What Constitutes "Accurate" Costuming Within Fantasy Films

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Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the BA (Honours) Design for Film. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

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Abstract

The term of "historical accuracy" is straightforward, setting its constraints onto films set in the past. But what does accuracy mean when designing for films within the genre of Fantasy? This thesis discusses the fine line walked by designers, between an accurate reflection of the world their costumes live in, and the freedom to let their imaginations depict the storytelling. Although "fantasy" implies the idea of a world free of constrictions, I believe that in order to achieve a believable production, some constrictions should be set. Although the fantastical world one is designing for, might not follow the same rules that our own follows, it follows it's own rules. Clothing, being a constantly evolving aspect of culture, should be a part of the worldbuilding- not work against it. In order to discuss this topic, I analyse the costumes of a few characters from Netflix's *The Witcher* (2019), as well as HBO's *Game of Thrones* (2011). By taking a closer look at both productions one after the other, as well as certain costumes within the same series, it becomes evident which designs were created with misdirected focus, and which designs were meant to aid in the storytelling of the film.

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Introduction

The phrase I've heard over and over again as a design student is "it's a fantasy story, you can have fun with it and do whatever you want". The notion comes from many places: "It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it" said Laura Mulvey (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 1975) a filmmaker and theorist, most known for her notion of "the male gaze". The idea behind it is that, since it's set in a world unlike ours, where magic and completely different rules exist, it may look any certain way, with no limit to one's imagination. However, most fantasy stories end up drawing inspiration from history. Why is that? Since it's fantastical, and one can make up whatever they want, why not come up with something completely new? When thinking of a world unlike the one we're familiar with, history is the reference we naturally fall upon. When trying to build a believable world, we draw inspiration from places, that already have the "worldbuilding" aspect imbedded within them.

Chapter 1: The first chapter starts off with the context of what costumes actually are- clothes. From the way they were worn before the common era, to the way they look now, clothing follows a natural evolution, in stride with history and culture. This same rule applies to costume design. Just as the clothing of the people around us reflects their personalities, environment and 'story", the clothing worn by characters depicts their narratives and where they came from, and in order to understand how to get there, one needs an understanding of the world around them. Throughout the chapter, I discuss the methods of designing described by Richard La Motte in his book *Costume Design 101* (2001).

Chapter 2: In the latter chapters, I look into characters from two different high fantasy TV series: *The Witcher* (Lauren Schmidt Hissrich, 2019) and *Game of Thrones* (David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, 2011). Chapter two discusses the differences in inspirations for characters in three different settings. Within the analysis I investigate and compare the costume design between two cities from the world of the series: Cintra (one of the Capitals of the Continent) and Blaviken (A fishing town to the North of Cintra). The costume Designer for TV Series, Tim Aslam, discusses the influences of his designs for the two cities. Although placed at the same coastline, within the same continent, the two clothing of the two cities looks incredibly different. Further in the chapter, I look into the magical institution of Aretuza, and analyse the fashion within its halls. Being a home to sorcerers from different places countries around the continent, by looking at the designs from Aretuza, the audience could expect to learn of what the different cultures of the Witcher look like. Instead, the scenes within the institution show the viewer a medley of unrelated and individually designed characters, with no insight into the world of the story.

Chapter 3: In this chapter, I discuss another TV series, *Game of Thrones* (David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, 2011). Particularly, three characters representing the same social class, but originating from different places. By looking at the highest female members of the House of Stark (Catelyn Stark), and House Lannister (Cersei Lannister), I am able to compare the fashions of the North and South respectively, showing the subtle and natural progression of the costume design within the series, and the use of it in adding credibility to the structure of the fantasy world. Furthermore, the third character I discuss is Sansa Stark, the eldest daughter of the Stark Family. Due to her travels from the North to the South, the changes seen in her costumes, show

another aspect of costume design, which is using it as a tool for the progression of story and narrative.

Chapter 1

Design in Context

1.1 The Origin of Fantasy

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary (Douglas Harper, 2020), the word "fantasy" comes from the Old French "fantaisie", meaning "illusory appearance", as well as the Latin phrase "phantasia" meaning the "power of imagination". Both are quite fitting explanations, and help understand what the genre is and where it has come from.

Since the beginning of time, Modern Humans Emerge ($\sim T = 13.8$ billion years): December 31st, 23:59:59 (*The First Three Minutes*, Steven Weinberg, 1977), stories of mythical creatures and magical occurrences have circulated societies. Before the scientific understanding of things, people rationalised different events by assigning them explanations that they could accept. Whether it be the belief that a thunderous storm was sent by Zeus to demonstrate his wrath and power (ancient Greek mythology, the Olympian gods), or the blood curdling screams in the middle of the night (which is the sounds that the common red fox makes), explained by the Banshee haunting Irish citizens (Legend of the Banshee, in Irish folklore). Naturally as years went by, and people continuously gained a better understanding of the physical world, those beliefs retired into myths, and were recognised to be matters of fiction.

