



THE DEPICTION OF DRAGON IN POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA



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2020

ภาพลักษณ์ของมังกรในสื่อบันเทิงสมัยใหม่



ปริญญานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตร
ศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ
คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ
ปีการศึกษา 2563
ลิขสิทธิ์ของมหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ

THE DEPICTION OF DRAGON IN POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of MASTER OF ARTS
(English)

Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University

2020

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THE THESIS TITLED
THE DEPICTION OF DRAGON IN POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

BY
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HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH AT SRINAKHARINWIROT UNIVERSITY

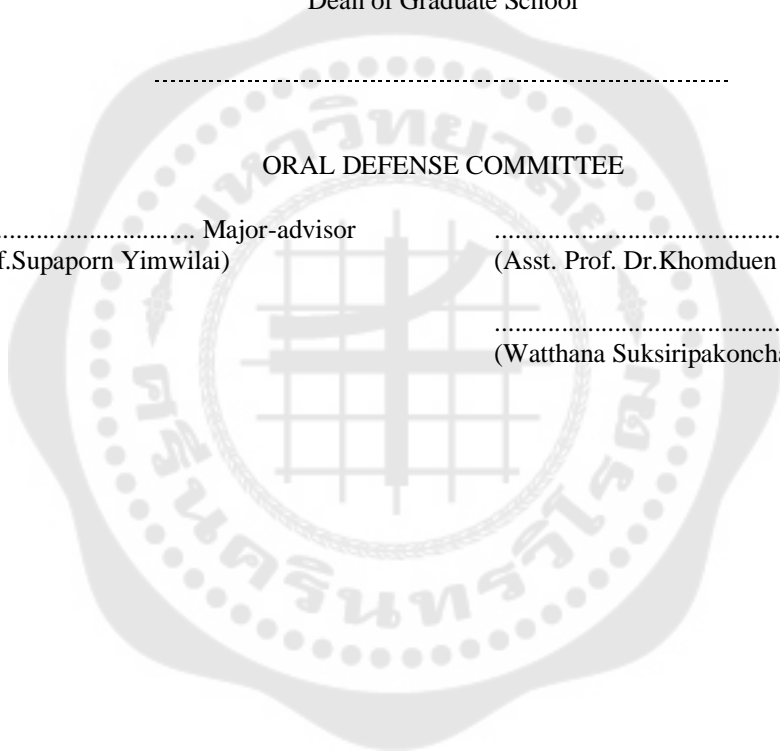
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Degree	MASTER OF ARTS
Academic Year	2020
Thesis Advisor	Assistant Professor Supaporn Yimwilai

This paper was focused on the characteristics and depictions of dragons in Christopher Paolini's *Eragon* (2002), a novel, and Square Enix's *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, a video game, in order to understand the changes to the depictions of dragons in entertainment media. Furthermore, the theory of Orientalism proposed by Edward Said was used as the theoretical framework of this study. The analysis revealed that the dragons in both *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* were changed to make them unique and different from past dragons. Past dragons were presented as the "Other." That is, they were stereotyped as evil creatures with a terrifying and aggressive appearance, as well as lesser intelligence and morality. Therefore, they should be destroyed by humans. On the contrary, Paolini depicted his dragons to be more humane by making them more regal in appearance, giving them more vibrant colors, showing them with greater intelligence, literacy, and superior morality. Similarly, in *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, dragons were depicted as more unique by adding the elements of diversity and modernization. They were given much greater varieties in terms of their appearances, from traditional reptilian designs to that of insectoid or humanoid designs. They also understood the concept of technologies used by their opponents and could devise cunning strategies to overcome their enemies without relying on brute force. As a result, the dragons in *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* were not the "Other" and lived in harmony with humans. This study indicated that the depictions of dragon in entertainment media have changed from the past, with the globalization of the world, intercultural exchange and the waning influence of religions in playing a part in altering the depiction of dragons.

Keyword : Dragons, Eragon, Final Fantasy XIV, Entertainment Media, Orientalism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give praise and appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Supaporn Yimwilai. Her guidance and council ensured the quality of this thesis, especially when it comes to the details regarding theoretical framework, citation, and grammar correction.

This research also benefits a lot from the various assistances provided by my associates and community members of my personal discord server. Due to their varying cultural views and national background, I was able to learn much more how each country appreciates and views the depiction of dragons, and the roles they play in fantasy stories.

I am also grateful to the support provided by my family during the course of the research study. Because of their recommendations, I was able to find motivation to see this thesis through, as well as providing me with additional counsels regarding the research.

PEERAWAT NONTAPHODEJ

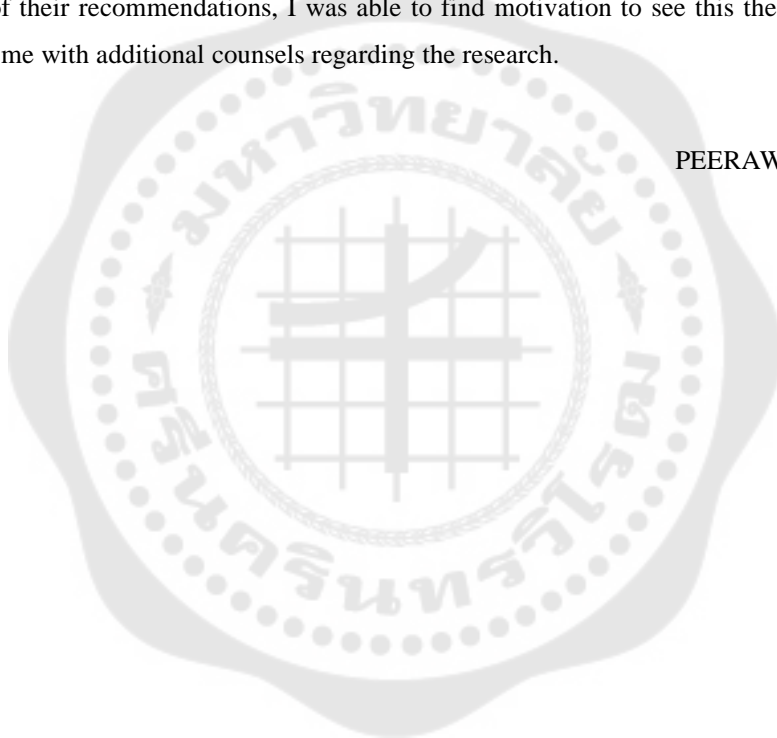


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The tales of dragons have always been a part of human's culture and civilizations since ancient times. They are one of mythical beings that have presences across the world, ranging from the holy dragons of China in the Eastern kingdom to the terrorizing flying killing machines of the West. Andrew Forbes stated that the influences of dragons spread throughout the globe (Forbes, 2013). Furthermore, the depictions of dragons often reflect the human culture of the time. They were often associated with many religious beliefs in the past, and their depictions change as human society evolve. According to Lina Yuan, both the Eastern and Western culture have their own depictions of dragons, each evolving beyond their initial depictions based on the changes of society (Yuan, 2015).

