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DRAGONRIDERS
OF PERN
DRAGONFLIGHT



*Suppression to equality- Portrayal of the 'Other' in
Speculative Cinema*

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1.0 Abstract

In this thesis project, I investigate the link between costume design for fantasy film and gender. In it I assert that costume design can be deployed to develop a positive visual language for female film characters and thereby enable agency and autonomy with regard to their clothing and bodies. The recent movements 'fourth wave feminism' and the online movement #MeToo (Helmore, 2019) provide a frame for the thesis discussion, and the case study film adaptation of Anne McCaffery's young adult science fiction/fantasy novel, *Dragonriders of Pern: Dragonflight* (1968). The adaptation, in particular, focuses on the costume change journey of the main protagonist Lessa and her transformation in status from suppression to equality.

In the film adaptation, costumes are posed as a storytelling device to reflect Pern's transitioning cultural hierarchy and shift from a feudal, patriarchal, society to a nation in which the social ethics of contemporary readers are more readily reflected. The *Dragonflight* film, and explanation of Lessa as a realistic, evolving, empowered female role model for contemporary audiences, is further underpinned by discussion regarding contemporary feminist issues surrounding women's equal rights. I argue that the adaptation of the original narrative for *Dragonriders of Pern: Dragonflight* (1968) is timely as although the text was progressive and even rebellious for the 1960s, it has remained a product of its time. I argue that attitudes towards female rights and sexual consent presented within this novel are outdated and require modifying to the standards of contemporary notions of equality.

I first examine contemporary entertainment media's portrayal of unhealthy gender stereotypes, gender/ race bias and continuous disproportionate roles for minorities and women, who, when rarely presented on-screen often lack diversity and authenticity, socially conditioning audiences' perceptions. This analysis is then applied to the shifts in navigation in Lessa's narrative journey, as depicted through the medium of costume design. I conclude that this visually demonstrates to a cinema audience Lessa's narrative arc from repressed and exploited serf to autonomous and empowered role model.

2.0 Acknowledgement

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4.0 Introduction

Being born and raised in a small, quiet town called Ryde on the Isle of Wight, England, I spent my childhood searching the green landscape for fairies and magical creatures. At the age of 13 my family began planning our emigration to New Zealand. Having never travelled to New Zealand and having little knowledge of this distant country, my mother sat my siblings and me down to watch *The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring* (2001) to introduce us to our future homeland. Fascinated and inspired by this film I pursued my passion for the fantasy genre and arts that consequently led me to a career at the internationally renowned studio Weta Workshop, where I have worked as a Junior Concept Designer since 2017.

In this thesis I aim to communicate through conceptual costume design a core message about the representation of the other in speculative film. This research is informed by a focus on clothing and fashion studies. I will engage with literature that critically reflects on clothing as a visual language of hierarchy, dominance, social and individual identity and identity symbolism (Crane, 2000). This will be used to analyse case studies of relatable science-fiction and fantasy (here after SFF) films; their use of costume as a storytelling device, and the sexualisation of characters through garment choice. The research will also look at issues arising from a lack of diversity, inclusion, and representation of the other within film. Further into this thesis my research inquiry will be summarised in the literature review, contextualising the components within my design process. Lastly my practical work focuses on the conceptual and technical design process of nine costume designs and two maquettes that communicate examples of empowerment and evolution symbolised through costume changes for hero character Lessa.

As the basis and design brief for my projects academic and practical investigations I have chosen to speculatively adapt *Dragonflight* as if it were to be produced as a contemporary feature film. The choice of the *Dragonflight* novel adaption was due to its popularity as a (SFF) series of its time, notably winning author Anne McCaffrey an array of awards (Kelly, 2019) including a spot in the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2006 (Kelly, 2019). McCaffrey became the first woman to win a Hugo Award for fiction writing (Kelly, 2019) and in 1968 at the World Science Fiction Convention won best novella for her short story *Weyr Search* which was later incorporated into *Dragonflight* (Kelly, 2019). *Dragonflight* is a uniquely female story of empowerment and overcoming adversity and domestic abuse within a usually male-dominated genre. McCaffrey (1988) states in an interview on women writers, "Science fiction in the 30's, 40's and 50's was 'pulp', it was written for the emerging adolescent boy" (Fullerton-Smith, 1988). As a female consumer of Science fiction media, I find, like McCaffrey, that it is challenging to see myself within contemporary (SFF) narratives. She goes on to state "I criticised science fiction in the '50s because they weren't portraying women properly...I wouldn't of been there in the corner screaming" (Fullerton-Smith, 1988). McCaffrey understood these stereotypical portrayals of female characters as damsels in distress in SF writing were unrealistic. She continues in the interview commenting:

"There is not a *Cinderella* theme in Anne McCaffrey's books because Cinderella was a wimp...my major characters, women are strong people, in fact, they are victims that become survivors" (Fullerton-Smith, 1988).

McCaffrey concludes by stating her characters, for example Lessa, are surrounded by complex social systems that often place the character in untenable positions, but they evolve to change their circumstances and improve their quality of life (Fullerton-Smith, 1988).

The *Dragonriders of Pern* series consists of 23 novels and several short stories. Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. obtained the licensing rights of the film adaptations, believing it was a suitable franchise to replace the successful Harry Potter movies (Chitwood, 2014). In 2002 the *Dragonflight* script was placed on hold until the license expired. Several studios over the years have made attempts, but the script seems to be in 'development hell' (Chitwood, 2014).

My opinion is that *Dragonflight* has massive potential as a live-action film adaptation. Wish fulfilment of riding dragons, like knights in shining armour protecting the world from peril, is an intriguing narrative while underpinned with the fight for equality in a pseudo-medieval society. To be contemporary and successful the original narrative needs adapting due to the changes in sexual politics and content laws since the novel's release.

The first novel *Dragonflight* (1968) takes place in the far future on Pern, a planet colonized by humans. The narrative focuses on protagonist Lessa's struggle to gain equality as a female within Pern's regressive, feudal and patriarchal society, centuries after the devastation of Thread, an alien exo-virus like creature that consumes everything. Lessa moves up the hierarchy, by first bonding with the golden queen dragon and eventually fighting Threadfall in battle as an equal to her male counterparts. The novel begins with a recounting of the origins of human life on Pern, a planet in orbit in the fantasy Rukbat system. The colonists who travelled from Earth to Pern originally intended to gradually adopt a low-technology agrarian lifestyle but after 50 years of peace they encountered disease and finally the deadly Thread raining down from the nearby Red Planet whenever its orbit brings it close to Pern. The Thread is a thin silver non-sentient mycorrhizal spore which destroys any organic matter it comes in contact with. Pern's newly created society was powerless to protect themselves and was devastated by the Thread. The Thread won't consume metal, plastic or rock and is destroyed if brought into contact with water, cold or fire.

In her last moments Kitti Ping, an Earth born Chinese bio-geneticist genetically engineers some of the indigenous Pernese creatures into large powerful beings capable of breathing fire to combat the falling Thread she named them after the mythical earth dragon. Humans who had a high empathy rating and some innate telepathic ability were trained to use the Dragons to combat the thread through fire throwers, and teleportation. As a result of these events and needs, women were confined to subordinate, domestic and breeding roles in society to regenerate and negate the decline in population, thereby forced to give up their occupations for the survival of the human race. Pernese society regressed over subsequent generations going from a technologically advanced society reflective of contemporary Earth standards to a savage, medieval feudal society. New social dynamics evolved, based on gender role hierarchy. This resulted in brutality and conflict, enslavement, and institutionalized rape of the vulnerable or lower class - specifically women.

When we meet Lessa she is an orphan disguised as an old drudge seeking revenge on Fax, the man who murdered her family and took her future throne. F'lar goes on search to find a new WeyrWoman to impress with a newly laid golden dragon egg. The Golden Queen controls all the dragons. F'lar discovers Lessa and brings her back to Benden Weyr as a candidate to the queen. Lessa and The Queen bond and Lessa moves into the highest female rank on Pern.

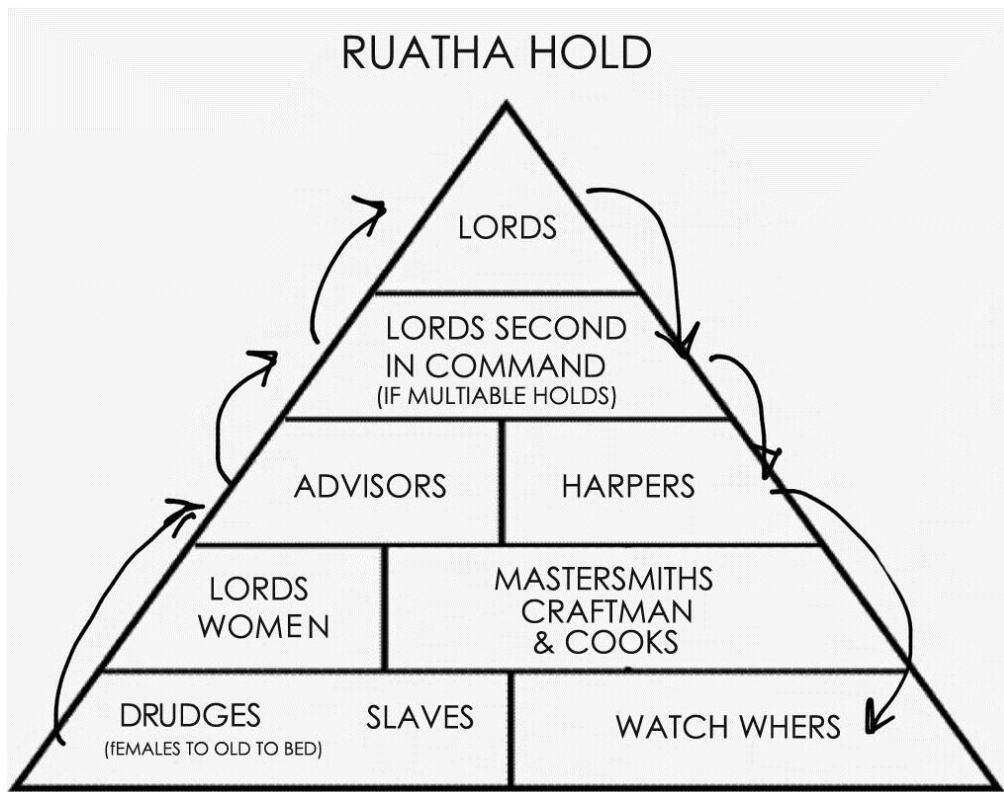


Fig 1: Ruatha (Lessa's home) feudal system based of McCaffrey's *Dragonriders* series. Artwork by Laura King

5.0 Literature review

5.1 Costume symbolism of hierarchy and dominance

5.1.1 Clothing and social identity

In contemporary society, garments are an important visual introduction to one's identity. It is human nature to 'judge a book by its cover' due to social cognition: the processing and applying of pre-existing social information (Cherry, 2019). An individual's garment embodies values and signifiers for a visual autobiography of our present lives (Crane, 2000). Cultural and political life is incorporated into clothing through fashion, which can contain political statements, represent the beautification of the body, and provide clues as to the wearer's values relating to modesty, social control, autonomy and conformity. Garments even create perceptions of the wearer's gendered characteristics. For example, masculinity aesthetically equates to strong shapes, while femininity equates to gentle feminine shapes (Crane, 2000). As Tarrant and Jolles state:

"[O]nce we're dressed, we carry with us into the day the sartorial significance of race, class, gender, sexuality - as well as issues of global politics, domination, imperialism, exploitation, and free will." (2012, p.2).

Judith Butler (1990), describes the visual language of garments and defines the difference between styling and self-styling thus; "styles have a history, and those histories condition and limit the possibilities." (Butler, 1990, p139). Self-styling resonates with previous periods and chosen fashion

trends are viewed as a form of personal expression and empowerment. This is in opposition to controlled styling which serves to repress identity.

Uniforms unify individuals within a group through controlled styling; for example, soldiers in the military or members of a sports team, but they can also serve as a means of control to the point of stripping the identity of the individual wearer. (Craik, 2005) Often dividing wears into normative gender roles, in specific careers such as the military uniforms are obligatory and regulated (Craik, 2005).

Diane Crane (2000) remarks that from modern to ancient times particular clothing choices by a wearer are made to convey immediate visual signals of ascribed or aspired social rank. She states:

“In previous centuries, clothing was the principal means for identifying oneself in public space. Depending on the period, various aspects of identity were expressed in clothing... including occupation, regional identity, gender, and social class.” (Crane, 2000, p. 2).