Although the need for the rationalisations myths brought has declined, as technology progressed, the need for escapism that they brought remained (Fantasy and the

Cinema, James Donald). Although society now knew why they might hear an odd noise at night, the stories were passed on through generations and often used as stories for children, which instilled a subconscious belief of the phenomenon in each society. Through that, Fantasy emerged as a genre of stories. Rooted within the beginning of storytelling, but created from new ideas and worlds, stories of new creatures, strange worlds and magic existing in them gained popularity and slowly became what we now know as the genre. This is the main difference between myths and Fantasy. Even though both share similar creatures and accept magic as fact within the stories, myths are something that is believed. In Fantasy, both the author and the audience are aware that the stories are fictional.

Throughout the years, as more Fantasy worlds (within literature and film) were created, the genre expanded in many different directions. Some stories focusing on finding magic and adventure on Earth, and some inventing new worlds entirely. With that, there is an ongoing debate on the subgenres of fantasy. Many different sources and fantasy enthusiasts published their own views on how to divide different Fantasy stories into categories.

 One example would be "Masterclass" publishing a list of 13 subgenres, and different writers such as Philip Athans in his "Fantasy Handbook" blog, questioning it and sharing his own views on it. Most sources however agree on a few basic principles. I concluded that the two main groups most sources agree on are the high or epic category, where the story is fully submerged in a magical land, with different magical creatures and rules from its own world (The Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien), and the low fantasy category, where magical events happening are accepted in our

world, for example someone being born with magical powers in a realistic world, or creatures coming to life in our world (The Spiderwick Chronicles by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black).

1.2 The Roots of Clothing

A huge portion of fantasy stories evoke a historic feeling in them. Although there is no specific rule to this, when one thinks of fantasy stories, what usually comes to mind is mediaeval imagery. Stories inspired by legends of knights, saving damsels in distress, royal dilemmas and slaying dragons, are what usually comes to mind when one thinks of a classic fantastical tale. These stories are inspired by legends, most of which originated in the Middle Ages.

One relevant example of that could be the mythology of King Arthur. The story originated in England around the 11th century, however it has stayed relevant for all this time and is still being retold/remade and produced in many different ways. The legend of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table, continues to live on as one of the greatest legends of all time, and serves as an example of a fantasy story that is inspired by the period it is set in.

An example of a Fantasy novel fitting into the same category could be Eragon, a Young Adult series written by Christopher Paolini, telling the story of a young boy and his Dragon. In the story, the hero uses magical powers obtained and the art of swordsmanship learnt throughout his journey. With the level of technologies presented in the series, the types of weapons used, as well as the clothing described, the novels represent the "mediaeval" world

In order to answer a question of what kind of clothes a character should wear, we should first understand where clothing come from, as well as why it looks the way it

looks now. If we break down the way we look, and the reasons behind why we dress the way we do, one will find out that there is a whole history of the way clothing evolved into what it is now. When we first evolved into humans and had very little available tools, the biggest concern was staying warm or protecting your skin from the dangers of the day. People did that by using animal skins, and tying them in the easiest possible ways that didn't require sophisticated tools or technology. As the years progressed and humans came up with more tools, technology progressed and the clothing progressed with it. Once we learned how to extract dyes from different plants, we were able to dye the fibres different colours. When the loom was invented, instead of just wearing animal skins, we were able to create textiles and make them much more versatile in the way we wanted to wear them.

Fig. 1: Cave Paintings at Munurru, Kimberley, Western Australia, showing people and their clothing.

Farmers in northern areas of the country couldn't rely on plants, due to the colder climate, therefore they relied on wool and different products that the animals that they kept could provide for them. This can be seen in the culture behind the Aran knits of Ireland and their huge popularity over time due to the availability of those materials. On the contrary, in the southern areas and countries of the world, people found a way to use the different plants available to make fabrics out of them. The biggest importance was to create something light and airy that was breathable to help with the temperature control and sweat, but also to protect one's skin from the sun. With the wider availability of plants and resources different materials came to be. People started using cotton, linens and creating fabric in accordance to their needs.