Dragons stand out among many other similar mythical creatures. While other mythical creatures gradually lose influences over a short period of time, dragons remain on the forefront as part of human literature. According to Donald G. McNei (2003), human believed that dragons truly existed for a long time before they were proved to be fictional. He stated that the dinosaur's fossils found across the world made significant impact on human's culture, with many past archeologists trying to associate these prehistoric remains with the legends of dragons. Furthermore, dragons have been depicted in various parts of the worlds unlike many other mythical creatures. Furthermore, Sara Lyn Hua (2016) commented that dragons are unique due to the impact they made in many literatures internationally.

Due to the ongoing reverence of dragons, they become recurring characters for many fantasy stories, being regularly depicted in literature. For example, Maja Gajek stated that dragons were often used as symbols or metaphors to human nature like wrath, pride, power, or wealth. The dragons may appear as enemies, allies to the protagonist in the story. Early western literatures tend to depict dragons as monsters, while eastern literatures depict them as gods. Due to the diversity in the legends of dragons, there is no rule that governs how dragons should be depicted, and the authors have greater creative freedom in the dragon's depictions compared to other mythical creatures. Furthermore, due to this diversity, dragons can often be used as inspirations for various other designs and concepts. New mythical creatures can and have been made based on the concepts of dragons such as nagas, wyverns or drakes (Forbes, 2013).

Dragons can also be used to study the evolutions of human cultural developments. As documented by various writers such as Mcneil (2003) and Forbes (2013), dragons play significant roles during the medieval age as religious figures. The change in the depictions of dragons often coincide with the shift in culture preferences. Once thought to be a pure representation of evil, many western dragons in modern literature represent a much more dynamic symbolism, with many elements borrowed from the Eastern dragons. By studying the history and development of dragons across various entertainment media, an understanding of the impacts that dragons may have made upon western culture will be possible.

Dragons may also be used as avatars to represent certain cultures or groups. Ragnar Ó. Guðmundsdóttir (2012) wrote in his analysis that dragons were used by various authors to represent the minorities within society in western culture

(Guðmundsdóttir, 2012). Past dragons were perceived heavily as aggressive, rampaging beasts that must be tamed by human. These negative depictions of dragon were, in part, due to the influences of religion who sought to use dragons as avatars to represent evil or non-believers. The changes to dragons in modern literature to be more benevolent and not tools coincide with the evolution of human society that strives to break away from past religious influences. However, dragons may also be used to represent higher authority or wisdom. Many eastern culture-inspired literatures depicted dragons as wise beings who guide or assist the protagonists. Many western dragons by 20th century were also depicted with greater positivity compared to the past (Yuan, 2021, p. 75).

Across the world, dragons are often depicted in entertainment media. Dragons appear in various novels, movies, and video games. Some authors use dragons as enemies to the protagonist like Smaug in *The Hobbits* (1937). As antagonists, the dragons are depicted as obstacles or negative representation of human's darker nature. However, many other authors depict dragons as neutral or even friendly force to the protagonists. The dragons may serve as mentors, allies, mounts, or friends to the protagonists. For examples, Muchu from Disney's *Mulan* (1998) is a tiny Chinese dragon that serves as a mentor and friend to Mulan (Barry Cook, 1998). Sandra Unerman (2002) stated that dragons are often depicted in entertainment media because the depictions of dragons often reflect the time period of the entertainment media, the dragons undergo constant shift, with new concepts being introduced regularly by authors to create a sense of uniqueness to their dragons.

Much research has been done to study the depictions of dragons in the past. Authors such as Gajek made extensive studies on dragons in both the western and

eastern culture. Sandra Unerman (2002) also made various historical studies of dragons that detailed back to as old as medieval era (Unerman, 2002). Guðmundsdóttir even made a direct comparison between dragons and real-world social norms in his study, stating that dragons are more than just fictional beings, they are used to present various aspects of human societies that are important part of human cultural evolutions.

Gajek's research also finds that it is due to the constantly changing and evolving human societies that dragons too will continue to change. Regardless of how much they may change, dragons will still be relevant across fantasy fictions for a long time due to their nature. In this way, his research supports the ideas that dragons are important figures in fantasy fictions that are always important to look at (Gajek, 2015).

Many researchers were interested in studying how dragons were used by authors in the past to project their ideologies into their fantasy fictions, demonstrating of how influential dragons are to human culture despite being just a fictional being. With dragons being an imposing figure, it is thus only natural that dragons will appear throughout various fantasies. They can be used as one of the many tools to project the concept of reality into the fantasy world.

Yet many of these studies look at the old stories that may not be quite up to date. Popular case studies for dragons such as *The Hobbits* are considerably dated and may no longer serve as a good indication of modern culture's viewpoints. Thus, this research aims to analyze the dragon story of *Eragon*, a dragon story written by Paolini in 2002 which is slightly more modern.

However, many studies used data samples that are quite dated. Tolkien's writings and literatures were used extensively as case studies, which although famous and successful, were also dated. This means that the modern day's social norms and cultural beliefs may not be so easily reflected through the studies of older literatures like Tolkien's dragons. As a result, this study aims to analyze dragons based on more recent data within 21st century time period, *Eragon* (a 2002 novel), and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* (a 2013 video game).

Scope of the Study

This study will focus on dragons presented in two types of entertainment media in contemporary period: *Eragon* (Novel) and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* (Video Game). These samples will be analyzed using Edward Said's theory of Orientalism as the theoretical framework.

Eragon

Eragon is the first novel of the *Inheritance Cycle* series. The story was written by Christopher Paolini (see Appendix 1) and was first published in 2002 and republished later in 2003. The story tells the tale of a young boy Eragon who discovers a dragon egg. After hatching the dragon, he named her Saphira and the two become fast friends. As they travel across the lands, they meet many other dragons, both friend and foe. *Eragon* follows the standard hero's journey setup where the protagonist and his allies must endure multiple trials to achieve their goals (Paolini, 2003).

