantasy, the fantastic enters the fictional world; in the liminal fantasy, the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; while in the immersive fantasy we are allowed no escape” (p. 21-22). Whatever the category is, however, the fantasy genre has an utmost connection to nature and an undeniable sympathy for the Other.

2.1.5.1. The Connection Between the Fantasy Genre and Nature

The fantasy genre has always made use of nature as a core device to tell a story. While it goes beyond realism, fantasy still manages to explore the real by repositioning our view and making us think about the connections between humans and nature, using imagination and fantasy. Baratta (2012) claims that the fantasy genre has the power to push the reader out of their comfort zone, out of their usual lives and daily stimuli, and into a place where everything they stump upon is unfamiliar, which places them within a world outside their current modes of knowledge. “In doing so, fantasy... stirs the imagination and asks the readers to step outside of prescribed, anthropocentric constructions of knowledge and into new, unfiltered modes of experience and knowledge” (Baratta, 2012, p. 5). Chris Brawley (2014) refers to this shift as “a shift from an anthropocentric paradigm to an

ecocentric or biocentric paradigm” (p. 294). Making this shift visible and the audience conscious about this shift is among this thesis’ objectives.

It is important to note that the fantasy genre has been key to ecocriticism. Just like fantasy, “ecocritical study [too] urges and individual to embrace new ways of thinking about the natural world, and, more importantly, the relationship between man and nature” (Baratta, 2012, p. 2-3). If an ecocritical analysis is done on works in the fantasy genre, the way they address environmental problems could be clearly defined and, more importantly, solutions to these issues could be introduced and reinforced.

2.1.5.2. The Other in the Fantasy Genre

Besides its involvement with nature, the genre of fantasy also has a reputation for sympathizing with the marginalized Other. Many scholars, authors and critics have emphasized this connection between the fantasy genre and the Other (Spivack, 1987; Balfe, 2004; Schwartz, 2006; Barron, 2009; Poor, 2012; Ulstein, 2015). While watching some of the animated fantasy series, I realized that there were astonishingly few cisgender, heterosexual white males; instead, all of the people who are coined as the “Others” in most societies were leading the stories: women, people of color, LGBTQ+, children, older adults, and so on. As expected from the fantasy genre, marginalized Others are not always presented as Others we know from our reality, but sometimes take different forms such as mythical creatures and humanoids, which introduce characters that belong to the nonhuman.

It is, then, a great place to discuss what a human actually is, and what makes us human. It is a long-standing discussion that the human or the at least the mind of the human is unique (Tomasello & Rakoczy, 2003; Zlatev, Racine, Sinha & Itkonen, 2008; Gazzaniga, 2008; Pollard, 2009). According to Rakic (1999) “the brain is the organ that sets us apart from any other species. It is not the strength of our muscles or of our bones that makes us different, it is our brain” (as cited in Gazzaniga, 2008, p. 7). Gazzaniga (2008), on the other hand, emphasizes that there are different opinions on the uniqueness of the human. Half of the scientific world believes that humans are part of a continuum along with other animals, while the other half sees a precise distinction between humans and animals (Gazzaniga, 2008). Yet Zlatev et al. (2008) remind us that “animals also have an ‘embodied mind’, and there are no good reasons to deny that at least birds and mammals also have a ‘conscious mind’” (p. 1). All these arguments of the distinction between humans and nonhuman animals rely on the *ability* of the human to reason, and Western thought has used this assumption for centuries as a powerful weapon to elevate humans and demote nonhumans. Plumwood (2002), argues that the human-nature dualism “is a system of ideas that takes a radically separated reason to be essential characteristic of humans and situates human life outside and above inferiorised and manipulable nature” (p. 4). When the fantasy genre blends this notion of human with characteristics that belong to the nonhuman and creates fantastic beings, it manages to blur some certain lines and helps us to see everything from a new perspective. It is this new point of view that leads Le Guin (2007) to argue that the most defining characteristic of the fantasy genre is its concern with the non-anthropocentric: “What fantasy often does that the realistic novel generally cannot do is include the nonhuman as essential” (p. 87). Still the characters need some indications that they are not human if they are not, because

without these signals, these characters remain in an unmarked state (a concept that will also be relevant while discussing racial coding). Winkle and Onyx (2019) define an unmarked character as white, youthful, monogamous, heterosexual, able-bodied and who possesses all normative traits. In fantasy narratives, unless it is stated or shown through unmistakable coding that the character is nonhuman, the audience will assume that the character is human.

2.2. Significance of the Study

This study will make a significant contribution to the field because there is so little scholarly work on animation, and particularly animated television and/or streaming series. There is also a critical gap where ecocriticism and media studies meet. The most compelling strength of this study is its interdisciplinary approach in investigating and examining how human-Others and nature-Others are portrayed in animated fantasy series. This thesis is not limited to ecocriticism and media studies, but rather it uses these two different fields to underscore various issues society and nature faces each and every day.

2.3. Methodology

To answer the research question “how are the human Others and nonhuman nature Others represented and portrayed in popular animated TV series in the fantasy genre?” I will do a qualitative analysis on the selected materials. The main methodology of this thesis will be doing an ecocritical analysis through close reading on the animated series, sometimes specifically on some episodes and sometimes on the entire series.

2.3.1. Close Reading

Close reading, or in other words textual analysis, has been seen as the primary methodology in literary studies (Jockers, 2013, p. 6). Brummett (2019) argues that “close reading is the mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meaning” (p. 2). Hinchman and Moore (2013) mention that subsequent literary theorists advocate for different types of close reading focusing on various purposes.

Reader-response theorists encourage close reading to transform the meaning of a text according to each reader’s experience (Rosenblatt, 1978) [...]

Critical theorists advance close reading as a way to discern how a text’s discourse positions readers according to race, class, gender, and other social markers (Appleman, 2009) (Hinchman & Moore, 2013, p. 443).

Close reading mostly tries to uncover hidden meanings in a text and decode the encoded instruments of a text. With deeper look into text, structural meanings that can be disclosed. Usually associated with New Criticism (Dubois, 2003), close reading is mainly a methodology in literary analysis, however, it can also be an extremely useful tool in communication studies while analyzing different types of media. As its main purpose is to find different meanings in different layers, close reading also helps trace how visual media navigates its multiple modalities to create meaning. This is especially important for animated media, whose elements such as character design, colors, voice acting, mise-en-scène, the setting and even the narrative play important roles; all of these can become objects taken up for analytical close reading. However, it is also important not to overlook the fact that close reading methodology is heavily dependent on personal ideas which means that each person who investigates a text may find a different meaning. Mainly for this reason,

close reading has been criticized as incoherent, boundless, and not research focused enough (Smith, 2016). However, it is also vital to have in mind that as a methodology it has the ability to introduce extraordinary readings and out-of-the-box analyses.

If we take positionality theory, which acknowledges “that people have multiple overlapping identities [and thus, that they can] make meaning from various aspects of their identity” into account, the process of close reading may also make much more sense (Kezar, 2002, p. 96). I am a woman who was born in Turkey, a bridge between Europe and Asia where certain values and *weltanschauungs*² are in a constant tug of war; where gender-based violence and femicides are on the rise; where the government policies practically encourage gender-based violence; where women, LGBTQ+, children, animals and nature are at the bottom of society. Thus, every analysis done in this thesis through close reading is coming from eye that belongs to an Other, both in Turkey and in the world. As a heterosexual woman, throughout the study, the analysis I make concerning LGBTQ+ will be coming from not knowing or assuming their experiences but from an understanding of their social position as another oppressed minority.

2.3.2. Objects of Study

In recent years inclusiveness and diversity in popular culture have become much more prominent, especially in a medium such as animation (UCLA, 2019; 2021) where usually the majority of its audience are children, whose perception can be

² A particular philosophy or view of life. It differs from the term “worldview” in the fact that the German verb “*anschauen*” stands for “to look” and “*shauen*” stands for “to display” or “to show” and thus is more comprehensive than the “viewing”.

influenced much easier (Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2009). When we look at these animations, it is apparent that currently there are lots of examples of nature-centric and Other-centric narratives portraying women, other human Others, and nature in circulation. While there is an endless list of white, heterosexual, cisgender, male characters both in popular culture, myths, and fairy tales, representations of women, other human-Others and nature-Others remain short. Thinking about my childhood, animated characters like Kim Possible from *Kim Possible* (2002-2007), Katara from *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005-2008), Sandy from *SpongeBob SquarePants* (1999-2021), Jake Long from *American Dragon* (2005-2007), Vince LaSalle from *Recess* (1997-2001), were essential to the stories, however they still were reinforcing extremely powerful stereotypes. Still, their successors in this last decade have been given exceptionally promising representations and stories, due in no small part to the audience fragmentation fueled by an increasing number of media options. If we think about broadcast TV, it is clear that its main aim is to create contents that will appeal to the broadest audience possible, and thus without challenging anything and taking risks, its contents stray from conventional ideologies. It also has a major disadvantage compared to streaming services like Netflix, which is that only one show can be on at a time on each channel, with viewers choosing between channels rather than individual shows. However, in streaming, with its freedom of timeslots and their ability to target a collection of various interests, they can present more diverse and independent narratives.

This study offers a detailed ecocritical analysis of five animated fantasy series released since 2018 to provide a thorough understanding of how nature-Others and human-Others are represented in contemporary animated fantasy series. All of the

animated series were selected after applying several criteria, which will be covered in the section below. These animated fantasy series are *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018-2020), which is a reboot of the *She-Ra: Princess of Power* (1985-1987) and revolves around Adora, who discovers she is the legendary warrior She-Ra; *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* (2020-2020), set in a post-apocalyptic world and telling the story of Kipo and her friends' journey of creating a world where humans and animals live in peace; *Disenchantment* (2018-) is aimed at a young adult/adult audience rather than small children, and it focuses on the rebellious princess of Dreamland, Bean, and her adventures in a medieval fantasy setting; *The Dragon Prince* (2018-) follows the story of two princes and an elf who try to bring back balance and heal the wound between humans and nonhumans; and *Wizards* (2020-2020) an installment of the 'Tales of Arcadia' trilogy³, in which where some of the main characters travel through time to medieval Camelot, where humans and trolls have a tense relationship.

2.3.3. Selection Criteria

I used several criteria to select the materials for close reading and ecocritical analysis. Firstly, I identified the top 100 most popular American animated TV series and selected the ones that were a) released in or after 2018, and b) rated above 7 (out of 10) through the Internet Movie Database (IMDb.com). I only selected shows that IMDb identifies as belonging to the fantasy genre, and those with a continuous plot and a story arc over multiple episodes/seasons. To understand if the series has a continuous plot and a story arc, I watched at least 5 episodes from each of the

³ A trilogy of animated fantasy series created for Netflix by Guillermo Del Toro. All of the three installments follow the story of the inhabitants of Arcadia Oaks, a suburban town which secretly host supernatural events, creatures and young heroes who fight against evil.

animated series. I froze the list on 7 September 2020, so that I would not have to update the corpus every time a new show entered or left the list (see Appendix B). Out of the 40 animated series I was left with, I have studied only the ones that meet Lawrence Buell's (1995) four criteria to determine whether a text is environmental or not:

1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history [...]
2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest [...]
3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation [...]
4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text [...] (p. 7-8).

After determining the shows that passed all four criteria, I was left with 5 animated series, and these form my corpus: *Wizards* (2020), *She-Ra: The Princesses of Power* (2018-2020), *The Dragon Prince* (2018-), *Disenchantment* (2018-) and *Kipo and the Age of the Wonderbeasts* (2020).

In the three content chapters I will focus on the character designs, the settings and the narratives of the animated series. The character design chapter will look at the female leads, characters who are anthropomorphized and/or theriomorphized, and at villains to assess how their designs reflect their characters and relate to nature. In the setting chapter, I will be looking specifically at fantasy maps, with particular attention to the map *Disenchantment* presents as a recurring visual element of the series. The chapter

will also discuss the borders, whose crossings and reinforcements often create tension between humans and nonhumans. Lastly, the settings chapter will also look into typical fantasy genre settings such as woods and forests. The narrative chapter will follow the journeys of Kipo from *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* and Adora from *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* through Victoria Schmidt's heroine's journey model. I will also discuss the binary oppositions of *The Dragon Prince*, *Wizards*, and *Disenchantment*, and how they introduce realignments of value that go against white patriarchal ideals.



CHAPTER III

CHARACTER DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

When we look at a person, we immediately form a certain impression of their character, a habit which has created the age-old cliché that “first impressions last”. Whether it is in a fictional world or real life, we immediately construct opinions and provide a role for the person we see. This idea of attributing characteristics to someone just by seeing them has been covered and discussed a lot, especially in the field of psychology (Zebrowitz et. al, 1998; Agnew, 1984; Snyder et. al, 1988). Branham (2001) uses the term ‘physical personality’, to refer to the importance of appearance which causes us “immediately and with no acquaintance [to] produce an impression of personality [...] which initiate a set of attitudes and expectations” (as cited in Haake & Gulz, 2008, p. 46). Aspects such as body shape, height, hair, make-up, race, gender, clothing and so on are important cues for people to carve ideas about an individual. However, the important thing is that people have impressions based on such cues regardless of their accuracy. “In folk psychology this is recognized in idiomatic warnings such as: ‘Don’t judge a book by its cover.’” (Haake & Gulz, 2008, p. 47). In a similar way, and as a contrary argument, the same folk psychology also says that “first impressions are lasting” and thus it is important how a character is presented (Haake & Gulz, 2008). While these kinds of pre-conceived

ways thinking can be harmful and unfair, when it comes to designing a character for a visual medium this psychological human habit becomes a great asset for the character designer, since the appearance of the character is precisely created for the audience to look at it and create pre-conceived thoughts.

3.2. Character Design

Character designer Sergio Pablos claims that “a character is a tool to tell a story” (The SPA Studios, 2016, 2:07). This remark is a simple definition and a clue about a character designer’s focus. They work hard to create memorable characters that reflect the character’s personality through their visuals. To reach this goal, the character designer should not only focus on the appearance of the character but also on who the character is, since the character must differ from other resembling creatures. “It is essential to combine the physical traits with the narrative ... to show the viewer who the character is. The who and the what are both equally important traits in character design” (Ekström, 2013, p. 4). The most important thing is doing serious research not just about the anatomy and appearance of the character but about every aspect the character is related to. Because a character is not just how it is physically described. “The primary focus needs to be on the psychological aspects of [the] characters such as their mood, personality, and motivation traits [...] [to achieve the perfect design, the character designer should] look at the situation from the character’s point of view” (Kar, 2019). The face is usually the primary source of expressing emotions, however, posture and body language can also say a lot of things about a person (Ekström, 2013).

Character design for animated series needs a visual language that the audience will quickly interpret. The reason behind this need for a quick interpretation is that the series demands its audience to carry on watching whether they are serial or episodic narrations, so it has only a little time before the audience sees, interprets, and decides whether they will continue to watch. In a media landscape saturated with choice viewers may not want to invest much time in a show whose basic premise is less than evident in the first few minutes of exposure. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that most animated shows or cartoons function with an assumption of the audience's collective knowledge of general signs so that the narrative and the stories are transferred quickly and efficiently. For the same reason using stereotypes "as a shorthand ... helps to convey the character's own story, their background, life choices, past development, and their relation to the narrative" (Lee, 2013, p. 2). This understanding of the character allows the audience to gather information about the character, so that they can shift their attention to the narrative while the strong visuals invite a deeper connection with and comprehension of the animated series. "Stereotypes act as a form of semiotics ... for existing data that makes us more efficient in future processes, and although there are lots of downsides to stereotyping, unfortunately, it is "a common practice among all humans to quickly sort and process the ... data humans are fed daily" (Lee, 2013, p. 2). In real life this kind of behavior, although done by the majority of humans, is frowned upon when talked out loud, however in fantasy worlds, or in designed characters, this common practice becomes an extremely useful tool for character designers

3.2.1. Semiotics

Contrary to the popular belief of animated works being shallow and for children, they are extremely rich and diverse in their way of storytelling. Although the technique of using stereotype-based semiotics is common in the field, other elements can undermine or demolish this technique by depending on other collective impressions constructed, again, through semiotics.

One of the most widely known definitions of semiotics belongs to Umberto Eco, who says that semiotics is “concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Eco, 1976, p.7). “Signs are found in the physical form of words, images, sounds, acts, objects...Signs have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when sign-users invest them with meaning with reference to a recognized code” (Chandler, 2002, p. 260). The founder of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure, however, says that semiotics is seeing language as a sign system and building a connection with letters and meaning. Saussure (1983) also claimed that a sign consists of two components ‘the signifier’ and the ‘signified’. The signifier is defined as the form that the sign takes and the signified is seen as the concept to which sign refers (Chandler, 2002, p. 14). However, as declared by Peirce (1931) ‘nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign’, which expresses that the reader’s interpretation is needed (as cited in Chandler, 2002, p. 13). Over the years, semiology has further developed and been applied as a means of analyzing visual media. In combining spoken (and sometime written) language with other visual modalities, animated series can also be seen as systems of signs, and thus can be productively analyzed using close reading and semiotics.

3.2.2. Shapes

One of the most important elements of character design is focusing on shapes.

Although there is a chance that the signified meaning may change according to the cultural background of the interpreter, some shapes do have universally accepted meanings. These associations between shape and meaning are most likely not created by the human but can be organically found in nature and can instinctively evoke something in living beings. These are the “primary shapes—the circle, square and triangle—[which] play a key role in communicating emotions” (SolarSKI, 2012, p. 197). Tillman (2011) in his book *Creative Character Design*, talks about a general perception of these shapes. The circle, he argues, can be viewed as “completeness, gracefulness, playfulness, comforting, unity, protection and childlike” (p. 72). SolarSKI (2012), adds to Tillman’s observations and claims that the circle gives the impression of innocence, youth, energy, and femininity. As it is noticeable, all of these traits point to that “curved and circular shapes are considered the friendliest as they have no sharp or dangerous corners [... which make them] harmless and evoke likeable characters. Many [...] protagonists are designed around circular concepts” (Ekström, 2013, p.6). The square, on the other hand, is associated with stability, trust, honesty, order, security, equality, masculinity, strength, and confidence (Tillman, 2011; SolarSKI, 2012). “Squares can both be large and daunting or comforting and clumsy. They often depict steadfast characters who are dependable and are commonly used for superheroes or the heavy” (Ekström, 2013, p. 6). The triangle, however, although having some positive qualities, gives mostly feelings of aggression, energy, sneakiness, conflict, and tension (Tillmann, 2011). “Triangles relate to diagonal and strong, angular lines and are the most dynamic of the three shapes. Bad guys and villains are often based upon dominant triangular concepts, as

they appear malicious, sinister and communicate with the most aggression” (Ekström, 2013, p. 7). Because it is the most opposite shape of the circle, it is mostly used for the villains or the antagonists.

3.2.3. Colors

Hovers, Ilan¹, Bar-Yosef and Vandermeersch (2003) suggested that in many societies, there are symbolic networks in which material objects are the symbols. “Among these, symbolic color systems are widespread and shared by many societies” (Hovers et al., 2003, p. 491). In a study done by Elliot, Maier, Moller, Friedman, and Meinhardt (2007), it was proposed that colors could “carry specific meanings that have important implications for psychological functioning” which turns colors also into symbols (as cited in Elliot & Niesta, 2008, p. 1150). Color symbolism is extensively used by contemporary societies and in the field of visual communication to transmit messages and meanings. Elliot and Niesta (2008) argue that when a color conveys information, it is enough for the receiver to have some kind of a perception of that color for it to produce cognition consistent with that meaning (Elliot & Niesta, 2008). Just like shapes, colors, too, have an enormous effect on the way a character’s personality is conveyed through visual design. However, it is important to have in mind that, similar to shapes,

[...]the uses and meanings of color have never been totally consistent across cultural boundaries. Colors can carry different symbolic meanings: yellow, in northern Europe connotes “deceit” and “cowardice,” while in China is the imperial color; in Buddhist tradition, yellow stands for “humility” and “renunciation”; but in the Mayan civilization of Central America, it was associated with the West. The underlying reason for these differences is that

the symbols used to portray archetypal energies are subject to the creative limitations of the human mind (Yu, 2014, p. 54).

Chapman (2010) points out that, even changing something minor, like changing the hue or saturation, can evoke different emotions in people. Levy (1984) claimed that while warm colors usually stimulate feelings, cool colors sedate them. Consistent with this claim, Clarke and Costall (2007) also found out that “warm colors such as red, orange and yellow [...] evoke [...] more active emotions” (p. 407). Other than Levy (1984), Wexner (1954) asserted that cool colors such as green and blue were highly associated with soothing and calming anxiety. Clarke and Costall (2007) found results that corroborated with previous research: “The associations of green and blue with ‘calm’ and ‘peaceful’ [is] common, yet there was a gradation. While green was often referred to as ‘neutral’ and ‘cool’ (44%) when the questioning progressed onto blue such terms as ‘cold’, [...] and ‘water’ became increasingly frequent (69%)” (p. 407).

Morton (1997) claims that most of the data about color symbolism is retrieved from “The Global Color Survey” which is located in a website called “Color Matters”. While referring to colors in the analyses of the designs of characters, I will draw information from that website and use the meanings the website attains to colors, precisely because the results are drawn from a global survey which gathered data from over 200,000 people worldwide since 1997.

3.3. And the Designer Created the Other

To have a better understanding of the chapter in general, first, the notion of the “Other” and its incarnation in the animation medium and fantasy genre must be

covered. As mentioned, while reviewing the existing literature, “otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“Us”, the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them”, Other) ...” which creates a potential act of discrimination (Stazsak, 2008, p. 2). Although the existence of the concept of ‘Otherness’ is sometimes necessary to understand and make sense of the ‘Self’, it gets problematic when a hierarchical order is created as a result of this duality. Once hierarchical groups are created, as expressed by de Beauvoir (1952) in *The Second Sex* and by Fanon (1967) in *Black Skin, White Mask*, the centrality of the unequal power relations becomes unavoidable.

The fantasy genre is one of the most important genres which has been associated with the concept of ‘Other’ and nature at the same time. Spivack (1987), who focuses on women’s fantasy, also notes that the fantasy genre has a tendency to express sympathy for the marginalized Other (as cited in Raddeker, 2009, p.3). On the other hand, Le Guin (2007) argues that the fantasy genre has a great concern for the non-anthropocentric and “partakes of realms in which humanity is not lord and master, is not central, is not even important” (p. 87). Having these in mind, it can be argued that the designer who designs characters for an animated fantasy series is already bound to design characters that are somewhat prone to qualities that represent Otherness, since the contemporary animated series seems more diverse and inclusive than ever. In this chapter I will look into the designs of the characters from the animated series which establish the corpus of this thesis. The main focus will be how the characters and the aspects of their visual design relate to their function in the series, to their Otherness and to their perception of nature and the environment.

3.4. Character Design Analysis

Figure 1: Adora, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*



Figure 2: Rayla, *The Dragon Prince*



Figure 3: Bean, *Disenchantment*



When looking at the protagonists of the animated series *Dragon Prince* (2018-), *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018-2020), and *Disenchantment* (2018-) it is obvious that there is a resemblance in the ways they were designed. All of them seem to be dominated by circular and curvy shapes. While Adora and Rayla have some squarish and even pointy spots, the design of Bean has almost no corners at all. All three characters are in situations where they need to fulfill crucial responsibilities and make sacrifices for the greater good. Rayla is an assassin who has to bring the dragon prince back to its mother; Adora is a guardian princess who needs to save the planet; and Bean is a princess and an heir to the throne. However, while Rayla and Adora are more equipped to fulfill those responsibilities—as the shapes suggest—Bean is stuck in a childish, playful, and care-free zone. All three seem to have both masculine and feminine qualities. Although the circular shapes stand as signs for femininity, Bean's baggy clothes which hide her body shape and thus her “curves” make her seem extremely masculine. Still the presence of her long eyelashes reveals a hidden femininity underneath her appearance. This fusion of masculinity and

femininity is a reminder of Spivack's (1987) claim that in the fantasy genre "women characters are often both masculine and feminine ..., both expert with swords and devoted to peace" (p. 8). Adora, literally holding a sword, can be seen as a confirmation of Spivack's metaphorical observation.