This goes for the entirety of our history. At first clothes were created in response to the needs of the people. However, later as our primary needs were met, society evolved. The needs of society made the process of dressing more complicated. Rank and hierarchy became key factors in how one was expected to dress themselves. If a certain colour was particularly hard to obtain in a part of history, having garments dyed in this colour was another way to signify status. This can be seen in the prevalent presence of the colour purple within the royal Houses of Europe. Purple dye was incredibly hard to obtain from natural resources within history. The way that we achieved a purple colourant was by extracting the liquid from species of sea snails, especially the *Murex brandaris* and *Purpura haemostoma*. It took a huge amount of snails to produce a small amount of the dye, about 12,000 mollusks, to make about 1 gram of the colour (Tyrian *Purple - The Origins of Color - The University of Chicago Library)*. Therefore, the colour purple was a huge signifier of status. In some moments in history, it was only permitted to be used by the heads of state. These kinds of "rules"

apply, in all worlds, even those of Fantasy. Although the exact same resources might

not be found, the idea remains throughout all different stories.

Fig. 2: 6th century mosaic of Byzantine emperor Justinian

Fig. 3: Gertrude from *Ophelia* (2019), wearing a Tyrian Purple coloured dress

Then how should a designer approach this topic? How does one design for Fantasy, in order to make the world believable, but also be creative? In his book *Costume Design 101,* Richard La Motte talks about the three approaches to costume design. He breaks it down as the "documentary", "Kabuki" and "the middle way" (which combines the previous two) methods. I believe that the different methods he discusses explain exactly the themes mentioned within this thesis. The documentary approach can be applied in works rooted in fact. He describes it as a method where "you find out what was worn and reproduce it" (2001, pg. 47).This way of designing works for pieces of nonfiction, for period dramas and for works in which the story relies on the costumes being accurate- like a documentary.

The idea of the Kabuki method however, shows a great template for designing in a more free, less rigid world. La Motte describes the method as far more exciting, however risky, saying that "if done wrong it can be a disaster" (2001, pg. 47). Although on one hand he says that the theory behind the method is that if "you are doing something which never existed before anyway, why attempt to be literal?", he also says something true to the opposite. Later in the same paragraph the author explains "In other words, create your own reality - and if it's true to the drama, no one will question its correctness." (2001, pg. 47). He later finishes by saying the same applies to specific characters within the production.

The Kabuki method is a perfect example of a way to design for Fantasy productions. As La Motte explains, one does not have to be literal to anything within our world when designing a new reality. However, once you create your reality, you should stay true to it. Although within the world of the production, hard to obtain sea molluscs

might not exist to create an expensive dye, maybe there is a certain species of rare flowers that is used to make a highly coveted fabric? Although the rules of our world may not apply, the rules of the reality one is designing for do, and if one strays from those "rules", the audience will question its correctness.

With that, I will discuss examples of universes being brought to life with amazing costuming, and ones that were completely unbelievable. For this purpose I decided to look at two shows that appear to be set in a similar time and setting, while also belonging within the same subgenre of fantasy: *The Witcher* (2019, created by Lauren Schmidt Hissrich) and *Game of Thrones* (2011, created by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss). Both TV series would belong to the High Fantasy genre, where both productions are set within different worlds, where magic, monsters and different creatures are present and live amongst the humans.

Chapter 2

The Witcher

2.1 Designing For The Production

The Witcher is a TV Series produced by Netflix, adapted from Andrzej Sapkowski's book series called "Wiedźmin". Within the books, the author created a world referred to as "the Continent", where Elves led their lives in peace amongst magic and where, after an event called the "Conjunction of the Spheres", humans along with monsters came to settle. The story follows a Witcher, named Geralt of Rivia, as he tries to stay far away from the political conflicts between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, as well as the ongoing conflict between the elves and the humans. Due to the nature of the stories he finds himself in, the series presents a wide array of scenery and environments. Although in some he is travelling between forests and villages, in order to help with the monsters within poorer areas of the Kingdoms, in others he is forced to take part in the politics of different courts. Within those stories, the action takes place in different castles all showing the different nature of different Kingdoms, while also showing the Schools of Magic, where Mages and Sorcerers are trained to consult the most powerful heads of the Continent. Knowing the different settings of the TV series, the costumes were made to work and fit within the world they were created for. Moreover the costumes were designed to not only reflect the environments but also the journeys the characters were going through.

The costume designer for the first season of *The Witcher* (Tim Aslam) speaks on the subject in an interview with the Turkish magazine *Episode* (Yakup Can Yargıç, 2019)

while discussing the evolution of the costumes for the main characters. When describing the journey of one of the main characters, a sorceress by the name of Yennefer of Vengerberg, he says: "She doesn't know exactly what she is, what powers she has. She's a character that's even been ostracized by her own family. So we designed her clothes to be that of a poor farmer; dirty, neglected and disheveled. Yennefer then develops over time in Aretuza. She reinforces her abilities and gains self-confidence. Ultimately, when she becomes a powerful character as we know it, her clothes reflect this. She wears brave clothes, a reflection of her newly discovered self-esteem."