Crane also discusses the importance of cohesion between classes. In many societies, particularly western European societies, materials and colours were restricted beyond uniforms for social reasons. Sumptuary laws controlled class distinction in various countries, the social class had fixed rules on what materials and fabrics their garments could be manufactured from. (Crane, 2000).

My designs of Lessa's rise in hierarchy through the Pernese feudal system will be achieved through costume symbolising identity through shape, fabric and colour palette.

Lessa's lowest social status costume, the Drudge's costume (fig 32) colour palette will be natural tones dirty and stained, making a perfect disguise, as other drudges around her wouldn't be able to afford to replace their soiled clothing. Crane (2000) explains that the lower class during the Pre-industrial Revolution often only owned one item of clothing their whole life. In comparison, Lessa's high ranking First flight costume (fig 38) palette will be rich blues and purples. Reese states:

“[p]urple colour associated with...status and general elitism is the shell-based purple-dye of the ancient Mediterranean, known variously as Royal purple, Tyrian purple or Imperial purple” (1980, p.79).

She continues to indicate that throughout history, fashion has been used to control and manage desires and sexuality. Fashion, therefore, can be seen as a tool to debate political agendas of equal rights and break away from previous fashion stereotypes (Tarrant & Jolles, 2012) and may be used to represent gender empowerment as well as disempowerment. Butler, Crane and Heyes' discussions demonstrate that clothing within the film can communicate the identity of a low class, suppressed individual to a high class, superior character through costume design.

I will utilise Crane's theories to demonstrate contrasts between clothing within various differentiate classes and additionally provide visual information on how Lessa experiences Pernese life.

5.1.2 Women and the significance of trousers



Fig 2: Left: Greek alabastron, a pottery vessel circa 470 bc, depicts a female warrior wearing highly functional trousers. Twelfth-century scroll from the Song dynasty shows Chinese horsewomen riding alongside men. Statue in Maharashtra, India, features Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi going into battle against the British in 1857 with her sari tucked up for easier riding.

Ancient paintings and sculptures depict war scenes of both male and female warriors (fig 2) with both genders wearing trousered attire on horseback in many different cultures. The utilitarian comfort of trousers for long distance travel and as appropriate attire for warriors, such as the Scythians and Amazons, gave a strategic advantage compared to the Roman togas and European tunics in battle due to the clothing's functionality and mobility on horseback. (Mayor, 2014, p.28-29) According to the ancient Greeks Amazonian-like warrior women invented trousers which the Greeks frequently portrayed in classical art, especially on vase paintings. (Mayor, 2014, p.28) Lessa will need to adopt practical trouser riding gear to effectively ride her dragon for her last two costume changes. The connection to Lessa wearing trousers for riding a dragon to the war on Thread shifts her societal position from domestic duty to a role reminiscent of an Amazonian warrior.

If we look to later Christian sources we can also find useful imagery to mine for designs. The laws of Deuteronomy 22:5 section of the Bible contains a verse- "A woman must not wear men's clothing, and a man must not wear women's clothing, for whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD your God." (Harland, 1998, p.73) As a result, Christian women were for a long time prohibited from wearing any item of clothing or putting on any object which rightly belonged to a man. Other translations suggest that the verse concerns war and military service clothing, but this rhetoric has judged a woman's choice to wear trousers until very recently (Harland, 1998, p.73- 76). Masculine hunting conducted on horseback and military professionals influenced the decision for men to wear trousers for protection and comfort. In contrast women are left behind doing domesticated chores (Honan, 2017, p.75).

Fashion, as a mode capable of symbolising social resistance, saw the rise of trousers for women in English culture in the 1930s (Bill, 1993, p.45). Previous fashion statements like the 19th-century bloomers under dresses gave women more freedom of movement and began a gradual transition away from traditional restricting dress. However, as gendered social constructs earlier associated the trouser with masculinity and they were often viewed as an offensive transgression in women's fashion and unfeminine. Kathna (1993) states that nineteenth-century women who wore garments labelled exclusively for men transgressed from the traditional female role. Women's dress transformations within this period were largely due to the First World War. Dramatic changes in women's societal position meant women needed to adopt traditionally masculine job roles, titles and clothing attire to

suit. (Bill, 1993 p.46) "[W]omen had been progressively enfranchised, they moved into paid employment in increasing numbers and a growing range of occupations, and their educational opportunities expanded." (Bill, 1993, page 45) However Bill's evidence insinuates that social opinions of dress code in culture can restrict equality and become a form of control. Ideas regarding trousers as capable of blurring boundaries between the masculine and feminine threatened a challenge to the patriarchy and male superiority. Women wearing trousers were refused service at government agencies such as the Post Office (Bill, 1993).

Pern's pseudo-medieval social structure contains similar restrictions to those outlined in the research above, forbidding women the right to wear trousers and military clothing. There are two reasons for the design choice of trousers. Firstly, as practical attire for dragon-riding and as a reference to the fashion shift to trousers, allowing women to effectively ride a bicycle (Bill, 1993). Secondly, this is a deliberate power move by Lessa, who in using her power and influence as the celebrity "Lessa Weyrwoman of Benden Weyr" dresses in the uniform of her male dragonrider counterparts to demand equality and reclaim bodily agency and control from F'lar. Her attire will be an homage to famous female aviators as her ambition for freedom in the sky is parallel to their stories. Lessa's costume journey will begin in oppressive clothing such as heavy fabric dresses, based on both traditional medieval European domestic dress designs and Chinese fusion, eventually shifting to her wearing her own version of a contemporary lightweight, functional military jumpsuit.

5.1.3 Celebrity fashion influencers- Power Dressing and posture

One of Lessa's major costume changes is her First Flight costume due to its breakdown of gender barriers and its move away from restricting female attire. Female aviators felt freedom in the sky (Bix, 2010), Lessa is a pilot and flying a dragon is a part of a new career, which in her world is also dominated by men. When aviation was still in its adolescence female pilots were at the forefront alongside men. However marginalization and scepticism made aviation a difficult profession for women to enter. "Yet even as the Wrights sought to spread enthusiasm for aviation, they expressed deep reservations about training women" (Bix, 2010, p.40). Harriet Quimby, the first American female to achieve her pilot's license earned the title of first woman's solo flight across the English Channel in 1912 (Bix, 2010, p.39) to disbelief from critics who were concerned that women "panicked easily and were too scatter-brained to master complex technical matters" (Bix, 2010, p. 40). She was dressed in a feminized version of her male counterparts' aviation clothing, including a leather jodhpurs jumpsuit cinched in at the waist, gloves and often fashionable 'cat-eyed' shaped goggles.

Barbara Burman (2000) researching the dress of pioneer female aviators found they "transformed their dress and appearance from the amateur improvisations of the Edwardian period to the streamlined "speed queens" of the 1930's" (p. 299). Burman (2000) argues that the transition of clothing strategies represented and embodied the female aviators' determined negotiation of boundaries and frontiers of culture and gender as they successfully embraced the pleasures, dangers, and opportunities of new technologies and unprecedented speeds. I imagine the functionality and warmth of the leather garments (Burman, 2000) were equalizers, permitting women to move freely and be as athletically active as men while preserving modesty, as bloomers did for nineteenth century female bicyclists. (Mayor, 2014, p.28)

Clothing strategies for the female aviators of the Edwardian era (1900-10) were varied, but successfully negotiated the immense impediments of difference or borders which lie between feminine and masculine appearance. This extends to notions of gendered stasis and movement and between safe passivity and risk-taking activity. One of the dilemmas of making or finding female clothing suitable for flying and racing was that it would erode the differences between female and male appearance and would require the crossing of long-established borders. As Burman puts it:

“Women, in order to assemble appropriate clothing for these conditions and for actual motor racing and flying, crossed a further critical border by their appropriation of garments and materials which were steeped in masculinity.” (Burman, 2000, p. 307)

A decisive step away from conventional feminine appearance towards functional all-weather, wind-proof leather garments with a protective layer, enabled them to function on the same terms as men in the extreme conditions created by speed and altitude. At the same time, leather is suggestive of physical strength, aggression and primitive animal power. (Burman, 2000)



Fig 3: Vox (2018) comment on similarities of famous male aviator Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart.

Aviator Amelia Earhart shifted into international stardom becoming a celebrity after being the first woman to fly solo and nonstop across the Atlantic in 1932 (Bix, 2010, p. 40). Earhart is shown in this photograph (Fig 3) with her tomboy masculine short haircut and “boyish good looks”. (Vox, 2018) Amelia was adored by the public and was a fashion designer with her own brand of clothing. (Bix, 2010, p. 40) However, my research indicates that her clothing choices away from the cockpit were still feminine in design, which demonstrates trouser attire was only considered appropriate for women when flying.

Kitti Ping is a similar celebrity within the Dragonflight story. She goes from bio-geneticist to household name in Pern society. Kitti Ping is the bio-geneticist who successfully modified the last dragon egg, single-handedly giving humanity a hope of survival. Her traditional Chinese-infused attire, personal Chinese artefacts and heirlooms from Earth become influential to fashion in early Pern society. The Dragonrider’s regressed military uniform (fig 38), made of dragon leather and with a need to be weather-resistant and fire-proof, and has an array of inspiration, including pioneering aviation leather flight suit attire. Lessa’s adornment in similarly designed attire (fig 38) symbolises the boundaries of traditional gendered control breaking down when she finally rides her dragon for the first time wearing trousers.

5.1.4 Power Dressing and Posture



Fig 4: Janet Jackson - *Nasty* (1986) power dressing in fashionable version of uniform.

Strong silhouettes created by shoulder pads and tailored trousers belted at the waist transform masculine clothing into flattering power garments. These garments challenged gender roles through feminizing masculine clothing and posture "Fashion was used as a vehicle for making social change" (Tarrant & Jolles, 2012, p.5). Famous female entertainers, such as Janet Jackson (Fig 4) were at the forefront of power dressing within 1980s popular culture. Fusing fashion and feminine sexuality, such entertainers demanded equality, respect, and bodily autonomy through their choice of clothing.

"Through dress, contemporary feminists embrace and reclaim aspects of femininity and sexuality." (Tarrant & Jolles, 2012, p.8)

The British Psychological Society's study into posture manipulation (fig 5) confirms that the judgements of individuals differs according to the clothing and stance they were photographed in. (Gurney & Howlett & Pine & Tracey & Moggridge, 2017) They state:

“Adopting strong, power poses can also cause people to feel more powerful, and specific power poses (fist-clenching) have been found to increase feelings of power.” (Gurney & Howlett & Pine & Tracey & Moggridge, 2017, p 436).



Fig 5 :Amy Cuddy image examples of Low power pose- making oneself smaller or hunched vs. High power poses make themselves larger in the space. (Cuddy, 2013)

Social psychologist Amy Cuddy (2013) explains in her TED-Ed talk, *Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are*, that body language is communicated through interactions. Your body language is judged by the viewer who will make sweeping conclusions and inferences from posture. She explains the power dynamics of posture as expressions of power and dominance and indicates that gender is a factor, commenting that “women are much more likely to be tiny. Women feel chronically less powerful than men.” (TED-Ed, 2013)

Lessa’s evolving costume journey will explore her posture within the costume to communicate her growth. The Drudge costume shows Lessa’s body bowed and submissive - this is a deliberate act to hide her appearance and show submission. The drape and loose fit of the costume further indicates her character’s low ranking status in society. Lessa’s high ranking positions in the feudal system are as First Flight and military, both power dressing costume designs that will be worn with strong posture. She is wearing parts of a stolen male aviator uniform, including trousers. A female in trousers within the world of Pern is a rebellious fashion statement against the Pernese society’s hierarchy of gender and its relationship to patriarchal power structures.

5.2 Clothing control and removal of identity

The audience is first introduction to Lessa is as a hidden woman after the genocide of her Ruathan bloodline and their loyal allies by the Overlord Fax. Lessa’s fictional story of the genocide of her family and enslavement of her people will have visual symbolic connections to real world events such as the Holocaust and Black slavery. In Nechama Tec’s first-hand experience as a Jewish child during the Holocaust she describes the experiences her family endured in order to conceal their heritage, and the relinquishment of their identity to survive. They created new names, dates, and place of birth. (Berger & Cronin, 2004)

“A key part of surviving involved knowing about money, which in various forms-jewellery, gold, and American dollars- was sewn into their clothes.” (Berger & Cronin, 2004, p.21).