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn (FFXIV, see Appendix 2) is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG, see Appendix 3) developed by Square Enix under the producer Naoki Yoshida. The game first launched in 2013 and featured deep narrative story atypical of most games of similar genre. The game has since launched multiple expansions afterwards and the story is still on-going by 2021. The story of FFXIV involves the journey of the player's character, the Warrior of Light in his or her quest to save the world from evildoers. During the course of the journey, they meet many dragons who play various roles in the story. Some of the dragons are friendly, offering aid and guidance to the player. But many dragons also seek to stop or defeat the Warrior of Light in an effort to exact revenge upon mankind (Yoshida, 2013).

Definition of Terms

Entertainment Media refers to all forms of media that provide entertainment to the audience. Based to the description provided by Carnegie Mellon University, the term refers to media that entertains people which consists of film, television, radio, and print (Taylor, 2015). They are broadcasted through channels such as movies, TV, shows, radio, news, music, books, or video games. It is part of the larger mass media family, designed as means to publicly communicate across large groups of audience. L.J. Shrum adds that entertainment media may also act or transform into persuasion tools that can change or manipulate audience (Shrum, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this research is to study the roles of dragons in modern time and its influences on cultures and inspirations. In order to achieve this, two entertainment media sources will be studied. By analyzing and studying the characteristics and depictions of dragons in these entertainment media, it should be possible to understand the roles that dragons play in human culture, and how human culture changes the ways in which dragons are depicted. After that, the research will analyze and discuss the ways in which dragons may be implemented in entertainment media.

Specifically, the research seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To study the changes in depictions of dragons in *Eragon*.
2. To study the changes in depictions of dragons in *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*.

Significance of the Study

Studying the depiction of the dragons may yield interesting results regarding the change of dragons in culture. The significance of the study is thus

1. It will help readers better understand the change of dragon's depictions and how they reflect the change in human's culture or society.
2. It will help readers see the differences in dragon's depiction between past printed and modern digital entertainment media.
3. It can be guidelines to how writers can add uniqueness to the dragons in their literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the attempt to study the depiction of dragons in entertainment media, it is important to first determine the overall framework and accumulate data regarding dragon's depiction histories, characteristics, and symbolism. A study on the growing popularity of video games as entertainment media will also provide greater context and importance in the video game sample. As a result, this chapter will explain the theoretical framework that was used for the study, the general background of dragon depictions, the development of video games as entertainment media and related research.

Orientalism

Edward Said's theory of Orientalism (1978) was a theoretical framework used for this study. Orientalism is a critical concept established by Said to describe the West's tendencies to describe aspects of eastern society, or the Other/Orients in negative manner. The term refers to the Orient or "Other" an opposite definition of the Occident. The "Other" in Orientalism includes Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. Said claims that old western scholars create Orientalism as a way for the Western culture to justify their superiority, by creating false images that depict other cultures as inherently inferior and less educated than the West (Said, 1978). The "Other" not only are made to be inferior in terms of academic tradition, but also worldview as well as political ideology. images, in turn, create recurring cliché and beliefs that are carried all the way to the present time of post-colonization period. The influences of these manipulations cause many western literacies and cultures to

unfairly view the Orient or “Other” as being inferior in intelligence, knowledge, and rationality. It is through this Orientalism, that western literatures are believed to portray certain groups as the “Other” as a way to conveniently justify their inferior morality, intellect or rationality when compared to the West (S. R. Moosavania, 2011).

Said believed that Orientalism carried influence in the fields of literacy theory, human geography, and cultural studies. In terms of literacy, the results of Orientalism caused various non-western literatures to be considered unimportant for study or preservation, or to be changed to accommodate western images. In terms of geography, it revealed the western stereotypes for other cultures such as Russians, where certain behaviors or cultures are being classified as being “Russians” in an effort to project inferiority against the western world in an exaggerated manner. Finally, Orientalism caused a surge in post-colonial culture studies. These studies focused on the continued dominance of western powers, in both academic knowledge and ways of intellectual enquiry or research. The theory provided a framework and method for the purpose of analyzing cultural representations of the “Orients” or “Other” (Said, 1978).

Said believed that Orientalism is, however, simply a manipulation to master over the “Other” in a hegemonic manner. For Said, it was not a fact of nature, but simply a convenient deception made by old western scholars. The concept created an image that paints the West as a rational, peaceful, intelligent, and powerful, while the opposite was true for the non-West “Other”. This, according to Said, was why the Europeans or Americans appeared to always emerges as the superior, more advanced culture in literature. Said did, however, acknowledge that the representative nature

behind Orientalism was somewhat necessary, but that it should not come at the expense of regression of other cultures (Said, 1978).

Orientalism has been used as a framework for some cultural representation analysis. The attempts made by the western colonizers to downplay their aggressive expansion through careful recontextualize certain culture's values and representations have been used to study the impact, changes, and evolution of literature by some research analysis. As the world begins to move towards globalization, the values of other cultures will be respected, and western imperialism will become less justified. Without colonial imperialism, the regression part of Orientalism can be lessened or eliminated (Prakask, 1995).

History of Dragon's Depiction

Dragons have been depicted since the medieval time. According to Donald G. McNeil (2003), he stated that unlike many other mythical creatures, dragons have been part of human culture for a long time, and only very later on have they been truly proven to be fictional. Furthermore, dragons appeared in various parts of the worlds in many cultures and for the longest of times, were thought to have actually existed. McNeil believed that this was, in part, due to the past common misconception that the dinosaur fossils were that of the dragons. Since dinosaurs fossils have been discovered all across the world, he believed that it was no coincidence that the dragons became a famous recurring mythical creature across the globe (Mcneil, 2003).

Dragons have had major influences in the western culture over the course of history. It is said that during Mesopotamian era, the god Naduk killed Tiamat, the evil

dragon, splitting the dragon in half. One half becomes the sky, another becomes the ground thus creating Earth. Furthermore, according to the Bible, the same dragon was also a manifestation of Satan himself. This indicates that dragons have major influences over the western religious beliefs since the ancient times (Yuan, 2015).

In contrast to the eastern culture, the west generally depicted dragons in a more satanic manner. Many western religions believed that the dragons represented the concept of the seven sins of mankind. As a result, western dragons were generally presented with many negative qualities of human, such as their lust for power, their savage nature or their penchant for greed and suffering. The folklores of western origin that involved dragon would often revolve around heroic figures cutting down these creatures as a result, often acquiring vast treasures in the process (Mcneil, 2003).