With that being said, the costumes of characters, just like Yennefer's, reflected their journey throughout the stories they've been through. However, the problem with the series costuming arises when looking at the bigger picture. When designing for a production, whether it's Fantasy or any other genre, one should not only focus on individual aspects of the production, but also the logical progression of how clothing would have developed within the world it exists in.
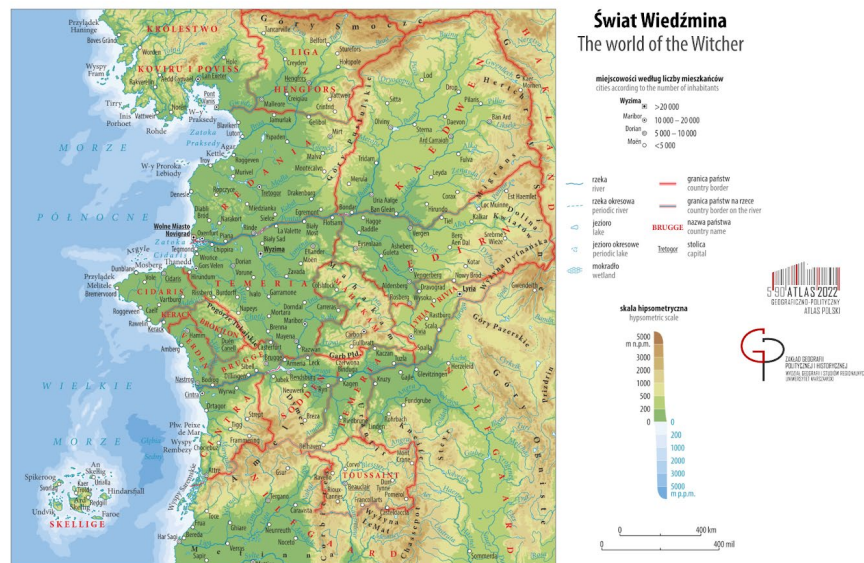
Fig. 4: Map of the Witcher Continent, made by the students of the University of Warsaw (Geograficzno-polityczny atlas Polski, 2022).

The costume designer talks about the inspiration behind the different characters, different groups and different cities, but fails to acknowledge the logic behind those choices. For example, in the same interview with the Episode magazine, Tim Aslam talks about the references used for his designs of two separate cities Cintra and Blaviken. He says that in order to distinguish different groups of people, he tried to incorporate common design elements foreach group, however, contradicts himself in the next sentence by giving an example of the two towns: "For example, Cintra, inspired by the 1930s Film Noir and gothic sentiment. Blaviken blends oriental fishing towns and Japanese high fashion." Within this example, what he says distinguishes the two cities is two completely different approaches, and inspirations taken from completely opposing times and cultures- not simply "common" design elements.

Fig. 5: Scene of a courtyard in Cintra (The Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 6: Scene of a street in Blaviken (The Witcher, 2019).

The Britannica Encyclopedia, defines "Film Noir" as: "a style of filmmaking characterized by such elements as cynical heroes, stark lighting effects, frequent use of flashbacks, intricate plots, and an underlying existentialist philosophy." It later

continues that the genre was "prevalent mostly in American crime dramas of the post-World War II era", which would mark its popularity in the latter half of the 1940s.

On the other hand, the audience is faced with the reference to the "oriental fishing towns" and "Japanese high fashion". While the term of the "orient" usually refers to Asian cultures, Tim Aslam specifies his inspiration by the later reference to contemporary designers of Japan.

2.2 The Case Study of Cintra and Blaviken

To apply context to Tim Aslam's task of designing for the two locations, I want to discuss their backgrounds. The city of Cintra is the capital of the country of the same name. Although it belongs to the Northern Kingdoms, it is the last Kingdom on the border between the north and the south. The country is on the very West part of the Kingdom which gives it access to the Great Sea. The sea access is one of the major reasons for the alliance between Cintra and Skellige, which is a Kingdom comprising of Islands within the Great Sea, and next to the border of Cintra. The alliance was further solidified after the marriage of Cintra's ruler (Queen Calanthe) to Eist Tuirseach, who was the Jarl of Skellige and the next in succession to its crown.

Blaviken on the other hand, is a town within the Kingdom of Redania, with a smaller population than Cintra, but along with it, it is the main setting of the first episode of the Netflix series. Just like Cintra, it is placed on the coastline of the Continent, and therefore has access to the Northern Sea from its western border. Although it is not at the centre of the plot for most of the series (whereas Cintra is), it plays a crucial role within the production, as it is the first location within the world of *the Witcher* that the audience is introduced to.