Princess Bean is designed with three freckles on each cheek. "Researchers at the University of Texas found 76.5 percent of villainous characters ... have what the authors call dermatologic findings" (Blanchard, 2018). It appears that the researchers also counted freckles as one of the negative skin conditions. When looking at the table they created, however, it is evident that only two out of the nine characters who do have freckles are labeled as "bad", which suggests that freckles are not usually associated with villainous behavior. Instead, an inference can be made that freckles can stand as a physical representation of a character's non-conforming personality (Bean; Anna from *Frozen* (2013); Shrek from *Shrek* (2001); Linguini from *Ratatouille* (2007); Eep and Guy from *The Croods* (2013)). While Adora has nothing extraordinary on her face, Rayla is drawn with blue, tear-like tattoos underneath her eyes. As stated by the creators Aaron Ehasz and Justin Richmond, these tattoos resemble henna and are semi-permanent face markings (Cartoon Universe, 2019, 07:02). This statement makes the audience believe that the shape and the place was chosen by Rayla herself. Their shape being rounded triangles, may be sign of a fusion of traits like gracefulness, energy, and sneakiness as she is an elven assassin. Adora's hair is tied into a ponytail, unlike other two characters. She was raised by an aggressive, masculine, and pro-war establishment called the Horde, which can be an explanation for her hair being tied up, both because this hairstyle signifies stability, balance, discipline and a distancing from femininity. Similarly, the fact that she does

not show any skin besides her face and her hands, seems like a sign of her conservative military upbringing by a masculine surrounding that sees the female body as an object to look at. Rayla's white hair is a trademark of species (Moonshadow elf), however, the little braid on her right may, again, suggest a feminine side as it is a hair embellishment. Another perspective suggests that a braid can signify the power of unity because it is created by three interlaced strands of hair. Even though the exact meaning may change according to different cultures, the "many is stronger than one" idea remains visible in this detail. Bean's hair is white as well, just like her mother's. Although, the color white, especially as a hair color, represents wisdom, mysticism, purity, royalty, or heroism (Copes, 2020), being aware of Bean's character it may also be an indication of her potential to become more than meets the eye, suggesting a "delicate balance of being unusual but not blatantly unrealistic" ("Mystical White Hair, n.d.).

Character designer Sherm Cohen (2006) points out that the use of accessories "helps further define your character as well as communicate the action being performed" (p. 21). Based on this one other important thing that all three of the characters have in common is the fact that they all have belts, in similar shades of brown. Their buckles are different though; Adora has a little wing, Rayla has a circular ornament, and Bean has an ordinary rectangular buckle. Before focusing on the buckles, there is one thing worth to mention. Although wearing "leather" belts is common in our world, there is no information, whether in Rayla's, Bean's, or Adora's world, animal skin is used to make clothes, accessories, and shoes. However, still, because this is something that could go both ways, and it is not specified which way it does, using such accessories that could cause misinterpretations could have been avoided. One

thing that is specified, however, is that in the world of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* it is seen that bird feathers are used in pillows (Stevenson, 2018-2020, 1-4, 00:01:52-00:01:58). “The feathers [...] found in most [...] bedding and clothing is a by-product of [...] waterfowl that have been slaughtered for food purposes. The plucking of *live* birds, while once commonplace, is now [...] a rare occurrence and has been outlawed in the United States and in several European countries” (Hickman, 2017). It being outlawed in some places doesn’t mean it is outlawed in everywhere, and even if it was, for feather to be used, an animal must be slaughtered. In a fantasy world where everything could have been designed from scratch the choice of keeping such things the same could make one speculate that Adora’s belt could also be made out of animal skin.

Figure 4: Rayla’s Belt, *The Dragon Prince*



Figure 5: Adora’s Belt, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*



Figure 6: Bean’s Belt, *Disenchantment*



As for the buckles of these belts, when looked closely, it can be observed that each of them is designed by making use of one of the primal shapes: circle, triangle, and square. Belts were picked up first by men in history. It was worn functionally as a tool to carry weapons more than a fashion ornament (Norris, 1999). Later, women, too, started to use a belt like girdle with more elegant buckles to bind and tighten their dresses or tunics; as they were not fighting in wars or did not need to carry weapons, their usage was more of a fashion choice (Norris, 1999). However, Bean’s buckle seems like an ordinary buckle, which purpose is actually to ensure the firmness. As mentioned before, Bean is a character that rejects her status as a princess and thus adopts a masculine look which is also visible in her clothes. Her clothes become especially significant when we pay attention to the clothing of other

characters who are coded as women, which are more stereotypically feminine dresses. Bean, too, in some occasions chooses to wear more stereotypically feminine dresses, which shows that in her daily life it is her own preference to wear stereotypically masculine clothes. Her belt is also a part of this argument, with a square shaped that can be read as conveying stability, strength, and confidence. On the other hand, Adora's and Rayla's belt buckles seems decorative, used to communicate identity. In the American civil war, for instance, belt-like sashes were used to identify ranks in the army through different colors (Lord, 1970). This can be especially true in Adora's case because in the beginning of the show, she had a Horde symbol on her belt, which resembles a demonic wing, but once she understands which side is truly evil, and which side is good, and changes sides, her buckle is replaced with the angelic wing. Although it is anthropo/theriomorphic to see wings as evil or good, as it is already mentioned in the character design section of this chapter, stereotyped concepts are shorthand for conveying stories to the audience.

Figure 2: Rayla, The Dragon Prince



Rayla, unlike the other two characters, is neither human nor a non-human animal as; rather, as mentioned, she is a Moonshadow elf: a humanoid. As a non-human person, she sees herself “as a part of nature and wilderness rather than [a ruler] over it” (Ulstein, 2015, p. 11). The use of humanoids, hybrid creatures or imaginary species

are not uncommon at all in the fantasy genre. These characters often create a connection between the fantasy genre and ecocentrism. Rayla, too, is a character that does not exist separately from nature, but on countless occasions acknowledges herself as part of a greater system and emphasizes her ecological morality.

In her character design, the horns that come out through her hair are important, since elves are fictional characters and a necessity for them to own horns is not vital. Without her horns, pointed and slightly elongated ears, and four-fingered hands, Rayla would look exactly like a human. The theriomorphism applied on Rayla through her horns not only separates her from well-known fictional elves like Arwen or Galadriel from *Lord of the Rings*, it also removes her from the human and human knowledge – and this lack of knowledge has a powerful effect when combining her design with her character arc. Guénon (2004) explains that the words “horn” and “crown” philologically share a common root. “It is too obvious that the crown is the emblem of power and [...] we find an initial correspondence in the fact that both are placed on the head” (p. 187). Rayla’s horns are a representation of both her and her species’ strength and it is not a surprise this power is symbolized by something that is, in reality, commonly found in nature; also, Guénon (2004) adds that there is another “correspondence which in certain respects is to be found in between such animal weapons as horns and what might be called vegetable weapons, that is, thorns” (p. 189). In other words, Rayla does not only share a part with the non-human animal world, but also with the plant world.

A question, then, can be asked about the reason for Rayla’s visual connection to nature; is it because she is a female creature, or because she is an elf? There is an

essentialist argument, mostly made by spiritual ecofeminists, that the female is inherently closer to nature. Plumwood (2003) argues that “giving positive value to the ‘barefoot and pregnant’ image of women and validating their exclusion from the world of culture and relegation to that of nature” seems to be the antithesis of feminism (p. 8). This kind of essentialist thinking, claims Plumwood (2003), “replaces the ‘angel in the house’ version of women by the ‘angel in the ecosystem’ version” (p. 9).

To give a healthy answer to the question of whether Rayla’s connection to nature is enhanced by her elfness or not, it is important to look at other female humanoid character designs and their relationship with nature. “If we think that the fact of being female guarantees that we are automatically provided with an ecological consciousness and can do no wrong to nature ..., we are going to be badly disappointed” (Plumwood, 2003, p. 10). Plumwood (2003) by making this claim, rejects that there is an inherent connection between the female and nature, and thus spiritual ecofeminism “(or eco-femininity as Davion regards ‘because of their uncritical acceptance of conventional gender binaries’) [which] believes in “the notion that women have had a closer relation with ‘Nature’ than men, and therefore once ... had a greater intimacy with the ‘divine’” (Raddeker, 2009, p.4). A great example against spiritual ecofeminism is the character Claudia from *The Dragon Prince*. Looking at Claudia’s character design, dark colors stand out; although darker colors do not always stand for evil, they certainly have a stereotyped meaning. “Historically our prehistoric ancestors experienced the dark of night as a time of danger—a time when unknown predators could attack without warning. Today, black

Figure 8: Claudia, *The Dragon Prince* Figure 9: Lord Viren, *The Dragon Prince* Figure 10: Soren, *The Dragon Prince*



represents the unknown and mysterious- the perfect surrounding for fearful encounters” (Morton, 2011). Drawing from this, while black is used in opposition to white, it may stand for the contrast between day and night, which may stand as another symbol for good and evil. It is especially significant because, the design of the character who is exactly the opposite of Claudia, Rayla, has hair in the opposite color (white) which may convince the audience that there is an actual color coding. Except for her skin color and the purple on the tip of her hair, Claudia is dominated by the color black. She is a mage, but she can only do “dark” magic which is done by harvesting living beings and using them as components and tools. She is a character who deliberately harms nature and members of nature for humanity’s advantage. Looking exactly like a “privileged white male”, Claudia’s brother Soren shares some of his sister’s design aspects. He also has a lot of black in his design, however his blond hair and shiny silver armor dominates the black in his design. Although for most of the series he treats nature and animals badly, in season three he goes through a redemption arc and starts to fight for the good, which is visible in his color scale (he has lighter colors in his colors scale while the other family members have not). One important thing is that both Claudia and Soren are manipulated by their father Viren. Plumwood (2003) argues that “the forces directing the destruction of nature and the wealth produced from it are owned and controlled overwhelmingly by an

unaccountable, mainly white, mainly male elite” – and this show reflects this tendency (p. 12). Lord Viren, as the former high mage of Katolis and the King’s closest adviser, checks all three of the boxes Plumwood (2003) states: White, male, elite. Just like his daughter, he has almost an entirely black outfit. Unlike his daughter, however, he has a purple gem on his chest and a staff which is also embedded with a purple gemstone. The color purple is rare in nature and thus is associated with supernatural aura, while also being associated with nobility and luxury (“Purple”, n.d.). Viren’s staff, as a phallic object, ensures his paternal authority over his children. His gray hair could signify his age and thus his wisdom, however, combining wisdom with evil makes him even a scarier character. Going back to the belt allegory, while Soren’s belt has no buckle, thus symbolizing his meekness in life, Claudia and Viren have triangle shapes on their buckles, which strengthens their villainous characters.

Figure 11: Catra, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*



Figure 12: Lord Hordak, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*



Figure 13: Jim, *Wizards*



When we look at other humanoids, anthropomorphized or theriomorphized, those in *She-ra and the Princesses of Power* and *Wizards* share some common aspects with Rayla in their character designs, especially Catra, Adora’s former-best-friend/nemesis/lover. According to Guitton’s (2013) study about morphological

conservation in human-animal hybrids in fantasy settings, “while the body appearance can be altered, human morphological traits are highly conserved” (p. 161). Walking on two legs, breasts being high on the chest as on a human body or designing faces similar to other human characters in the show can be examples of these human morphological traits. As observed in Catra, Hordak, the leader of the evil Horde and Jim, a formerly-human troll hunter whose duty is actually to protect the trolls, aside from their heads and faces, their body structure exactly resembles a human. However, it is also evident from both looking at Rayla and Catra’s design that “female human-animal hybrids [and humanoids] retain more human traits than do males” (Guitton, 2013, p. 161).

Catra is a human-cat hybrid, even though her species is not clearly stated, she is a member of the feline family and almost for the entirety of the show she is a part of the Horde and works against the good. Although towards the end of the show, she goes through a redemption arc, her debut purpose as a character is clear: hindering Adora, the good and chosen one. Although the theriomorphized Catra is working for the evil Horde, Rayla, who is an elf and has horns similar to a domestic goat, is working to bring back balance. Lecker (2007) points out that in 6,000 B.C., the Egyptian society had an admiration for cats, because they were eating pests and saving grains (p.16). Along with the cat gods of Egyptian culture (Bastet, Isis, Sekhmet), other cultures and mythologies also had feline related goddesses and entities (Labbatu, Freya, The Olmecs). As Simon (2003) notes in *The Feline Mystique* “most such associations between the divine and the feline are [...] female” (p. 50). Towards the medieval times, however, this association became a tool to persecute both: “the cultural history of the female/feline has linked the two through

connotations of perverse or uninhibited sexuality and evil/death. These cultural beliefs are linked to the felines' physiology, their behaviors and their perceived attitudes" (Lecker, 2007, p.18-19). Looking at Catra, all of these negative traits of treachery, fickleness and wickedness are visually evoked through pointed elements and sharp angles in her design. Her face also has angular features, such as her pointed chin and her almond-shaped, sharp-edged eyes. This number of pointed features reflects her malicious character. Her eyes are heterochromatic, one yellow and the other one turquoise. Departing from the idiom "eyes are the mirrors of the soul", Catra's eyes make her untrustworthy. Due to her feline ancestry, she has black sharp claws both on her fingers and toes. Like Rayla, Adora and Bean, she, too, has a belt, and a symbol of the evil Horde is visible on her buckle. It is clear that Catra's personality and her narrative function are conveyed through her character design.

In both Rayla's and Catra's cases, as two theriomorphized and/or anthropomorphized humanoids, the "conservation of female trait seems to be critical. Female appearance may bear constraints for identification; these constraints seem to overpower the creative process involved in imagination" (Guitton, 2013, p. 162). When we look at Hordak or Jim, there is little human left in their faces, compared to the other two female characters. Additionally, it is worth to note that Hordak, who is the main evil character almost until the end of the series, has a face resembling a skull signifying danger and death, while Jim, a good character, a defender of the weak, is designed to resemble an animal, again with horns, while still keeping some facial features that makes the audience understand he is (or was, in this case), in fact, a human.

Figure 14: Kipo, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*



Figure 15: Kipo (in jaguar form), *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*



One other female character in this corpus associated with a feline is Kipo from *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, however, she is different from Catra in that she is a good character who tries to build a world where humans and non-human animals (“mutes” as the animated series calls them) can live in peace as equals. Kipo’s character design is striking, especially because of her skin color, which is pinkish purple and is exclusive to her in the series. The color pink, while it’s usually associated with childhood and femininity, has also a physical effect on people as it tones down aggression and its “use in holding cells for violent criminals have been quite effective” (“Pink”, n.d.; Genschow et al., 2014). As all choices in character design are deliberate, Kipo’s pink skin foreshadows of her duty in later episodes of the animation. It is explicitly stated in the animated series that she is biracial; her mother is Korean, and her father is Black. The pinkness of her skin, however, is due to the fact that her parents “enhanced her with MEGA-jaguar DNA as a fetus” (Cooper, 2020). It is possible that her mutation can be read as an allegory of her being mixed-raced. Although this trait will be further unpacked in the narrative structure chapter, it is also worth mentioning that among the interesting race issues brought up in the show, the muddling of the animal/human binary is one of “posthumanism's favorite boundaries to disrupt” (Cooper, 2020). When Kipo changes into a “full mega” jaguar, she retains elements of her human(oid)

appearance. Her skin color is preserved, but her hair color changes, and she also gets her rosettes. Jaguars are known to be the “largest big cats” (Langley, 2017). It is also discussed that the jaguar symbolizes warfare and fighting in many different cultures like in the Aztec and Maya (Saunders, 1994). It makes sense since Kipo, as mentioned, fights for a future of human-animal collaboration, however, she does not do that aggressively and out of rage, that’s why her color being pink soothes the jaguar imagery.

In the case not of theriomorphized humans, but anthropomorphized animals, things get far more interesting, at least in an ecocritical context. First and foremost, the animal/mute antagonist of the first two seasons of *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, is Hugo Oak, aka Scarlemagne, a self-imposed nickname. His exaggeratedly triangular head and pointed beard and forehead, automatically tells the audience’s subconscious that he is a character that they should watch out for. The

Figure 3: Scarlemagne, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*



name resembles “Charlemagne”⁴, one of the most compelling figures in European history. Having this in mind, the name Scarlemagne is a portmanteau of the word

⁴ “Charlemagne (c.742-814), also known as [...] Charles the Great, was a medieval emperor who ruled much of Western Europe [...] He embarked on a mission to unite all Germanic peoples into one kingdom and convert his subjects to Christianity (“Charlemagne”, 2019). After he was crowned the emperor of Romans, he “encouraged [...] a cultural and intellectual revival in Europe” (“Charlemagne”, 2019).

“scar” (because he has several of them on his face) and “Charlemagne”. Just like the person his name is coming from, Scarlemagne’s main aim is consolidating power: he wants to build a golden city where he would rule over all the “mutes” and make all humans his servants.

Scarlemagne is a mandrill, a species which, according to the “IUCN Red List of Threatened Species”, is listed as ‘vulnerable’ (Abernethy & Maisels, 2019). From an ecocritical point of view, having an animal at some risk of extinction as an antagonist seems less than ideal. However, who has more right to punish the human than the mandrill, especially a mandrill who has also been subjected to experiments done by humans? In the series itself as well, it seems like Scarlemagne is the only mandrill alive, an assumption I make due to the fact that no other mandrill is seen in the course of the series. Being the last of its species, while Scarlemagne is supposed to be protected and prevented from putting himself in dangerous situations, at the end of the series he sacrifices himself to protect Kipo, a scenario that would be much more problematic if Kipo was not a hybrid. Scarlemagne’s sacrifice results in the extinction of the mandrill in the world of *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, seemingly for the cause of creating a society where humans and mutes can live in harmony, but, underneath, for Kipo, a human who was artificially made a hybrid by humans.

Looking at Scarlemagne’s clothes, one immediately thinks of the “redcoats”, the clothing of the British-revolutionary-era. It is an important outfit choice since Scarlemagne is the show’s first main antagonist. “The show uses Scarlemagne’s attire to pinpoint a powerful and prevalent theme throughout its run, relating to race,

and the history, iconography and visuals of how race is depicted and affected” (Johnson, 2020). Scarlemagne has the ability to control humans with his pheromones. Wearing this outfit, he forces humans to work and refers to their work as ‘slacking’ even though the humans collapse because of working too much, which almost parallels British colonists’ treatment of Black American slaves (Johnson, 2020). Also, another important feature in the practice of character design, Scarlemagne’s voice actor is the white and British Dan Stevens. With the costume design of the character and the voice actor being chosen to be specifically British, associating such horrible history with an endangered animal, even though in the final season the character completes his redemption arc, seems problematic and will be further discussed in the narrative chapter.

Up until now in this chapter, the protagonists and the antagonists have been discussed and among them only one person of color was present: Kipo, whose visible skin color is actually a pinkish purple. Glotfelty (1996) claimed in the Introduction of *The Ecocriticism Reader* that ecocriticism is a white movement, adding that it will only be an inclusive and multi-ethnic movement once it encourages the contributions of diverse voices and once the connections between the environment and social justice is strengthened. Although, in serial shows, animated or not, there are many outstanding representations of people of color, they are usually not the main protagonists. Lemish and Johnson (2019) analyzed the landscape of children’s television in the United States, finding that “the majority of human characters... are Caucasian (65% in the US...) [and] females are nearly 2x as likely to be portrayed as persons of color or racially ambiguous than males” which suggests that “some shows might be trying to ‘check two boxes’ with one casting” (p. 14). While doing so,

however, these shows still cannot manage to represent the non-white characters (35%) as main protagonists, but rather as the best friend, or a member of the main protagonist's squad.

In *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *Dragon Prince*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, and *Wizards* the characters of color are all in a supporting role, always beside the good, with the exception of Odval from *Disenchantment* who has evil tendencies. All of their designs seem to resemble each other, with big brown eyes (in Ezran's case blue), colorful outfits and with an eagerness to help the protagonist.

Figure 17: Ezran, *The Dragon Prince*



Figure 18: Zym, *The Dragon Prince*



Figure 19: Benson and Dave, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*



Ezran is designed using shapes of circles and triangles to reflect his youth and energy. He has also lots of squares in his outfit, which may symbolize his honesty and willpower. The most special thing about his design, however, is that there is an uncanny similarity between his and Zym's character design. Without even knowing their relationship or how their arcs are interrelated, one can assume they have an important connection with each other. In a similar manner Benson and Dave from *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* are connected to one another visually in their harmonic coloring. Both relationships are far away from a human-pet relationship and represent more of an equal friendship, as showed in their complementary, even

mirrored character designs. While in the designs of Ezran and Benson show their connection to nature through their resemblance to their animal/creature friends, in the following two examples it is shown through their powers and little details on their outfits.

Figure 4: Mermista, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power



Mermista from *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* is a member of the princess alliance, the alliance that fights against the Horde. She is a princess who has the power of controlling water and turning into a mermaid (as her name suggests).

Although her ethnicity is ambiguous and not revealed by the creators, fans have speculated that she is either Indian (South Asian) or Native American. Her hair is in the style of a multiple-tied ponytail. The tip of her hair evokes the shape of a fish fin. Her clothes and hair are dominated by shades of blue and green to recall the sea/ocean. She has lots of golden jewelry, which seems as a symbol for royalty, wealth, extravagance and richness (Fussel, 2019). “In many societies across the world gold became the most highly-prized material, valued for its rarity and beauty” (Fussel, 2019). Mermista also has black nail-polish which may signify her rebellious, sarcastic, and blunt personality. The flap of her shoe resembles the shape of a seashell, reinforcing her connection to the ocean or sea. The fact that this sign

connecting her to water is placed on her shoe suggests that the ocean/sea is the reason she's standing firm, which creates a bond between Mermista and nature. Also, having in mind that she has the ability to turn into a mermaid, it would not be wrong to assume that her feet turn into fins, using design not only to symbolize her bond with water but also hint at her ability. According to Gill (2007), "femininity is defined as a bodily property rather than...social, structural, or...psychological" (p. 149). She also adds that for women "the body" is a source of identity and a source of power (Gill, 2007).

In Mermista's case, being able to use her power efficiently depends on her bodily transformation; however, the beauty of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* lies in the fact that, unlike other famous princesses and mermaids, Mermista does not have to sacrifice anything to transform. An identity change is certainly not required for her to change form; furthermore, unlike other popular mermaids (Ariel, *The Little Mermaid*; Madison, *Splash*; Aquamarine, *Aquamarine* etc.) Mermista does not have a Barbie-doll-like figure ("tiny waist, large chest, large eyes, and long, flowing hair") (Frasl, 2018, p. 346). Frasl (2018) states that bodies who do not conform to the western beauty standard are seen as 'ill-disciplined bodies' and are vilified. Even if Mermista had a body like a Barbie doll it would not matter, because Frasl (2018) also argues that "merpeople's bodies are ill-disciplined because they are creatures who are at the same time human and non-human. They represent a strange – queer – inbetweenness." (p. 348). Adding the fact that she is also a *princess* (not referring to her title or status but to the fact that she has unique powers, abilities, and connection to nature), which in the show also suggests non-humanness, her species becomes blurred, and this makes her a character who subverts binaric orders. Unlike other

famous mermaids/princesses, the series does not put her in a situation where she must choose between worlds, and grants her the ability to maintain her in-betweenness.