There is also a debate on how the term “dragon” came to be, and the meaning behind the word. Based upon the terminology used to describe the creature, the term “Dragon” may have meant “Shard-sighted one” or *δέρκομαι* in Ancient Greek, based on *The Universal Dictionary of English Language* (Wyld, 1946). Alternatively, the term may be based on Aryan dialect meaning “to see” (Skeat, 1946). Both sources, regardless, point out the meaning that dragons are creatures with great sights.

Dragons also play a significant role throughout Eastern culture’s history. For example, the “Loong” dragons in Chinese represent the symbol of the royal family, and are thus associated with Chinese imperial rule since the ancient times (Yuan, 2015). According to Yuan, the term Loong means a supernatural animal which has horns, whiskers, and a single head with the ability to cause rains and able to fly in the

sky. Because of this connection to the royal family, Loong dragons have come to be regarded as mythical creatures that bring fortune and prosperity and are sacred to their beliefs. Therefore, many sculptures and clothes are made with styles representing the Loong Dragons (Yuan, 2015).

In addition, dragons are also generally depicted favorably and positively across other Eastern cultures due to their close proximity to China. Many of these dragons possess the various similar attributes to that of the Chinese Loong dragons, namely their general appearances and their powers over water, wind, and sky. For example, Japanese Ryu dragons are influenced by Chinese Loong dragons and thus many similarities can be drawn between them (Ku, 2012). Japanese dragons are as such, also heavily associated with Shinto Shrines, as well as various Buddhist temples due to their religious connections. They also appear on Yakuza cultures, with many Yakuza having tattoos and namesakes associated with that of dragon.

Dragon Characteristics

Western dragon primary physiology features are their enormous wings, menacing horns, and fangs with dark or red snake-scaled bodies and usually sports limbs. They achieve flight by utilizing their wings which although strong, can be damaged and renders flying difficult. Due to their powerful physique, western dragons utilize their bodies as weapons much more than eastern ones, from their teeth to their claws, wings and tails, all are equally deadly against their combatants. They are also known to employ various elemental powers such as fire, lightning, ice, or even divine and black magic. One distinct feature often used by western dragons are their

ability to breathe fire or other elements through their breaths, either through natural means or magical-based; an attack usually not seen on eastern dragons (Forbes, 2013). Although each country within the western nations has their own variations of dragons, a truly “modernized” iteration of dragon emerged around the time of 1260 AD. This is defined by their iconic reptilian features, with horns, arms, legs and sets of wings. The number of wings varies on a case-by-case basis, but this physical attribute is generally the most distinctive features that Eastern dragons do not have.

Western dragons are generally portrayed to live in caves, mountains or sometimes, their own personal keeps. They are considered apex predators that regularly prey and terrorize all beings within its hunting ground. They lay eggs and care for their offspring within their nests, often going to great lengths to protect the eggs from potential hunters. Since they are a major threat to many people, dragon hunters and looters are also commonly portrayed. On many occasions, dragon eggs may be stolen and adopted by other species and raised to be personal deadly living weapons against other enemies. They are, aggressive creatures bred for destruction by nature (Forbes, 2013).

On the other hand, Eastern dragons have long, fish-scaled, green or yellow s snake-like skin and body without wings. Their heads are usually a combination of many animals, primarily lions. They usually have deer antlers, long beards, lion manes and reptilian eyes. Some eastern dragons do not have arms and legs and simply fly in the air through magical power without the need for wings. They usually display power over wind, air and water magic (Ingersoll, 1928).

In terms of their ecology, eastern dragons usually live under water, in the skies or rarely in caves. They are not known to prey on other animals and usually do not

naturally carry eggs for offspring and use some other magical methods for reproduction instead. They are isolationists who do not generally interfere with mortal affairs, only emerging to interact with those who have proven worthy of their attentions. Their primary methods of intervention in the environment are usually done through avatars of their choosing, usually in the form of their chosen warriors who receive their blessings and powers. Since they do not actively engage in worldly affairs, dragon hunting is extremely rare; however, the hunting for dragon-related artifacts is common practices within stories that incorporate eastern dragons (Huo, 2016).

Based upon the prior analysis, it can thus be surmised that eastern dragons are generally much more benevolent and peaceful, representing good qualities of humanity, while the western dragons are the polar opposite. Eastern dragons are a combination of various animals, each considered sacred and holy in one way or another, giving an aura of majestic light. Meanwhile, western dragons are purely reptilian with very aggressive and domineering appearances.

One of the better examples of modern dragon depictions that were referenced a lot by various research was Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Ring*. These series of novels have such extensive details about dragons that many other following works still base their frameworks of Tolkien's creativity (Tolkien, 1937). However, due to the fact that Tolkien's works have already been heavily researched, they will only be used as references and not part of the main study of this research.

Dragon Symbolism

Aside from the similarities and differences of dragons across various religions and time, one more aspect that has been studied, the cultural impact of dragons. Guðmundsdóttir explained in his study that dragons may be used to represent “The Other,” the older depictions of dragons where they are perceived as untamed beasts that must be killed by the heroes on their great journey. In this case, the dragons have evolved in the modern cultures to be different, acting more like companions or allies to the protagonist’s great journey rather than mindless beasts that must be killed. This suggested that dragons are designed and made differently over time, even though they belong to the same source material in the past (Guðmundsdóttir, 2012).

Earlier on, dragons were prominently portrayed as concepts of evil and destructions. These dragons came into the minds of humans as a combination of various animal images such as snakes, eagles, or panthers, all of which were predators of our ancient primates. The stories during those times would generally depict dragons based on religious concepts: they were represented as evils that terrorized mankind and must be stopped (Huo, 2016). Most stories during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries would often utilize dragons as opponents for the protagonists to slay (Unerman, 2002).

Particularly within European cultures, dragons are the symbols of sins, wickedness, and ferocity. This is mostly due to the influences of the story of Saint George in *the Golden Legend*, a tale that involved the slaying of dragon (Symbols). This reinforced the notion that dragons represent chaos and untamed nature. However, dragons also symbolize supernatural power, wisdom, strength and hidden knowledges (Dove, 2011).