Blaviken is a fishing town, with quite a developed infrastructure and local government. With a population of less than 5,000 people (according to the official map of the World of the Witcher, University of Warsaw), we know it has a Mayor and his Grand house within the city square, as well as its own Wizard (Stregobor, known by the citizens of the city as Irion), and his Tower.

As Tim Aslam said within the interview, the influence of the 1930's comes through within the visual representation of the Cintran royal family.

Fig. 7: Scene of the Cintran Royal Family (The Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 8: Ciri's velvet grey dress, exhibited in Lucca, Italy (Lucca Comics and Games, 2019).

As seen in on the page above, elements of the 20th century have been represented within the costume in it's column silhouette, monotone colours, as well the boat neckline and puffy sleeves.

Fig. 9: Pavetta's green dress, exhibited in Lucca, Italy (Lucca Comics and Games, 2019), next to the dress seen on the screen (The Witcher, 2019)

The same silhouette applies to Pavetta, another member of the Cintran royal Family. Although more intricate than Ciri's dress, the general shape evident of the 1930's remains in her design. It replaces the muted colour with the bright green, however it adds the waist seam, indicative of the dresses of the era.

Fig. 10: Close-up of Marilka's shirt in Blaviken (The Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 11: The back of Marilka's shirt in Blaviken (The Witcher, 2019).

The character of Marilka (as seen above) is the only character from Blaviken, that is focused on within the show. Throughout the episode, the audience sees her character wear two different garments.

The first one is the muted blue blouse and flowy brown skirt. Although quite an original design, without a clear instinctual reference to a period or location, the Japanese influence does show through within the length and neckline of the costume. Reminiscent of the Kimono necklines, Marilka's collar wraps around her neck and goes down into a "V" shape, possibly referencing the traditional piece of clothing.

Fig. 12: Shot of the residents of Blaviken (The Witcher, 2019).

Her second costume, relates more to the "fishing town" inspirations Aslam talked about. Continuing with the neutral palette of the town, the designer replaced her intricate blouse with a sweater, possibly as a reference to fishing nets, or as to what sailor wear during cold, damp weather.. Just like the other residents of Blaviken

(standing behind Marilka), the silhouette of their costumes are relatable to on of a fishermen, the coats specifically resembling water resistant coats of the modern times.

Although the two cities are placed within different countries and are of different economical standings (a capital of a country in comparison to a fishing town), they are both placed along the same coastline. Both of the towns live within the same climates, which is described as quite moderate (Redania being described as the granary of the Continent and Cintra being independent). Moreover, the audience has a view of the two towns during the same historical period (The Butchering of Blaviken having taken place around the same time as Pavetta's wedding).

Taking all of the context into account, there is no reason why the costuming for the two cities should be so unfamiliar with one another. The reference of Gothic and 1930s film noir, has an extremely stylized visual connotation to it. With the use of darker, more muted colours, the clothing of that style gives off a mature, and distinguished air to it. Another aspect to consider is the iconic silhouette of the period. With the rise of cinema in the 1930s, as well as it being a known and studied era due to its rough political climate, the shape of the costumes worn at the time became highly recognizable. What isn't recognizable however, is any resemblance between the inspiration of the western idea of 1930s clothing, and traditional, oriental Japanese fashion. With Film Noir being a Western movement, and Japan being a country in the far East, both represent the opposites on the spectrum of design influences.

2.3. The case study of Aretuza

Aretuza is one of the two known schools of magic within the world of The Witcher franchise. Along with Ban Ard, Aretuza is the school located on the island of Thaned, in the kingdom of Temeria. It is known for its exemplary education of female mages, and training them as advisors to the rulers of the Northern Kingdoms. Although placed within Temeria, the school is isolated within the island, and therefore presents its own case study of costuming. For most of the early scenes within the halls of Aretuza (episode 2, season 1), the costumes present are mostly the uniforms worn by the initiates, as well as the costumes of the rectoress Tissaia De Vries. Aslam comments on the uniforms when describing the transformation of one of the characters: "For example, Yennefer starts her journey at a lower position, realizes her power and gains confidence. In the case of Yennefer, we initially prepared her clothes based on the model of the farmers / peasants. Then we turned the costume into an Aretuza uniform. Then, after fully fulfilling her potential, her clothes became more courageous, strong and flashy in accordance with her new physical structure."

Fig. 13: Shot of one of the Aretuzan initiates wearing the school's uniform (The

Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 14: Shot of one of the Aretuzan initiates wearing the school's uniform, showing

the different neckline (The Witcher, 2019).

The Aretuzan uniform consists of what seems to be a chemise as the base layer, with a simple teal frock on top of it. The chemise has a smocking-like detail along its neckline, that changes from one student to another. The teal dress on top, mirrors the neckline of the chemise with an even lower one, allowing the detail of the chemise to show through. The dress, apart from its colour, has a few pin tucks on its short sleeves, as well as seam detailing along the entire length on both sides of the body. Although the general shape of the uniform, as well as the lack of a defined waist, may be a reference to 13th century tunics, the uniform doesn't seem to be specifically rooted within any particular time period.