In the character design of another member of the Princess Alliance, Perfuma, who is also a person of color, there is a similarity to Mermista in the sense of her connection to nature, as she has the ability to control the earth and plants. She has blonde hair and black eyes. Her body resembles the shape of a rectangle, which may tell about her character that she is supportive, strong-willed, trustworthy and egalitarian (Tillmann, 2011; Solarski, 2012). Of the series' characters, she is most

Figure 5: *Perfuma, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*



explicitly connected to nature in her character design, even more so than Mermista. She is a princess, and thus she has a crown as on her head made out of plants and flowers. As mentioned before in this chapter, the crown is a sign of power (Guéron, 2004). Designing Perfuma's crown as plants and flowers, is a strong sign that her power and strength come from nature, even suggesting a power over nature, since she has the ability to "control" plants. Due to the lack of research on chlorokinesis (the power of manipulating plants), I approached the issue from a more realistic perspective. Galun (2001), in her essay *Genetically Manipulated Plants: Ethical and*

Religious Issues, talks whether or not it is ethical for humans to genetically manipulate plants. Galun (2001) says that genetic manipulation for research purposes should be separated from genetic manipulation to produce plants for human consumption, because when the manipulation is researched based, it does not pose a threat on the environment. Adapting this argument to Perfuma's purpose in the universe of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, plant manipulation for research purposes aligns with plant manipulation for survival, because Perfuma is one of the most pacifist and egalitarian characters. It can be even argued that her unconventional sandals without soles are further proof of her constant connection with the earth beneath her feet. Barefoot, with the little flowers in her hair, she looks like a visual definition for "angel in the ecosystem". But the gender essentialism in this image cannot be overlooked. Alaimo (2000) believes that "casting woman as synonymous with nature actually constituted woman as "woman", that is, as a completely sexed being. Defining woman as that which is mired in nature thrusts woman outside the domain of human subjectivity, rationality, and agency" (p. 2).

Yet Perfuma defies this binary that would separate nature from rationality and agency, complicating the strict gender essentialism that Alaimo proposes. Even though Perfuma has the ability to control plants an entire episode is devoted to her struggle controlling cacti because they are, according to Perfuma, "rough and unfriendly": "I hate cacti. There. I said it. I love and honor all, things except cacti" (Stevenson, 2018-2020, 4-1, 00:14:54-00:15:01). This shows that her power of controlling plants is not an absolute power but an ability (or, according to Perfuma, a blessing) that works through understanding and accepting your place in the ecosystem. She cannot communicate with the cacti, and even otherizes them at some

point; however, in a moment of crisis, she observes that they have the strongest root system she has ever seen. Perfuma accepts she was wrong about them and makes peace with the cacti, demonstrating a de-otherization process through narrative. Recognizing the cactus as a phallic symbol adds a further layer to this reading, one that is conveyed visually. When recognized as a phallic symbol, the relationship between the cactus and Perfuma recalls not penis envy but rather a phallic fear or a reservation: she does not want to own it or possess it, but rather understand it and build a relationship with it as she has with other plants. Padva and Buchweitz (2014) remind us that psychoanalysis usually considers the phallus as an object representing power, however, “the phallus itself has no universal material sign, and the closest signifier is the penis, given male social dominance” (p. 2). If we look at the cacti as symbols of male social dominance, Perfuma’s fear becomes a fear of society’s patriarchal ideologies. However, when she manages to control the cacti roots with support from her female friends Huntara and Adora, she realizes that they have the most powerful root system. There are two sides to this analogy. Firstly, the roots may stand for everything that the phallus has repressed, making the roots signifiers of the marginalized Others and minorities. Perfuma, a woman of color, with the support of other women, manages to pull the roots up from underground, making them visible and placing them in a higher position. However, this is an imperfect analogy because, the roots are meant to stay underground, in order to nourish the plant and allow it to thrive. The second interpretation therefore comes from focusing on the roots of the phallus, symbol of patriarchy. From this point of view, the series suggests that the problem is not men, but rather the symbolic power of the phallus and the privilege it is given by the patriarchal ideology and society.

It is also worth noting that in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, each member of the Princess Alliance except Adora (She-Ra) is designed as visibly non-white. Even though Adora is not great at everything and regularly needs or depends on the other Princesses' help, she is still the leader. Some design restrictions are expected since the animated series is a reboot of a 1985 show; however, since they were free to change the ethnicities of all the other Princesses, one wonders the reason behind the choice of keeping Adora—and only Adora—white. Klein and Schiffman (2006) point out that

studies focusing on race-related content in the media have concluded that racial minority group members are underrepresented in the media (Eschholz, Bufkin, & Long, 2002; Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2004; Larson, 2002), regardless of whether these persons=characters are African American (Jackson & Ervin, 1991), Latino (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Li-Vollmer, 2002; Taylor, Lee, & Stern, 1995), Asian (Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 2002; Li-Vollmer, 2002; Mastro & Stern, 2003), or Native American (Greenberg et al., 2002; Li-Vollmer, 2002; Mastro & Stern, 2003; Merskin, 1998) (p.164).

When we look at the designs of nonhuman characters, there is mostly no visibility of an ethnicity or race. However, they still must have some human characteristics and carry some cultural reflections so that they can be relatable to the human audience. “Humans have a habit of anthropomorphizing everything they encounter, even inanimate objects. So regardless of whether characters are technically orcs or talking fungi, the audience will draw parallels to real human groups” (Winkle & Onyx, 2019). However, coding race or ethnicity can be ambiguous if the character is not human, thus the designers or the animation crew usually code some traits that

indicate racial or ethnic backgrounds. One of these strategies is voice casting. What I will focus is voice acting and the voice actors that are cast to lend their voice to a specific character.

When a character is human, although it is much easier to code race visually through character design, there remains the question of voicing. Whitewashing – the practice of casting white performers for characters coded and/or established through prior intertexts as non-white – can also affect casting of voice actors in animated series, and these practices have recently been addressed more publicly. Almost a month after the tension provoked by the police killing of George Floyd, Jenny Slate, a white performer who voiced the Black character Missy in *Big Mouth*, stepped away from her role and explained this decision through Instagram saying “Black characters on an animated show should be played by Black people ... I was engaging in an act of erasure” (as cited in Romano, 2020). Following Slate, many white voice actors from popular series “who were originally cast to play characters of color, have stepped away from their roles [...] [and] acknowledged the long-standing problem of whitewashing in the voice acting industry” (Romano, 2020). The five animated series this thesis investigates have not come under similar scrutiny in the media for their voice castings, although there remain some mis-castings and tendencies to perpetuate whitewashing (see Appendix C). Despite some minor mismatches, the corpus shows that animated fantasy series that meet Lawrence Buell’s four criteria to determine whether a text is environmental or not, are sensitive about matching the voice actors’ race/ethnic identities with their characters.

When the character is nonhuman, however, unless the character is given conventionally unmistakable racial/ethnic coding, they would be considered as characters in an unmarked state. “An unmarked character is a white, youthful, monogamous, heterosexual, able-bodied, neurotypical cis man. Any trait that deviates from this is a ‘marked’ trait, because it has to be specified by the storyteller in some way” (Winkle & Onyx, 2019). As mentioned, the voice of the character can be counted among the marked traits.

Figure 6: Aaravos, *The Dragon Prince*



Figure 7: Luci, *Disenchantment*



The corpus for this research includes several nonhuman characters that have no obvious physical traits that invite association with a specific race. However, their voice actors suggest some purposeful coding through casting rather than visual design. Through IMDb, I have checked all the voice actors of the animated series in the present corpus. Several nonhuman characters are voiced by non-white actors: (Hordak (Keston John) – Shadow Weaver (Lorraine Toussaint), *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*; Aavaros (Erik Dellums), *The Dragon Prince*; Kipo (Karen Fukuhara) – Dave (Deon Cole), *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*; Luci (Eric

Andre), *Disenchantment*; Nari (Angel Lin)– Callista (Stephanie Beatriz), *Wizards*). Except Dave, Nari and Callista, all the other characters listed have evil tendencies. I will only focus on the character of Shadow Weaver because I believe she introduces the most interesting case among all.

Figure 8: Shadow Weaver, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power



Shadow Weaver, a sorceress formerly served in the Horde, is one of the early antagonists of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*. Even though she later leaves the Horde, her redemption arc is not that powerful and even when at the end of the show she gives her life for the protagonists' sake, she never really gains status as “good”. Her visual design is dominated by darker colors. The ends of her dress and her hair are in constant movement reminding a flame. However, the fact that they have black and reddish colors evokes sinister aura. Her face is covered with a mask which may be symbolizing her mysterious character and that we never know what her true purpose is. In the upper-middle of her mask there is a piece of the Black Garnet (a runestone) that gives her, her power. The Black Garnet, formerly, belonged to a native family before the Horde arrived and invaded Etheria. The fact that the Horde confiscated the runestone from a family native to Etheria and uses it repeatedly to cause damage to the inhabitants of the land, introduces some colonialist undertones, and tying this to a character who is coded Black through voice seems insensitive.

When we are introduced to Shadow Weaver, she is working for the Evil Horde (and in fact she has a high rank), which makes the audience associate her with the evilness of the Horde. All the raids and attacks the Horde executes hurts the environment, the indigenous people, and the Whispering Woods, which seems as these maltreatments are a product of Shadow Weaver, a character visibly coded as evil, and coded aurally as Black (voiced by Lorraine Toussaint). In a fantasy series, this performer might have been cast as any character, but their decision to casting her as a character whose objectives are ambiguous, who is power hungry, who works in a high rank in the Horde which constantly harms the Others (both human and nonhuman) compounds the problem of keeping only the lead, Adora, white,. Even though the series seems inclusive, with diverse and successful representations, both on-screen and off-screen, it still has some issues that need unpacking regarding race.

3.5. Conclusion

For living humans, appearances may not be always the most credible way to understand a person's character. However, using semiotics to look into the character design of an animated series can reveal key details about the stance of the production and how the designer may have wanted to introduce the character to the audience as efficiently and effectively as possible. Yet, even here, appearances can be deceiving. Although a work may look like it promotes environmental, feminist, anti-racist, pro-Queer, and generally egalitarian messages, sometimes it may fail to live up to these ethics, precisely due to a high dependence on stereotyped concepts to convey messages through character design.

This chapter has discussed several character designs from the animated series *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *The Dragon Prince*, *Disenchantment*, and *Wizards*, all of which are part of the fantasy genre. The main protagonists of all these ecologically minded, animated fantasies that meet Lawrence Buell's four criteria are female characters, mostly white. Although they were all designed mostly by using circular shapes, they have also angular features which showed they are layered characters who have flaws. Humanoids, human-animal hybrids, or theriomorphized characters are mostly people of color and, again, female. On the other hand, anthropomorphized characters are mostly male. Evil characters usually seem to be humanoids, or white people who have mostly darker colors in their outfits. All the animated series have a range of diverse characters. However, their connection to nature is not always explicit in their designs, unless they have obvious features that belong to non-human nature, such as animal parts or plants. Still, when combining the designs with the animated series' narratives, it can be observed that there are consistent design preferences.

CHAPTER IV

SETTING

4.1. Introduction

While the fantasy genre has many ways to realize imaginary tales, the settings, the landscapes, and the maps it creates are key to inviting the audience into the comforting and familiar but also into the disturbing and the alien. The term setting is used here as an umbrella term for maps, landscapes, places, and time periods; its overt presence in these series is vital due to many different reasons that shift with each show and with each narrative arc. The strength of the fantasy genre's connection to the natural environment, as established before in this thesis, has been expressed by many scholars before. It was even argued by many that the setting and the landscape could be seen as separate characters who have their own plot and arc (Rozelle, 2005; Patterson, 2009; Maass, 2013). However, still, the attention the characters and the plot receive is certainly not lesser than the attention received by the setting. Elgin (1985), author of *The Comedy of the Fantastic*, claims that the setting is important because it serves as a force that affects the characters and in return is affected by them (p. 180). Although, in general terms, setting in the fantasy

genre does not differ from its conventional definition⁵ “the location and the time frame in which the action of a narrative takes place”, the concept has certainly a heavier influence on the fantastic due to the genre’s dependence on physical surroundings and time periods (“Setting,” 2001, para. 1). This chapter will concern itself with the ecocritical readings of the settings of the animated fantasy series *The Dragon Prince*, *Disenchantment*, *Wizards*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, and *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*. One of the main aims of ecocriticism is to raise awareness of nature and the environment. When the setting is not seen only as a backdrop to the story, its larger purpose can be acknowledged and analyzed. Just as in feminist studies, focusing on women in narrative can raise important issues and propose solutions to social problems, ecocriticism has the ability to do the same thing for nature. By analyzing the function of the settings and physical surroundings in these animated series, the relationship between humans and nature-Other will be investigated.

As mentioned above, setting is defined as a location and a time period where a narrative takes place. In the fantasy genre, while preserving that meaning, it also becomes one of the fundamental features that defines the genre. In his groundbreaking essay “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre”, Altman (1984) suggested two ways to consider genre: semantic and syntactic. The semantic approach concerns itself with the conventions of the genre that are communicated to the audience such as “common traits, attitudes, characters, shots, locations, [and] sets”, and the syntactic approach with the relationship between these semantic elements and the structures of narratives (Altman, 1984, p.10). In the case of the

⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica Online

fantasy genre this line between semantic and syntactic gets blurred, because, although setting is seen as a semantic element at first, it can easily be tied to the syntactic as well.

The setting serves as a way to declare the genre as fantasy. If the setting is unknown to the real world; if the setting is coded to represent medieval Europe (which usually is the case); if it's a secondary world; or if it's based on Earth but it's not the Earth we know, then a claim can be made that the text we are dealing with is a fantasy text.

Altman (1984) reminds that genres are treated like they always existed independent from time, however, every genre has a starting point, or in other words, texts that opened the gates for the development of a genre. According to Altman (1984) "genres arise in two fundamental ways: either a relatively stable set of semantic givens is developed through syntactic experimentation into a coherent and durable syntax, or an already existing syntax adopts a new set of semantic elements" (p. 12).

Tolkien's works are seen by many as the genre-defining works of literary fantasy, and their influence has extended to audiovisual formats as well. When we think of the settings he created, we come up with imageries that seem now synonymous with the word 'medieval'. Tolkien's ability in world-building and making masses accept settings like Shire (which resembles Elfwood in *Disenchantment*), Rivendell (which resembles Silvergrove in *The Dragon Prince*), and Mordor (which resembles Fright Zone in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*) as bases for the setting conventions in the fantasy genre cannot be underestimated and thus must be emphasized in making settings semantic elements in the fantasy genre.

However, what we see as a semantic element can simultaneously acquire another position through becoming a syntactic element, since Altman (1984) also states that they are not opposing but complementary terms. In this case setting is also a syntactic element because it is usually the one element that introduces the driving force behind the motives of the characters and creates the tension between good and evil. Rozelle (2005) says that “the location and time frame of [the] story is more than just a stage for [the] characters to tromp around on. In some cases, the setting becomes the character itself” (p. 2). When it is seen only as a stage or backdrop, distanced by historical time and/or physical space, it is a semantic element of the genre, however, as a syntactic element, as will be discussed further in this chapter, the maps, the borders, and the forests or woods all introduce situations in which the audience expects certain characters to fight for that setting while the others are against it.⁶ This duality in the narrative adds excitement and provokes curiosity, which increases as the narrative goes on and leaves the audience in a place where they cannot remain neutral and need to take sides of good or evil.

4.2. Place, Space, Landscape, Nature

Because this chapter mainly concerns itself with the settings of the animated series, some clarifications need to be made about several terms, both to avoid confusion and have a better and clearer understanding of concepts related to the setting. Some terms that are often used while studying the setting are landscape, place, space, nature, physical surroundings, and the environment. However, it is not explicitly stated

⁶ An example could be the Ents in The Lord of the Rings Trilogy. Sauron, the main antagonist, has destroyed an area, which later became the ‘Brown Lands’, and caused the disappearance of the Entwives. Also, in “The Two Towers”, the second volume of Tolkien’s trilogy, Saruman’s (an ally of Sauron) armies cut down large number of trees which make the Ents furious and decide to join the war to destroy Isengard (Saruman’s personal realm). This shows that even in the grandfatherly work of fantasy, when an evil group harms nature or the setting, even the neutral characters take sides.

every time, what the terms exactly refer to or how they are interrelated if they are.

While the concept of setting harbors all the other terms under its umbrella, a clear distinction will be beneficial for the reader to have a better understanding of the arguments introduced further in this thesis.

4.2.1. Place

One term that one tends to confuse and use interchangeably with other setting-related words is place. However, place has its own theory, an enormous literature behind it and is discussed in extremely broad considerations. As Lutwack (1984) mentions, in the 18th century time, under the heading of unity of time, was getting much more attention than place. Even in the twentieth century, time continued to be the focus of literary criticism, except that it became “time in the novel, rather than time in the drama that fascinates critics” (Lutwack, 1984, p.1). However, Denis Donoghue (1978) draws attention to the idea that “history and time are dangerous concepts because they seem to identify meaning with teleology and they lead the poet to fancy that he sees the spirit of the age by reading its signs in history ... poets would do better to turn away from time toward space, from history toward ... place” (para. 10). Donoghue (1978), here, states that focusing on place rather than time keeps the creator in reality, even though the work they create may be unrealistic. Place also carries a more personal and “human” connotation than concepts like landscape or nature, because “place” is irrelevant if no cognition is present to recognize it. This can also be combined with Barbara Bender’s (2006) take on the subjectivity of place:

The same place at the same moment will be experienced differently by
different people; the same place, at different moments, will be experienced

differently by the same person; the same person may even, at a given moment, hold conflicting feelings about a place (p. 303).

Even though a place can change on its own, when there is no one to recognize that change, such shifts may be irrelevant. According to Bender (2006), a place can only affect a person if the person is experiencing it. Yi Fu Tuan (1979) also believes that “place incarnates the experience and aspirations of a people. Place is [...] also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning” (p. 387). This could be connected to Buell’s (2001) notion of place-connectedness, in which he claims that personalities grow through connecting to many places. A place for Buell (2005) is a “center of felt value” (p. 63). While Bender (2006) focuses on the relationship between the place and a person and how a person is experiencing that place, Buell (2001) takes this argument one step further and says that the place actually carves personalities and creates identities.

4.2.2. Space

Crang and Thrift (2000) suggest that the word ‘place’ is used so often that “its meanings run into each other before they have been properly interrogated” (p. 1). Although used in an extremely close sense the concepts ‘space’ and ‘place’ also differ. Space is a much more abstract concept than place. While place is a recognition of a location by a cognition, space exists through experience. It is irrelevant whether a cognition recognizes the location whether this cognition belongs to a human or a nonhuman.

Recent ethological studies show that nonhuman animals also have a sense of territory and of place. Spaces are marked off and defended against intruders.

Places are centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food,

water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied. Humans share with other animals certain behavioral patterns, but [...], people also respond to space and place in complicated ways that are inconceivable in the animal world (Tuan, 1977, p. 4).

According to Tuan (1979) when one studies space from a humanistic perspective, they study the “people’s spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience” (p. 388). Although it is much more abstract than other similar or relevant concepts, space is conditioned through the fact that an individual is in it which makes it more closely tied to experience (Tuan, 1979). Tuan (1979) explains this in the following words: “[the] space of which I am centre, the space that answers my moods and intentions” (p. 388). While the place needs a cognition that recognizes it as a place, the space exists together with the body and the individuality. Geographer Edward Relph (1976), in his book *Place and Placelessness*, also states that it is vital to explore space through the notion of experience. “[...] He identifies modes of spatial experience that are instinctive, bodily, and immediate [pragmatic space, perceptual space, and existential space] [...] [and] modes of spatial experience that are more cerebral, ideal, and intangible [planning space, cognitive space, and abstract space]” (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p.2). Although it was seen as a radical idea when he first introduced it, today, in wider geographical studies, “Relph’s conclusion that space is heterogeneous and infused with many different lived dimensions is largely taken for granted” (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p. 2).

4.2.3. Landscape

Barbara Bender (2006) opens her discussion in her article *Place and Landscape* by saying that ‘landscape’ “is ... ‘the world out there’ as understood, experienced, and

engaged with through human consciousness and active involvement ... [and] thus ... a subjective notion” (p. 303). Henson (2011) states in her book where she discusses the relationship between landscape and gender in Charlotte Bronte’s novels that “landscape can be seen as ‘a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values’, and the complex reshaping process is culturally determined” (p.1). Stephen Daniels, (1993) on the other hand, sees landscape as a force that represents national identity. He claims that the changing sites of the landscape can shed light to how the cultural history of a nation has evolved (Daniels, 1993). Elizabeth Helsinger (1997), in *Rural Scenes and National Representation*, asserts that “representations of the land ... can naturalize and reify ... a variety of historically specific internal and external relations, between biological and political history, between rural places and urban, or industrial areas, between bordering states or ... different classes of people” (p. 17). The presence of landscape has the ability to reestablish a middle ground between dualities and thus serves as an embodiment of the relationships it surrounds.

Henson (2011) also emphasizes that landscape is instrumental to the plot: “lovers may be parted by physical distance, for example, by mountains or by water; new lands are to be discovered, explored, tamed, and brambles constitute an impenetrable barrier to Sleeping Beauty’s castle” (p. 5). While landscape can work as a rationale for why things happen, and/or why things do not or cannot happen, it can also be used as a device to set the mood of a story, or the characters, sometimes with things like the seasons, and/or natural disasters, and sometimes with pastoral imageries or comparisons between rural and the city (Henson, 2011). Different than the opinions above, Victorian art critic John Ruskin (1856) looks at landscape in a more romantic

light and points out the grand pleasure one gets from the landscape. He says that landscapes are the “ruling passion” of his life but does not neglect to acknowledge that passion is socially contracted (p. 295).

4.2.4. Nature

It is also important to note that ‘nature’ is not synonymous with ‘landscape’.

Although there is an implication in the word ‘landscape’ that makes us think of nature (connected, for instance, to the genre of landscape painting), ‘nature’ is so much more on its own. Nature is defined as “the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, *the landscape*, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to human or human creations” (“nature”, OED; emphasis added). Although it is extremely easy to find a definition in a dictionary, its meaning in our minds can be elusive and vague. From one perspective, nature includes “the domain of both the life sciences and the physical sciences - that is, the broad range of phenomena that conform to the laws of matter and energy” (Wohlwill, 1983, p. 6-7). Of course, this definition is also a broad one and thus it may be beneficial to change the word a little bit to find a better solution. If we look at the word natural, it “(as employed in reference to organic processes operating in the biological world and as shown in the expression) [...] refers to the organic processes that permeate the world of nature and have come to be known as the *ecosystem*” (Wohlwill, 1983, p. 7, emphasis in original). Although true, I believe this definition to be still unsatisfactory. Wohlwill (1983) suggests going one step further and looking at the term *natural environment*:

This is the vast domain of organic and inorganic matter that is not a product of human activity or intervention. It is [...] defined largely by exclusion. It

deals with the landscape rather than with the built environment. It includes the world of rock and sand, of shoreline, desert, woods, mountains, etc., and the diverse manifestations of plant and animal life that are encountered there. It excludes the man-made world: our cities and towns, our houses and factories, along with the diverse implements devised by mankind, for transport, recreation, commerce, and other human needs (p. 7).

This definition seems to be the most accurate one for this chapter too, however, this thesis also includes humans (and sometimes human-made world) inside the term of nature. Because when humans and the human-made world is excluded from nature, the duality between human and nonhuman nature is reinforced and the distance between the two terms increases. When the distance increases it becomes almost impossible to suggest an equal relationship, because as the distance grows, the Othering process gets stronger and faster. However, once it is accepted and understood that human is also a part of nature and the problems regarding the environment is caused by an internal force rather than an external one, the solutions become easily visible, through humans' understanding of the nonhuman nature.