The hiding of objects of sentimental and material value generally occurred within clothing and other objects, such as the rusted cup recently found at Auschwitz. Belonging to an unknown prisoner, the cup contained a secret compartment which hid a gold ring and necklace wrapped in a scrap of canvas. Paweł Sawicki (Sherwood, 2016) states of the hiding of objects that “Jewish families constantly had a ray of hope that these items will be required for their existence.” (Sherwood, 2016)

Slave branding with a branding iron was another brutal act used for identification (Browne, 2015). Similar to the Star of David or numbered armbands worn by Jewish prisoners (Schoenberger, 2004). Jewish individuals were subjugated and forced to wear the star badge as compulsory clothing, and if not worn they were liable for severe punishments from the Nazi regime. Both forms of identification visually communicate a form of psychological submission and symbol of ownership over property as “an act of marking the body legible as property that was put to work in the production of the slave as an object that could be bought, sold, and traded.” (Browne, 2015, p.93) Branding is painful, humiliating and can often be used as severe punishment and demonstration of control through physical dominance. Furthermore, branding and slave collars were practises originally only used on animals, a way of dehumanising slaves and making their ownership justifiable in their master's eyes (Browne, 2015).



Fig 6: Numbered concentration camp badge used by Nazis to identify prisoners. The purple triangle represented a person who believed in the Jehovah's Witnesses religion.

Colour coded triangles (fig 6) were used within Nazi concentration camps to identify and categorise individual Jewish prisoners. (Cornish, 2013, p.148) In *Dragonflight*, the Overlord figure Fax hot iron brands his name onto every slave and replaces the names with a number and colour code wristband to dehumanise his slaves and show dominance. In my adaptation, Lessa's Drudge costume design is about the concealment of identity, and she wears the mark of her Hold. While she is a Drudge, objects

designed for her first child princess costume (before going into hiding) will later be hidden under her many layers of clothing.

Within the adapted narrative the social structure and costume design aesthetics for key characters Fax (Ruatha) and Lessa (Drudge) are principally influenced by an ethnic minority community in south-western China called the Austroasiatic Yi people. (Yongxiang, 2003, p. 362) The Yi traditionally structured society continues today with men assigned masculine work and women performing feminine domestic work. Yi society in the times of High Socialism was organised into three castes before The People's Republic of China outlawed this caste system in 1949. The three castes system is a feudal structure which positioned minorities who ranked lower on the scale as slaves to the higher (Yongxiang, 2000). The three hierarchy division consisted of the Black Bone Yi, the White Bone Yi, and the Jianu, here described by Yongxiang:

“The Black Bone Yi was the ruling class, making up roughly 7% of the population at any given time. The White Bone Yi, who made up about 50% of the population, were not slaves but rather subjects of the Black Bone Yi, with no freedom of migration.” (Yongxiang, 2003) The term Jianu in Yi (Nuosu language), translates to household slaves, Jianu consisted of two subgroups: Ajia and Xiayi. Both the Ajia and the Xiayi groups had no rights within their society, but the Xiayi were at the bottom of the social hierarchy and were commonly treated like animals by the Black Yi. (Yongxiang, 2003)

The structure of the Yi community pre-reform is a real-world comparison to the Pern's Ruathan society described in McCaffrey's Dragonflight novel. Also the introduction of a minority Asian group creates a cultural connection to Kitti and Lessa's ethnicity.



Fig 7: Yi women in their everyday clothing. Lessa's Drudge costume inspiration.

5.3 Gender and cultural inequality in film mirrors reality

5.3.1 Gender and equality in film

To create equality for the “other” within the *Dragonflight* film adaption I will be analysing statistical data which determines areas of character misrepresentation within film to guide my design choices and decisions. There is lots of evidence to suggest that there is an on-going misrepresentation of gender roles and equality in Hollywood films. Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (as cited in Hollinger. 2012) reveals in her 1975 essay, “the deep-rooted nature of patriarchal ways of viewing narrative films” and “the intimate connection among the male gaze, the patriarchal unconscious and spectatorial pleasure.” For Mulvey, “the spectator position offered by Hollywood cinema is masculine with female characters positioned merely as objects of male desire.” (p.11)

The Geena Davis Institute (GDI) (Seejane, 2019), suggests a significant number of Hollywood films need to shift their narrative, character and costume choices away from the stereotypes and problematic gender constructs that these films often reinforce. This philosophical shift is a core influence for the design of Lessa's costumes. The Institute focuses on the effects of female portrayals and gender stereotypes within the entertainment industry on children, but its extensive research across multiple genres and age ratings is transferable. GDI has researched and collected data connected to gender prevalence in film entertainment across a timeline of 20 years (Seejane, 2019) to reveal an often one-dimensional female portrayal, or lack of female presence within scripts. The organisation provides the industry with a guide to how to form more in-depth, complex female characters. McCaffrey has stated her belief that the *Dragonflight* novel is women-orientated due to the narrative and viewpoint centred around strong protagonist Lessa (Fullerton-Smith.J 1988), thereby making the text worthy of adaptation in the contemporary period.

The infographics (show over fig 8) demonstrate the gap in the entertainment industry for a license like *Dragonflight*. Lessa's re-design of character and costume aesthetic respond to the infographic statistics in several ways. Reimagining her as a multiracial Asian/Black ethnicity adds diversity in an already established method of subverting the tropes. In reality, a voyage from Earth in the distant future to Pern, would logically comprise of a mixture of different ethnicities. This contemporary adaptation will incorporate a multicultural future moving away from Eurocentric origins.

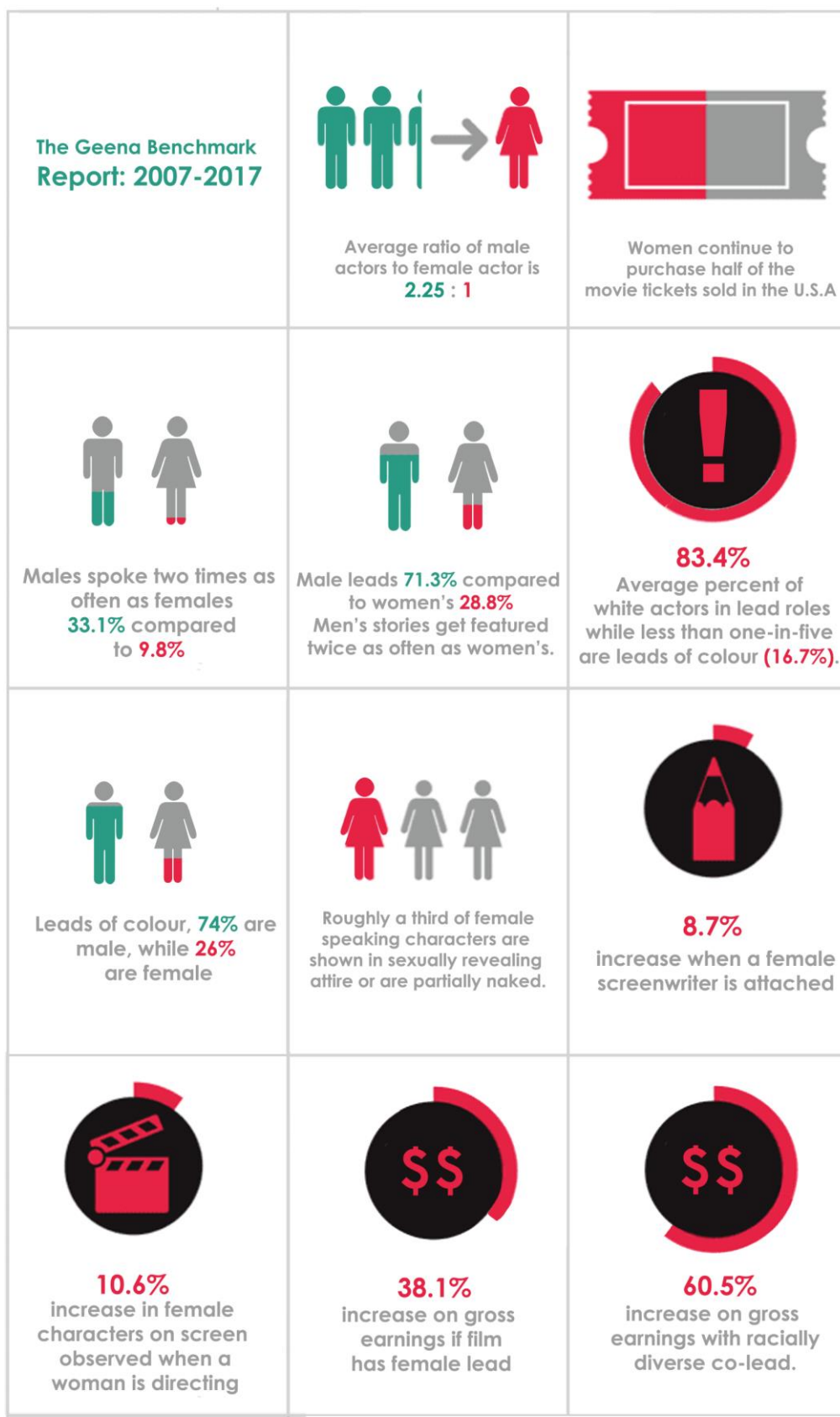


Fig 8: Statistics information gathered from GDI website <https://seejane.org/on-representation-in-film>.
Artwork by Laura King

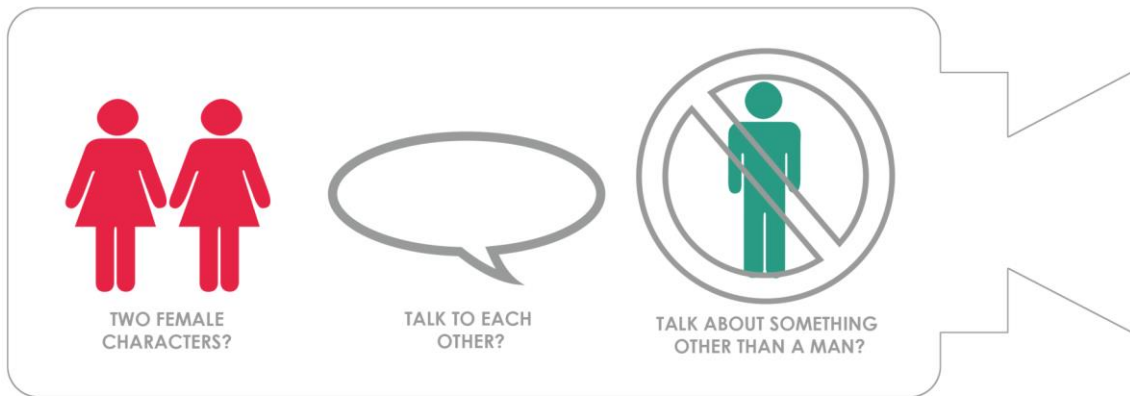


Fig 9: The 3 Bechdel Test rules. Artwork by Laura King

The Bechdel Test (Sarkeesian, 2009) demonstrates (fig 9) the three rules film-makers need to be mindful of in order to best represent female characters. Alison Bechdel credits the Virginia Woolf essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as a major influence on the creation of the Bechdel test. Woolf essay focuses on her thoughts of the representation of women and their limited one-dimensional roles within fiction (Woolf, 1929, p.51) Virginia Woolf (1929) questioned the stereotypical roles and purpose women had within a narrative and argued that “relationships between women are too simple...and almost without exception; they are shown in their relation to men.” (Woolf, 1929, p.61) Researching this test was useful in informing the design choices for this project. The Bechdel test website (*bechdeltest*, 2019) has over 6000 Hollywood films rated by everyday users identifying films that pass or fail three simple rules. Alison admits the Bechdel Test has flaws. It was not created to measure feminist themes or determine the successfulness or quality of a film’s narrative, but to guide viewers to be aware of the capacity for more in-depth stories surrounding women and their complex lives and emotions. This test has influenced my design process by indicating that Lessa’s focus, posture and costume must have their own identity and story which doesn’t primarily focus around F’lar’s identity and needs.