However, dragons become a powerful and much more positive symbol in the fictional fantasy story telling in the twentieth century. They have been portrayed with much different depictions from the past, having been integrated into mankind much more. Instead of slaying dragons, characters begin to live with dragons, sometimes even commanding them. In certain stories such as *How to Train Your Dragon*, the dragons are even shown to be misunderstood, sympathetic beings. Ragna Guðmundsdóttir theorizes that this sudden reverse is due to the modernist and postmodernist ideas in which he wrote “The most fundamental elements of practices were challenged and rejected” (Barry, 2009). In other words, the traditional ideas were losing influences, giving writers new inspirations to develop their dragons freed from the perception that once plagued the cultural beliefs (Guðmundsdóttir, 2012). That is, dragons are no longer considered solely to be beasts to be slaughtered. They have now become civilized and neutral force, moving away from the old beliefs. While they may still fulfil the role of evils, they are no longer one-dimensional characters, an example which is presented in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. In the story, while Smaug actions are typical of medieval dragons, he demonstrates understandings of human societies. He asked Bilbo, one of the characters on how Bilbo would carry the treasures home, mentioning the need for carriages, armed guards, and tolls. His accents were made to sound like British upper class (Tolkien, 1937). In fact, Ragna believed that Smaug was based off British upper class in terms of his traits, showing sense of superiority and greed for useless things. Modern dragons such as Smaug have thus become a symbol of various human history and culture beyond just being mindless beasts (Guðmundsdóttir, 2012).

Different from the West, Eastern dragons were represented as deities and positive forces of eastern people. Both Sara Lyn Hua (2016) and Liu Yuan (2015) state that eastern dragons were depicted as being auspicious and lucky. They brought rain and prosperity to the lands while guarding the skies. In fact, Chinese people believed themselves to be descendants of dragons. The emperor was approved to rule over the land by the heavens by the dragon seal and throne (known as “龙椅(lóng yǐ)” or “dragon chair” (Yuan, 2015). The influences of Chinese cultures in the past are so significant that even now countries in the East still celebrate their new years with dragon dances (Huo, 2016).

Perhaps such a drastic difference in how dragons were depicted in the past by both sides had played a major factor in how modern dragons are depicted. Now that the world is connected via mass media, the barriers that once separated the two cultures have been removed. As a result, studying the depictions of dragons from modern entertainment media may give a clearer picture on how dragons are perceived right now, and how their depictions reflect our ever-changing cultures and beliefs.

Video Games as Entertainment Media

There is a growing popularity of video games as a story-telling entertainment media. The advancement in computer graphics, memory capacity, sound designs and overall experiences allow game developers to construct a digital, fictional world that can be used to tell a powerful story similar to books or movies. Victor Navarro Remesal (2018) studied on the gender, sex, and romance using three video games as data samples. In his findings, games have become powerful tools to explore identities and diversities of characters with complex story and background (Navarro-Remesal,

2018). Furthermore, Jakub Majewski (2003) made similar study on video game narrative and found that the previous assumptions that video games and narratives were incompatible may be wrong. Majewski argued that video games enable new narrative tools that allow for even greater degree of subjectivity compared to non-interactive mediums such as books (Majewski, 2003). The interactive nature of video games also makes them able to create narrative story that cannot be done by traditional printed media. This is supported by Tamer Thabet (2015)'s study on video game narrative and found that video game's story is interactive, being told by both the player as well as the author. The author sets up the possibilities, and the player "narrates" the story by playing (Thabet, 2015).

Related Research

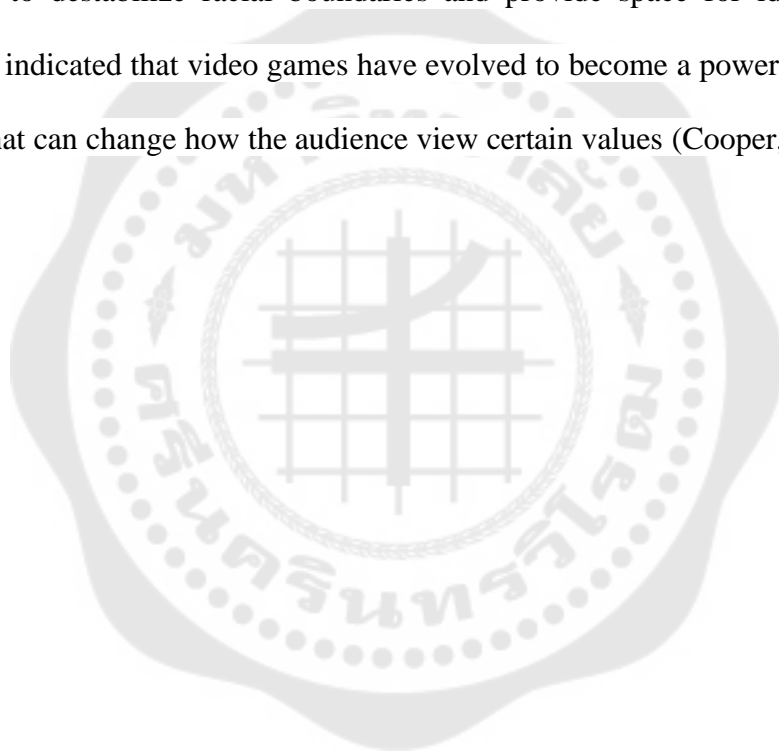
Within the field of fantasy fiction, dragons are recurring creatures that appears many times, leading to various research being made to study the depictions of dragons in the writings. Unerman (2002) made extensive studies on dragons within twentieth century. Her research focused on famous works of that time such as Tolkien's and Beowulf's dragons. She discovered the many deceptive similarities and differences between the two antagonistic dragons. She concluded that the roles of dragons in each era illustrated deeper changes in human society and approaches to fiction. The change in attitudes towards animal and humanity was found, with humans instead playing the role of evil antagonists instead. Her findings also indicated that modern dragons were designed to display human-like traits, while still following the same traditions as the old dragons.

Likewise, Guðmundsdóttir (2012) expanded the study of Unerman by studying Tolkien's and McCaffrey's dragons. The analysis revealed that McCaffrey's dragons were not represented as enemies of mankind, but their allies instead. Though they lacked the many human-like mannerism displayed by Tolkien's Smaug, McCaffrey's dragons shared many similarities with trained animals used by human, being able to understand what the dragon riders wanted them to do. Dragons in this story suggested a vision of society where human and animals live in a symbolic relationship and could understand each other (Unerman, 2002).

Furthermore, Guðmundsdóttir (2012) also studied one of the animated movies, *How to Train Your Dragon*. Toothless, the dragon in this story, was shown to demonstrate many dog and cat-like behaviors. This was because dragons like Toothless was domesticated by Vikings; these peaceful traits were not shared with Drago Bludvist's enslaved dragons who had more in common with old dragons. His research indicated that dragons could be used to represent the oppressed, both from humans and other dragons.