What is interesting about the design of Aretuzan costumes, is the wide array of styles we see within its walls. The audience is introduced to the establishment in just the second instalment of the first season, however it plays a crucial part in both of the latter seasons, being one of the most re-visited locations within the series. Due to its political importance within the world of *the Witcher*, educating the future political advisors of the kingdoms, it is also home to different conclaves and meetings of Mages, who hold various positions of power across the entire Continent.

These scenes show us the inconsistencies within the fashions of this World, and show the designers focus on their views on the individual characters, rather than storytelling.

Tissaia:

The first character I would like to focus on is Tissaia de Vries. Being the rectoress of Aretuza, and an important figure within the circle of mages, Tissaia's costuming stands out in front of the other Mages. Most costumes in which she appears on screen appear to be heavily influenced by the fashions of the Victorian era. Consisting of high collars, structured bodices, and darker jewel tones, the inspiration behind the demanding character of this educator are incredibly clear.

Fig. 15: Side view of Tissaia in a Victorian inspired costume (The Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 16: A photograph of a Victorian Dress, displayed at the Costume Institute of the

Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 17: Front view of Tissaia in a Victorian inspired costume (The Witcher, 2019).

One author of historically influenced novels (Natania Barron) gives her opinions on the costuming of the characters in an article published on her website. She says: "Tissaia, Rectoress of Aretuza, is on another plane of fashion, as she's solidly in the Victorian period. All those angles, the sleeves, the collars and buttons." (Natania Barron, 2022). Although the comments within the article are complimentary of her costumes, the fact that Tissaia appears to be on "another plane of fashion" is a problem when talking about designing costumes for cohesive storytelling. Especially when seeing her character appear next to the other mages, who's costumes are influenced by other moments and places in time, the Victorian dresses applied to her seem entirely out of place.

Tris:

Tris Merigold is another one of the mages, as well as an Aretuzan alumni. Although her character is introduced within the first season of the series, the audience gets to see much more of her character throughout the latter seasons. Tris's costumes could be defined by a mediaeval silhouette with natural influences, reflecting her character being in tune with the natural world.

Within the costume design for Tris Merigold, one can recognize a few defining features of 13th century clothing. Starting with the drop waist of her dresses, reflecting the waists of the time, to their long sleeves. Another feature is the flowy and "drooping" nature of the fabrics chosen for her, highlighting the straight down

silhouette of the era. This style, although logical for the time period, is extremely stark

in contrast to any other character she is present in a scene with.

Fig. 18: Scene of Tris wearing a mediaeval inspired costume (The Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 19: An illustration of a mediaeval tunic dress (*Dictionnaire du Mobilier Francais*, 1901).

Moreover, when standing next to Tissaia's character, the two mages look as if they come from completely different worlds and timelines. As seen in moments of the second season of the series, the costuming of the two characters is a complete juxtaposition of one another. One wears loose and flowing tunics with nature motifs, while the other wears structured, geometrical and tightly fitted Victorian suit dresses.

(The Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 21: Shot from the back of Tissaia and Tris next to each other (The Witcher,

2019).

Other Influences:

As mentioned previously, Aretuza presents an interesting case study for the costume design, due to its depiction of many different characters from various backgrounds (both cultural and geographical). Nevertheless, what could have been used as an incredible opportunity to showcase the subtleties of the developing cultures, and how they are all interconnected through their fashions, as well as the differences in cuts, fabrics and layers, differing between the warmer and colder climates, as well as the richer and poorer countries, has been wasted by creating a series of individual characters, that belong only within their own, individual character sheets. Rather than using the international setting of Aretuza to give more credibility to the worldbuilding of the show, the series decided to abandon the storytelling aspect of costume design.

Examples of that are shown throughout the series, but are particularly evident in scenes like the ball of Aretuza. Still set within the 60s of the 13th century (of *the Witcher*'s timeline), more than a few separate time periods from the Earth's history appear to be represented within one scene. From Tissaia's Victorian ensemble, to Tris's mediaeval dress, as well as some references of the Tudor dynasty, the audience is shown plenty of other moments from the history of fashion.

Fig. 22: Shot of Djikstra wearing Tudor inspired jewellery (The Witcher, 2019).

Fig. 23: The of the ball at Aretuza, different sorcerers wearing modern evening

gowns and ensembles (The Witcher, 2019).

The examples above, show a few of the many instances where the costume design of the characters had no correlation between the timeline, region or culture portrayed in the scenes. The characters within the show, as well as the world in which they live in, suffers from the lack of continuity of their designs.