The MPAA (The Motion Picture Association of America):

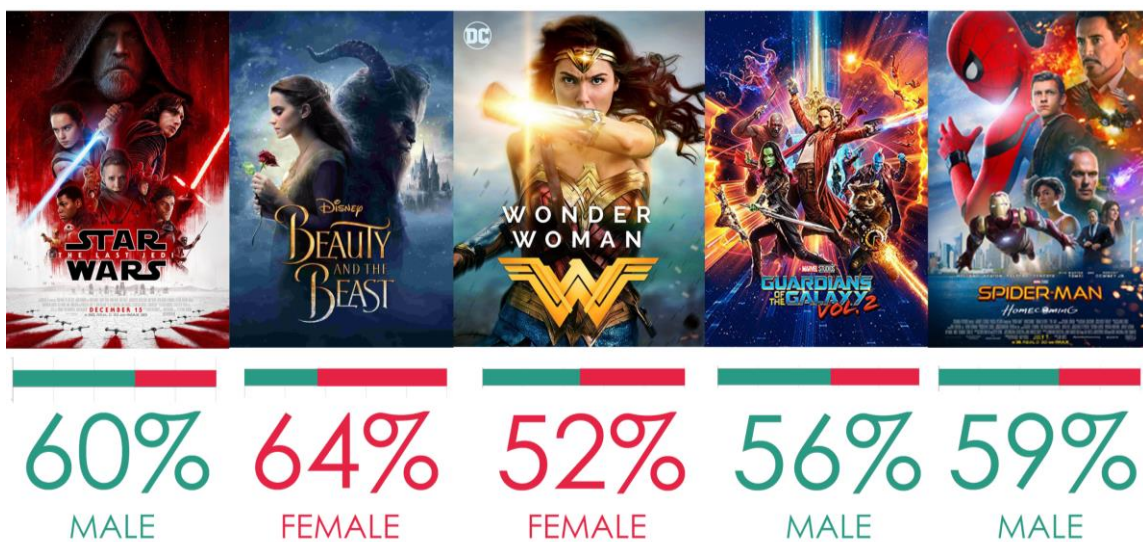


Fig 10: Information sourced from MPAA, compiled by Laura King

The 2017/2018 Motion Picture Association of America data (MPAA, 2017) reveals women continue to average fifty per cent of the audience at the movie theatre. The three highest grossing movies of 2017 (fig 10) were Star Wars: The Last Jedi (MPAA, 2017), Beauty and The Beast (MPAA, 2017) and Wonder Woman (MPAA, 2017). All three films featured female characters in a lead role, and passed the Bechdel test. Star Wars: The Last Jedi, with female protagonist 'Rey,' held the top-grossing movie title in theatres in 2017 and earned 60 per cent of its box office from men. This demonstrates that men are interested in watching films with empowered women and my project would still be inclusive of them as an audience.

In 2018 Black Panther, which passed The Bechdel Test, owes 35% of its ticket sales to African-American moviegoers — compared to an average 15% of this demographic for the other top five grossing movies of that year. This statistic is evidence that diverse racial representation is important to moviegoers. In a recent TEDx Talk, Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie (2013) states that the single story is often framed from a Eurocentric perspective. As she puts it:

“The consequence of the single story is this: it robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult (TEDx Talks, 2013).

Adichie comments that if she wasn't Nigerian born she would witness African stories only through the media. She would see an “incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and aids, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner” (TEDx Talks, 2013). The success at the Box Office of Black Panther demonstrates that audiences want to hear different African stories within multiple genres.

In Hollywood women continue to be regularly hyper-sexualised. This is why realistic female representation is necessary in film and entertainment. Hollinger (2012) suggests “Hollywood films present images of women that are, in fact, not reflections, but distortions of women's real lives which work to support patriarchal ideology” (p.8). Films remain a powerful way to communicate significant social and gender norms and issues. If the narratives of the 'Other' within our film are unheard, they become stereotypes from a singular perspective.

The recent announcement of a live-action remake of The Little Mermaid sees Black actress/singer Halle Bailey cast as the iconic character Ariel who was initially depicted by Disney's film adaption (1989) as a Caucasian redhead. Director Rob Marshall (2019) states "Halle possesses that rare combination of spirit, heart, youth, innocence, and substance – plus a glorious singing voice – all intrinsic qualities necessary to play this iconic role." (Cain, 2019) However, when Disney changes the recipe from a largely white-cast collection of films, we see mixed feedback from fan bases.

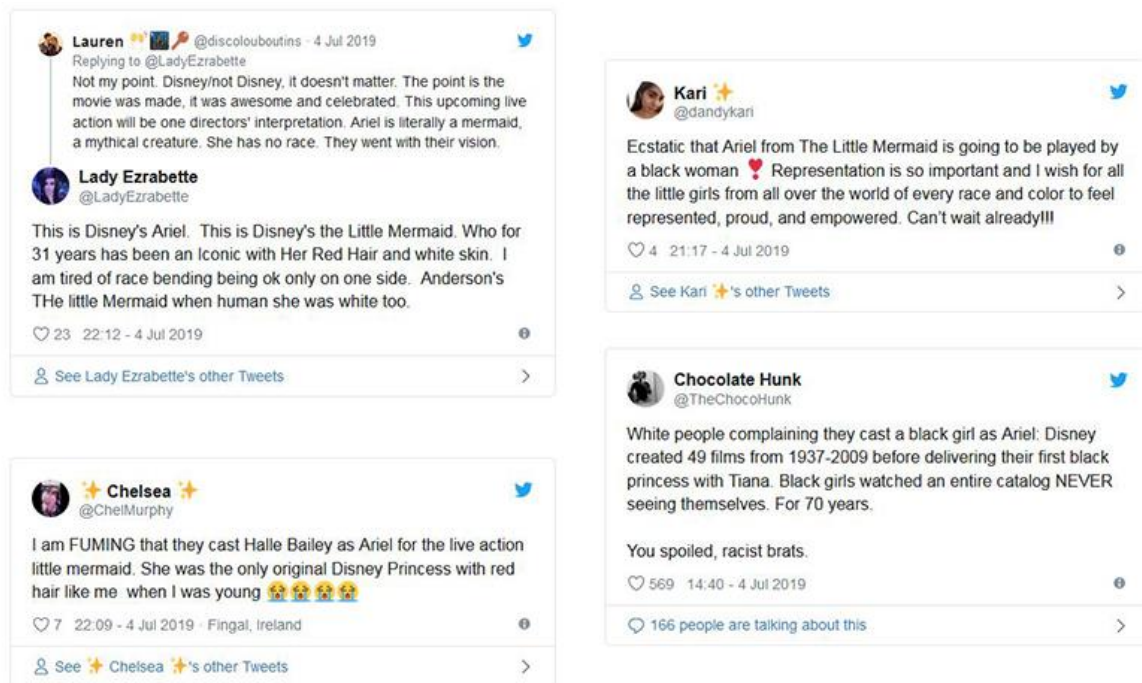


Fig 11: Screen-shots of Twitter responses to news of black actress/singer Halle Bailey cast as the iconic character Ariel for the Little Mermaid live-action remake. A mixture of approval and disapproval of the casting discussion.

The negative Twitter feedback (fig 11) over changes in ethnicity to the lead character in *The Little Mermaid* (1989) within the new adaption demonstrates a significant nostalgic fan base. Unlike *The Little Mermaid* (1989) *Dragonflight* is an older unadapted novel and several narrative reasons may shape the reluctance to adapt it. The statistics of disparity in ethnic minority representation in the film industry, as demonstrated in the literature, justify a change in Lessa's speculative ethnicity from Caucasian to Black Chinese descent. There is also potential to have a more significant spotlight on the original character Kitt Ping, showcasing the film to a broader audience.

Recently J.K. Rowling (2015) tweeted in defence of the non-white casting choice for the adult version of character Hermione in the Harry Potter and the Cursed Child theatre production. Stating "Canon: brown eyes, frizzy hair and very clever. White skin was never specified. Rowling loves black Hermione" (Rowling, 2015) Consistent with J.K. Rowling's arguments no ethnicity or skin colour is overtly described for Lessa in *Dragonflight* either. However some approved cover art of Lessa depicts her as a Caucasian female. To make *Dragonflight* more inclusive within my adaption, Lessa is of mixed descent Chinese and African English.

5.4 Sexualisation in costume

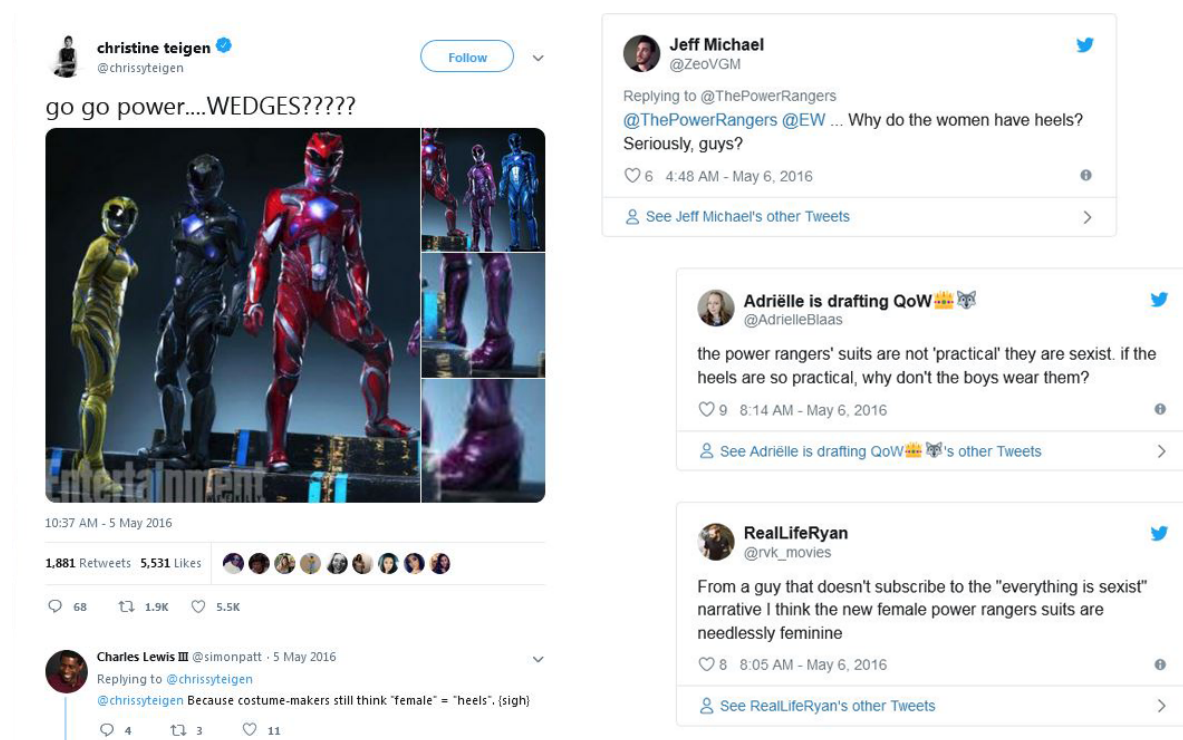


Fig 12: Screen-shots of Christine Teigen's Twitter account discussing the female Power Rangers new costume design

As a child of the 90's I saw a rise in equal gender roles and representation of minorities in entertainment. Television series including the original Power Rangers (1993) and Captain Planet (1990) showed a team of characters from diverse backgrounds, genders and ethnicities, all uniformed in equal attire to fight for the greater good. The Power Rangers' gender neutral uniforms helped to create unification between characters. However the (2017) Power Rangers film adaptation received negative backlash on social media from both celebrities and fans due to the design of the female Yellow and Pink Power Ranger costumes. The costumes were sexualised through the use of dangerously high heels, a corset to give an hourglass figure and an enlarged breastplate to increase breast size. These changes gave these characters unrealistic and hypersexual perfect forms. As a combat suit this would hinder the performance and the main objective of the character - the ability to fight. Feminist blogger Louise Pennington comments on the costume choice:

"The women who play the pink and yellow Power Rangers are skilled athletes. Sexualising their outfits for a program aimed at children teaches young girls that their only value is in their appearance - regardless of their skill set and training" (Moss, 2016)



Fig 13: Lieutenant Uhura on the Starship USS Enterprise portrayed by Zoe Saldana (2009) originally by actress Nichelle Nichols (1966). Costume comparison Uhura Star Trek (2009) to Ellen Ripley Alien (1979) Both ranking officers on spaceships. Ripley is wearing a jumpsuit designed closer to our reality of standard gender neutral military wear.

Star Trek (1966) actress Nichelle Nichols, who formerly played Lieutenant Uhura on the Starship USS Enterprise, was one of the first Black female leads to be cast within an SF television role. Uhura's character was an intelligent, educated woman who held authority and respect. This role was in stark contrast to comparative roles for female African American women who were cast as stereotypical maids, domestic helpers or slaves. (Sylvans, 2017) The female version of the USS Enterprise crew uniform that Uhura wore consisted of a 60s short mini skirt dress with long black boots over stockings (Alimurung, 2008). Her male counterparts wore trousers and long-sleeved tops. Although in the constructs of a professional workplace, the Enterprise women would wear similar attire to their fellow male crew members. Uhura's mini skirt outfit was a statement of the times. Star Trek empowered women to see themselves in new roles separate to stereotypical June Cleaver roles of traditional 50s housewives (Hawn, 2017, p.1) and is demonstrative of the trend towards the sexual liberation of women at the time. The female Starfleet crew costume transitioned to pantsuits similar to their male counterparts within the 1980s' version of the Star Trek series.