The symbolism of dragons in *Eragon* was also studied by Rian Muhammad (2011). The objective of Muhammad's research was to identify and interpret the symbols and the meaning of dragon's characters. Muhammad discovered that each dragon in *Eragon* had their own symbols unique to each other. Saphira represented love and friendship, while the antagonistic dragons like Shruikan was the symbol of evil and destruction. The study concluded that the dragons in *Eragon* were depicted with specific symbols that defined the concepts that they represented through their actions (Muhammad, 2011).

While there is general lack of study of dragon depictions in video game, some research has been done to analyze the roles in which video games can play to bring up the subject of cultural identity or change. One example was the research made by Victoria Cooper (2017) which studied the political, cultural and race depictions in *Elder Scrolls:Skyrim*, a game that featured dragons heavily. Cooper discovered that players of the game were actively engaged in identity play, and that games could act as tools to destabilize racial boundaries and provide space for identity play. The findings indicated that video games have evolved to become a powerful entertainment media that can change how the audience view certain values (Cooper, 2017).



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the details of research design, theoretical frameworks and sample will be explained, along with providing the details behind the data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using the content analysis approach. The samples were two entertainment media: *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*. The data were analyzed by content analysis using Edward Said's Orientalism as framework.

Theoretical Framework

Edward Said's theory of Orientalism was the primary theoretical framework used to analyze the changes in dragon's depictions. Orientalism describes the term "Other" as a means to refer to certain culture that is deemed to be different, usually inferior to another culture. The process of creating the image of the "Other" can be made through multiple depictions such as the stereotype of certain negative aspects or depicting one society to be less rationale or intelligent than another, but also to see how these views could be proven false after closer examination (Said, 1978). In particular, this theory was chosen because the constant change in dragon's depictions coincide with the change in human culture, and by using Orientalism as a framework, it will be possible to see the many past negative aspects of dragons that have been

changed to fit new perspective that attempts to move away from culture or race prejudices.

Data Samples

The samples in this study included 1) *Eragon* 2) *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*. They were chosen due to the unique aspects that are used to depict the dragons in the stories. When compared to many past depictions, the dragons in both media were praised by critics for their much greater depth, background, and importance.

Eragon, the first of the *Inheritance Cycle* series of novel was picked as the first sample. This particular novel was selected due to its exploration on relationship between a newly hatched dragon and its owner, Eragon. The book has received various comments, both positive and negative. Many criticized its tendency to borrow elements from other works but praised that the story was quick and exciting. For example, Liz Rosenberg stated that the book has awkward and gangly prose, but ultimately an authentic work of great talent. Matt Casamssina, a reviewer from IGN (Imagine Games Network, see Appendix 3) noted that the book was entertaining, and the author was able to hold the reader's eyes, which distinguished the books from other similar fantasy novels (Casamassina, 2009).

Despite receiving mixed reviews, the book still received a substantial popularity. It was the third best-selling children's hardback book of 2003. It also received the second best-selling paperback of 2005 and was placed on the *New York Time's* Children's Book Best Selling List for 121 weeks. Finally, the book received a film adaptation of the same name on December 15, 2006. Many of the positive

reviews referenced Saphira, the dragon in the story owned by the protagonist (Rosenberg, 2003).

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn (FFXIV for short) is picked as the second sample. This online multiplayer game was selected due to its many new innovative and creative depiction of dragons. The game itself has been highly praised by various critics and reviews including IGN and Metacritic (Metacritic, 2014).

FFXIV has an engaging narrative and story that is atypical of similar games of its type. There is a heavy emphasis on both the importance of the player's character as well as all other supporting casts, many of which are related to dragons. Many praises the quality of the story to be akin to actual novels or books, with high number of positive reviews of over 90 from critic reviews and 9.0 from user reviews.

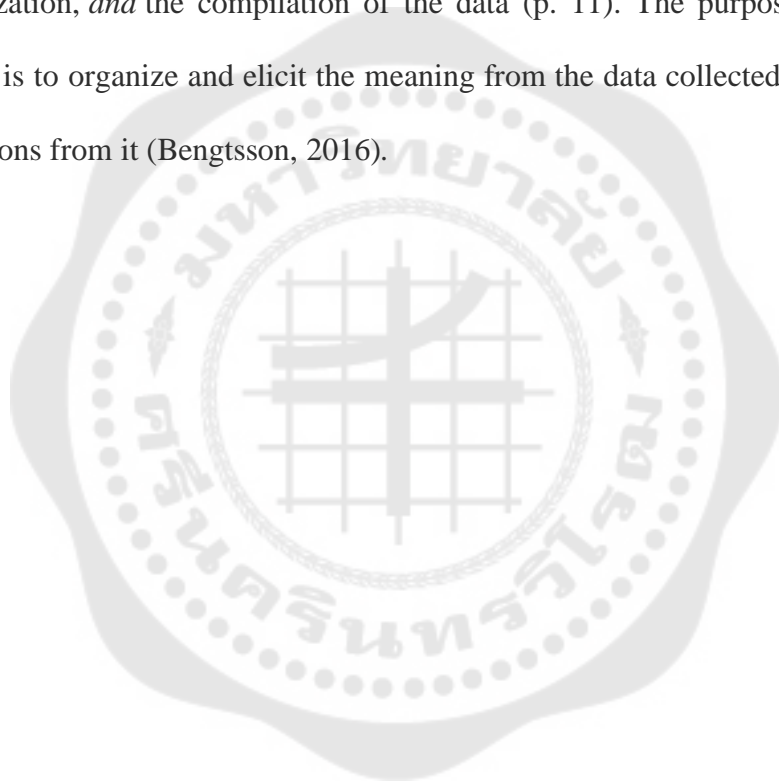
Furthermore, both *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* provide a reasonable amount of time-gap from popular past fantasy stories that have dragons in them. *Eragon* was first published in 2002, making it part of the early dragon literatures in the 21st century. *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, in turn, was released in 2013, giving the game another decade gap in which the depictions of dragons may be studied to see their changes when compared to past depictions.

Data Collection

The data from *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* was processed and then analyzed to determine the changes in the depiction of the dragons compared to the past. The data was grouped and categorized into themes using Orientalism as a framework.

Data Analysis

All the collected information was analyzed using the descriptive content analysis method. This method was used because it directly examined the documents to understand the meanings behind words, sentences, and phrases within the contents. According to Mariette Bengtsson (2016), data analysis using content analysis approach involves the decontextualization, the recontextualization, the categorization, *and* the compilation of the data (p. 11). The purpose of the content analysis is to organize and elicit the meaning from the data collected in order to draw conclusions from it (Bengtsson, 2016).