4.3. Importance of Building a Strong Setting

Although the “setting” is a fundamental and an indispensable part of a story, the reason is not always overt. According to Truby (2007), in *The Anatomy of Story*, creating a story-world from scratch will define the protagonist and help the audience to see the physical expressions of the character's growth. While expressing the essence of the setting, he also draws attention to the fact that “in real life, we are born into a world that already exists” and we must adapt to it, “but in good stories, the characters come first, and the writer [or creator] designs the world to be an infinitely

detailed manifestation of those characters” (Truby, 2007, p. 145). T. S. Eliot defines this relationship between the characters and setting as “objective correlative”. Eliot (1921) claims that the best and only way to express emotions is through finding an “objective correlation”. In other words, only if there is an obvious relation and correlation between the character and his/her surroundings, can the work transmit emotions to its audience (Eliot, 1921). As Bachelard (1994) expresses in *The Poetics of Space*, a person who truly understands how imagination works, “comes to realize that the cosmos [or the surroundings] molds mankind, that it can transform a man of the hills into a man of islands and rivers, and that the house remodels man” (p. 47). Building on all of these attitudes towards the setting or physical surroundings, the setting can be seen as a tool to build a stronger bridge between the audience and the characters. Similarly, although I usually refer to fictional fantasy settings, Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis can also serve as a complementary idea. According to the frontier thesis, “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development” (Turner, 1893, p. 1). Here as well, although Turner’s thesis glorifies and endorses American exceptionalism and has colonialist and racist undertones, by asserting that the American democracy and character is derived from the frontier experience, it is suggested that the setting influences the development of character. The anthropocentric undertone of the idea that in narrative the environment’s primary purpose is to elevate the character and to aid creating a deeper understanding of human beings for human beings, cannot be avoided. Taking everything the names above claimed into account, the idea that the physical surroundings exist only to complete characters emerges. However, from another perspective one can also say that the environment and the human (the character) are always in a state of constant,

mutual exchange. Buell (2001) argues that “all the places a person has lived ... are embedded and responsible for shaping present identity beyond what is consciously realized” (p. 69). However, his argument differs from others by touching upon the concept of “place-connectedness”. Drawing from Seymour Martin Lipset’s argument that “those who know only one country know no country”, Buell (2001) adapts it to the notion of place. He argues that one’s connection to the place can be the strongest when one knows many places, as it gives the opportunity to make comparisons among the places it will lead to a wider awareness and a connectedness with the place (p. 66). This argument disrupts the hierarchy between the character and the setting and balances them by bringing them to closer levels. The setting’s presence does not only exist to take the shape of the character’s emotions, but it rises to a level where they both comment on each other. Through this argument, when the writer or the creator manages to build a strong setting it not only elevates the story as whole, but it also attracts the audience’s attention to physical surroundings and how they contribute to the story. Thus, Buell (2001) argues that nature and the environment should occupy a larger space in the text. When the setting stops being only a backdrop the story, then, it can adopt a genuine sensitivity towards nature (Buell, 1995).

4.4. Setting and the Fantasy Genre

The idea that the setting is fundamental to a story, its ability to shape the story and the characters and its presence both as semantic and syntactic elements in the fantasy genre has been discussed. However, beyond being a semantic/syntactic element, the setting in the fantasy genre is vital because it cannot function without a strong setting. This does not mean that I am adapting a toposfocal perspective while

analyzing the fantasy genre, however it means that I believe, as Stefan Ekman (2013) does, that while looking at a fantasy work the focus on the place should be equal to the focus on the characters or the narrative. Ekman (2013) in his book *Here be Dragons*, where he systematically examines fantasy settings to find out how they are constructed and what kind of a relationship they have with the other elements of the story, stresses the importance of the natural environment in the fantasy genre. Seen as a separate character, the setting or evocating another world, is a characteristic trait of the genre (Timmerman, 1983, p. 49). Timmerman (1983) points out that this trait “has received by far the most attention in critical circles and is perhaps the chief distinguishing trait of the genre. Scholars agree that writers create, or in Tolkien’s term ‘subcreate,’ another world in which their characters live and move and have their being” (p. 49). Although, the word choice of Timmerman (“creating other worlds”), seems as he is talking about something else, when looking at the core of his argument, it is nothing other than creating a setting, or at least a large part of it.

As established several times by now, the fantasy genre has a special relationship with nature and the environment and thus, also with the setting, however, while doing so it does not exclude human and the concept of reason. In his essay *Tree and Leaf*, Tolkien (1989) points out that

fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity ... For creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it (p. 51).

Although, assuring the reader that the fantasy genre does not destroy “reason” is a claim that hints what kind of a perspective Tolkien has towards the concept of reason, which would elevate reason and lower nature, his advocacy for fantasy, and indirectly the setting’s function in fantasy, cannot be avoided. While spending time to craft a new world for a story, recognizing the real in our reality, the crafter/creator, may, most probably, fall in the trap of anthropomorphosis. According to Sacknoff (2014) in an attempt to preserve realism, anthropomorphizing the natural environment shows that the writer cloaks the realistic representation of nature so that it would be more interesting. “Or, perhaps worse, [...]”, he adds, “... they anthropomorphize nature because they will not exert the time or energy to understand the sign of the environment within an environmental context” (Sacknoff, 2014, p. 33). The writer may think that it is much easier to recreate nature in a human context, instead of trying to relate or understand a non-human concept (Sacknoff, 2014). In the fantasy genre, however, this anthropomorphizing process shapeshifts into a different thing; anthropomorphizing is inverted by the fantasy genre, because through fantasy, humans form an “appreciation of the familiar tree, rock, or blade of grass...” (Sacknoff, 2014, p. 33). Boysen (2018), in his essay, where he talks about Jane Bennet’s anthropomorphism explains that “anthropomorphism allows for a glimpse of this otherwise inaccessible singularity; it allows for a glimpse of the absolute made visible in a human guise” (p. 235). He also adds that according to Bennet “the deployment of anthropomorphism is ‘an attempt to counter the narcissistic reflex of human language and thought’” (as cited in Boysen, 2018, p. 235). However, Boysen (2018) also claims that anthropomorphism is deeply encapsulated in human subjectivity:

At the end of the day anthropomorphization remains a projection allowing us to imagine things from our perspective. The anthropomorphized thing is thus an echo of our speech. By deploying it, Bennett reenacts the *narcissistic reflex of human language and thought*, which she strives to supersede (p. 236, emphasis in original).

Although Boysen is mostly not wrong in his assertions, I believe it leaves us with no solutions. There are three possibilities for representing nonhumans in human media. The first and most obvious one is not to represent them at all, just like in the Hays code era in Hollywood, or in recent history, where some marginalized human groups were not being represented. The second solution is to represent nonhumans, but not anthropomorphize them, which necessarily limits such representations to the human perspective that captures the nonhuman's existence in real life. Finally, the third solution, which is already in practice, is to represent nonhumans and anthropomorphize them. Out of all these three solutions, I believe the latter is the most beneficial one. Of course, while doing so, the important thing is from which perspective these anthropomorphisms are realized. While anthropomorphizing, instead of reiterating the dominant ideologies that put the nonhuman nature as an opposition to human, it is important to reflect ecocentric thoughts and to create inclusive representations.

4.5. Maps

When we talk about setting in the fantasy genre, maps are a common representational element that merit close investigation. Whether one reads a novel in the fantasy genre, or watches a visual text in the fantasy genre, there is nearly always a map or at least an implication of a map. Maps are extraordinary tools that help us find a

location we are looking for. They “divide up our surroundings: into our land and theirs, into safe places and unsafe, and, ultimately, into the known world and the unknown” (Ekman, 2013, p. 14). With humanity’s endeavor to explore and conquer the unknown, maps are important tools.

In the beginning of the 21st century, a prehistoric star map “which is thought to date back 16,500 years, [and] shows three bright stars known today as the Summer Triangle”, was discovered on the walls of the famous caves at Lascaux (BBC News, 2000). While this discovery shows that maps are an ancient art (cave paintings can also be seen as proto-maps to some extent), they were not always overtly studied or even recognized. The history of cartography was born after a slow and painful process. “The first and most important stage of its development took place during the last hundred years of the pre-Christian era in Alexandria, the Roman capital of Egypt” (Brown, 1979, p. 12). Being a cosmopolitan city, Alexandria was also a popular destination for travelers and scholars, and “a place where a *man* could think” as Brown (1979) says (emphasis added) (p.12). Once this popular route was merged with the raids and invasions of the era, the earth began to take shape.

It is only logical to link the roots of the map to masculinism and imperialism, which is also evident in the opening sentence of Brown’s (1979) book *The Story of Maps*: “This is the story of maps: the men who made them and the methods they employed...” (p. 3). The dominance of the male gender in the history of cartography is understandable yet saddening. While women were majorly a fundamental part of the domestic sphere, men were out there, working, exploring and creating. When Christopher Columbus and his peers went on journeys and expeditions to make sense

of the world, to find new recourses and land, women were still at home. Thus, when cartography started to become a thing and maps were in use, women had no print on them. According to this, assuming that cartography has patriarchal roots would not be a far reach. This claim even becomes more interesting once one focuses on the presences and absences of the maps in the animated series in the fantasy genre, which will be discussed in the section below.

4.5.1. Maps in the Fantasy Genre

Maps are tools that help us find our way through physical space; however, fantasy maps are usually not a representation of a geographical reality (Ekman, 2013). As they don't have the characteristics to be related to the actual world, "they are simply not maps," Ekman (2013) says, "... as they violate the deeply ingrained notion that a map must in some way represent the world of the cartographer" (p. 19). Thus, from a cartographic point of view, a map that belongs to the fantasy genre is a contradiction; still, many cartographers and historians include fantasy maps, or maps of imaginary places into their discussion (Robinson & Petchenik, 1976; Black, 2000; Wood, 2010). Ekman (2013) distinguishes between maps of imaginary places and maps that graphically represents extant milieus, as the latter represents a place that already exists, but a fictional map actually creates a world *through* the map (p. 20). Just like Ekman (2013) draws inspiration from how Wood (2010) differentiates between *fictional maps* and *fantasy maps*, I also will adopt a similar approach to the terms. While talking about fictional maps, I will be referring to any map that does not represent the actual world and when using fantasy maps, I will refer to maps of fantasy worlds, generally found in the fantasy genre (p. 20).

Tolkien (1983/2008), as established before, one of the founders of the genre, in his essay “On Fairy-Stories” explains his idea of “sub-creation”, referring to creating a believable and meaningful secondary world. Although creating such a setting is an important part of a story in a fantasy genre, embellishing it with regions which are not relevant to the story assuring the audience (or the reader) that this world is not limited only to the story being told but does also contain other lives that the audience is ignorant of. Thus, it makes even more sense that Tolkien (1954) admits that first he started with a map and then fitted a story inside this fantasy world he created.

Presenting a map in written fantasy works allows easier access for the reader. Maps could be included in the beginning or ending of the book, and readers have total control over their access to the map as they read. Thus, a map usually extends the fantasy text, but is not necessarily part of the narrative, which means, though there are some exceptions like the maps of a visual medium, maps are not directly referred to or acknowledged inside of the narrative. Instead, they are basically constructing the setting of the fantasy work. According to Röhl and Herbrich (2008) “cartographic representations lend themselves well to narrations where imaginary places are to be created and presented, and are an integral part of fictional works [...]” (p. 2).

Although he does not refer to maps directly, (except from in the conclusion of *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*), drawing from Gerard Genette (1997), a map can be seen as a “threshold”, which is

an ‘undefined zone’ between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side... or the outward side[...], an edge, or, [...] ‘a fringe of the [...] text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text (p. 2).

When translating this definition into a context where maps become the subject, the threshold is a place where the audience's world and the fantasy world meet.

However, sometimes, especially in visual media, due to their inability to introduce a map separate from the medium, this map-as-threshold idea gets blurred because it has to be featured inside the narrative.

In the animated series examined here, while the more conventional fantasy tales *Dragon Prince* and *Disenchantment* use maps to complement their story, unconventional ones like *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* and *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* do not. Of course, differentiating fantasy tales by labelling them conventional or unconventional may be problematic, since from the very beginning of this thesis I claim that the fantasy genre has the ability to familiarize anything to its audience. However, as many would agree, the fantasy genre has also its roots and those roots are, again, male-dominated. Garret Robinson (2016) states that “the grandfatherly books that defined the fantasy genre...” referring to works like *The Hobbit* or the *Lord of the Rings*, had a problem with women and are extremely patriarchal (para. 3). Maddox (2018) notes that Tolkien appears to be intentionally excluding women from his narrative:

[...]the Entwives are all inexplicably absent, powerful women are excluded from major scenes and events, and there are ‘more named horses than women’ in the trilogy (Viars and Cooker 48). Even important women such as Lady Galadriel of Lothlórien and Éowyn of Rohan appear to be idealized caricatures of stereotypically feminine elements rather than developed characters (p.1).

Although the focus of this chapter is not how characters are depicted but how the setting is depicted, and thus maps, still, having in mind that one of the most influential works in the fantasy genre is approached in a manner as in the above quote, creates a general mood for the whole work.

Backing up the claim of these works being works that defined the conventions of the genre, I claim that the stories of *Dragon Prince* and *Disenchantment* are more conventional, due to their similarity in their time periods, their featured creatures, core quests and their inclusion of maps. However, judging them as misogynist would be unfair, since they both feature extremely diverse and important female characters. However, the point I am raising here is that the fact that these fantasy worlds have maps introduced to the audience and that the usage of maps in the fantasy genre and the historical background of cartography has patriarchal undertones.

4.5.2. Dreamland

Figure 25: Map of Dreamland (a),
Disenchantment



Figure 26: Map of Dreamland (b),
Disenchantment



Disenchantment does not share a map with its audience outside of the narrative, but the map appears multiple times within the diegesis. While watching the series the audience has the chance to catch some scenes where the map of the Dreamland, which is the main setting of the series, can be seen, however, it is not always

explicitly the focus of the sequence. This map also depicts various places other than Dreamland itself: an active volcano, which is later revealed to be the gateway to hell; rivers, seas and forests; different cities and settlements and a decorative compass rose on the left, which echoes the middle ages. Instead of being plain and simple, it is rich in detail, drawn with muted colors, and has an aura reflecting the mood of the story. Other than depicting places existing in the world of *Disenchantment*, the map also features different kind of plants and creatures. The trees and other green plants in the map seem as if they have no individuality. It may be challenging to design and draw unique and different-looking plants in a map like this. It can even be confusing for the observer and thus, the cartographer may have wanted to have a single symbol for plants to avoid messiness. However, one wonders, then, why the cartographer chooses to design different kinds of ships (as it can be seen in the map there are at least three different ship designs). If it is possible to have different representations for certain objects in the map, it should be marked that the cartographer willingly and purposefully chose not to spend time on trees at all. Ekman (2013) mentions that in cartography there is a notion that “a map must in some way represent the world of the cartographer” (p. 19). Since a fantasy map cannot represent the world of the cartographer directly, some of the design choices they make can be seen as ways to realize their own world within these fantasy worlds, which suggests that even if the cartographer did not represent their beliefs, they must have, maybe even unwillingly, represent the beliefs of the world they are living in. The fact that the cartographer ignores the trees and other plants, and focuses only on human-created objects echoes humanity’s attitude towards the nonhuman nature in general.

One other thing I noticed is related to animal/magical creature representations. It is apparent, when looked closely at the map, that all the represented animals/magical creatures, be it a sea “monster”, a squid, a troll, or a giant crab-like creature, they are all portrayed in a situation where they are a threat to their surroundings or humanity. The sea monster is surrounding a ship and is about to sink it; the squid has already split the ship in two; the troll has a club in his hands ready to attack, with a stiff facial expression; the crab-like creature holding a literal person in its hands, ready to eat it. It is understandable that the map is a tool for humans, so the decision to only represent animals as violent creatures, or in other words, representing only violent animals may be logical; to warn people against the possible dangers in the areas the map covers. However, I believe that a map’s purpose should not be to warn but to inform or tell. Maps cannot have opinions unless the humans (or humanoids) who create the maps insert their opinions inside these sheets of paper. I am suggesting that the cartographers of the fantasy worlds, just like the cartographers of the real world, should not reflect their perspectives on the maps but should only draw what there actually is. Thus, I wonder why there are not animal representations that do not seem “violent”, since the map does not seem to be a map for the adventurer who travel the world, one expects to see all kind of representations that exist. Author Cristopher Paolini says that “a good map will suggest possibilities” not expectations (as cited in Moss, 2016). However, with limited representations as this, the number of possibilities shrink and thus, the map is doomed to be a bad map, according to Paolini. Both because of the lack of diverse representations of plants and the restricted representations of animals/ magical creatures (only represented as threats to humanity), I argue that up until now, from an ecocritical point of view, this map is inconsiderate and influencing the audience to be distant from nature. Remembering

Buell's (2001) argument that only when nature occupies a larger space (meaning when nature is explicitly referred to, when it is detailed as much as the characters, or has a vital place in the narrative) in a text or in this case paratext, can the setting stop being a backdrop to the story and one can adopt a genuine understanding towards nature, the map of Dreamland fails to create that genuine bond between the audience and nature.

A question, then, comes to mind about for whom this map actually is. Although I claimed above that the map of *Disenchantment* is influencing the audience to be distant towards nature, since the map is a diegetic element, the map may not be intended for the audience to pay attention. If it were non-diegetic then we could claim that the map is created only for the audience. However, even in this case where the map is in fact diegetic, just like the voices and words of the characters, the characters themselves, or the sounds objects make, a map hanging on the wall is also an element served to the audience. Inside the narrative, however, this map seems to be involving only Dreamland and its surroundings, and thus can be claimed it is either for the non-Dreamlanders who are not familiar with Dreamland or characters who want to wander around the surroundings of Dreamland. However, because the map is only to be seen hanging on the wall in King Zog's bedroom and in the King's council room, I argue this map does not serve for either option and it's there for only aesthetic reasons or royal duties. In either case, having in mind that this map has limited plant and tree representations, and only violent nonhuman representations, I don't believe one would hang it if they were having feelings and thoughts towards the nonhuman nature contradicting the map. Additionally, since the map, as mentioned is only hung in the rooms related to the king, a parallel between the

Figure 9: Map of Dreamland (c), Disenchantment



“What maps of [the fantasy genre] and tourism have in common is that in both

Tourist maps are created in a manner to excite the tourist and supply them with

information relevant to boosting the state's or country's financial gain, since tourism is a great economic source for many countries. Among the icons the cartographers of the map of Dreamland highlighted and used, the first one that strikes is the large castle, positioned on the edge of a cliff. Although it is not uncommon to place palaces or castles on higher ground than the city centers (as in the fantasy worlds of *Lord of the Rings*, *Game of Thrones*, *Skyrim*, *Shrek* and so on), it still metaphorically introduces a connotation related to a hierarchical order. When having in mind that the name of the main setting of *Disenchantment* is Dreamland, this connotation

mentioned in the previous sentence can be taken in two ways. Firstly, there is the literal meaning of the word “dream”, suggesting that this place is somewhere we can only dream about, referring both to being an ideal place and a place out of reality. Secondly, it can work as irony, suggesting this place has no connection to a dream or to that ‘ideal place’. However, since dreams are inherently subjective and one person’s dream can cause great suffering for others, the decision of naming this fictional fantasy land ‘Dreamland’ may signal the subjectivity of this place, meaning this land is experienced different by everyone, which is apparent even in Bean’s narrative (it is a dream for a lot of people, but not for Bean).

4.6. Borders

While a map is not always present in works in the fantasy genre, all of the animated series I discuss in this thesis do address the issue of borders. Borders inevitably stir up conflict, and this conflict promotes the setting to be more than a backdrop and have an influence on the characters and the narrative. Author Max Byrd (2000) claims that “the first thing any storyteller [whether it is a novel or visual medium where the story is told], has to learn is how to create contrast and conflict—drama...And this is the *sine qua non* of setting” (p. 187). To find this *sine qua non* of setting, Byrd suggests dividing the place in question into two parts, in this way they will be set in collision with each other (p. 187).

The animated series studied here are all structured around a division between two lands. In *Dragon Prince*, there is an important border between the human kingdoms and magical lands, and it is protected by a powerful dragon. In *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, there is a border between Etheria and Fright Zone, one being the land of “the good”, and the other “the bad”. In *Wizards*, the land of the trolls and

humans are separated by a border. *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, takes a different approach towards the border by separating vertical space: the upper world belongs to animals (now mutes), the underground belongs to humans. It is important to recognize that all of these borders I mentioned above, are borders that create tension and advance the plot. Additionally, and more importantly, one quickly realizes that these divisions are overwhelmingly made between the lands of humans and land or territory belonging to non-human animals or animalistic creatures (except for in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, where the division separates those who hurt nature from those who try to protect it). Because the fantasy genre highly depends on a relationship between humans and nature, the *sine qua non* of setting is derived from a similar kind of tension to the one between humans and nonhuman nature.

4.6.1. Xadia vs. Human Lands

In the very beginning of the animated series the *Dragon Prince*, a voice-over narration is present for the audience to have a better understanding of the current situation. Although the content of this voice-over will be discussed thoroughly in the chapter on the narrative, it is also worth mentioning here because it loosely defines

Figure 10: Map of Xadia, *The Dragon Prince*



the setting and the main border of the series. The voice tells the audience that Xadia once was a land rich in magic and wonder (Ehasz & Richmond, 2018, 1-1, 00:00:35). When humanity discovered a way to use dark magic and unleash darkness, however, the elves and the dragons of Xadia wanted to stop this “madness”. They divided the continent and drove all humanity to the west, leaving the east to the magical non-human beings. The border, an active volcano, in the middle of these two territories was protected by the Dragon King, until it was killed by the human kingdoms.

In the animated fantasy series especially because of the conventions of fantasy, the characters have explicit interactions with the setting, or with entities that belong to the setting. Before even the audience has the chance to get to know the character, placing such interactions could help the audience to start to grow some opinions about the character. In *Dragon Prince* the character Claudia, who is a citizen of Katolis (one of the human kingdoms in the West) is first seen reading a book while walking. It is apparent that she does not have a conscious interaction with her surroundings at that moment, because of the book she is reading. Just when she is about to walk right into a tree, she is warned by another character Callum. After being a shocked for a second, the first thing she says about the tree is “Is this new?”. Callum answers: “relatively new [...] it is only been there for three hundred years” (Ehasz & Richmond, 2018, 1-1, 00:12:31). To clarify, I would like to point out that the issue here is not that she does not see the tree, because this can easily be tied to characteristics like being a bookworm or being absent-minded. The problem about Claudia here is that she questions the presence of the tree by saying “is this new?”. Even though this remark sets up a joke, when combining it with Claudia’s general attitude to the nonhuman nature (which is, seeing it as a source to exploit) this joke

comes across as a snobbish comment. Comparing Claudia's attitude to some important environmental movements, especially to one that is famous for the heavily involvement of women, may provide a beautiful example of how a character's personality is conveyed through their relationship with the setting. One of the most important environmentalist movements is the Chipko, or "Embrace the Tree" movement as mentioned in the literature review section of this thesis. Chipko is "an ecological movement, concerned with the preservation of forests and...maintenance of the traditional eco-balance in the sub-Himalayan region where hill people have traditionally enjoyed positive relationship with their environment" (Jain, 1984, p. 1788). Although the Chipko has its roots in older movements emerged from conflicts over forest resources, the 1973 movement was born as a cultural response towards forest destruction while also being an important collective mobilization of women that made them want to change their place in society (Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1986). Katolis is a country that was most probably created to resemble a country in the medieval European (West), while the Chipko happened in the second half of the 20th century in India (East). Juxtaposing Claudia's attitude towards the tree, and the

Figure 11: Women in Chipko Movement



Figure 12: Claudia almost bumping into a tree, The Dragon Prince



attitude of the women in the Chipko movement who embraced trees for days to protect them serves to give clues about Claudia's character. The movement, as stated above, is famous for the heavily involvement of women than other tree-centric

movements. As the audience later finds out, she is a mage who uses dark magic, which is only possible by absorbing the essence in living creatures. Her relationship with nature is one that depends on her being abusive of it. Thus, even early in the series, the audience is given hints about Claudia's character through her interaction with the setting.