The Star Trek (2009) remake sees Uhura's return in a homage red mini-dress worn by Zoe Saldana. Saldana's costume is further sexualised by the short dress design shifting almost incomparably from her male counterparts' uniform (see Fig 13). In modern-day authentic uniforms, such as navy and military forces uniforms, female and male attire is aesthetically identical, which raises questions of why her uniform looks like a casual dress in such a professional environment. If uniform shapes a part of a wearer's identity and affects how they do their job (Craik J. 2005) these changes become purely made for eye candy. Stripping the sleeve away and losing Uhura's ranking demonstrates significant disrespect for this iconic character's authority.

5.5 Toxic gendered relationships in entertainment

5.5.1 Toxic heterosexual sexual or romantic relationships

Toxic relationships disguised as romances are common throughout film history. Daenerys and Khal Drogo from season one of *Game of Thrones* (Cynic, R. 2011) is a contemporary and salient example of a woman, Daenerys, who falls in love with Drogo despite his aggressive physically dominating behaviour and continuing sexual assault of her. This romance is a typical patriarchal narrative and feminist scholars have extensively critiqued this and other toxically masculine structures and relationships for some time. Bealer summarises:

“Beginning in the 1980s, feminist theorists started to look at the way gender norms that promote and perpetuate submissive roles for women depend upon complementary and similarly reductive identities for men. The theoretical term “phallic masculinity” began to circulate in the literature, referring to the privileged (“normative”) version of manliness that encourages emotional hardness and physical and social dominance, and perpetuates a collective social fantasy that men are active subjects positioned against women, who are figured as passive and penetrated.” (Bealer T.L. 2011 p.140)

Dominant behaviour can be visually woven into a story through costume design. Daenerys has been previously abused by her older brother Viserys Targaryen, who controls her clothing choices by demanding she wear a sheer, revealing dress to entice Drogo. Her lack of bodily autonomy is demonstrated by a male controlling her clothing as well as that costume being designed purely for male gaze and to dress her as a sexual object.

Daenerys and Drogo’s relationship forms a stereotypical dynamic where he would physically dominate her and she would manipulate him and use his power to do her bidding. An extract from *Dragonflight* when F’lar is internalising his feelings for Lessa:

“Evidently, no one had bothered to penetrate the curtain of rags and the coat of filth she had carefully maintained as a disguise. He had been a considerate and gentle bed mate ever since, but, unless Ramoth and Mnemeth (their dragons) were involved; he might as well call it rape.” (McCaffrey, 1968, p.78)

This is how I imagine Lessa and F’lar’s relationship. A toxic relationship built on dominance. F’lar’s forceful sexual abuse of Lessa within *Dragonflight*, his control over her body and clothing choices make his role as the protagonist difficult to project to a modern audience.

5.5.2 Toxic gender characteristics:

Masculinity is a set of behaviours and practises that have traditionally been associated with men or manhood in culture. This is also the case with women and femininity. (Voltaire's Ghost, 2016) Toxic masculinity and toxic femininity are often tropes in film. Lessa as a female is manipulative and F’lar as an alpha male dominates physically.



Fig 14: A list of toxic masculine and feminine toxic behaviours. Artwork by Laura King.

I have chosen to retain these personality aspects of heroes Lessa and F'lar within my adaptation. The toxic relationship between F'lar and Lessa and archetypes of toxic gender behaviours are a central part of the original narrative, and their inclusion enables Lessa something to fight against, in order to grow as an individual and examine these negative mind-sets. This story has a time travelling element, which when both time zones are compared, enables the audience to see the positive developments society has taken over time, that can continue to develop with equal rights within society.

6.0 Case Study analysis

6.1 Game of Thrones - Daenerys Targaryen (2011-2019)

Whiting (2019) remarks that the entertainment industry engages with audiences through a mirror which focuses on important societal issues and themes. A perfect example is the depiction of Daenerys within the Game of Thrones series. Her character arc from oppressed to gaining self-empowerment campaigns gender equality on screen. Like Lessa, Daenerys is a symbol of female empowerment.

Daenerys' personality is in-depth, containing qualities that reside in masculine and feminine categories such as strength, determination, compassion, and love. (Whiting, 2019, p 44)

Daenerys' character arc beginning in season one and finishing in season eight demonstrates her large array of costumes reflect her changing status and evolving journey from political pawn, to Khaleesi, to Commander and finally queen of Westeros and potentially the Iron Throne.

Daenerys' costume journey in season one (Fig 15 over) - wearing garments controlled by a male - made of light, soft, draped feminine fabrics combined with submissive and 'weak' (Cuddy, 2013) posture in contrast to her rise to power and gaining independence, wearing bold tailored silhouettes

provides a strong design influence for my design of Lessa's costume journey. Confident posture contributes to Daenerys' shift into her new leadership role in seasons three and four (fig 16 over), with her shoulders back and her head held high in combination with strong structured dresses, capes and shoulder pads create a powerful silhouette. Her shifts in identity are therefore demonstrated through clothing.

In the meeting with Drogo of the Dothraki and during their arranged marriage Daenerys' dresses are made out of off white, and soft diaphanous materials that showcase her body as a prize to be traded without her consent. Lessa's Impression dress (fig 37) will transform to have a similar reveal of her skin and adhere to tropes of virginity and purity. Daenerys' leadership of the Dothraki enables her costume to evolve to trousers for the first time and in Qarth she adds armour-like metal pieces to her garments creating a battle feminine aesthetic.



Fig 15: Season 1-2 (2011- 12) of Daenerys' costume design journey. These pieces of clothing are all given to her not chosen and reflect the societies fashion and identity not her own.



Fig 16: By season 8 (2019) Daenerys' costume shifts again. The introduction of strong, structured shoulder pads, tailored jacket and trousers combo of power dressing symbolising her rise to power like mentioned in (6.1.5).

Daenerys is now in charge of her own body's autonomy and wears garments (fig 16) of her choosing with confidence.

Lessa's character arc follows a similar pattern to Daenerys' from the bottom of the hierarchy within a feudal system, through a forced toxic relationship, obtaining of power through dragon/s and finally to the pinnacle of that system. Daenerys' costume change throughout her transition from repressed to power will be used as an aesthetic reference portraying the shift of garment shape language and colour as well as posture.

6.2 Mad Max: Fury Road - Imperator Furiosa (2015)

The newest instalment of the Mad Max franchise, *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) continues within the established post-nuclear apocalyptic Earth of the prequels. The narrative is driven by heroine protagonist Imperator Furiosa and her reluctant counterpart Max Rockatansky. Furiosa leads a revolt to seek revenge and redemption through the liberation of a group of sexually abused females labelled 'Wives'.

Until Imperator Furiosa enters the scene, the audience view an exclusively all-male society living above the poverty line. Antagonist Immortan Joe only grants higher living conditions to select females, (excluding Furiosa) hiding them within the Citadel walls as livestock. Their roles within the Citadel comprise of either to be milked like cows or forced into breeding programmes to bear his male heirs. This narrative parallels a dehumanized role for women within our society. The film's core theme is the destruction of our modern society and its regression to a dystopian patriarchy, which works as a platform for an underlining feminist politics. Humans here regress to a savage society, where the dominant brutalise, enslave, and allow institutionalised rape of the vulnerable.

Furiosa's aesthetic (fig 17) features a masculine style shaved head, war-painted face and makeshift shoulder pads as tactical attire. White-stained fabric is wrapped around the chest to flatten her breasts, giving a further masculine appearance. A healed iron branded insignia is a visual symbol of Immortan Joe's ownership. Her role in this society is similar to her male counterparts. She is respected as a superior, her costume reflecting her strong-minded personality as an established warrior. Lesley Vanderwalt, head of Hair and Make-up, and costume designer Jenny Beavan create a grounded, lived-in feeling to the costumes (vanityfair, 2016).

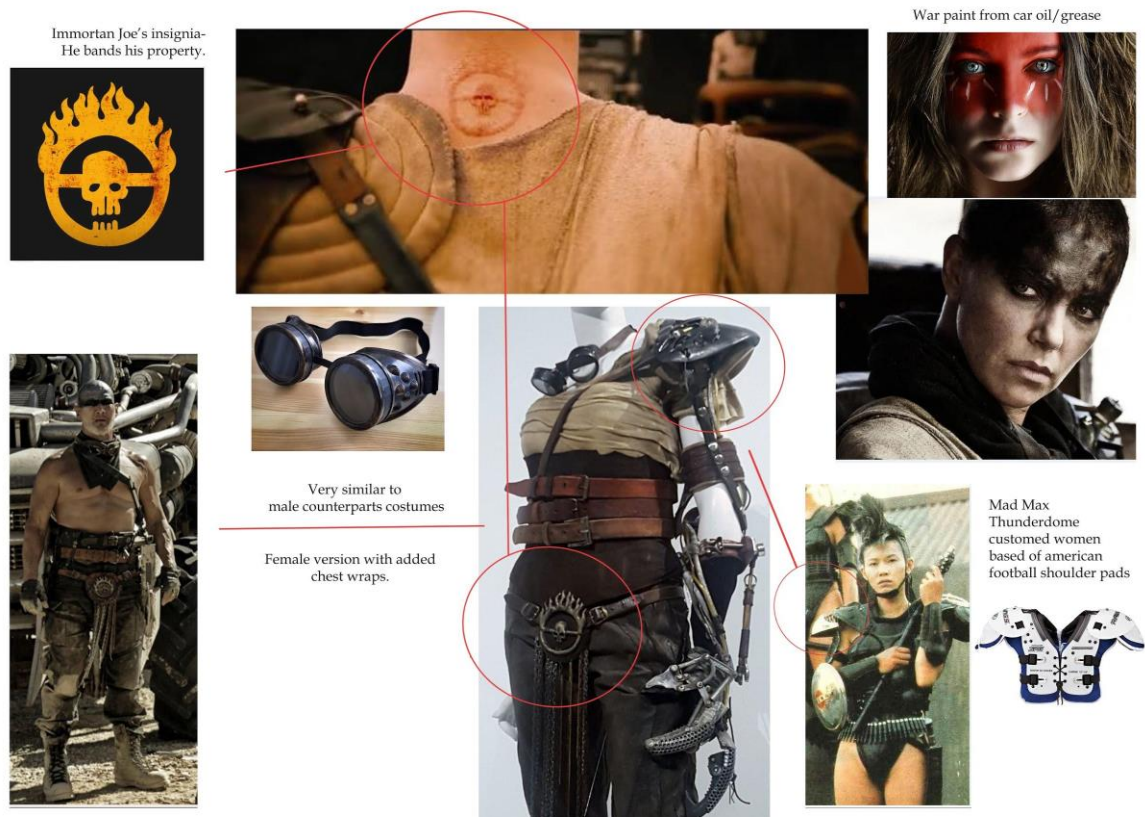


Fig 17: This costume breakdown of Furiosa will be reflected on when working on Lessa first flight costume number 8. This is a female version of an existing male costume. In the narrative of the film adaption Lessa has been branded on her right wrist.

In contrast, the five 'Wives', young women who are involuntarily part of an exclusive breeding program, are genetically pure and unaffected by disease and radiation. The 'Wives' are forced into submission and are objectified, sexualised, raped and assaulted by Immortan. A common trope in dystopian, apocalyptic speculative fiction is the reduction of women to mere biology. Often a patriarchal authority figure enforces oppressive laws within that fictional society— the dehumanisation of women by converting them to mere breeding machines to rear children. This behaviour reflects tactics in centuries-old real world conflicts and power struggles across cultures. One way Immortan Joe controls his 'Wives' is through clothing, forcing each of them to wear a chastity belt. Crane (2000) states:

"Many feminists have argued that fashion is a means of controlling women and keeping them trapped in a feminine, and thus subservient, position in relation to men." (p.175)

The 'Wives' costume aesthetic (Fig 18) is symbolic of the 'pure maiden' within western history and society with the wearing of veils over their heads, similar to the depiction of the Virgin Mary. Historically, white wedding dresses and veils classically indicated virginity (Williams, 2012). In a symbolic mix of a "pure" feminine aesthetic and voyeuristic objectification, the 'Wives' are all beautiful women, clothed in white diaphanous fabrics that are draped and tied to reveal their female form underneath. Such costume choices showcase their status as sexual objects owned by Immortan Joe, with the use of lightly coloured clothing serving as a metaphor for moral 'purity' (Sherman and Clore).