CHAPTER 4

Finding

The aim of this study was to explore the change in dragon depiction in two types of entertainment media. Edward Said's Orientalism was employed to the analysis. This chapter presents the results of the analysis and divide into two parts, namely the depiction of dragons in *Eragon* and the depiction of dragons in *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*.

4.1 The Depiction of Dragons in *Eragon*

Eragon is the first book of the *Inheritance Cycle* novel series written by Christopher Paolini. The story takes place in a western medieval fantasy world of Alagäesia and follows the journey of a young man named Eragon and his dragon companion, Saphira in their quest to stop the tyranny of Galbatorix, the story's antagonist. During his journey, he meets many allies such as Brom the Wizard who is his mentor and Anya the female elf who travels with him. Although the plot of *Eragon* is typical of the old fantasy genre involving the protagonist rising to challenge the villain, the beauty and charm of the story revolves in the carefully designed dragons in the story (Paolini, 2003).

Dragons are amongst one of the most important concepts that Paolini introduces into his story. He spends a great deal of efforts to craft dragons into interesting beings that contradicts the usual depictions of dragons in the past. Paolini uses various methods to transform his dragons into something unique, based on the source materials he has researched in the past such as Tolkien's *The Hobbit* or McCaffrey's *Dragonriders of Pern* as mentioned in his 2005 interview. The result is a

compelling story that explores the relationships between a man and his dragon friend, against an unforgiving world where dragons almost become a myth.

As a result, there are multiple elements that make dragons in *Eragon* more unique from past stories. For example, the dragons in *Eragon* are humanized, both in terms of physically and mentally, to make them more relatable to humans. This humanization makes them appear less savage or evil, but more intelligent being deserving of respect. The dragons also become significantly more involved in the overall plot compared to the past, giving them deeper background and personality than past depictions.

4.1.1 Humanizing the Dragons

There are many attributes that define us humans as a species. According to Lisa Marder (2019), multiple theories have been made to define: what makes human a human? What separates us from other intelligent animals. Can a humanoid-shaped animal be called a human? Marder theorizes that the combination of the following attributes is what makes us human such as the Voice Box which allows us to speak, hairless skins, blushing expression, religious beliefs and death awareness or concerns for the future of their species. These are some attributes that resonate with human as a species, and thus they are often used in fictional species to make them appear more humane and relatable. The character design should create a sense of familiarity and comfortability to the viewers (Marder, 2019).

For *Eragon*, Paolini used various methods to humanize his dragons, both physically and mentally. In terms of physical depictions, the dragons in *Eragon* are given regal appearances and diverse colors. These make them stand out from past

depictions. Mentally, the dragons are depicted with higher intelligence, literacy, as well as superior morality compared to their predecessors.

The Physical Change of Dragons

Using humans as templates to design fictional being's physical appearances can make them feel more intelligent and humane. According to Marder (2019), readers tend to be more familiar with races that possess human-like designs or appearances. For example, many insect-based characters in Disney or Pixar movies are portrayed with human-like facial expressions over their real-life counterparts to make them more friendly and relatable. Furthermore, many fantasy races are depicted to have humanoid shape but with different size and heights, like elves, dwarves, gnomes, orcs, or trolls. On the other hand, fictional beings can appear less humane by emphasizing on their non-humanoid traits. Removing human-like facial features and replacing them with animalistic or insectoid ones can make fictional beings appear more primitive and savage. An example of this can be found in the depiction of alien races in *Star Wars* where aliens like the Hutts (slugs), the Geonosians (bugs), or Wookies (primates) are perceived to be more savage, primitive, or uncivilized.

Dragons can also be made to appear more humane and intelligent. While they may not be made to easily resemble humans due to their reptilian nature, various humanoid attributes can be given to compensate. For example, giving them more vibrant colors can make them less animalistic and more approachable. Constructing their facial expressions to be expressive can also make them more relatable as pointed out by Marder. Both examples are what Paolini used to paint his dragons in a more positive light as a result (Marder, 2019).

Dragons in the past stories usually have menacing appearances and animal-like facial features. Smaug from *The Hobbits*, for example, is depicted with furious and aggressive appearance. His expression makes him appear as a towering and ferocious beast. Although Smaug may display a level of higher intelligence than a typical animal, the way his appearance is depicted heavily paints the picture that he is a beast of destruction that the protagonist must defeat. This is what Marder explained in her study, the physical depiction of Smaug emphasizes on his savagery and destructive nature, making it easier for the audience to understand Smaug's role as the antagonist.

Past dragons were depicted this way due to the influences of western culture's traditional concepts of dragon. Because past dragons were associated with many negative elements, many past stories tend to paint the picture of dragons as powerful and fearsome creatures, who align with forces of evil to create challenges for the protagonists. The past dragons were given appearances that conveyed the images of something dangerous and evil. As a result, they became the representation of the "Other" in Orientalism.

On the other hand, Paolini's dragons in *Eragon* do not possess menacing appearances. Their horns are shorter, their bodies are not as spiky, and their eyes are much less menacing, sometimes depicted to be human-like with visible irises. An example of this is shown on the cover page of the book itself in which Saphira is drawn with a very calm and noble expression with her eyes gazing at the readers as if she is calmly judging them. This less-menacing, more regal design decisions for the dragons in *Eragon* are made to send readers the messages that the dragons are not savage beasts. The less monstrous and more humane features make them look

intelligent and noble. K.M. Weiland (2017) states that good fantasy stories have their designs rooted on reality so that they are relatable for the readers (Weiland, 2017). Therefore, giving dragons with certain humanoid aesthetics make them more humane and less monstrous. For the dragons in *Eragon*, aspects that humanize them are used to present the dragons in a more positive manner, by depicting them with more regal, proud and less threatening demeanor. These designs give Paolini's dragons the impression that they are noble, intelligent, and not prone to anger and savagery like Smaug.

Colors can also be used to describe characters as part of physical depictions. They act as symbols to represent various meanings in culture. According to Edith Feisner (2006), colors have been used as symbols, and its context change over time. The science behind color shows that humans are more attracted to colorful or mysterious objects such as the green of the forests, the white of the seas, the blue of the skies, or the colors of our clothes. Unique and colorful objects stand out in our eyes and are easier to garner attention. An example is how we find colorful insects like butterflies attractive, and plain and dark insects like cockroaches disgusting. These colors, according to Feisner, eventually make humans associate certain symbols or beliefs with them. Many writers, as a result, use colors to help express the characters or settings in their stories (Feisner, 2006).