Although the world of *Dragon Prince* is obviously a fictional one, the concepts "East" and "West" still carry the meanings the actual world has attained to them. As Edward Said (1977) mentions many artists, philosophers, political theorists and actually most of humanity "...have accepted the basic distinction between East and West..." (p. 19). Pattberg (2009), notes that "Herodotus..., the 'father of history'... was possibly the first recorded historian who deliberately portrayed the 'east'... and the 'west'... as mutual antagonists, thereby proposing the nucleus of all ancient history" (p. 1). Some believe that the only reason the West was ahead of all civilizations was the invention of the sciences. Pattberg (2009), refutes this belief, and draws attention to the fact that the West had descended upon the "other" by always suppressing it. Said (1977) introduced the concept of orientalism and said that "the orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (p. 18). Orientalism, a line of thought in the larger colonialist discourse, refers to an ideological lens through which Western nations perceive the East. Although Said's focus was mainly on academic writing and Western literature, as he believed that the Western ideologies had manifested themselves best in these works, the concept he introduced proved to be extremely useful in other fields such as visual media. For centuries while the West has stand for concepts like human, reason, science and

reality, the East was the embodiment of concepts like the Other, exoticism, mysticism, fantasy, and nature.

This geographic conflict became enshrined in maps, both representative and fictional. In “Incredible geographies? Orientalism and Genre Fantasy”, Myles Balfe (2007) looks at fantasy maps from an Orientalist perspective.

He uses the map from Robert Jordan’s *Wheel of Time* series (1990-2013) to demonstrate how, rather than portraying a completely imaginary landscape, it “continues a Western historical convention of representing the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Orientals’ who exist there as both *opposite* and *inferior* to the West, and its Westland heroes” (as cited in Ekman, 2013, p.16-17)

Similarly, Jourde (1991), where he focuses on the maps of Tolkien’s works, he points out that there is an important basic division in fantasy geographies, which is the division between east and west. “The western regions are [...] the more civilized, with great number of “microcosms” and innumerable rivers, a land open to the western sea. The regions to the east are more corrupted by the forces of evil, with vast, undefined areas, open to an unknown continent from which Sauron’s troops come” (as cited in Ekman, 2013, p. 17).

The *Dragon Prince*, also shows Orientalist undertones; the West belongs to the “human” kingdoms and the East to the magical beings and the creatures of fantasy. However, here, the West’s archetypal connection to “reason” and the “human” is portrayed here as evil, even if this evil is not present in all of the human characters. There are characters from the West who are not on the side of violence, and who do not want to continue making the same mistakes their elders made. As I mentioned

above, humanity was banished to the West because it discovered dark magic, which is a kind of magic that does not rely on interacting symbiotically with nature, but rather is achieved through exploiting nature. When translating this concept of dark magic to our actual world, it aligns with the technology humanity uses to achieve its goals, mostly through damaging and exploiting natural resources. Toxic material and gasses released from factories to the atmosphere, deforestation, hunting, marine pollution and all other environmental issues are a result of the actions of the energy-hungry industries. While I will continue this discussion in the chapter on the narratives of the animated series, I briefly wanted to introduce the inner dynamics of *Dragon Prince* to be able to deliver the points about its setting.

4.6.2 From the Burrow to the Surface

A similar separation, but by a horizontal border through vertical space, is present in *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*. In the series' post-apocalyptic setting, humans are forced to live in underground cities called "burrows", while mutated animals live on the surface. This situation emerged as a way of protection from these now-giant, now-thinking, now-speaking and angry animals. The burrows are almost all in metallic colors, reminding of technology but at the same time invoking dullness due to the lack of colors found in nature. The surface, however, is now greener (most probably because all the operations harming nature has ceased). In the very beginning of the show, the audience is given two images one after another. The first

Figure 13: City before the apocalypse, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*



Figure 14: City after the apocalypse, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*



image is a depiction of a big city full of business centers and skyscrapers; siren and traffic noises in the background; the world as we know it. The second image depicts the same city, from the same angle, however, this time the skeletons of the same skyscrapers are surrounded by different kinds of plants and giant trees, like a jungle, accompanied by monster noises and a melody invoking danger, informing the audience that the world they are going to watch is not the world they know today. Truby (2007) says that the jungle is a state of nature and “its primary effect on the imagination is the feeling of suffocation” (p. 175). While every aspect of the jungle is grabbing the audience, it also gives the strongest sense of the power of nature over humanity (Truby, 2007). In that environment, Truby (2007) claims, the human is *reduced* to the beast (p. 175). Although not being on board with Truby’s word choice, the animated series *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* takes a similar approach. Seconds later, when the frame tilts down, the protagonist, Kipo, comes out

of a hole appearing to be a sewer, together with a body of water. We later find out that Kipo has lived in a burrow her whole life, however, at that moment she crosses a border and changes settings by coming out of a metaphorical womb and just like a newborn infant finds herself in a world she has never seen before. Although at first, she panics because she is on the surface, she slowly calms herself down, says “Humans have lived on the surface for thousands of years. You can handle a few minutes up here...” and tries to find a way back to her burrow (Sechrist & Wolkoff, 2020, 1-1, 00:01:41). The audience expects Kipo to *reduce* herself to a *beast*, to be able to survive on the surface, however Kipo proves them wrong by keeping her *humanity* until the end (although she discovers that she has the ability to turn into a giant jaguar) and tries to bring peace everywhere she goes. Her attitude towards the other animals, the nature of this attitude, her hybridity and the nature of her humanness will be discussed in the later chapters.

Figure 15: Kipo coming out of a sewer, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts



4.6.3. The Woods

Both in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* and *Wizards*, a forest is used to create the tension between two different settings. In *Wizards* the forest does not have a special name, and it is called “the wild wood” by the characters. The woods serve as

a border between the kingdom of Camelot, where being a troll is punished by death, and the Troll zone. It is forbidden for the trolls to cross the border and enter Camelot aka Arthur's lands. Arthur, Gwen (Arthur's deceased fiancée), and Morgana (Arthur's sister) have spent their childhood in those woods and played games all the time. Morgana remembers that they loved the woods, "the freedom they offered" (Del Toro, 2020, 1, 00:09:32). She says "the wood showed us kindness for our courage. Gwen and I were never scared. Arthur, however, ..." (Del Toro, 2020, 1, 00:09:35). Arthur interrupts her by claiming he was scared because he knew what danger lurked in the darkness. As Rozelle (2005) says, in this instance, where both Arthur and Morgana talk about the woods, the Wild Wood setting becomes a separate character with its own, separate relationship with characters. Additionally, it is evident that Gwen and Morgana had a better relationship with the woods than Arthur. According to some ecofeminist thought, this can be seen as a portrayal of women's innate connection to nature; however, this belief is mostly related to reducing the female down to their reproductive *abilities* and as Davion (1994) suggests this is not ecofeminism but eco-femininity. Instead, the reason why Morgana and Gwen have a better relationship with the woods, or the nature, may be that, as women, they are also otherized by an ideology that is mainly carved by the white-heterosexual-cisgender man. To clarify, from an ecofeminist point of view, the notion which is metaphorically portrayed here may be that one group that is suppressed (women) and one group that is dominated (nature) (Warren, 2000) are in a relationship developed through mutual understanding, since they are both Otherized by the same ideology.

During their discussion Morgana claims that the king has given the woods to the “enchanted creatures”. However, he and his soldiers still hunt the trolls down even if they are in the boundaries of the woods, which at some point becomes the territory of Gunmar, the leader of the Gumm-Gumm trolls, who is a major antagonist in the series. Truby (2007) points out that

the central quality of the forest is that it is a natural cathedral. The tall trees, with their leaves hanging over us and protecting us, seem like the oldest wise men assuring us that whatever the circumstances, it will resolve as time moves on. It is the place where contemplative people go and to which lovers sneak away (p. 174).

Wizards also makes use of the forest in a similar kind of way. While the human soldiers try to hunt the creatures (the trolls), the trees and nature in general help these creatures to hide and protect them. Truby (2007) also adds that the forest is where hunters stalk their prey, this prey being mostly human (p. 175). In Truby’s remark there is this undertone, mostly because he chooses the word “prey”, that the human is innocent and a victim of nature. However, *Wizards* turns this dynamic upside down where the humans hunt another creature which makes the humans (led by King Arthur, a white-heterosexual-cisgender man) the ones that nature should beware.

In *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* the forest called “the Whispering Woods” is the border that separates colorful Etheria from the brown, gray and mechanic Fright Zone. While Etheria is a place where nature is at peace, where all living beings live in harmony, the Fright Zone is a wasteland full of broken-down machines and pollution. “It is comprised mainly of aging technology, pipes, and piles of discarded junk situated within what appears to be a large crater with raised, spiked

edges...Leading out of the Fright Zone, a large canyon filled with machinery opens up to a field of flowers before approaching the Whispering Woods” (“The Fright Zone”, n.d., para.1) The natural-anthropic contrast between the two lands is obvious. The Whispering Woods eases this contrast by being a natural habitat that has frightening features. More than being a border, it is a liminal space-between, a no man’s land. The residents of the Fright Zone see the Whispering Woods as dangerous where “they say there are strange, old monsters in there...and the trees are moving when you’re not looking” (Stevenson, 2018, 1-1, 00:09:47). Adora, the protagonist of the animated series, also remembers that no Horde soldier (the military force of the Fright Zone) that entered the Whispering Woods ever came out again. On the other hand, even if Etherians’ perception of the Whispering Wood is not that hostile, they still have their own reservations. Although Bow, one of the main characters, “pretty much grew up in those woods”, there are parts he has never seen before (Stevenson, 2018, 1-1, 00:18:40). At some point he says that he “heard stories about weird stuff out [there]” (Stevenson, 2018, 1-1, 00:18:43). Even, the name of the forest, “Whispering” Woods, suggests that it has the potential of hosting the mysterious and the unknown and that these can be communicated to people through strange ways. Truby (2007) also asserts that people often get lost in forests. “It’s the hiding place of ghost and past lives...The jungle will kill anything in it at any moment. The forest when it does its frightening work, causes mental loss first. It is slower than the jungle but still deadly” (p. 175). McGonagill (2016) agrees with Truby and suggests that in such realms, the protagonists often “get lost, have unexpected encounters and undergo transformation” (p. 64). The characters do get lost in the Whispering Woods several times. The three main characters Adora, Bow and Glimmer were all lost in the woods when they met each other and Adora’s

discovery of her identity as She-Ra also happened in these woods. She has seen ghosts and memories of her past life (Mara) throughout the series in those woods. As Zipes (1987) claims, the forest is always the strongest realm no one can ever gain power over, however it possesses a power that can change one's life and destiny, as it changed Adora's (p.66).

4.7. Conclusion

Although, generally, the setting is seen as a backdrop, it is much more important than that, and sometimes has the ability to become a separate character or even something that introduces the main conflict of the work in question. Especially in the fantasy genre, the setting is a vital instrument on which the narrative is highly dependent. The use of maps, a frequent trope in the fantasy genre, also highlights the importance of the setting by offering the reader/audience an experience where they could enhance their suspension of disbelief and the creator an opportunity to realize the imaginary. The *sine qua non* of the setting, which introduces the narrative's conflict and drama, is established through creating a border between two different locations. The presence of the borders is essential for creating tension and is usually the starting point and the core of the narrative. The discussion of the tension between the West and the East is often made use of by transforming the notions inside the context of fantasy. This border, is, usually, not a constructed border out of walls but, usually a part of nature, mountains, a river of lava or forests as in the examples given above. However, still, even if these borders are not constructed, these natural landmarks work as signifiers of shifting cultures or populations. As these borders separate two different cultures or lands, it also illustrates how a change of culture can illustrate different perspectives to issues regarding nature. All things said, it is evident, once

more, that the fantasy genre has an extraordinary relationship with nature and thus also with setting.



CHAPTER V

NARRATIVE

5.1. Introduction

Making sense of the world through stories has been a habit of the human since pre-historical times. Pradl (1984) says that “stories are the repository of our collective wisdom about the world of social/cultural behavior; they are the key mediating structures for our encounters with reality” (p. 2). Mark Turner (1996), on the other hand, suggests that “narrative-imagining-story is the fundamental instrument of thought ... It is a literary capacity to human cognition generally” (p. 4-5). In many different disciplines, it is widely acknowledged that understanding stories and how they are structured can help make sense of ourselves and our surroundings, and the term narratology refers specifically to the study of story, focusing on how narratives are told.

Up until now, this thesis has concerned itself with the character designs and settings of the animated fantasy series. This chapter is devoted to the narrative structure of the animated series *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Wizards*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *Disenchantment*, and *Dragon Prince*. I will focus on some important moments in their narratives and look into how these animated series

portray Otherness and the relationships between humans and nonhuman nature.

5.2. What is Narrative?

While sometimes used interchangeably, narrative and narration are not the same thing. While *narrative* has been defined as “an account of a series of events ... given in order and with the establishing of connections between them”, *narration* is the act of telling the story, the process of presenting this account of events (“Narrative”, 2021). For something to be a narrative, it has to feature a series of events that have some kind of connection between them, but narratives are not limited to fictional literature and cinema: they actually are everywhere in our lives. As mentioned above narratives are automatic responses of the human’s effort to make sense of the world. However, Genette (1983) reminds the reader that we use the word “narrative” without paying much attention and distinctions must be made between shades of meaning in order to have a clearer understanding. The most commonly used meaning refers to the narrative statement, that is, “the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events” (Genette, 1983, p. 25). A second meaning, one less widely acknowledged though common among narratologists, refers to the “succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of discourse” (Genette, 1983, p. 25). Based on this meaning, then, the medium of narration is less relevant to analysis than the totality of the actions present in the narrative. The third meaning, which Genette refers to it as “the oldest”, is again referring to the event, however, this time, the event has to consist of someone recounting something: “the act of narrating taken in itself” (Genette, 1983, p. 26). This chapter’s approach to narrative aligns primarily with Genette’s first meaning, since this chapter is not mainly about narrative but how ecocritical and ecofeminist thought is embodied in it.

Richardson (2000) also introduces four approaches which are in use in defining the narrative: temporal, casual, minimal and transactional. The first one, he says, “posits the representation of events in a time sequence as the defining feature of narrative” (p. 169). The second one, causal, suggests that the presence of a connection is essential between the events, which directly concerns itself with the succession of events and could be paired with Genette’s second meaning (Richardson, 2000). The minimal approach, pointed out as the most capacious by Richardson (2000), belongs actually to Genette, who claims that the minimal approach “suggests that any statement of an action or event is ipso facto a narrative since it implies transformation from an earlier to later state” (p. 169). The last approach, the transactional, simply says that narrative is “a way of reading a text, rather than a feature or essence found in a text (p. 169). Dorrit Cohn, on the other hand, has an interesting definition which she thinks is consensual: “a series of statements that deal with a causally related sequence of events that concern human (or human-like) beings” (p. 12). It seems that Cohn (1999) does not give a reason for only including humans in her definition or an explanation to what she means by “human-like”, which makes the definition unreliable for an ecocritical approach.

Although, studying narrative is seen as a relatively young field in itself, the acknowledgement that not only written works have a narrative is even more recent. Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, suggests that “if the word “text” is understood in the broadest sense—as any coherent complex of signs— then even the study of art (the study of music, the theory and history of fine arts) deals with texts (works of art)” (p. 103). In a similar manner Genette (1983) also advocated that every text has traces of narration and can be studied so that the

term can be understood better. This brings this chapter to a place where a clarification is needed about how the narrative manifests itself in visual texts.

5.3. Narrative in Visual Media

Although both Bakhtin, Genette and many other scholars have claimed that any kind of text whether it is written, visual or aural, can have a narrative, for a very long time, it was presumed that narration could only be a feature of a language-based text, and these texts were the near-exclusive focus of early narratology. Even, today, there are scholars that believe that comic strips, for example,

belong to the corpus of narrative texts, but others disagree... Those individuals who consider comic strips to be narrative texts interpret the concept *text* broadly. In their view, a text does not have to be a *language text*... Other individuals, sharing a more restricted interpretation of what constitutes a text, reserve this term for language texts only (Bal, 1999, p. 4).

Of course, as it can be guessed from the general tone and the focus of this thesis, I believe that the term *text* and also narrative can be used in a wider sense, which means that anything can be a text that creates a narrative out of an event or a series of events. However, even though narratives can be visual, these changes of medium can produce changes in how the narrative functions. Metz (1990) says that cinema is made of imagery, speech, music, noise and sound effects, a combination that can now extend to other recorded audiovisual form besides film; however, while some of these codes particularly belong to visual arts some belong to other fields of art (Özden, 2000, p. 125). Thus, other than core concepts like time, setting and characters, the narrative of visual media also depends on camera angles, the positioning of the audience, the usage of light, the acting, the mise-en-scène and the

editing. Because the objects of interest of this thesis are fantasy animated series, the narrative is also particularly affected by colors, voice acting, and even the animation's ability to bend reality in its representations.

5.4. Theories on Narrative

5.4.1. Lévi-Strauss' Binary Oppositions

Part of a group of early- to mid-20th century narrative structuralists, Claude Lévi-Strauss emphasized that most stories are built on a foundation created by binary oppositions. He (1977) claims that once the structure of the story is examined through its foundational binaries, these oppositions reveal ways of understanding the community to which the story belongs (p. 146-197). When we think of how to perceive opposites, we come to the conclusion that there are two "signs" that have a certain relationship between them. Hawkes (1977) explains that our perception of meaning depends on our understanding of the opposition of the concept in question (p. 88). Thus, if one wants to understand what 'cold' is they have to define their understanding of its opposition to 'hot'. In this sense, the notion of opposition has an important place while extracting meaning from a text. Lévi-Strauss (1955) has applied his theory of binary oppositions to the narrative and claimed that an analysis of narrative discourse through binary oppositions would be rewarding.

While binary oppositions establish conflict that furthers the narrative and enriches the plot, they also perpetuate stereotypes. This being said, as mentioned in the chapter where the designs of the characters were discussed, stereotypes are efficient formulas to convey a character's personality and their relation to the narrative. Stereotypes help the audience to process the given data or information easier and

quicker. Unless it is used in an excessive way, they could be useful and beneficial both to the audience and storytellers/screenwriters/directors/authors.

Binaries have an ability to underscore the values and beliefs of a society, which means that when binaries such as human/nonhuman, male/female, and Nature/culture are utilized in narratives, they let the narratives to reveal the values and perceptions of the societies. In these narratives, however, there is usually a tendency to value the human/male/culture side, while ignoring or devaluing the nonhuman/female/Nature side. Still, especially in genres like fantasy that depend on the imaginary, there are exception. Looking at these fantasy narratives through Lévi-Strauss' binaries might expose how and where these presumed values are shifting. Both because I think Levi-Straus has a powerful stance on the issue and as a thesis revolving around ecocriticism and ecofeminism (since both of these theories were born partially from the existence of binaries such as human/nature, male/female, human/nonhuman animal), I believe that using Lévi-Strauss' theory of binary oppositions will be appropriate while analyzing the corpus of this thesis.

5.4.2. The Heroine's Journey

One more idea that is needed to be mentioned is Joseph Campbell's "hero's journey". "Joseph Campbell tried to elucidate myths under the light of Jung's concept of collective unconscious. Influenced by Jung's ideas, he developed a theory to identify a relation between the universal archetypes and literature" (de Pádua, 2007, p. 3). In his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell (1964) draws attention to three main stages that outline the monomyth: a separation from the

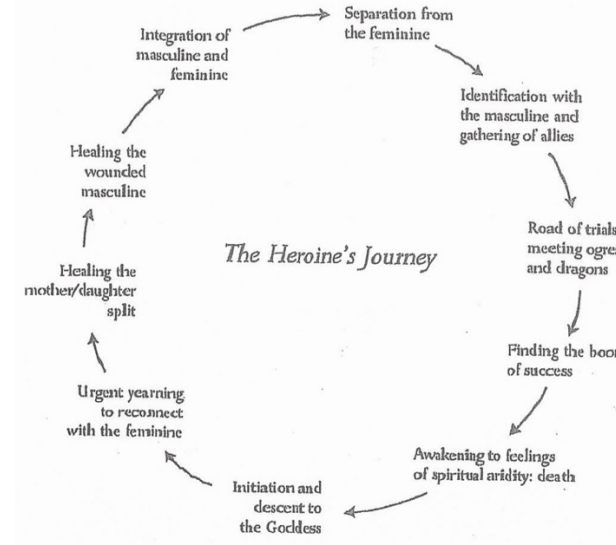
ordinary world, a penetration to new source of power and an eventual life-enhancing return to the ordinary world.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder; fabulous forces are there encountered, and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell, 1964, p. 28).

Although this structure can be identified in many stories, scholars claim Campbell's hero's journey to have a male focused structure, which, among other problems, makes it hard for people who do not identify as men to connect with characters and their ideals. Feminist theorists Pearson and Pope (1981) have noted, for instance, that even though Campbell initially declares that the hero in the hero's journey can be of either gender, "he... proceeds to discuss the heroic pattern as male and to define the female characters as goddesses, temptresses, and earth mothers" (p. 4). Several scholars have criticized this gendered slant in Campbell's narratology, offering new versions that either address women specifically or seek to reincorporate them into the overarching model.

Maureen Murdock, psychotherapist and student of Campbell, creates an alternative narrative for heroines, deriving from Campbell's model of the heroic quest. Although Murdock's model is designed to be more of a self-help book for modern women and what kind of a journey they have in the modern world, it still parallels Campbell's hero's journey. Murdock (2020) mentions in her book *The Heroine's Journey*:

Figure 16: Maureen Murdock's Heroine's Journey Model



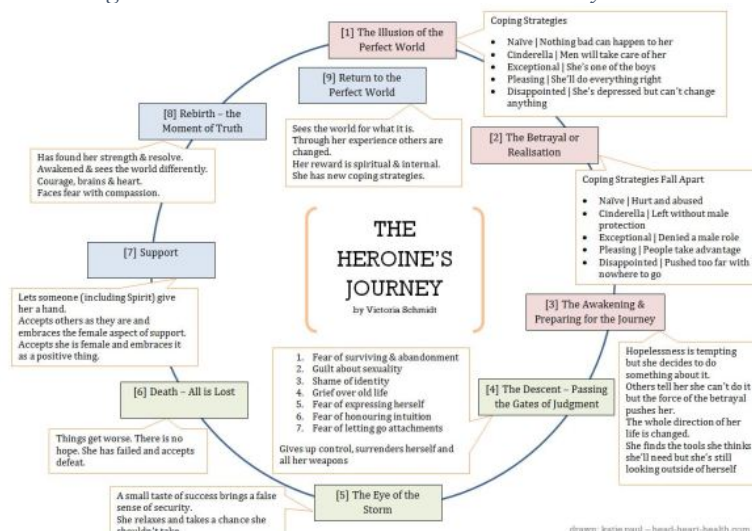
Woman's Quest for Wholeness, that in order to understand how the woman's journey was related to the hero's journey, she was eager to hear Campbell's thoughts on the issue, which he responded as:

In the whole mythological tradition, the woman is there. All she has to do is to realize that she's the place that people are trying to get to. When a woman realizes what her wonderful character is, she's not going to get messed up with the notion of being pseudo-male (as cited in Murdock, 2020, p. 2).

Finding Campbell's remark unsatisfying and untrue, Murdock (2020) introduces a new formula, where the main aim of the women is to "fully embrace their feminine nature, learning how to value themselves as women and to heal the deep wound of the feminine" (p. 3). Although the model of the heroine's journey is derived from Campbell's model, Murdock (2020) emphasizes that the language and the stages of her model is particular to women. Because I'm in favor of a more inclusive model and Murdock's model, besides being exclusive, holds a serious essentialist stance, I will not focus on her take.

Valerie Estelle Frankel (2010), in her book *From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend*, has also mirrored Joseph Campbell's work and created a new journey for the heroine. However, while Campbell sees the female as the goal or as *the place people are trying to get to*, Frankel asserts that the true role of the heroine is "to be neither hero nor prize but to be dynamic, valiant, [and] thoroughly feminine" (p. 3). Different than Murdock, Frenkel (2010) designed a model to describe the true heroine's journey in myth, "from magic slipper to triumphant motherhood" (p. 3). In her book, which she divided into two sections, "Steps of the Journey" and "Archetypes", Frenkel (2010) focuses on different tales and introduces a new step to the journey in each chapter, while still utilizing the work of Campbell. However, still, Frenkel's (2010) focus on and emphasis of words like "thoroughly feminine" and "triumphant motherhood" restricts her inside the borders of gender essentialism and biological determinism.