Chapter 3

Game of Thrones

3.1 The North

Game of Thrones is another TV Show adapted from a series of books. *The Song of Ice and Fire* book series, written by George R. R. Martin, is

As opposed to The Witcher the costume design of Game of thrones doesn't reference a specific time period for any of its kingdoms period. The world built seems to have its own culture and not one specific inspiration whether it be historical or cultural can be pinpointed within the costumes. On the contrary the costumes seem to be designed specifically for the climate and natural progression of the evolution of clothing within the placement of the clothes within the stories rather than be inspired by already existing styles and culture within our known world.

The Starks:

I am going to first focus on the costumes on the House of Stark. The Family is one of the nine major families of Westeros. They are known to rule over the North, and are regarded as fair and just rulers. In accordance with the motto of their House being "Winter Is Coming", one can imagine the general aspects of what their wardrobe consists of. Being a family living in Winterfell, a city far to the North, as well as referencing Winter whenever possible, the Starks clothing consists of layers of heavy

fabrics. From cloaks and furs, to wools, their costuming is consistent with their environment.

This shows from the very beginning, as in some of the first views of the Stark family together, the most noticeable aspect of the clothing is the weight of it.

Fig. 24: The Stark family standing together to welcome their guests (Game of Thrones, 2011).

Knowing the general fashion of the House of Stark, gives insight into what the rest of the North would be wearing as well. Michelle Clapton, the lead costume designer of the series, refers to the effect as the "trickle-down principle". When discussing her way of approach for the designs, she said: "The design of the nobles' clothes spirals outward; what they wear inspires the people around them, from the ladies-in-waiting to the household staff, on down to the peasants". This explanation represents the notion of clothing (and therefore costuming), working in an organic way with their

surroundings. In order to get a better understanding of some the costumes, I'm going to discuss the design for Lady Stark.

Catelyn Stark:

Catelyn Stark is the Lady of the House of Stark, making her the highest positioned woman withing the Northern regions of Westeros. Throughout the series, her clothing stays true to her character, just like she stays true to herself and her principles. The palette of her wardrobe consists of dark colours, from darker, muted blues and greys to black and brown attire. The Starks are left with a very muted colour palette, using either fabrics that are raw in their colour, or have a muted shade to them, establishing they were probably dyed by using the limited supplies available to them in the harsh climate.

Fig. 25: Catelyn Stark wearing an evening dress (Game of Thrones, 2011).

Along with the rest of her family, the fabrics used to create her costumes are different wools and furs, however on occasion her dresses appear to be embroidered, adding a sense of maturity and status to her garments.

3.2 The South

In contrast to the Starks, the Lannisters are a House of the South. Regarded as the richest of the houses, the Lannister's wardrobe reflects their funds, as well as their place of residence. Throghout the series, the family mostly resides within Kings Landing (the capital city of Westeros). I will be focusing on Cersei Lannister, as just like Catelyn Stark, she is the highest Lady of the House. Although married to the King of Westeros (Robert Baratheon), Cersei's wardrobe reflects that of her original family, symbolizing where her loyalty truly lied.

Cersei Lannister:

As opposed to the Northern clothing, the Southern clothing of the Lannisters showcases opulence over practicality. In comparison to the Stark family, which although wealthy, dresses to stay warm and comfortable within their home, every aspect of the Lannisters wardrobe showcases their wealth and influence. Spanning through even the simplest of their costumes, it is clear that their main place of residence is in a place of influence- in this case the Capital of the country. An example of that is their colour palette. Although mostly associated with a vibrant red colour, Cersei is seen wearing different shades of red, blue and green. In order to achieve this range of colours, one has to have access to different dyes, which are usually unavailable in one spot alone. Therefore, the variety of her palette, signifies she has access to goods from places around the world, and lives in a place with well established trade routes.

Fig. 26: Cersei Lannister wearing a Southern court dress (Game of Thrones, 2011).

As seen in the image above, the wider access to a wide variety of dyes, fabrics and embellishments is evident through the costuming of the family, especially within the costumes of Cersei.

Another aspect communicating the wealth of Cersei and her family, is the cut of her costumes. The silhouette of the dresses she wears is very fitted to her body, with a very full skirt in the bottom. However, looking closely at the pattern of her dresses, it's evident that her dresses are constructed from long panels of fabric without any seams across the middle. The panels would be narrow at the top (around her chest) and

gradually get wider (starting at the hips) all the way to the bottom, creating the shape of the full skirt. This method of constructing garments, takes a lot more fabric than dresses made out of smaller panels, in turn making the dress much more expensive.

Fig. 27: Catelyn Stark and Cersei Lannister next to each other at the Winterfell Feast (Game of Thrones, 2011).