Fig 18: Images I found that I believe influenced the costume design choices

Similarly, Lessa's mandatory white, revealing dress for the 'Impression' (fig 38) ceremony mirrors the 'Wives' attire. These costume choices are made in reference to case studies like the 'Wives' costuming and other movies which employ the trope of sacrificing women to creatures, like Ann Darrow in *King Kong* (2005), the 'virgin lady sacrificed to a dragon' (Fig 19 page over) in *Dragonslayer* (1981) and Nimue in *Merlin* (1998). This trope is used regularly in films where a 'pure woman' is forced into situations of distress or is an unwilling participant in sacrificial rituals.



Fig 19: *Dragonslayer* (1981) White dressed woman in film being sacrificed to a dragon.

7.0 Methodology

7.1 Costume Designer Role

Costume design provides storytelling opportunities which give audiences an insight into the character, the world they inhabit and their relationship with other characters. Directors use the visual descriptors of purposefully designed clothing as a tool to enhance an authentic and realistic personality for the character. Designing such additional layers immerses the audience in the narrative surroundings, adding to the magic of the film. The detail in design planning will aid in decision-making within the manufacturing process to deliver the best product for the director and the most authentic product for a character.

In my professional experience as a contractor at Weta in concept design, I was inspired by costume design processes like Deborah Lynn Scott's methods of iterate costume design for James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). Specifically, the process for how designs translate through to the physical manufacture of garments. The use of physical maquettes are extremely useful as part of the design process, utilising drapery techniques to create shape and realistic fabric fold as well as creating a three dimensional understanding of a chosen design. Both techniques contribute to the overall design process, and neither should be treated as a final product.

This research references both historically-based clothing attire and fictional hybrids with other worldly (SFF) aesthetics. The designs for Lessa's seven and F'lar's two costumes need to be adequately alien enough to transport the viewer to an exciting and different world, but familiar enough to keep them grounded in what audiences readily understand. The final visual product comprises of nine digital 2D costume designs within a horizontal line-up (fig 27) and the fabrication of two physical maquettes (fig 34 and fig 41). This line-up of costumes visually demonstrates the arc of Lessa's narrative journey throughout *Dragonflight*.

7.2 Changes to the *Dragonflight* source material.

A critical part of this adaption surrounds the understanding and retention of the essence of *Dragonflight's* (1968) source material despite many problematic elements. The *Dragonflight* novel

represented the Western depiction of dragons (Fullerton-Smith, 1988), transforming them from evil creatures that humans slay to pony-like objects of desire and wish fulfilment.

The original narrative's conclusion to *Dragonflight* results in a love story flourishing between Lessa and F'lar, who eventually conceive a child together. In my adaptation of *Dragonflight*, Pern's society evolves and becomes more progressive in their world views. Lessa and F'lar have a daughter together, but although Lessa cares for F'lar, she is unable to create the new utopian world she envisages with him. F'lar demonstrates a reluctance to change in accordance with new societal ethics and his loyalty to the Weyr's old traditions makes Lessa realise she needs to break the circle of abuse for her daughter's sake and to act as a role-model for other women. The inherent problem, resulting from editing the narrative's ending, are the changes this causes for certain narrative plots in the preceding novels.

Here I use the example of a successful novel-to-film adaptation that similarly altered the source material, resulting in positive impacts with fan-bases. The film I refer to, in part because it is also reminiscent of *Dragonflight*, is DreamWorks' *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010). The DreamWorks film adaptation of Cressida Cowell's novel *How to Train Your Dragon* (2003) alters multiple source material elements yet still resulted in author approval (Anderson, 2019): "She has stated that while the portrayal is different, the heart of the story remained the same." (Anderson, 2019)

Figures 23, 24, 25 in the next pages are finalised planning documents I used to plan out and adapt the storyline of *Dragonflight* to fit the vision I needed. Figure 25 also contains colour palettes formulated to cinematic colour language to help me plan for the colour and materiality changes of the costumes over the film's course.

Dragonflight is an exploration into Lessa's unique female perspective of Pern, which is a notable point of difference in the storytelling world yet is undermined by the lack of racial and cultural diversity. Because McCaffrey is writing from a Eurocentric western perspective, her world is heavily referenced by a newly reformed European middle age. The addition of Chinese-influenced cultural clothing, as previously discussed, further diversifies McCaffrey's narrative for the better and fits with the broader changes made to the storyline. A selection of the maxims and themes that will guide the Chinese influence on the design for my costumes from Pern can be seen in Fig 20.

EURASIAN CULTURE MIX

- **The P. E. R. N. Survey** was paid for by two companies, a Chinese company (CNPC) & a Irish company.
- **Kitti Ping** (Earthling of Chinese ethnicity sponsored by CNPC) a bio-geneticist of Chinese ethnicity genetically engineered the dragons.
- Chinese dragons **symbolizes:** supernatural power, royal dignity, wisdom, strength, and hidden
- Lucky animals, bring good fortune to people.
- Adding diversity to an Eurocentric book.

Fig 20: These are the reasons for the adaptation of the narrative to have Chinese influenced cultural clothing.
Artwork by Laura King

Archplot structure

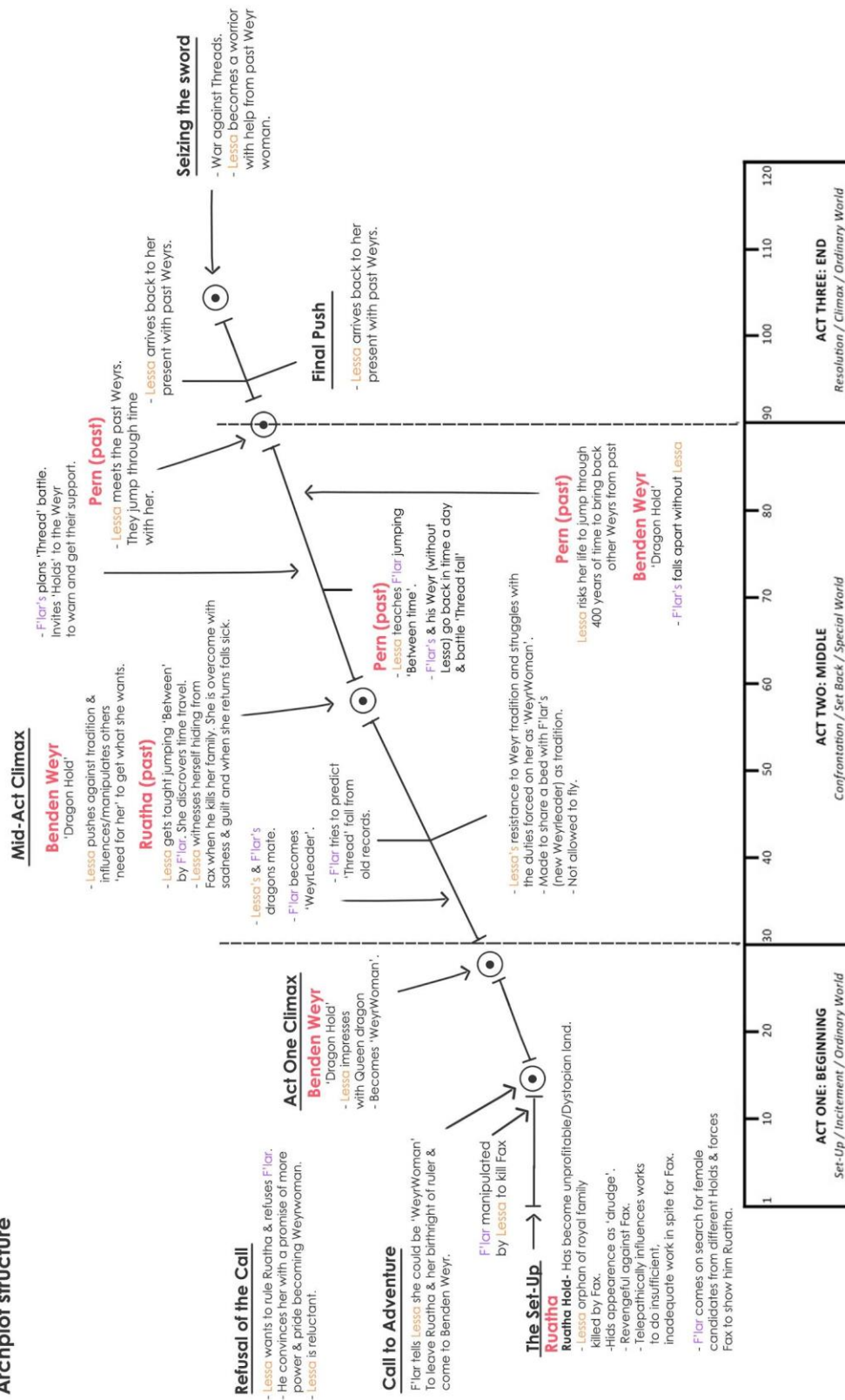


Fig 21: I made this diagram of the story beats of Dragonflight. I will use this diagram to work out where Lessa and F'lar's costume changes happen. Artwork Laura King

95 % leathers & natural fabrics/ 5% reminisce of old synthetic fabric			100% Synthetic fabric		
Royal	Slave	No status	High female status	fighting for equality	Equal
1. Princess Aesthetic - Dress-Beautiful, long and green - hair up in buns- with gold accessories - Slip on shoes - green, gold colour palette. Tempture - Summer- Ruatha - warm season. - Mid/low altitude- to the left - protected by a mountain, to the right the sea. Job/props - Lessa of Ruatha Hold, Princess. forbidden to leave castle. Sneaks out to play. Stance - Straight- Told to stand proper.	2. Drudge Aesthetic - Rags- holes/ patched/tattered - Matted hair- over face. - Sandals - Natural browns colour palette. White goat hair tied into hair Tempture - Winter/spring- Ruatha - Cold season. - Mid/low altitude- to the left - protected by a mountain, to the right the sea. Job/props - layered clothing for slave work. Cleaning, womens work. Buckets, cloth Stance - Hunched- Disguised as older woman.	4. weyr-woman Aesthetic - second hand womens clothing- no holes but maybe nice rich faded fabrics. - clean hair- cut out matted hair - Natural brown, greens or orange colour palette. 5/6. Impression Aesthetic - White robe beautiful rich translucent fabric but simple. Can see breasts and body through fabric. - clean hair- short - White, soft colour palette. Transforms Tempture - Winter/spring- Benden Weyr - High altitude. - Stays inside. Possibly well heated. Job/props - Waiting for impression/has no job description. Stance - Straighter- uncertain of new environment	7. WeyrWoman Aesthetic - Dress robe. A symbol of power & beauty to the Holds by the Weyr. - clean hair- long, black, worn up. - Gold Jewellery. mixed with bolder rich chinese reds. - Symbol of status Dragon like. Tempture - Spring- Benden Weyr - High altitude. - Stays inside. Needs/props - seat- wooden throne like seat. Stance - Straight/ head held high/ confident	8. First flight Aesthetic - Dress pulled up with trouser underneath. beautiful rich fabric. Trousers Wier leather - clean hair- pulled up out of face - Browns & rich reds and blue colour palette. - New badge of symbol of status Tempture - Summer- Benden Weyr - High altitude + Flying and Between. - Outside. Needs/props - Saddle for dragon. - Stance - Straight/Strong/Leader- confident	9. War on Thread Aesthetic - Uniform or futuristic battle gear. Synthetic textured material. - clean hair- In helmet. - Black/Grey colour palette. - New united badge of symbol of status DRAGONRIDER Tempture - Winter/spring Pern - High altitude + Flying and Between. - Outside. Needs/props - Saddle for dragon. - Flamethrower

Fig 23: This diagram breakdowns Lessa's nine costume changes (not including F'lar costumes) worked out by breaking down the narrative into beats (Fig 21) Seven out of nine costumes were taken to final render. Artwork by Laura King.

8.0 Project

Utilising my professional knowledge attained while working within the film industry, I intend to use research-based iterative design methodology processes.

The final design product includes line-up paintings of Lessa and F'lar's costume designs (fig 25) and two maquettes. The line-up aims to visually demonstrate through costume design the transition Lessa undergoes from suppression to equality.

My design process commences with the creation of nine written design briefs for each costume change (based on information from fig 23) including key novel descriptions. I then move onto the development of mood board research, which aesthetically incorporates influences reminiscent of Chinese and European Earth culture with a fantasy/alien twist. Analysis of mood board research transitions into conceptual line designs within Photoshop, establishing shape language and overall silhouette. Lastly, I polish the chosen line designs into final renders through the combination of painting and imagery.