Figure 17: Victoria Schmidt's Heroine's Journey Model



The most striking model of the heroine's journey belongs to Victoria Schmidt (2001). Schmidt's (2001) heroine's journey, or in her words the feminine journey, is "a journey in which the hero gathers courage to face and endure the transformation toward being reborn as a complete being in charge of her own life" (p. 242). Unlike

Murdoch and Frenkel, Schmidt (2001) states that every character will have a different experience along the journey “whether it’s a female hero on the masculine journey or a male hero on the feminine journey” or a nonbinary hero in any journey (p. 247). She admits that more female characters tend to go down the feminine journey and vice versa, however, she also emphasizes that “the journeys aren’t bound by gender” (Schmidt, 2001, p. 247). She shows that even though linguistically and didactically there are flawed expressions and models, the distinction between masculine and feminine lies in the journey itself, rather than the person who undertakes it. Although she traces both the feminine journey and the masculine journey, my focus will be the feminine journey model, which is mostly followed by women characters, because focusing on women will also reveal some important features about the domination of other human Others and nature.

Schmidt’s (2001) three-act model (containment, transformation, emergence) contains nine stages in total. In the beginning the heroine is in an illusory world, where everything seems flawless. The heroine uses five coping strategies to protect the illusion of the perfect world: the naïve strategy, in which the heroine thinks time will reward her efforts; the Cinderella strategy, in which the heroine relies on male protection and guidance; the exceptional strategy, in which the heroine thinks she is different than the others and ignores sexism because she does not see herself as a woman; the pleasing strategy, in which the heroine lives to please others and protects the status quo through her actions; and the disappointed type, in which the heroine is angry and discontent with her life but does not act to change it (Schmidt, 2001).

Once the heroine is betrayed and/or realizes that everything is not that perfect, she proceeds to the third stage where she awakens and prepares for her journey. In the fourth stage (the descent-passing the gates of judgment) the heroine faces her fears

and questions her new identity. When she faces her fears and tastes power through a minor success, she thinks her journey has ended (the eye of the storm), however, with the next stage approaching, which is “death-all is lost”, the villain or the struggle revives, and everything starts to tumble down. In the next stage (“Support”), the heroine accepts support from other people, tools or spiritual entities. Schmidt (2001) adds that “while the masculine hero may need to do things totally on his own to prove himself to the group, the feminine hero needs to prove herself to herself and then share this knowledge with the group” (p. 286). Before the heroine completes her journey, she goes through a rebirth, in which she finds strength and goes after her goal with full concentration: “she isn’t afraid to die because she realizes she was already dead in the perfect world” (p. 289). The last stage, “return to the perfect”, where the heroine makes a full circle, she returns home to the “perfect” world, but this time, she is capable of facing that world without being pulled back in. Schmidt (2001) notes that some say that the female story model does not have an ending at all. However, she disagrees and points out that women do make concrete changes in their lives. While the masculine hero, gets an external reward at the end of his journey, the feminine hero gets an internal reward that will continue to exist even after she is gone. The things she has fought against will still be there, however, now she and her group are more equipped to face the obstacles, which makes the journey one that favors continuation, rather than closure.

5.5. The Other’s Journey

In this section, where the narratives of the popular fantasy animated series will be analyzed, I will be looking initially at two things. Firstly, I will be following the characters’ journey through using Victoria Schmidt’s model of the heroine’s journey.

Secondly, I will specify how some characters and concepts which reinforce binary oppositions after Lévi-Strauss' narrative theory. Through these analyses I will be experimenting with Victoria Schmidt's character journey model and will see how much it works in popular fantasy animated series, while also establishing these animated series' stance by investigating the binary oppositions they introduce.

As outlined in an earlier chapter, this thesis adopts an *ecofeminist* approach, which does not claim that gender oppression is more important than other forms of oppression, but rather operates according to the conviction that "a focus on 'women' reveals important features of interconnected systems of human domination" (Warren, 2000, p. 2). In this section too, while still taking other Others into account, women characters will lead the course of analysis both because of Warren's three reasons and because women characters are mostly the leads of the narratives of the popular fantasy animated series.

Because focusing on multiple narratives will be prolonging this thesis without introducing new or substantial ideas, in terms of the heroine's journey I will only be discussing two of the five animated series: *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* and *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*. The decision of which one to exclude is made through a purposive sampling.

The main protagonists of both series start their journey in their ordinary world, as Schmidt (2001) states, even though in some cases, this world is not explicitly shown to the audience in the beginning (as in Kipo's journey). Kipo is a child who grew up in an underground burrow and has no first-hand information of and experience on the

surface, and Adora is a recently promoted soldier in the Horde who thinks that she is fighting for good.

5.5.1. *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*

Kipo's journey omits the first stage of the heroine's journey and is introduced to the audience when she comes out of a sewer. The existence of water (baptism) and the fact that she comes out of a hole (womb) when she is first introduced suggests rebirth. Skipping the first stage of Schmidt's journey, she immediately goes into the betrayal and/or realization stage, where she finds out that an upper world exists, and that there are "mutes" – mutated animals – who can think (as humans) and speak (as humans). She is left without protection and is vulnerable in a world where humans are not loved or wanted, instead, they are despised and hunted down. Kipo, ignorant of the danger lurking on the surface, meets a girl named Wolf (a nickname given by Kipo, due to her mute wolf-skin cape), a boy named Benson and a bug mute named Dave. Although at the beginning, they are skeptical of each other's motives and Kipo's capability to find the new burrow and return home, in time they become extremely close and help each other overcome all the obstacles. Kipo proceeds to the fourth stage, when she realizes that she can transform into a mute, a pink mega jaguar, because she was injected with pink jaguar genes by her scientist parents. She feels lost and questions herself while also having a hard time accepting this new identity.

Although the main quest in Kipo's journey seems at first like returning home, not so long into the journey, the audience realizes that her actual quest is to build trust and make peace between the animal and human communities. She believes that anything

can be resolved through healthy communication and tolerance. One of the main binary oppositions structuring *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* is the human-animal duality, even though Kipo herself reveals that this binary is more accurately a spectrum, and hybrid forms are possible. According to French feminist Helene Cixous (1976), the first term in a pair is usually the one that has a more privileged and powerful position in the society. In this duality of humans and animals it is apparent that one party, the humans, are the ones that, in most cases, exploit and dominate the other party, the animals. What usually ignored is that we “easily recognize the exploitative and degrading nature of [the behaviors towards] ... human beings”, however, we are not that quick to recognize those same behavior when they are done to animals (Simons, 2002, p. 7). Kipo is a character who takes recovering and healing the relationship between these two species as her quest and begins her journey.

One other obvious binary opposition in *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* is violence and nonviolence, which are embodied in the characters of Scarlemagne and Kipo. As mentioned before, Scarlemagne is a mandrill: a species listed as vulnerable in the real world by wildlife authorities. His main aim is to get revenge on humans for their past warfare. Kipo, on the other hand, tries to contain Scarlemagne not through violence, but in a peaceful way while also aiming to heal Scarlemagne's wounds. The intentions behind making the animal character on the side of violence and Kipo on the side of peace can be questioned. However, there are three reasons why this decision is not actually that harmful to the movement of animal rights.

First of all, Kipo is a child. Ecofeminist theologian Elizabeth Dodson Gray (1979), who examined the roles played by religious and sexual imageries in the patriarchal Judeo-Christian and Western intellectual traditions (Warren, 2000), claims that children are seen as “so derivative that they are not even in the Creation story” as cited in Warren, 2000, p. 3). Other than being a child, the fact that Kipo is a female plays an important role in her advocacy of human-animal equality as well. Warren (2000) claims that

the analysis of oppression of nonhuman animals is based on a variety of women-animal connections: for example, sexist-naturist language, images of women and animals as consumable objects, pornographic representations of women as meat, male perpetrated violence against women and nonhuman animals (p. 126).

As a female child, her Otherness is brought to a level where she can claim an extremely powerful position as the defender of equality. The third reason that justifies her role as this defender is the fact that she is a human-animal hybrid or in other words a shapeshifter. Although she was artificially made a hybrid by her parents and through science, a field that is mostly used to praise human reason and persecute nonhumans, the action itself was a self-defense mechanism: by obtaining mute abilities and turning into animals, humans could have a fighting chance on the surface. Once the nature of this gene injection is revealed, the animated series introduces fundamental questions on ethically grey applications of science. However, as Johnson (2020) underlines, the animated series fails to delicately address, let alone answer these questions:

[...] when Kipo’s father reveals what they did to her, the show feigns a sense of horror at this, only for Kipo to shout her excitement and approval at what

happened to her. The audience is supposed to take that at face value, to move on from this notion and accept everything else about this plot that follows, but it's just near impossible to shake the ethical dilemma deeply inherent in this revelation. To not even engage in the nature of what's revealed here feels disingenuous, and that looms over the second half of season two (Johnson, 2020, n.p.).

Shapeshifting is a concept that has roots in almost every culture all over the globe. Granqvist (2011) focuses on the psychoanalytic perspective of shapeshifting, built his argument around Freud's (1964) idea that "division of what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise of psycho-analysis" (p.13). Departing from this, Granqvist (2011) moves on to Rivkin and Ryan's (1998) paraphrasing of Freud:

Repression is essential to civilization, the conversion of animal instinct into civil behavior, but such repression creates what might be called a second self, a stranger within, a place where all that cannot for one reason or another be expressed or realized in civil life takes up residence (Rivkin & Ryan, 1998, p. 119).

Since animal instincts are repressed to achieve civilization, Granqvist (2011) invites his reader to look at this *second self* less as a stranger than as an *animal within*. This animal within can be also seen in Kipo's hybridity or shapeshifting. The animal she transforms into can be seen as a reflection of who she actually is. When Kipo turns into the Mega Jaguar, there are instances where she loses her "humanity" and becomes *uncivilized*. She needs an "anchor"; something that will help her transform back into a human. When she loses her anchor and gets stuck in her Mega Jaguar

form, we glimpse her inner world, where she struggles to transform back to a human. In an endless pink colored void, her human form is chased by her jaguar form. Only when her friends sing to her, she can transform back into her human form, and she realizes that her anchor was her friends all along: both her mute and human friends. Her name “Kipo” translates to the word *garden* in Greek, which can stand as another signifier of her identity; natural but artificial; *wild* and *tame*; a hybrid of human-touch and nature. Her last name being “Oak” is also significant, since oaks are “associated with longevity, strength, stability, endurance, ...power, justice, and honesty” – which are the qualities that Kipo stands for in the narrative (Leroy, Plomion & Kremer, 2019, p. 1013). Returning to Kipo’s advocacy for mutant animals’ rights, being both an Other and a shapeshifting hybrid, she is equally close to both sides of the conflict, which makes her a perfect candidate to mediate between the two parties.

Scarlemagne, the mandrill who controls the minds of primates through his pheromones, is Kipo’s first major challenge. Being a test subject in the past and feeling betrayed by his adoptive family (Kipo’s mother and father), Scarlemagne despises humans and announces his reign over this new world:

My mute brothers and sister! You all came, like I asked. That was smart of you... It was only 200 hundred years ago that humans, like that burrow girl, kept us locked up in prisons just like this one [showing the dilapidated remains of a zoo behind him]. Well, now the tables have turned. This is how all humans should be: Obedient [showing the mind-controlled humans behind him]. I can make them into an army. An army I can use to build an empire. Mutes on top! Humans below! (Sechrist & Wolkoff, 2020, 1- 8, 0:36-1:28).

However, through understanding and compassion, Kipo manages to heal the hate inside Scarlemagne and even helps him to trust humans again. It is important to note it is not any human that succeeds in this, but a hybrid who is both human and animal. If it was a human an argument could be made about how once more the human *tames* the animal and *civilizes* him, but in this case, the hybrid works as a middle ground for the extremely hurt Scarlemagne, easy to approach due to her muteness and easier to forgive due to her humanness.

Once Kipo overcomes the first challenge, she enters the stage of “The eye of the storm” in her journey. With this small success and a false sense of security Kipo thinks that “hate between humans and animals” can be resolved and tries to bring all humans and mutes together through forming HMUFA (Human Mute Ultimate Friendship Alliance), which both of the parties prove unwilling to join. While Kipo is struggling to find a solution to persuade everyone to join HMUFA, the main antagonist Dr. Emilia comes into the picture and triggers the “Death—all is lost” stage.

The second binary opposites the animated series tackles is, again, one of the most known ones: good and evil, with good embodied in Kipo and bad in Dr. Emilia. It is different than the war-peace duality, because what Dr. Emilia wants is not war but an instant victory. She is a human scientist who worked with Kipo’s parents, and the leader of the human resistance against mutes. Although she appears friendly in the beginning and poses as an ally to Kipo and her friends, her only aim is to see the demise of all mutes through injecting them with a serum that will revert them back. Instead of trying to find a way for humans and mutes to live together like Kipo, Dr.

Emilia chooses the path of restoring anthropocentrism and wants everything to go back to “normal”, where humans dominate and exploit animals. As a daughter of a white, heterosexual, and cisgender man, Emilia is a *product* of the patriarchal society, her father pushing her explicitly to *reclaim* the world from the mutes. This becomes even more relevant when we look at all the other characters who are fighting against Dr. Emilia: Kipo, as mentioned while analyzing her character design, is biracial; her mother is Korean and her father is Black; Wolf is Black; Benson is Black and homosexual (which the show explicitly confirms); Dave is a bug mute; Mandu is a pig mute; Asher is nonbinary; Troy is Asian/Latino and pansexual. Moreover, when Kipo and her friends all agree to stop Dr. Emilia, Kipo turns to the camera, breaking the fourth wall, and says to the audience “We’re gonna do it, together” and thus, invites the viewer to fight andro/anthropocentrism (Sechrist & Wolkoff, 2020, 2-10, 21:33-21:34).

Johnson (2020) claims that the show uses imagery and visual/narrative choices to comment and reflect on racial issues. He makes some amazing points like all the lead characters being all Black and their backstories representing different perspectives of Blackness. From details like graffiti on various walls that demean humans, restaurants that refuse to serve humans, or a mute theater group that dresses like humans, Johnson (2020) sees the relationship between the humans and the mutes as an allegory of the history of anti-Black racism. Although having wonderful points and on spot analyses, he fails to acknowledge that throughout human history the nature-Others have also been exploited, dominated, and subordinated and their response to this, once they get an *ability* to communicate with humans, is far more than understandable. Johnson (2020) also points out that tackling with “the ethically-

grey uses of science, and the part-mute nature of Kipo acting as a potential lens to view things now from the mute point of view, there's a concern that, at worst, things may take on a 'both sides' or a 'reverse racism' kind of vibe" (n.p.). However, Johnson wrote his article before the animated series has concluded, and his point was made only from the perspective of race; his recognition did not extend to the show's articulation of anthropocentrism.

The fact that Dr. Emilia, a white woman, stands opposed to a whole range of beings identified as various Others is something to focus on, because as the next stage of Schmidt's journey model suggests ("Support"), once a greater threat is introduced or revealed all the Others come together to fight against evil. Although up until that point both humans and mutes had serious trust issues and deep-rooted prejudices against each other, Kipo's optimistic attitude and plucky idealism stands as a more appealing option than the hate and destruction Dr. Emilia radiated. At this point, everyone, one by one, decides to join HMUFA, setting the stage for the "Rebirth—the moment of truth" in which the heroine finds all the strength and support she needs. Kipo and the members of HMUFA defeat Dr. Emilia together, but do not kill her and give her one more chance to atone. Schmidt (2001) explains this by saying "having a heart isn't to say the hero can't kill, if that's what the story calls for. Having heart means to have consciousness...It is to act from a place of calmness" (p. 289-290). Emilia, once more, betrays everyone and is narratively punished by becoming the prisoner of a mute fungus named Fun Gus.

After evil is defeated, the characters enter the "Return to the Perfect World" stage where the age of Wonderbeasts (not mutes) can begin. Although the word

“Wonderbeast” is in the title of the show, the one and only time it is used inside the show is at the end, when all the problems between humans and nonhuman animals are resolved. Calling the nonhuman animals Wonderbeasts instead of “mutes” suggests a metamorphosis. With accepting their status as not animals that went through mutations, but as beings that must be praised through a positive connotation, Wonderbeasts and humans start a society together where everyone is at last living in harmony.

5.5.2. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*

She-Ra and the Princesses of Power’s main protagonist Adora starts her journey with Schmidt’s first stage “The illusion of the Perfect World”. She is a successful Horde soldier adored by her superiors who just got promoted to force captain. She fights against vicious instigators and believes that the Horde liberates the people of various kingdoms in the name of Lord Hordak. Her best friend Catra, a human-feline hybrid, is not as successful and obedient as Adora and though this does not initially pose a threat on their friendship, from time to time Catra shows signs of jealousy. As Schmidt’s (2001) model predicts, Adora “has a false sense of security about her future and thinks everyone will like her if she keeps it up. This is a safe world of things known to her; repetition brings her the illusion of security” (p. 248). Schmidt (2001) also insists that the heroine will not return to this place, so it has to be presented negatively. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* does this through setting; as the previous chapter discusses, Fright Zone is brown and gray, a wasteland full of broken-down machines and pollution that invokes negative feelings. These feelings of negativity increase once Adora and Catra decide to ride into the Whispering

Woods, a shift in setting that creates the first important binary opposition: natural vs. anthropic.

Catra's irresponsible driving leads to an accident, and the friends find themselves in the middle of the Whispering Woods. This moment triggers the beginning of the second stage: "The Betrayal or Realization", or in Adora's case, both. She wakes up from the accident and immediately sees a glowing sword. With feelings of awe, she touches the sword and sees visions accompanied by a robotic voice saying: "Balance must be restored. Etheria, must seek a hero. Adora! Adora!" (Stevenson, 2018-2020, 1-1, 00:10:57-00:11:07). After Adora hears this, she goes back to the Fright Zone with Catra, but Adora cannot stop wondering about the sword. At night, when everyone's asleep she goes back to the Whispering Woods to find it. However, at that same moment the princess of Bright Moon (a kingdom in Etheria) Glimmer and her best friend Bow are also trying to locate the sword. Once they meet and realize they are enemies (Glimmer being a princess, and Adora being a Horde soldier) they begin to fight, and Adora is taken prisoner. During her captivity, she realizes that everything she was taught was a lie, and the Horde is bringing suffering to the inhabitants of the kingdoms and to nature.

With this realization, she jumps to the third stage "The Awakening and Preparing for the Journey". She embraces her role as She-Ra, joins the Rebellion, and rebuilds the princess alliance together with Glimmer and Bow. The way this development affects Catra sets off the fourth stage: The Descent—passing the gates of judgment. When Adora leaves the Fright Zone to fight against the Horde, Catra feels betrayed and abandoned – Catra's journey starts also here – which makes her violent and

aggressive. Although Adora tries to persuade her to join her, Catra, rejects Adora and becomes her mortal enemy. Schmidt (2001) explains that “now that [Adora] has made a life-changing decision, she has to face the changes to come with it” (p. 284). “The hero faces one of her fears, an obstacle that has much more at stake than mere self-doubt...One by one, she passes the gates of judgment, faces a fear, and loses a weapon in the process” (Schmidt, 2001, p. 285). In Adora’s case this weapon she loses is not a literal weapon, but another member of the Princess Alliance, Entrapta. When the alliance enters Fright Zone to save the captured Glimmer, Entrapta stays behind, and, though the alliance believes she was killed, Entrapta actually joins the Horde. However, this betrayal is somewhat qualified, since Entrapta is written as a character in the autism spectrum (Stevenson, 2020) who puts science before anything else, which makes her social skills secondary. Her joining the Horde, was not an act of revenge or did not come from an evil heart, but because Catra manipulates Entrapta into believing that her friends left her, and telling her that the Horde would allow her to do more and better science.

Once Adora loses a friend and an ally, she blames herself, and several members of the alliance leave. Adora, then questions her role and her abilities while talking to the Whispering Woods: “I can let anyone else get hurt... You want me to be weak, [she transforms to her Adora form from her She-Ra form] well... I am. And I am afraid. I am no good at any of this” (Stevenson, 2018-2020, 1-10, 21:45-22:03). She begins to think that everyone will be better if she stays far away from them. However, through the power of Glimmer and Bow’s friendship, she comes to terms with what has happened, takes responsibility, and sets to fix it.

Meanwhile in the Fright Zone, Entrapta developed a weapon using one of the runestones —magical and native stones and sources of the princesses’ powers— to hack the planet. Once they run the weapon, it starts to suck the planet’s energy. The animals run away panicking, the Whispering Woods loses its colors, and it starts to snow, which it never does there. The series thus uses allegory to show how the technologies of the people in power hurt the environment, and to frame climate change as a result of evildoing. This good vs. evil binary carries the narrative throughout the series, and just like in *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, every member of the “good” Rebellion reflects the Others in our society. Yet, unlike in *Kipo*, where the “evil” side is very clearly framed in terms of patriarchal whiteness, in *She-Ra* the people who work for The Horde are also Others, a fact whose significance will be discussed below.

Moving on to the “The Eye of the Storm” stage, Adora manages to reconvene the Princess Alliance. When the Horde attacks Bright Moon, all of the princesses fight against the invasion. Once they touch She-Ra’s sword, they all start to glow, and together they create a rainbow-colored wave and repel the enemy. With this great success Adora gains a false sense of security and almost for 2-3 seasons she and the alliance constantly do the same thing: Catra or the Horde attacks and the Rebellion defeats them: Catra and the Horde drags everything to the edge of peril and the Rebellion defeats them. The series gets stuck in a cycle of stage four and five, where they lose something, then win something until the overarching villain is revealed. It’s not the Horde soldiers or Lord Hordak, but rather someone else who pushed the first domino tile.

When Horde Prime is finally introduced, the audience finds an answer to the question of why the members of the Horde are Others as well: they are not the evil ones. There are characters who have done terrible things through the course of the animated series, but they find ways to atone. With the emergence of Horde Prime, the emperor of the Horde and the known universe, Adora proceeds to the sixth stage of Schmidt's journey ("Death—All is lost") and the binary opposition of good/evil is realigned. Horde Prime's main motivation is to conquer the universe and use the heart of Etheria as a weapon. While the former antagonists (Catra and Lord Hordak) wanted attention, revenge, or to make someone proud, Horde Prime's sole purpose is to colonize Etheria to use its resources and submit its people to his authority. With an *outsider knows best* mindset, an ideology that drives a great deal of Western conservation efforts in the global south (Warren, 2000, p. 5), Horde Prime justifies his narcissistic actions with remarks like "all creatures no matter how small, have a place in service of Horde Prime", which is a way of saying everyone is less than him and an affiliation with him promises them a purpose in life, or "weeds must be burned for new life to flourish" as if the destruction of the colonizer mindset is meant to help the planet. He uses the imagery of white light to frame himself as a beacon of hope and peace in the darkest corners of the universe, which introduces another binary opposition: light/dark. However, in this equation when Horde Prime corresponds to "light", "dark" remains empty, because no one who opposes him stands for darkness, uses it in the narrative, or lives physically in dark places. Thus, I believe that *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* tries to break binaries and dichotomies and shows its audience that not everything should be either one or the other. It pushes the concept of "light" as white, shiny and clean to the side and puts "colorful light" in its place: interconnected, diverse, and inclusive. While with his

God/messiah complex Horde Prime embodies andro/anthropocentrism all the o/Other characters come together through love, understanding, forgiveness and support (Schmidt's seventh stage, "Support") in order to defeat Horde Prime as well as *white* male patriarchy, androcentrism and anthropocentrism. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, through this duality, shows that there are some shifts in the correspondence of some concepts. While in traditional stories concepts like androcentrism, anthropocentrism, and white male patriarchy belong to the good and winning side, *She-Ra* changes this by framing these concepts around a character who harms the human-Others and the nonhuman nature Others. In this way the show emphasizes that andro-anthropocentrism is responsible for starting conflicts regarding environmental and social issues we are facing today.