Overall, the show does an amazing job at showing the contrast between the two opposing families, in a subtle and unforced way, creating a very believable world and communicating the dynamic of the characters.\

3.3 Sansa Stark

Sansa Stark is the oldest daughter of the House of Stark, a family ruling over the entirety of the north. Being a part of her family, Sansa's costumes consist of wools and stay in the muted colour palette. However, what differentiates her from the res of her siblings, is her interest in her clothing as well as what was considered as "feminine" activities, such as sewing and embroidery. In the beginning of the series, Sansa mentions that she made the dress she is wearing, and what's most important, she is wearing said dress at a formal event. Therefore, if a Lady of Sansa's status makes her own dress, rather than buys it or has it made, the viewer can assume that it is common practice within the region and not just limited to poorer families. Following the earlier mentioned "trickle-down principle", Sansa's clothing communicates to the viewer that the Northerners made their own clothing with the things they had on hand.

Furthermore, the aspect of Sansa's character relevant to her costume design, is that although she is a Northerner, and the audience is introduced to her as such, she later travels with her father to King's Landing- the main environment of the Lannisters.

Fig. 28: Sansa Stark wearing a Northern day dress, made by her.

(Game of Thrones, 2011).

The influence of the large city is later reflected within Sansa's character. Being an impressionable young girl, suddenly thrown into the bustle of court, her wardrobe reflected that in a natural way. This shift is first seen with the change in the style of her hair. In the beginning, Sansa is seen with most of her hair down, and incorporating a few braids around her forehead. As the story progresses, and she travels to the South, she starts to wear her hair differently. Reflecting the environment around her, and

trying to fit in to the high society of the South, Sansa starts to put her hair up, in accordance with the trends of the surrounding environment.

Later on in the story, the change her character undergoes through shifts. As she matures and learns of the dangers of her environment, the things that she first used to "keep up" with the fashions, evolve into being her camouflage. A crucial moment within the first season of the series, that truly showcases the evolution of Sansa's character, is after her father's arrest. The scene in which Sansa goes to the King to plead for mercy for her father, is one of the first times the audience sees Sansa dressed fully in Southern fashion.

Fig. 29: Sansa Stark at court, wearing a Southern wrap dress and hairstyle (Game of Thrones, 2011).

Beginning at the very top of her costume, her hair is pinned up, with two rope braids falling onto her shoulders. The dress she is wearing, mimics the "wrap" style dresses seen on the Ladies of the court.

Her transition from the Northern environment and culture to the Southern style and trends, works well, as it happens over time. Just like a person moving from one country to another within the real world, the assimilation of cultures is a natural process, and a logical series of events.

Conclusion

Throughout my thesis, I discussed the many aspects that go into the process of designing costumes for the genre of fantasy. Starting with the origins of the genre itself, and how it became the way it is today. I explained where the idea of fantasy comes from, and its roots within mythologies around the world. Following the same route, I showed the evolution of clothing, and its natural progression within the timeline of our world. Starting at the tied animal skins, to the embroidered ball gowns of the past, to now clothing as we know it today. Moreover, I deliberated on the culture imbedded into clothing. This all ties in with the designing of costumes, as by looking at them, the audience is meant to understand the background and culture of the characters wearing them.

In later chapters, I analysed the costumes of two different productions The Witcher (2019), as well as Game of Thrones (2011). Although both are set in similar times and come from the same genre, the approach for designing the costumes could not have been more different. Throughout the chapters I discuss the individualistic way of designing used for the world of the Witcher. The costumes, although reflecting the progression of the individual characters' narrative, said nothing about the world around them and didn't relate to any culture or place.

On the other hand, the costume design for Game of Thrones, looked at the costumes as a part of the world. Just by looking at the different families within the Lands of Westeros, one could tell where they came from. From the fabrics used, to the colours and shapes, the costumes communicated their stories, rather than just being a visual

medium. The costumes of Game of Thrones were a part of that world, and gave credibility to it. Showing the hierarchy and politics of the families, showcasing the trade routes with neighbouring countries, making Westeros seem like a reality, that would be able to function in the real world, in a way, making the fantasy more real.

Throughout the writing process, I highly enjoyed the deep dives of the world of costuming, and analysing the little details hidden within the clothing. The process of understanding and the knowledge gained on how different cultures and environments coexist within the show, is also something I revel in.

What I wish I was able to expand on, was the cultural impact that the design of productions can have. From the visuals of the Witcher, the viewer would never know that the story was written by a Polish writer and is rooted in Slavic mythology and folklore. By choosing to design the costumes and world of the show the way it was, the culture of it is disregarded. I hope that in the future I get to analyse this part of costuming and look at the consequences "lazy" design can have on the audience watching its outcomes.

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