The line-up narrates costume design transitions, shifting through Lessa's identity using colour tone, palette change and shape language. Fig 24 and 25 below showcase the sketches and final line-up.



Fig 24: My design line up of costume. This was a draft to see if they would all work in a line-up. I made edits for example changing F'lar's arm so he wasn't point, this was due to him pointing moved the viewer's eyes the wrong way across the image. Artwork by Laura King.



Fig 25: My costume line-up of all Lessa and F'lar's costume changes. Artwork by Laura King.

8.1 Dragon Design

The dragon's description in the original *Dragonflight* novel depicts huge, six-limbed flying creatures. From artworks previously approved by McCaffrey, dragons were depicted with conventional Western anatomy of four legs and a set of wings. Using these precedents, the adapted designs aim to shift away from Western tropes and push anatomical possibilities, resulting in a four-winged, two-legged creature. The dragon's silhouette (fig 26) and shape language are being utilised within the costumes and logo conception. Conceptual inspiration was gathered from animals including dragonflies, seahorses and birds. Whilst final renders of the dragon didn't feature in the brief I set myself, it was important to understand the dragons in Pern and how they work mechanically in order to create authentic designs for the costumes of F'lar and Lessa, as they would be required to ride these beasts.

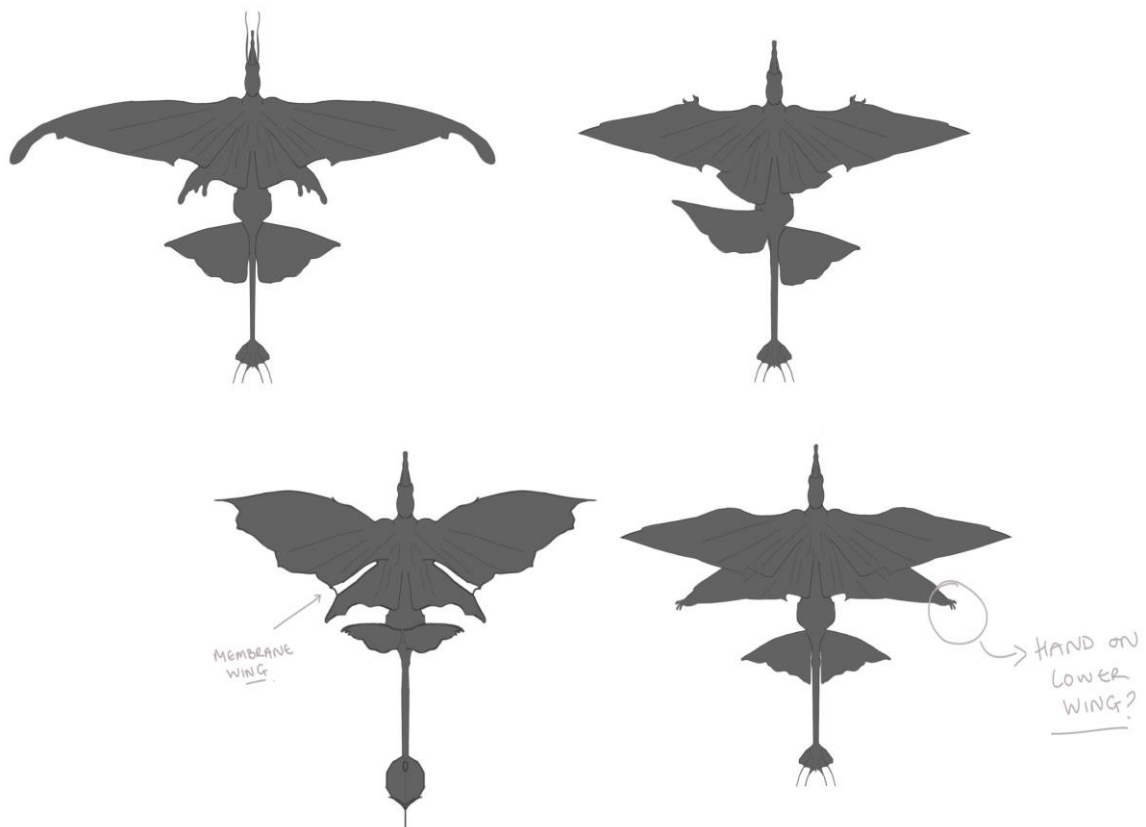


Fig 26: Dragon silhouette designs. Artwork by Laura King.

8.2 Lessa of Ruatha (child)

The first costume in the line-up is Lessa's childhood royal dress. The key theme is to communicate her as a child within a wealthy family with a high status in the class system of Pern. The original *Dragonflight* novel lacks a description of the aesthetics of both garment and hairstyle of child Lessa, focusing on her emotional fear at that time. All information from the novel is sorted into the script breakdown chart above (fig 23).

A summary of the scene from the novel:

Lessa is woken suddenly in the night; an uneasy sensation urges her to leave the castle. Dazed and confused she seeks refuge in the Watch Wher's (dragon guard-dog) dirty kennel. In the adaption, Lessa disguises herself by cutting her signature princess dress and hair as a metaphor for the stripping of her identity.

I began with mood boards comprising of classical garments from various sources including historical dress and paintings, analysing cultural inspirations from Chinese and European garments of socially important people within the equivalent medieval period. Wu Zetian (624 AD-705 AD) is recognised as the first and only female Emperor of China. Her garments indicate her high status, yet also symbolise rebellion against traditional patriarchal Chinese rule. The main aesthetic inspirations originate from the traditional Cheongsam dress neckline (of recognisable Chinese origins) and the overall shape of floor-length woollen/ linen Celtic traditional dress with Chinese stage dancers' attire.

Lessa's dress is fashioned in rich Chinese silk fabric in a Celtic saturated green colour palette. The green colour (neutral colour) symbolises Lessa's parents' impartial stance in political feuds, equally demonstrating hospitality toward Hold Lords and Dragonriders. Symbolising wealth through excessive amounts of expensive fabric means Lessa struggles to walk without holding parts up. This dress indicates that she rarely leaves the castle and if required is transported in a palanquin.

The Ruathan emblem placement on Lessa's dress mirrors the traditional arrangement of Chinese emblems situated on the chest of the garment. The deliberate placement of the emblem also expresses pride for her homeland, keeping it close to her heart. The emblem is based on the Chinese Oil Company (CNCP) logo hybrid, incorporating traditional Celtic knot patterns. The adapted origin narrative incorporates the Chinese company (CNCP) funding the voyage to Pern. For branding purposes, their logo would be printed onto the spacecraft and other locations for publicity. When Pern society regresses, the logo simultaneously becomes the iconography of the medieval Ruathan emblem.

Gold costume trim and jewellery indicate status and wealth in many cultures, additionally; Chinese culture believes gold brings luck to the wearer. The necklace's invention in the adaption was inspired by fantasy narratives that often revolve around important objects. The idea revolves around the concept that the necklace has a lost technology inside, alerting the fall of Thread. Lessa's parents' instructions to keep the heirloom close resulted from their traditions but also originated as a safety measure. To allow Lessa to appear as an in-depth character, I pushed the original *Dragonflight* novel sparse descriptions by inventing props to compliment the core costume design and broaden Lessa's backstory. The addition of treasured objects enables the addition of storytelling layers to her costume, connecting her to a sense of place and history.

DRAGONRIDERS OF PERN DRAGONFLIGHT



Fig 27: Final Lessa of Ruatha (child) design from line-up. *Artwork by Laura King.*



Fig 28: Emotional child Lessa cutting her dress and by doing so stripping her of her own identity. Drawn on Photoshop. Artwork by Laura King.

The line drawing above (fig 28) was completed to demonstrate the stages of transformation within the narrative, with costume serving to enrich depiction of an emotional moment.

8.3 Drudge/F'lar research

The second costume in the line-up is Lessa's Drudge disguise costume, with the key theme communicating her inferior status existing at the lowest position in the feudal system on Pern.

A summary of the scene from the novel:

Ten years have passed and Lessa has fabricated a disguise from rags. So not to reveal her true identity, Lessa hasn't bathed in this time which doubles as a defence as her odour repels others. The original novel's basic description of the garment's aesthetics describes a ragged, holey dress fashioned with thin sandals. Her hair is matted over her face. Lessa's faked weak, hunched posture gives her the appearance of an old and frail lady to keep herself hidden from the public's eyes.

The first attempt at conceptual idea generation of the Drudge costume below (fig 32) was based on McCaffrey's description of a simple, rag dress and was very limited in its design scope. These designs appear contrived and unrealistic in their capacity to hide Lessa's age and gender from a society where violence and sexual assault are normalised. I find it ironic that McCaffrey is quoted as declaring

"There is not a Cinderella theme in Anne McCaffrey's books because Cinderella was a wimp" (Fullerton-Smith, 1988) as her visual description certainly indicates a 'Cinderella' aesthetic.



Fig 29: First attempt Drudge line designs. Artwork by Laura King.

Restarting the mood board process again involved new visual research, including studies of homeless and nomadic people as well as Yi cultural garments. My justification for utilising homeless visual references is to symbolise Lessa as a wanderer with no home. Layering her body with scrap fabrics keeps her warm in the cold climate and doubles as a disguise to hide her identity. Her few, scavenged belongings hanging from her rope belt indicates that due to her social status she has no room of her own and she risks the items being stolen by fellow poor citizens when she sleeps on the floor on a

bed of hay. Her sleeping quarters often leaves loose strands of hay in her hair. Utilising her jacket as a sleeping bag, she carries it on her back.



Fig 30: Stage one- line drawing. Artwork by Laura King



Fig 31: Stage two- photo-shoot. Photographs by Laura King.

To get the most accurate anatomy stance of Lessa while so draped in fabric I set up a photo-shoot. From the success of this session I drew all design in fig 26: and showed the model and was able to get each pose easy photographed to paint over my costumes.

Comparing Lessa and F'lar provides context to the designs and communicates the different social status and quality of life between the highest and lowest citizens in the feudal system. F'lar standing alongside Lessa reinforces that she is striving to survive at the bottom while his living situation is comfortable. Lessa's position in the hierarchy is due to many reasons, but primarily because she is pretending to be old and is a woman.



Fig 32: Stage three- paint over costume design. Designs from line-up. Lessa and F'lar will be analysed together in this section. Artwork by Laura King.

In the previous image (Fig 32) Lessa's ragged clothing and hunched posture is contrasted to F'lar's powerful posture in preteen military uniform, showcasing his shiny top rank badge and "aiguillette" ornamental braided cord. The minimal colour palette difference between the two (consisting of browns and neutrals) connects them as part of the same hold. The contrast in shape language (patchwork versus tailored) and the materials (natural cotton versus Watch Wher leather) affirms their different social status. F'lar's rich blue-dyed chest piece (blue dye only available to the rich) is influenced by motorbike body protection, adding contrast to his bronze and brown suit.

Lessa's cuff around her right arm is influenced by the holocaust upper arm numbering band combined with the Yi patterned sleeves, replacing the beautiful pattern work of the Yi clothing with indentation marks of letters, numbers and colours. The first band indicates Lessa is old, the second that she is now infertile, and the third that she is uneducated. Hiding behind her costume and identification marks keeps herself safe in this inhumane system.

Lessa iron brand (Fig 33) of Overlord Fax's insignia symbolises her enslavement. These practices visually demonstrate the inhumane treatment of the lower-class within a dominant hierarchical system. Inspirations such as African branding irons contextualised into a Chinese stamp format.



Fig 33: Fax's iron branding on Lessa's arm. Artwork by Laura King.



Fig 34: Drudge hair design. Artwork by Laura King.

8.4 Drudge maquette

Basing the Drudge maquette off the concept design (Fig 32) provided a starting point to the construction of the figure. Importantly, the maquette is part of the design process and complements the designs as a conceptual process. The maquettes effectiveness at creating a three dimensional and material understanding of the design are extremely valuable. The opportunities to drape fabric over the maquette, cutting and easily manipulating the shape of the costume were beneficial. I believe this technique is ideal for the Drudge costume, giving me an understanding of how Lessa would construct her garment in real life, layering up piece by piece over the last 10 years.

The maquette manufacture process consists of various components. A base adjustable figure bought from SideShow Toys, 3D printed resin head, bucket and gourd on Formlabs Form 2 SLA printer, found objects and an array of fabric. I created the head by 3D scanning my model's face (fig 35 over), and modifying it with the software ZBrush and Maya for a successful print.

The main challenges in the construction of the Drudge 6th scale model were scale. Incorrect scale proportions of objects, fabric weave size and overly large machine stitching would appear off in sizing. This resulted in the choice of custom hand-stitched garment layers and 3D modelling critical design elements to produce the custom desired size and aesthetic of the unique Drudge design.