When everything seems at its worst, when Adora is unconscious and infected with Horde Prime's technology, Catra, her best friend and former enemy declares her love for Adora and kisses her. As they start to glow, they create a rainbow-colored light which starts to heal every damage Horde Prime has done to the planet. In the "Rebirth—The Moment of Truth Stage" Adora wakes up in her most powerful state and points her sword to Horde Prime's airship. Instead of destroying it, she attacks it with nature and turns it into a giant tree that hangs in the universe. Her next steps are recovering the land; thus, she sticks her sword to the earth and heals nature by creating plants and giving the color and magic back to the planet. At the end of the series, with Schmidt's last stage "Full Circle—Return to the Perfect World" emerging, they find themselves in the perfect world that they've always imagined. Similar to *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, all mistakes are forgiven, everyone (except Horde Prime) is accepted and Adora together with Catra, Glimmer and Bow

decide to spread this magic they restored to the whole universe. Just like when Kipo approaches the “Support” stage she says “together” and looks at the audience, Adora’s and the series’ last words are “Then let’s do this. Together” (Stevenson, 2018-2020, 5-13, 00:22:29-00:22:32) while the camera does a pedestal and moves up only to show us the last image of the entire series; a giant tree hanging in space.

5.5.3 Binary Oppositions in *The Dragon Prince*, *Disenchantment* and *Wizards*

In the previous two subheadings I have investigated the narrative structures of *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, through Victoria Schmidt’s heroine’s journey model. I also mentioned how binary opposite affected the narrative. Lévi-Strauss (1969) argues that “if we consider only the syntagmatic sequence—that is, the unfolding of the story—it appears incoherent and very arbitrary in construction” (p. 306). But collecting different elements of a story can reveal the binaries that drive its conflict and express its underlying ideology. Thus, this section identifies several binary opposites in *The Dragon Prince*, *Wizards*, and *Disenchantment*.

It is extremely common to use the conflict between good and evil in all kinds of narratives to enrich the story, since it is one of the oldest topics humankind has constantly discussed. Just like it was a core binary opposition both in *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, it also introduces the fundamental conflicts in *The Dragon Prince*, *Wizards*, and *Disenchantment*.

For a very long time the good vs. evil binary had some strict and precise borders. Also, in the fantasy genre it was taught “that good and evil are diametrically opposed. As thesis and anti-thesis, the two cannot meet without one overcoming the other” (Robinson, 2003, p. 32). This meant that whatever evil was, it could not be good and whatever good was, it could not be evil. Schrag (2006) answers the question of “what is evil?” by saying: “Evil [...] is that which is not morally good; wicked; sinful; offensive; painful; foul; uncomfortable; disagreeable; unpleasant; wrathful; malignant; causing or tending to cause harm; calamity; disaster; misfortune—and I suspect all of the above in a variety of combinations” (p. 150). From the oldest times evil was usually associated with women, children, other human Others and nature. Tertullian regarded women as the “devil getaway” (as cited in Noddings, 1989, p. 35); evil is usually experienced as something alien: Schrag (2006) stresses the fact that the Other is demonized as evil; and there is a concept of natural evil, “suffering that occurs without the deliberate or negligent agency of human beings”: storms, natural death, earthquakes, drought (Noddings, 1989, p. 5-6). All these groups, which are not white, male and inside the boundaries of normative understanding were seen as evil. Ruether, however, points out that “feminism represents a fundamental shift in the valuations of good and evil. It makes a fundamental judgment upon some aspects of past descriptions of nature and etiology of evil as themselves ratifications of evil” (as cited in Noddings, 1989, p. 5). In this light, I claim that, through an understanding of ecofeminism, animated fantasy series managed to realign both good and evil so that they correspond to what in the past they opposed.

In *The Dragon Prince* the issue of pinpointing evil becomes sometimes hard. The series welcomes its audience with a voice-over narration that gives a brief introduction and some historical context. It explains that long ago, Xadia was one land rich in magic and wonder and that there were only six Primal Sources of magic which are the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth, the Sky, and the Ocean.

But a thousand years ago a human mage discovered new magic, the seventh source: Dark Magic. It used the essence within magical creatures themselves to unleash dark power. Horrified by what they saw the elves and the dragons put a stop to the madness. They drove every last human to the west. And so, the continent was divided in two. In the east, the magical lands of Xadia. And in the west, the human kingdoms. For centuries, the King of the Dragons himself defended the border...The humans called him Thunder, for when he spoke, his voice shook the Earth and the sky. But on the eve of last Winter's Turn, the humans used unspeakable Dark Magic to slay Thunder. Then, without mercy, they destroyed his only egg, his heir: The Dragon Prince. Now the world stands on the edge of all-out war (Ehasz & Richmond, 2018, 1-1, 00:01:15-00:03:29).

Once the voice-over narration is done the audience is left with lots of different binary oppositions: Primal Sources of Magic vs Dark Magic; West vs. East, Humans vs. Nonhumans. All of these pairs, however, are interrelated and almost impossible to analyze without touching upon another. For this reason, I will be starting the discussion by talking about “good vs. evil” because it has given birth to all the other dualities. It is extremely common to use the conflict between good and evil in all kinds of narratives, since it is one of the oldest topics, humankind has constantly

discussed. Just like it was a core binary opposition both in *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, it is also a fundamental conflict builder in *The Dragon Prince*.

In normal circumstances, in Xadia, only magical creatures are capable of magic due to their inborn connection to one of the primal sources. However, humans have no ability to cast magic unless they use a magical artifact or a Primal Stone, stones that have the energy of one of the Primal Sources in them. As the prologue explains, a human mage has discovered that dark magic could be practiced by extracting the magic from creatures, in other words murdering them. This discovery ends in humans being banished to the west of Xadia (a duality covered in the chapter about the setting). Although humans were the ones who started the conflict by *crossing a border they shouldn't have crossed* (literal and figurative), they still see the Xadians as the problem. In conventional andro/anthropocentric understandings the Xadians would be demonized, positioned as evil, and their otherization by human characters would also be supported by the narrative; however *The Dragon Prince* lets go of the patriarchal and human-centric understandings.

Soon after Prince Harrow was crowned to be the king of Katolis, the kingdom faces a situation in which lots of people will die due to a lack of food and resources. Lord Viren, a mage and the king's most trusted advisor, finds a "creative" solution that could save all the lives: They need to travel to Xadia and take the heart of a rocky giant *monster* to cast a spell. Although the king is thrilled with the news and is ready to travel, his wife Sarai objects to the decision, including his calling the creature a *monster*. She asks Harrow: "Does it think? Does it feel? Does it have a family?"

(Ehasz & Richmond, 2018- , 2-5, 00:18:23-00:18:27). When Harrow says that he doubts it has a family, Sarai responds: “Then it’s the last of its kind” (Ehasz & Richmond, 2018, 2-5, 00:18:31-00:18:32). Despite every point Queen Sarai makes against anthropocentrism and in favor of conservation, King Harrow proceeds with the plan, which gives Sarai no option but to join the quest. They cross to Xadia, even though they are not allowed, kill the *monster* and get its heart. On their way back Thunder, the Dragon King that secures the border of Xadia, catches them and takes the lives of Sarai among others. Although this was an expected consequence of trespassing, and although what they initially trespassed for, the heart of the *monster*, was acquired, the spell was made and “humanity was saved”, Harrow goes after Thunder and kills it on the day the Dragon Queen laid an egg. This made all the Xadians even more angry at the humans (they also thought that the humans killed the egg) and the blood the humans shed has begun an endless cycle of violence and vengeance.

As Robinson (2003) mentions, the fantasy genre usually draws a precise line between good and evil. However, *The Dragon Prince* constantly blurs this line, putting the viewer in a dilemma because it is apparent that killing the *monster* does not come from an evil heart. Humans, so that they can save other humans, have no option but to kill the monster. According to Harrow and Viren, proceeding with the plan of killing the *monster* was necessary so that humans could live; from an anthropocentric view it is justified and necessary: one creature, a *monster*, will die, so that a hundred thousand people will live. However, the issue here is why killing the *monster*, a living being, is an option in the first place? In normal circumstances many would agree that to save more lives, one life can be expendable. Still, this has its own

philosophical discussions through cases like the Transplant Problem⁷ and the Trolley Problem⁸. However, in *The Dragon Prince* the reason for hundred thousand people's lives being at stake is not a Trolley nor a Transplant case, but a famine caused by a natural disaster and the government's inability or unwillingness to deal with the consequences, or perhaps by human events such as warfare (National Geographic, 2020). I am not claiming that a famine is something to be taken lightly or taking a reductionist approach. Nor am I suggesting a deserved cause-effect scenario. I am only emphasizing the fact that a famine, an environmental disaster, should not be prevented through another environmental threat because it will only justify the next time when humans harm nature, which is evident in the aftermath of the *monster-heart* spell which created fertility and abundance but changed the climate immediately and artificially. In *The Dragon Prince*, once the human crossed one of the rules of nature and discovered Dark magic, it only became another justification for future non-human slaughters by humans. Even if it is not murdering a living being to benefit humans, Dark magic can take the shape of using, manipulating, or exploiting the living being for the same ends. It is common in many great works of fantasy to use a nonhuman being for human benefit (killing dragons for glory in *The Avatar: The Last Airbender*; educating dragons to become weapons for humans in *The Game of Thrones*, the rituals of the Skelligers who worship Svalblod in *The Witcher*). However, *The Dragon Prince*, through Queen Sarai, articulates this

⁷ The dilemma of whether to “chop up an innocent person simply because we could transplant organs only from him and so could save the lives of five other innocent people” or not (Kamm, 1989, p. 227).

⁸ The dilemma of whether to “turn a fatal trolley away from killing five toward killing one, even if we have not set the trolley in motion toward the five and are just bystanders watching it” or not (Kamm, 1989, p. 228).

injustice as injustice and thus discusses an issue that normally many of us would not even think about in the context of fantasy narrative.

A similar situation takes place in *Disenchantment*. Elfo, an elf who spent all his life in Elfwood, decides to leave and finds himself in Dreamland in the middle of the princess of Dreamland's arranged marriage. Seeing him, Sorcerio, the wizard and advisor of the kingdom, says "Imagine the possibilities. With elf magic I could progress far beyond card tricks," and the King offers a reward for his capture (Groening & Weinstein, 2018, 1-1, 00:24:05-00:24:11). Once the King captures Elfo, they put him in a cage and make him dance while also playing the flute. Seconds before King Zog kicks Luci, a demon he thought was a cat. These two interactions already give some clues about how this kingdom perceives non-human beings. Thus, it is not surprising when they use the captive Elfo's blood to create an Elixir of Life. They make lots of experiments on him and nearly drain his blood out of him. The princess Bean, to save her friend, drains pig's blood instead and makes her father release Elfo. Even though Bean tried to save her non-human friend, she still sacrificed an animal, which is still highly problematic and resembles the situation in *The Dragon Prince*. For several episodes Sorcerio and King Zog continue taking Elfo's blood and the soldiers of Dreamland invade Elfwood to capture more elves. During the battle, Elfo gets shot by an arrow and dies. In the aftermath, we find out why King Zog is so obsessed with the Elixir of Life: 15 years ago, Bean's mother was petrified from poison, and King Zog is trying to reverse the curse with elven blood. Finding this out, Bean, who has seized the elixir for herself, oscillates between giving it to her mother or to Elfo, finally deciding to bring her mother back to life. Although in the course of the series Elfo is also resurrected, it is important that, in

that moment, Bean chooses her mother even though Elfo died because of the humans, and specifically to produce the elixir that Bean uses to revive her. Neither Bean's nor Zog's actions are evil, but they do underscore the injustice of such a choice. I am not claiming that a human's life matters more than an elf's life, or that using an elf in experiments and taking its blood is justified if it can resurrect a human, but Bean's preference for her mother is emotionally understandable.

Comparing the two series, the idea that abusing or exploiting a nonhuman living being is not ethical is not explicitly stated in *Disenchantment*, as it is in *The Dragon Prince*. However, in *Disenchantment* too, even though it is not voiced out loud, the consequences of Bean's choice in the narrative suggest as much. Firstly, we find out that Bean's mother is not a good person (the poison that petrified her was prepared by her for the King, and she wants to sacrifice her daughter Bean in a ritual). With this realization, Bean and Luci travel to the underworld to revive Elfo, putting themselves at considerable risk, and Bean apologizes repeatedly for her selfish actions until Elfo (who clearly expresses his anger) finally forgives her.

Bean's character arc, almost for the entirety of the series, is mainly steered through her rejection of her princess status and all the privilege that comes along with it.

When we first see her she is a (not-so-successful) princess, however over the course of the series, she learns a lot about herself, her surroundings and how her privilege, which she wants to reject, is harming both humans and nonhumans in Dreamland.

With her two nonhuman best friends, she learns to raise her voice when needed, and she faces horrible consequences like being burned at a stake after being accused of being a witch. In the later seasons when she travels to Steamland (a steampunk version of Dreamland) to save her country, her compassion and closeness to

nonhumans becomes more evident as she falls in love with a mermaid. With the introduction of her love interest, it becomes even clearer that most people she cares about are members of a nonhuman community.

Of course, the good vs evil binary opposition cannot reveal itself by only focusing on the evil side. As Calder (2014) demonstrates, focusing on its opposite may not always work, thus it may not be its literal opposite. Thus, instead of trying to extract 'good' by discussing 'evil', I will look at the 'good' for itself. At the beginning of *Wizards*, several main characters from *The Trollhunters*, which takes place in the modern world, find themselves in the middle of medieval Camelot. The audience quickly finds out that in the medieval Camelot humans and trolls do not have a pleasant relationship. The king, King Arthur, believes that trolls have ravished their land and taken their loved ones, and in response he has banished all trolls from the land and the penalty of trespassing is death. Morgana, Arthur's sister, on the other hand, thinks that trolls are born of magic as human are blood and questions how their nature is a crime. Just when Arthur is about to execute a troll, another character saves him and says "Just because you're scared of him doesn't mean he shouldn't exist. It doesn't make him evil" (Del Toro, 2020, 1-1, 00:04:14-00:04:19). Morgana tries to persuade Arthur into *showing mercy*. When the troll, Jim, is thrown into the dungeon he sees that not only trolls, but other magical creatures are captives too and meets another troll named Callista, who summarizes the situation: "Arthur has a sick sense of humor. Steals my homelands, then says I'm trespassing there. Now trolls are forbidden along with anything else that's not a fleshbag [human]...Ask Arthur, the only good troll's a dead one. Same goes for goblins, gnomes, and any other so-called 'monster' he doesn't understand" (Del Toro, 2020, 00:05:40-00:06:12). After this

explanation, having also in mind that the creator of the series is Mexican filmmaker Guillermo Del Toro, a parallel can be seen between Arthur's behavior towards the magical creatures and the anti-immigrant attitudes of the Trump administration. The fact that King Arthur is voiced by James Faulkner, a white male voice actor, and Callista by Stephanie Beatriz, a Hispanic woman, strengthens this parallel. Although anti-immigrant policies are not the primary focus of the current study, this Othering is still significant from an ecofeminist perspective.

Another important thing here is that the presence of the trolls is not just a filler in this fantasy world, as it usually is, but it is actually nonhumans who lead the story. Lindow (2014) remarks that "in Old Norse, the word troll [...] denoted all sorts of things – giants, troublesome people, even troublesome animals" (Introduction, para. 14). Atteberry (1996) informs that

the trolls of fantasy writing derive from two related but nonetheless distinguishable sources. First, there are the ogre-like giants of the Icelandic sagas [...] A second source for the trolls of fantasy writing is the human-size troll of Scandinavian folk narrative, who resembles the huldafolk, or hidden folk, of Iceland (p. 62).

Atteberry (1996) reminds us that the best-known images of the trolls belong to Tolkien. In Tolkien's works the troll has two incarnations: "There are ancient trolls, which he describes as "creatures of dull and lumpish nature," (III, 511) who cannot speak, and there are trolls bred by Sauron. The latter are malicious giants possessing great strength and enough intelligence to present a real danger" (p. 66-67). Whatever their looks were, they were usually portrayed as unintelligent, savage, ugly, mischievous, dark skinned, and evil (Atteberry, 1996; Lindow, 2014). Lindow (2014)

claims that the troll has been used as one of the most powerful and persistent images of Otherness and of nature beings across many different cultures. In the case of *Wizards*, the trolls are not giants, nor are they human-like; rather, this representation combines several different features of trolls. While in the past the image of the troll was used as othering beings, marking enemies, or adding comic relief, *Wizards* changes this with its portrayal of the trolls. In the series they are not portrayed as evil, unintelligent, or ugly (although there are violent trolls among the community), but as colorful ‘nature beings’ who want their land back and fight against the humans, who are the bad ones now and who othered them and hunted them for years. This shift in the portrayal of trolls, just like *Disenchantment* and *The Dragon Prince*, raises important issues by reversing age-old binaries, drawing attention to the fact that humans, for centuries, have been stealing land, exploiting nature, and othering every living thing that did not look like them.

Going back to Morgana, as she is also a sorceress, she sees trolls and all the other magical creatures as connected to herself and is determined to protect them, even if it means fighting her own brother. During their sword fight, Arthur tells Morgana that he overlooked her true nature because she is his sister but now, he sees her for what she is: a demon, a witch. Morgana responds: “And all I see is a little boy driven mad by hatred and prejudice” (Del Toro, 2020, 1-1, 00:20:11-00:20:15) and falls from a cliff, leaving everyone thinking she died. In fact, she is found by Nari, a mythical being of nature and a member of the Arcane Order (a trio of primordial demigods who wish to maintain the balance between magic and mortals). Nari and the rest of the Arcane Order believe that *man* has destroyed the balance and that Morgana can make right what the mortals made wrong, as someone from the human world fighting

for the nonhuman world. However, with their anger and tiredness of the situation the Arcane Order finds themselves in a misanthropic state and while Morgana was trying to do good, they all lose themselves and tumble down to the edge of evilness. Singer (2004) claims that “one of the paradoxes of evil is that a person can be evil in one set of circumstances and not in other, or evil in relation to certain other persons, but not evil in relation to others” (p. 197). In case of Morgana, her actions were all on the side of goodness until she was blinded with anger. All she wanted was a balanced world where peace is the ruler. However, with Arthur’s politics and with the influence of the hurt and furious Arcane Order, she loses her pure objective and becomes evil, however it shouldn’t be forgotten that “an evil deed may be done by someone who is not evil but only weak or misguided. Neither is every wrongdoer evil, for one may do wrong with good intentions” (Singer, 2004, p. 208). This does not mean that the Arcane Order is truly evil as well. Everyone in the Order, including Morgana, constantly misguide each other through fueling each other’s anger.

A similar thing happens to Soren and Claudia in *The Dragon Prince*. Their father Lord Viren, a mage who practices dark magic, raised them and influenced them their whole lives. As a result, Claudia has also become a mage and got into dark magic and Soren has become a member of the Crown Guard of Katolis. Viren’s aim is to elevate humanity at any cost, even if it means sacrificing humans or slaughtering millions of nonhumans, so that humanity can live without any threat and in their right place, which is at the top. Although fantasy narratives are rife with male villains who face the protagonist openly and voice his endeavors out loud (Saruman and Sauron from *Lord of the Rings*, Voldemort from *Harry Potter*, Ozai from *Avatar: The Last Airbender*), Lord Viren’s character introduces a new kind of male villain. Klaus

(2010) claims that “the majority of the male antagonists oppose the protagonist openly, whereas female adversaries are less easily identifiable as such. They wittingly conceal their real motives behind a veil of tenderness, sympathy for the [...] heroes” (p. 137-138). Following this gendered distinction, Lord Viren is an antagonist whose characteristics traditionally associated with female villains. As the King’s closest friend and adviser, father of two brilliant children, and a compassionate mentor to the two princes, he seems like a good person; however, just like the Evil Queen in the *Snow White* tale, he sends his children after the princes to murder them. Once more, there is a change evident in the attributed characteristics to certain characters. While according to patriarchal tradition, the male would face the obstacles directly and the female indirectly (using her charm, beauty and compassion rather than open communication), *The Dragon Prince* changes this by showing a duplicitous male villain.

As a result of Viren’s anthropocentric nature, both his children are insensitive to nature: Claudia literally kills animals and creatures to take their primal energy to practice magic, and Soren sees everything else as less than humans. This family falls under the category of ‘fanatical evil’ according to Singer (2004), which is “judging it to be evil if inflicted on them or on people they are concerned about...but not regarding it as evil if it is inflicted on others or inflicted by themselves...in some instances [it] also manifests egoistic evil” (p. 205-206). An example is, when Soren and Claudia hurt a dragon by shooting it down.

When Soren comes across a dragon that flies over a town, he has a hard time understanding why the townspeople haven’t shot it yet. The town’s people say that the dragon has not attacked them yet, to which Soren answers “So? It’s the enemy.

I'm taking command here" (Ehasz & Richmond, 2018- , 2-7, 00:06:05-00:06:10). He wants to show the dragon that humans won't be intimidated by its actions. Although everyone tries to convince him that he shouldn't attack the dragon, he shoots a pear at it. As a result the dragon starts to attack the town, and Claudia enchants a spear to never miss its target, which finally shoots the dragon down. As they collect the dragon's body, subjecting it to further violence and tying it with ropes and chains, they carelessly joke around about how Claudia was the one who *took down* the dragon and not the knight Soren. Claudia, overly excited, talks about the many kinds of magic she can do with dragon parts and that they can carry it home in pieces—a scene that evokes the real-world problem of wildlife hunting and poaching.

Soren and Claudia's attitudes are also a reminder of McGinn's (1997) definition of an evil character as someone who takes pleasure from the pain of others. Both Claudia and Soren pretend like there is no hurt animal lying in front of them and in fact talk about how they will utilize the animal. With this behavior I believe they deserve a place among names like Ahmed Kamran, Ben Simasiku, Bhekumusa Mawillis Shiba and Sergey Darminov who are among the world's most wanted environmental criminals. Going back to *The Dragon Prince*, minutes later when Rayla (a moonshadow elf) and Callum (Queen Sarai's son) arrive to fight for the dragon, the dragon kicks Soren towards a stone which leaves Soren paralyzed. The series parallels the two scenes (the dragon lying defenseless / Soren lying defenseless) and shows both Claudia and Soren losing their joy once they are the side that got hurt, which makes Singer's (2004) notion of "fanatical evil," apparent in them. However, this situation makes one wonder if someone is beyond the reach of a

sober remorse, because of the evil they have done and the evil of their character (Gaiata, 2004). In the course of the series Soren goes on a redemption arc:

He's smart, and the way he talks, you really believe he's a good person, that everything he does is to protect his family, his home, or all of humanity. He makes you think that as long as you do what he says, you must be doing the right thing. Even when he asks you to do something bad. Something evil. So, the truth is someone who wants you to do horrible things, and convinces you that they're good, that's a villain. My dad is a villain...The only way to stop this is to look evil in the face and say, 'No more.' (Ehasz & Richmond, 2018-3-8, 00:20:18-00:21:22).

When he sees that his father's wishes are evil and even his son's life is expendable, Soren joins Rayla, Callum and Ezran in their mission to take the Dragon Prince to its mother and protect it from Lord Viren and humanity. It's clear that Soren changes sides when his and his loved ones will suffer because of Viren's pursuit. Thus, it can be said that this decision is out of self-interest, rather than new selflessness.

However, it is important that he now knows, what is evil and what is good, and that he was misguided in thinking that evil was the good. Even though his decision to change sides still cannot be explained as coming from a strong desire to protect the nonhuman nature, this redemption arc, which can be more easily justified than suddenly making him an eco-friendly and ecofeminist character, possibly indicates his coming character development.

5.6. Conclusion

Telling stories and creating narratives are one of the primary ways of human communication. It is also a fundamental way to transmit ideas and perceptions

through which people can make sense of the world and their surroundings. Victoria Schmidt's heroine's journey, a remodeling of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, coherently describes the narrative trajectory of several animated fantasy series. The heroines of *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* both complete their journey according to Schmidt's model by realizing their perfect world is actually an illusion, and by fighting against the evil and for both Others and nature (while being an Other themselves), finally succeeding at creating their own perfect world. Although in both of these shows there were powerful binary oppositions, this chapter looked at the binary oppositions driving narratives of *The Dragon Prince*, *Disenchantment*, and *Wizards*. The presence of binary oppositions in the story enriches the narrative and these two contrasting elements build a strong interest in stories.

One of the most overt and used binary oppositions is the one between evil and good. After my analysis, I claim that in most of the animated series in the fantasy genre, especially in the ones that meet Lawrence Buell's four criteria, this evil vs. good binary are represented through the characters as exploiters of nature and defenders of nature. In some cases, the exploitation happens to save a loved one or is framed as a matter of life and death, thus mitigating the "evil" of their actions; however, usually such actions take place so that humanity can dominate nonhuman nature. Importantly, though, this does not mean that all the characters who engage in such exploitation (and thus are aligned with evil) are forever beyond redemption; characters like Soren and Morgana exemplify a change of heart and mind. The most striking thing, however, is the fact that some of the oldest binary oppositions in popular narrative are reversed in these animated series. While in

normative and traditional cases, masculine ideals such as independence and aggression would dominate the narratives as the more valuable ideals, in the corpus of this thesis the opposite is happening. The ‘feminine’ and the ‘Other’, both nature and human, are framed as more valuable and capable of ‘winning’ core ideological conflicts through teamwork. As with the heroes, among villains, too, gendered traits have been shuffled around. As seen in the examples of Lord Viren and the representation of magical creatures, specifically trolls, traits attributed to the feminine and/or the Other have gone through a significant shift. Traditional narratives associate characteristics like insidiousness, slyness, and sneaking with female villains, while male villains were more straightforward in their villainy. However, in the fantasy animated series, there is an endeavor to decouple these negative connotated characteristics from the female, by associated them instead with the male. This does not reflect a turn to misandry, but rather an intent to question the supposed bonds between the female and these particular characteristics. Similarly, concepts such as being a princess, or being a nonhuman/magical creature saw their customary meanings demolished through new representations and narratives, a process which gathered momentum with big-ticket film animations from Disney, including *Brave* (2012), *Frozen* and its sequel (2013/2019), and *Coco* (2017). All in all, the pattern on evidence in this project’s corpus puts the Other on the side of the good, and even if the Other does something against nature or against a nonhuman being, they have a powerful emotional reason that complicates or rejects a more gratuitously destructive impulse aimed at *elevating humanity* for its own sake.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine the representation of human-Others and nature-Others in popular animated fantasy series from an ecocritical and ecofeminist point of view. The five top-rated series that meet Lawrence Buell's four criteria were analyzed to see how animated fantasy series criticize contemporary social and environmental issues and whether they offer resolutions to these conflicts through imagination and fantasy. The five animated series, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *Wizards*, *Disenchantment*, and *The Dragon Prince* all proved themselves to be texts that are environmentally conscious that put characters positioned as Others at the center of the narratives as saviors and guardians of nature.

As visible in the character designs, mentioned in CHAPTER III, animated series make use of stereotyping to help the audience quickly process characterization and ideological alignment. In daily lives, stereotyping can be harmful and inaccurate, while encouraging negative assumptions that create and endorse binaries such as 'self' and 'Other'. However, in the field of animation, for the character designers, stereotyping becomes an extremely useful tool for conveying personalities

through visuals. Although all the animated series promote environmental, feminist, anti-racist, pro-Queer, and egalitarian messages, they sometimes fail to live up to these ethics through their character designs, because of their dependence on long-standing stereotypes.' While the main protagonists are mostly female characters, they are also mostly white. The human-animal hybrid characters, the humanoids, and the theriomorphized characters are also mostly female, but are coded to read as people of color through visual cues and/or voice acting. Preserving female traits in character design seems fundamental when disrupting the boundaries of the human, which reinforces the female body as an object to look at while fetishizing it by adding animal traits. Anthropomorphized characters are mostly male. As discussed in CHAPTER II, being human is defined mostly through our *ability* to reason. If most anthropomorphized animal characters are male, and if an *ability* to reason is needed to be given to animals for realizing the anthropomorphizing process, this underscores the dichotomy of mind/male-body/female (see Appendix D). Most antagonists are humanoids and/or white humans who wear darker colors in their outfits. The characters' relation to nature is not always obvious from their visual design unless they have features that belong to the nonhuman, e.g., horns, tails, claws, flowers, and plants.

Once the visual designs of the characters were analyzed, the settings of the animated series were examined in CHAPTER IV. While setting is mostly seen only as a backdrop or a framing device for the story, it can be acknowledged as a separate character and/or the main conflict builder of the story. In the fantasy genre, the setting has a particularly important place due to the genre's deep connection to nature. All five animated series establish their main conflict, which is usually

between the humans and nonhumans (or nature-harmer and nature-protectors), over borders that separate two lands. These borders are usually directly a part of nature: a river, a volcano, a forest. Maps are also an important trademark of the genre. The chapter pointed out that, historically, maps have patriarchal roots, because while the first cartographers (male) were on fantastic journeys, women were fulfilling their duty as the ‘angel of the house’ in the domestic sphere. Yet the presence of maps cannot be a reason to condemn the texts as male dominated, since the series containing maps have extremely diverse and important characters. Using maps in fantasy texts highlights the importance of the setting by introducing new ways to enter the fantasy worlds and by giving the creator an opportunity to bring their imaginary worlds closer to reality.

In the fifth chapter, the narratives of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* and *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* are traced using Victoria Schmidt’s heroine’s journey, a remodeling of Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey. After following the journeys of both Adora and Kipo, it was clear that Schmidt’s model coherently describes several series’ narrative trajectory. Although in both *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* and *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts* there were powerful binary oppositions to investigate, the chapter focused on the binary oppositions driving narratives of *The Dragon Prince*, *Disenchantment*, and *Wizards*. As established in the chapter, the presence of binary oppositions enriches the narrative and according to the narrative’s portrayal of the binaries, it can give clues about the series’ stance. As it was apparent in the setting conflicts, the good vs. evil binary opposition has mostly taken the shape of conservationism vs. exploitation, where exploitation is further associated with various –isms, like colonialism. Even though, sometimes, this exploitation takes

place to save a loved one or for survival, usually it is mainly for the elevation of humanity through dominating nature. One of the most compelling points is the realignment of certain binary oppositions, especially the assumption that masculine ideals reflect the “good” that deserves to win core ideological conflicts. In the corpus of this thesis, it is women, other human Others, and nature that are all framed as more important and capable of saving the world.

The character designs, the settings, and the narratives of the five animated fantasy series all work collaboratively to point out some serious realignments concerning binary oppositions. The shift in the good/evil values of binaries such as male/female and human/animal across these five series suggests a broadershift in societal values, which I believe is related to the urgency of the problems regarding the environment, the rise in animal brutality, femicides, and intra-human violence. Because the five animated series this thesis investigated were all fantasy texts, they couldn’t feature these problems in a realistic way, but created a clear shift away from andro- and anthropocentrism towards “feminine” values. For example, a male character can behave as a “feminine” villain, or a nonhuman who would have been seen as ugly, stupid, and evil in the past could become a hero in today’s narratives. Taking one step further, the inclusion of nonhuman animals and nonhuman nature as the Other, as the marginalized and as victims of injustices, has also helped to push these already changing values further and emphasized the urgency of increasing diversity.

By including the nonhuman as the Other, this thesis has also joined a relatively new field: ecocriticism. While expanding the objects of study for ecocriticism, from its narrow literary scope to seeing everything as, potentially, an environmental text, this

thesis has tried to communicate the possibilities of animation through ecocriticism and also how animation could help ecocriticism to become something more than before. The five animated fantasy series, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *Wizards*, *The Dragon Prince*, and *Disenchantment*, all managed to tell the stories of Others, while also defying andro-anthropocentrism by including nature-Others to the discussion as well. Apart from being environmental texts (according to Lawrence Buell's criteria), I believe these five animated series to have strong ecofeminist undertones, especially *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, and *The Dragon Prince*.

The interdisciplinarity of this thesis is its strength, because it shows how some concepts that might seem distant are, in fact, extremely related. Apart from the obvious relationship between women, other human Others, and nature, seen also as another Other, this thesis brought together fantasy (an Other of genres) and animation (an Other in media studies). While being a strength, however, it is also a weakness. A study that only examines one animated series from the angles of character design, setting, and narrative, or a study that examines the animated series from one angle could extrapolate more refined analyses while trying to understand how animated fantasy portrays human-Other and nature-Others. Also, this thesis has only analyzed American animated series, because of their global reach and thus their power in influencing greater masses. In a future study, it would be interesting to see the results of a cross-cultural analysis; an investigation of the portrayals of women, other human Others and nature in the Japanese Anime, another great industry, for instance, would be a great contribution to the fields of ecocriticism and ecofeminism.

My initial motivation for writing this thesis came from a hunger for justice and equality both in my country and in the world. As statistics showed, after the outbreak of the coronavirus, when we were confined in our houses, animation was the genre that gained the most streaming share, which suggests that people turned to animations in times of crisis. Being one of those people, I was also among the people who were constantly refreshing the pages of several social media platforms and sharing content, in the Summer of 2020, for justice to be served for George Floyd and Pınar Gültekin. However, knowing I needed to do something more than scrolling on social media, I dedicated this thesis to all the Others in the world and combined it with a genre people watched the most during the Summer of 2020. While concluding this thesis, I would recommend that the animation industry acknowledge their educational power, and fight for the rights of the Others in a louder voice.

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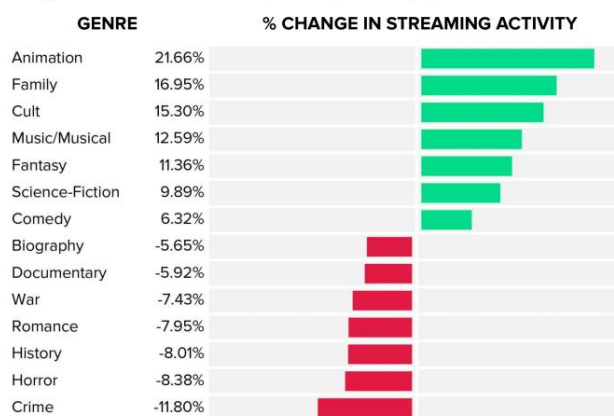
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APPENDIX A

Statistical Data Gathered by Reelgood

GENRES THAT GAINED AND LOST THE MOST STREAMING SHARE

*based on a comparison of total movie and TV show streams initiated via Reelgood per genre for 7 weeks prior to the quarantine (Jan 26 - Mar 14) versus the following 7 weeks with most states under quarantine (Mar 15 - May 2) in the US



Source: Reelgood.com

APPENDIX B

Top 40 Animated Fantasy Series that my criteria were applied: most popular animated *fantasy* series, that are a) rated above 7 (out of 10), b) released in or after 2018, and that meet Lawrence Buell's (1995) four criteria to determine whether a text is environmental or not:

1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history [...]
2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest [...]
3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation [...]
4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text [...] (p. 7-8).

Position	Const	Created	Modified	Description	Title	URL	Title Type	IMDb Rating	Year	Genres	Num Votes	Release Date
1	t1695380	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		The Legend of Korra	https://www.imdb.com/title/t1695380/	tvSeries	8.4	2012	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	96696	2012-04-14
2	t0417299	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Avatar: The Last Airbender	https://www.imdb.com/title/t0417299/	tvSeries	9.2	2005	Animation, Action, Adventure, Family, Fantasy, Mystery	231687	2005-02-21
3	t1760402	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Harley Quinn	https://www.imdb.com/title/t1760402/	tvSeries	8.5	2019	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Crime, Fantasy, Mystery	10351	2019-11-29
4	t0458290	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Star Wars: The Clone Wars	https://www.imdb.com/title/t0458290/	tvSeries	8.2	2008	Animation, Action, Adventure, Drama, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	54362	2008-08-15
5	t18050756	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		The Owl House	https://www.imdb.com/title/t18050756/	tvSeries	7.6	2020	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery, Sci-Fi	1484	2020-01-10
6	t11865718	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Gravity Falls	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11865718/	tvSeries	8.9	2012	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery, Sci-Fi, Thriller	67534	2012-06-15
7	t17736558	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Wizards	https://www.imdb.com/title/t17736558/	tvSeries	8.3	2020	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Fantasy	1194	2020-08-07
8	t18146754	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Infinity Train	https://www.imdb.com/title/t18146754/	tvSeries	8.4	2019	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Mystery, Sci-Fi	2634	2019-07-20
9	t11734135	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Trollhunters	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11734135/	tvSeries	8.5	2016	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy	12454	2016-12-23
10	t0561862	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Love, Death & Robots	https://www.imdb.com/title/t0561862/	tvSeries	8.5	2019	Animation, Short, Comedy, Fantasy, Horror, Sci-Fi	88768	2019-03-15
11	t2930604	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Star Wars: Rebels	https://www.imdb.com/title/t2930604/	tvSeries	8.0	2014	Animation, Action, Adventure, Family, Fantasy, Mystery, Sci-Fi	27041	2014-08-21
12	t11305826	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Adventure Time with Finn & Jake	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11305826/	tvSeries	8.6	2010	Animation, Short, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	73069	2010-04-05
13	t17745956	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	https://www.imdb.com/title/t17745956/	tvSeries	7.7	2018	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	8828	2018-11-13
14	t6517102	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Castlevania	https://www.imdb.com/title/t6517102/	tvSeries	8.2	2017	Animation, Action, Adventure, Fantasy, Horror	35301	2017-07-07
15	t8688814	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		The Dragon Prince	https://www.imdb.com/title/t8688814/	tvSeries	8.4	2018	Animation, Adventure, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Thriller	14859	2018-09-14
16	t0278238	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Samurai Jack	https://www.imdb.com/title/t0278238/	tvSeries	8.5	2001	Animation, Action, Adventure, Drama, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Thriller	44163	2001-08-10
17	t3061046	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Steven Universe	https://www.imdb.com/title/t3061046/	tvSeries	8.2	2013	Animation, Short, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Musical, Mystery, Sci-Fi	24553	2013-07-27
18	t5531466	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		DuckTales	https://www.imdb.com/title/t5531466/	tvSeries	8.2	2017	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy, Mystery, Sci-Fi	5589	2017-08-12
19	t17736544	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		S&W: Tales of Arcadia	https://www.imdb.com/title/t17736544/	tvSeries	7.8	2018	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	3755	2018-12-21
20	t11666278	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Thundercats	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11666278/	tvSeries	7.8	2011	Animation, Action, Adventure, Family, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	6238	2011-07-29
21	t0317068	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Final Space	https://www.imdb.com/title/t0317068/	tvSeries	8.3	2018	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	32817	2018-02-26
22	t5363918	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Disenchantment	https://www.imdb.com/title/t5363918/	tvSeries	7.2	2018	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Fantasy	41281	2018-08-17
23	t11103414	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		The Midnight Gospel	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11103414/	tvSeries	8.3	2020	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	9536	2020-04-20
24	t11710308	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Regular Show	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11710308/	tvSeries	8.4	2009	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	28440	2009-08-14
25	t8050740	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Amphibia	https://www.imdb.com/title/t8050740/	tvSeries	7.8	2019	Animation, Short, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy	1295	2019-08-14
26	t11942683	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		The Amazing World of Gumball	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11942683/	tvSeries	8.2	2011	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy	19967	2011-05-02
27	t6994156	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Close Enough	https://www.imdb.com/title/t6994156/	tvSeries	8.0	2020	Animation, Comedy, Drama, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	1267	2020-06-15
28	t8101850	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Undone	https://www.imdb.com/title/t8101850/	tvSeries	8.2	2019	Animation, Drama, Fantasy	11845	2019-09-13
29	t3718778	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Over the Garden Wall	https://www.imdb.com/title/t3718778/	tvMiniSeries	8.8	2014	Animation, Adventure, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery, Thriller	37180	2014-11-03
30	t11600055	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11600055/	tvSeries	8.0	2010	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Crime, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery	8444	2010-07-12
31	t11033208	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Primal	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11033208/	tvMiniSeries	8.7	2019	Animation, Action, Adventure, Drama, Fantasy, Horror	3907	2019-10-07
32	t4839610	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		We Bare Bears	https://www.imdb.com/title/t4839610/	tvSeries	7.9	2014	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy	10943	2014-11-21
33	t0235918	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		The Fairly OddParents	https://www.imdb.com/title/t0235918/	tvSeries	7.2	2001	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy	32565	2001-03-30
34	t11751105	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11751105/	tvSeries	7.6	2010	Animation, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Musical, Sci-Fi	18713	2010-10-10
35	t0275137	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Justice League	https://www.imdb.com/title/t0275137/	tvSeries	8.5	2001	Animation, Action, Adventure, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Mystery	38972	2001-11-17
36	t4902964	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Tangled: The Series	https://www.imdb.com/title/t4902964/	tvSeries	7.6	2017	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Family, Fantasy, Musical	1791	2017-03-24
37	t2758770	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Star vs. the Forces of Evil	https://www.imdb.com/title/t2758770/	tvSeries	8.0	2015	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Thriller	10096	2015-01-18
38	t5580664	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Voltron: Legendary Defender	https://www.imdb.com/title/t5580664/	tvSeries	8.1	2016	Animation, Action, Adventure, Comedy, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	7378	2016-06-10
39	t11482560	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	https://www.imdb.com/title/t11482560/	tvSeries	8.3	2020	Animation, Action, Adventure, Fantasy, Musical	2146	2020-01-14
40	t6025022	2020-09-07	2020-09-07		Justice League Unlimited	https://www.imdb.com/title/t6025022/	tvSeries	8.7	2004	Animation, Action, Adventure, Fantasy, Sci-Fi	9643	2004-07-31

APPENDIX C

Voice castings of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *Wizards*, *Disenchantment*, and *The Dragon Prince* non-white characters.

Green – voice actor's race/ethnic identity matches the character's race/ethnic identity

Red – voice actor's race/ethnic identity does not match the character's race/ethnic identity

She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	Wizards	Disenchantment	The Dragon Prince
Catra - AJ Michalka	Kipo - Karen Fukuhara	Claire - Lexi Medrano	Odval - Maurice LaMarche	Ezran - Sasha Rojen
Glimmer - Karen Fukuhara	Wolf- Sydney Mikayla		God - Phill LaMarr	Corvus - Omari Newton
Bow - Marcus Scibner	Benson - Coy Stewart			Harrow - Luc Roderique
Entrapta - Christine Woods	Lio Oak - Sterling K. Brown			Queen Neha - Patricia Isaac
Perfuma - Genesis Rodriguez	Song Oak - Jee Young Han			
Mermista - Vella Lovell	Troy - Giullian Yao Gioiello			
Lonnie - Dana Davis	Asher - Rhea Butcher			
Frosta - Merit Leighton	Dahlia - Fryda Wolff			
Micah - Daniel Dae Kim				
Netossa - Krystal Joy Brown				
Castaspella - Sandra Oh				
Mara - Zehra.Fazal				
George - Chris Jai Alex				
Lance - Regi Davis				

APPENDIX D

1) List of Theriomorphized Characters

Theriomorphized Characters	Male	Female	Nonbinary/Unknown
Angella, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Catra, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Double Trouble, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power			x
Elberon Mayor, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Flutterina, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Horned Goon Girl, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Huntara, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Jewelstar, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	x (transgender)		
Light Hope, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Mermista, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Mushroom Man, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	x		
Norwyn, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	x		
Scorpia, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Shadow Weaver, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power		x	
Lord Hordak, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	x		
Horde Prime, She-Ra and the Princesses of Power	x		
Jim, Wizards	x		
Nari, Wizards		x	
Aaravos, The Dragon Prince	x		
Aditi, The Dragon Prince		x	
Ethari, The Dragon Prince	x		
Ibis, The Dragon Prince	x		
Janai, The Dragon Prince		x	
Khessa, The Dragon Prince		x	
Lujanne, The Dragon Prince		x	
Nyx, The Dragon Prince		x	
Rayla, The Dragon Prince		x	
Runaan, The Dragon Prince	x		
Tiadrin, The Dragon Prince		x	
Lain, The Dragon Prince	x		
Prince Derek, Disenchantment	x		
King of Dankmire, Disenchantment	x		
Lady in the Lake, Disenchantment		x	
Mermaid Queen, Disenchantment		x	
Mora, Disenchantment		x	
Oona, Disenchantment		x	
Queen of Dankmire, Disenchantment		x	
Sagatha, Disenchantment		x	
Shelly, Disenchantment		x	
Tess, Disenchantment		x	
Ursula, Disenchantment		x	
	13	27	1

2) List of Anthropomorphized Characters

Anthropomorphized Characters	Male	Female	Nonbinary/Unknown
Cobalt, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Four Armed Lizard Grill, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>		X	
glory, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>			x
Grizzlor, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Imp, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Leech, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Melog, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>			x
Octavia, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>		x	
Rogelio, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Snake Men, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Swift Wind, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Tung Lashor, <i>She-Ra and the Princesses of Power</i>	x		
Aaaaaaargh , Wizards	x		
Angor Rot, Wizards	x		
Badqwella, Wizards		x	
Blinky, Wizards	x		
Bellroc, Wizards			x
Bular, Wizards	x		
Charlemagne, Wizards	x		
Galadrigal, Wizards	x		
Draal, Wizards	x		
Gatto, Wizards	x		
Gunmar, Wizards	x		
Skrael, Wizards			x
Avizandum(Thunder), Dragon Prince	x		
Zym, Dragon Prince	x		
Balt, Dragon Prince	x		
Ava, Dragon Prince		x	
Phoe-Phoe, Dragon Prince		X	
Pip, Dragon Prince	x		
Pyrrah, Dragon Prince		x	
Rex Igenoud, Dragon Prince	x		
Sol Regem, Dragon Prince	x		
Zubela, Dragon Prince		x	
Alpha Dad, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Alpha mom, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Amy, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Bad Billions, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Boom-Boom, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Brad, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Camille, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Cappucino, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Carton, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Charles, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Cotton, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Dave, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Dusty, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts			x
Easy, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Fun Gus, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Geli, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Gerard, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Good Billions, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Harriet, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts			x
Harris, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Hugo Oak (Scarlemagne), Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Jamack, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Jeanine, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Jibraitla, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Kameko, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Kwat, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Label, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Lemieux, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Loretta, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Mandu, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Margot, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Megan, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Molly, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Mrs. Sartori, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Pierre, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Porcelain, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Puck, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Ruffles, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Rupert, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Rusted Can, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Shoelace, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Tad Multholland, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Tongue Depressor, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Wheels, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts		x	
Yumyan, Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts	x		
Asmodium, Disenchantment	x		
Bloaty, Disenchantment			x
Elfo, Disenchantment	x		
Elastico, Disenchantment	x		
Exemplo, Disenchantment			x
Griffin, Disenchantment		x	
Kissy, Disenchantment		x	
Laughing Horse, Disenchantment			x
Leavo, Disenchantment	x		
Luci, Disenchantment	x		
Pops, Disenchantment	x		
Merkimer, Disenchantment	x		
Racist Antelop, Disenchantment	x		
Shocko, Disenchantment	x		
Shrimpo, Disenchantment	x		
Singo, Disenchantment	x		
Slapo, Disenchantment	x		
Speako, Disenchantment	x		
Superviso, Disenchantment	x		
Trixy, Disenchantment		x	
Watcho, Disenchantment	x		
Weirdo, Disenchantment	x		
,	x		
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