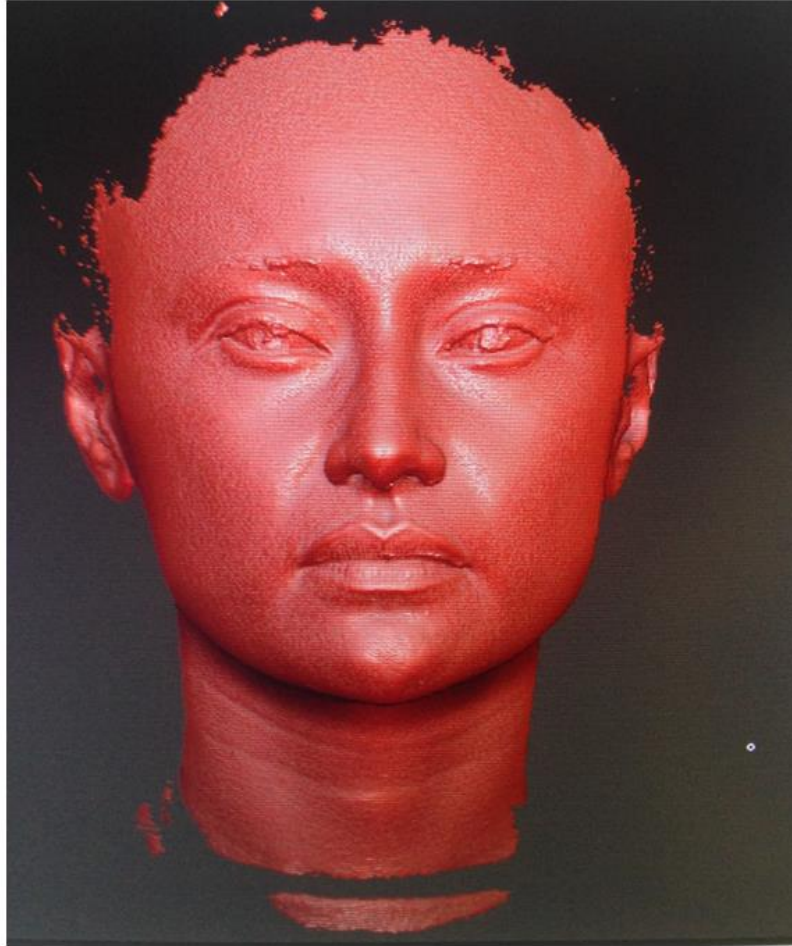


Fig 35: 3D Scanned Head for Lessa. Artwork by Laura King.

8.5 Lessa of Ruatha (adult)

The third costume in the line-up is Lessa's Princess remanence costume. The remanence of this costume under her Drudge garment symbolises the continuous limbo Lessa is in as she tries to hold onto her identity.

A summary of the scene from the novel:

Arriving at Benden Weyr (dragon hold) undressing to take a bath.

The original *Dragonflight* novel contains no description of this garment's aesthetics. This costume is the result of the adaption and is absent in the original novel. In our interpretation the remains of Lessa's Princess dress are hidden from sight under her Drudge outfit for ten years, with the Ruatha insignia and necklace on her chest over her heart. The silk, lacking in stretch, ceased to grow with Lessa and as a result cuts into her body, making it impossible to stand straight and flattening her chest (fig 36 over).



Fig 36: Lessa of Ruatha (adult) design from line-up. Artwork by Laura King.

8.6 Impression (transformative costume)

The fourth and fifth transformative costume in the line-up is Lessa's candidate costume. Key themes here involve communicating her loss of identity, baptism and rebirth as Lessa WeyrWoman of Benden Weyr.

A summary of the scene from the novel:

Lessa bathes for the first time in ten years. F'lar forcefully demands Lessa wear a white dress, as the original *Dragonflight* novel describes the fourth garment. She reluctantly dresses in the garment and rides to a ceremony ground within an active volcano. The fifth costume is again a result of the adaptation for *Dragonflight*, choosing to elaborate on this ceremony to make this outfit a transformative costume, and is absent in the original novel. In the original, Lessa bathes and detangles her long matted hair. In my adaptation, her extremely matted hair is unsalvageable, leading her to cut it short once again. This symbolizes another shift of identity from Lessa the Drudge of Ruatha to Lessa the Weyrwoman candidate.

For this design, I was inspired by my case studies of the 'Wives' from *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Game of Thrones* Daenerys' translucent costumes. This costume indicates the metaphoric scarification of a pure woman and transforms the finale of this event into an important ceremony where dragon and human minds meet and are bonded for life (Fig 37 over).

Once Lessa and her newly hatched dragon, Ramoth, impress a ceremony essentially similar to a Christian baptism, the dragon's vitellus helps create a new dress silhouette and the eggshell behind her head is similar in shape to the crown often depicted in paintings of Goddesses. This is the pinnacle scene in Lessa's transformation when she impresses with her Dragon and becomes the world's only WeyrWoman. Due to the nature of the white fabric and the dragon's vitellus, areas of Lessa's body become visible with the ends of her garment stained by the ash in the volcanic environment.



Fig 37: Impression (transformative costume) design from line-up. Artwork by Laura King.

8.7 First flight

The sixth and seventh costumes in the line-up are Lessa's and F'lar's Dragonrider flight uniform and Lessa's first flight costume. Key themes involve communicating her challenge of tradition and attainment of agency.

A summary of the scene from the novel:

Lessa manipulates F'lar to break Weyr tradition of a WeyrWoman being forbidden to ride, and he begins to teach her to fly. The original *Dragonflight* novel contains no description of the aesthetics of Lessa's garment. F'lar has a basic description as we are told his riding gloves are made of dragon leather. This costume represents a significant development for Lessa in attaining her agency. I imagine Lessa parading around in stolen dragonrider clothing, announcing she is anticipating flying Ramoth (dragon). This costume is the audience's first time witnessing Lessa in masculine attire (trousers) with a highly powerful stance.

Lessa's dress design incorporates the expensive blue and purple shell pigment palette which matches F'lar's Dragonrider suit chest piece. Lessa is actively choosing her identity by picking a flight suit. She wants to fly and reinforces that notion in her clothing choice. She hoists up her dress to reveal the same trousers beneath as the men. Women wearing men's clothing would be offensive cross-dress in Pern society. My designs can be seen over in Fig 38.



Fig 38: First flight design from line-up. Artwork by Laura King.

8.9 Military futuristic uniform

The final eighth and ninth costumes in the line-up are Lessa and F'lar's Military futurist uniform. Key themes are communicating equality and social advancement.

A summary of the scene from the novel:

In the narrative, Lessa travels back in time. The past Weyr's time-travels to assist Lessa's present in fighting Thread. The adaption alters the past Weyr's lifestyle, creating an advanced version of society. The adaption changes the suit aesthetics of the past Weyr's into modified advanced cryogenic suits from the voyage from Earth. Suits modified into military gear when Thread first fell due to them being durable and synthetic in material.

The original *Dragonflight* novel contains no description of the aesthetics of Lessa's and F'lar's flight suits. This costume design was the first garment I created in the series, due to this suit residing from the past, meaning it would influence shape language of the present-day military attire. Inspirations for this design included military uniforms, extreme biking armour and baseball pitcher padded clothing. The shape language of the Dragonriders helmet is inspired from the dragon's head shape. This design incorporates ideas of functionality and aerodynamics into creation. The last designs (Future suits, fig 42) incorporate levels of fantasy shape language but with inspiration from unique futuristic science fiction aesthetics appropriate to the narrative of Pern.

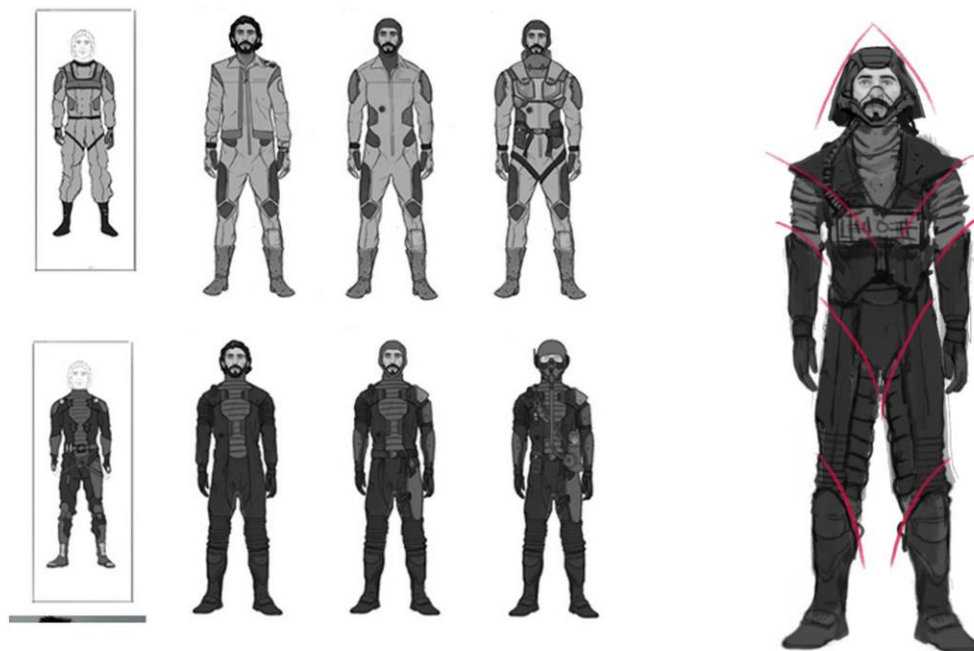


Fig 39: Early line designs of Military futuristic suit. Artwork by Laura King.



Fig 40: Military futuristic suit design from line-up. Artwork by Laura King.

Lessa's costume hybrids old and new technology together as seen above in Fig 40. Lessa is equipped with a flamethrower due to the Golden Queen dragon being forbidden to breathe fire. She is

equipped with a futuristic suit gifted by past colonists, and a leather arm piece with dragon gold motifs from present Mastercrafters. The arm piece is constructed from her old first flight trousers.

This flame thrower evens the playing field between male and female soldiers. Lessa's flamethrower is manufactured from an old antique shotgun originally from Earth and modified using the past Weyrs knowledge and technology. The coloured shoulder pauldrons mark their hierarchy as F'lar s the WeyrLeader (bronze dragon) and Lessa as the WeyrWoman (golden dragon).

8.10 Future suit maquette

This costume uses similar techniques from the previous Drudge Marquette but with a more substantial amount of 3D modelled components. Unlike the Drudge maquette this costume required tailoring fabric to the body to create a more streamlined finish. The 3D modelled arm and gun required 27 hours to 3D print. The modelling of custom knee pads, boots, shoulder pads and the breathing pack were 3D printed to 6th scale.

The objective of making this maquette was to create a comparison with Lessa's lowest (Drudge) and highest (Future suit) ranks and test the effectiveness of concept translation to manufacture into physical 3D printed elements and structured pattern made costume.

9. Conclusion

The initial research aim was to assess if a set of costumes could show a character's journey from repression to equality in contrast to her male counterpart. I believe the final line-up designs successfully characterise the emotional journey of Lessa's character and demonstrate how clothing can show the evolution and empowerment of a character. Lessa's endurance of oppressive Pernese society is demonstrated through her clothing. She began with repressed garments and evolves to stand firm in gender neutral, equal attire, reinforcing key elements from the original novel that challenge our idea of female empowerment.

I learnt that using both digital 2D conceptual design and three-dimensional maquettes methods resulted in a more profound understanding of costume creation. I believe these methods combined would be effective at communicating the final design for manufacturing real costume of the film adaption. Additionally the creation of digital line-art key scenes provides an opportunity to look into Lessa's emotional state, which has helped me to make more informed design decisions regarding her costume. In contrast, the posed figures in the line-up indicate change stance and hierarchy, and a map of the story moments which define a shift in her costume silhouette.

In summary, I feel the final research and design serve its two intended purposes. Firstly, it gives *Dragonflight* a contemporary appeal to modern audiences while tackling the inclusion of the Other's representation. Secondly, the designs successfully symbolise Lessa's journey as a dimensional character with real difficulties, hardship, triumph and a desire for personal freedom. This research demonstrates a sensitive adaptation of the licence enabling films like these to be adapted with contemporary values in place. Lessa's journey can influence an audience and may give them a better understanding of the "other's" daily struggle. Were this project's designs to be made into a feature film, I believe they could enable the director to consider the intended purposes of representing a female character in a realistic light and encourage studios and producers to let the stories of those historically underrepresented be told.

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