As color can be used to represent symbols or personalities, they are often used to emphasize the character's traits or affinity. The same is true for dragons as well; red dragons may represent ferocity or anger while blue dragons may represent calmness, peace, or wisdom. Furthermore, color may be also used to show the dragon's affinity to certain biological or magical symbols such as elements; red

dragons have fire power, blue dragons have ice or waterpower, or green dragons have nature power.

Many dragons of past stories such as Smaug tend to feature mostly darker tones to their skins and scale colors to emphasize on their evilness. They lack the variations in color, as well as the brightness in their designs. This makes them appear to be much less lively and whimsical, and also make them appear more like reptilian creatures with wings. The blackness in their color attributes them to various negative symbols in Christianity such as evil, fear, unhappiness, or anger; all of which are traits that best describe these dragons such as Smaug. This choice of color is done to give the audiences the implications that past dragons like Smaug are evil creatures by nature, and that the heroes are justified in seeking their destruction. By depicting them to have similar colors to real reptilian animals, the audience can draw similarities between them, making them akin to mere animals that are not equal to the audiences who are human. The saturation of blackness in their color further gives the indication, to the western audience that these dragons are different, dirty, or uncivilized; a common belief held by westerners regarding black people in the past. These dark or black dragons like Smaug are thus associated with the “Other” like in Said’s theory, for they are considered to be violent, inferior, and unequal to humans.

On the other hand, dragons in *Eragon* have very colorful skin colors ranging from white, yellow, blue, red, black, or various others. These vibrant and diverse scale colors that they possess give them a much livelier and whimsical feel to both Eragon and the readers. Like Feisner ideas, the colors are used as symbols to express the dragon’s personality (Feisner, 2006). Sapphire, a blue dragon is calm, collected, and majestic. Glaedr, a gold dragon is wise, noble, and strict. Shrurikan, the antagonist’s

black dragon is like Smaug, filled with anger, hatred, and sin. Paolini uses these colors to help further flesh out his dragon's identity by giving them colors that fit with their personalities and traits.

The diverse colors in Paolini's dragon may also be linked to the real world's international globalization that was taking place during that time. In order to challenge the depiction of dragons as the "Other," *Eragon* depicts dragons with diverse colors, but this diversity does not devalue or make one color's superior to another. This is what modern society is trying to achieve as well by eliminating color inequality and prejudices. Between the many colors of dragons, none of them are considered the "Other" within their society, they are all equal to one another. Eragon does not think Saphira as a lesser dragon due to her blue color.

The Mental Change of Dragons

Another aspect that is used to humanize Paolini's dragons is their high intelligence and literacy. According to Marder (2019), one key aspect that defines us human is our capacity for higher intelligence and our ability to efficiently communicate to each other using verbal communications. While other animals may show signs of intelligence, or their own communication systems, only humans have the ability to do so with actual words. As a result, fictional stories can humanize other non-human races by depicting them with the abilities to communicate with humans (Marder, 2019).

In this case, dragons in *Eragon* are described by Brom, a wizard mentor to Eragon, to be very intelligent. Brom states that only intelligent beings can form pacts and agreements for peace like the elves and the dragons (*Eragon*, pp. 54-55). When

Eragon tries to pick names for Saphira during “A Name of Power” chapter. she demonstrates high level of intelligence by rejecting names used by male dragons, as she is a female (p. 56), showing that she is smart enough to understand her race’s naming system. Furthermore, Paolini’s dragons are also capable of learning other languages, as Saphira is able to speak with others verbally after only a short exposure to human language. Since Paolini’s dragons are intelligent and powerful, their relationships with humans and elves are more akin to real world’s human from different country, who may come from different background but are all ultimately equal. Because dragons in *Eragon* are capable of intelligence and speech on their own, they are arguably considered not to be part of the “Other” in Said’s theory. The dragons do not need human intervention to improve their lives, nor do they need elves or humans’ help.

On the other hand, *Dragonriders of Pern* (1968) written by Anne McCaffrey depicts dragons to be much less intelligent. In McCaffrey’s design, local fire lizards have been genetically augmented by human to be loyal to their masters, transforming them to become dragons. Although friendly to human, McCaffrey’s dragons are simply companion animals altered against nature to serve their human masters. While they are considered sapient, their intelligences relied solely on the human’s manipulation and their limited memory capacity makes them less intelligent than human. As a result, the relationships between human rider and dragons in McCaffrey’s story are more akin to masters and servants (McCaffrey, 1967).

Since dragons in the *Dragonriders of Pern* do not actually exist at the start of the story, their relationships to human are akin to that of colonized people. Even with increased intellect and power, they are still bound to serve and fight for the humans

who uplift them. In many ways, their situations are more akin to when the Europeans conquered and colonized the natives across America and Africa. Although the natives were uplifted from their primitive cultures, they were also forced to work for the Europeans and became second-class citizens. McCaffrey's dragons, much like the Africans, are thus considered as the "Others" in Said's theory.

However, intelligence alone does not always mean one is human-like. Many animals may be intelligent, but they lack the human morality to understand good and evil and right or wrong. The characters with the ability to comprehend morality, what is good or evil, are the key to make them feel more akin to human, even if they are animals. This concept is used often by animal characters in Disney or Pixar, as they are given traits and moralities similar to human to make them more relatable. The main characters from the movie *Ice Age* for example, are animals who display human morality, and are willing to risk their lives to deliver the lost human kid they found back to his parents.

On the contrary, characters who show lack of morality are unrelatable or unsympathetic even if they are human. According to Weiland, the character's story and motivation should be explored, even if they are antagonists. Antagonists who lack any defining morality that separates them from animals are easily forgettable as they lack the charm and quirks that make them interesting (Weiland, 2017). An example of this is Lord Farquaad in *Shrek* (2001), who despite being a human, show little regard for the lives of his own soldiers and are willing to throw their lives away just for his own personal gain, as shown by his quote "Some of you may die, but it is a sacrifice I am willing to make". Farquaad, as an antagonist, has little morality and considers himself above the concept of human life (Jenson, 2001).

Many dragons in the past are usually depicted in this similar negative manner. They are generally evil antagonists or monsters with little to no morality. For instance, Smaug, although intelligent, is depicted to be extremely evil. In his depiction, Smaug is greedy and violent. He attacks and destroys the dwarves for their treasures and causes untold destruction with little regard for morality. He displays barely any more than animalistic instincts, driven purely by selfish desires (Tolkien, 1937).

While Smaug is intelligent and plays on human's concept of greed, he has little in common with other real-life human mannerism and nature. His only desire is to accumulate wealth of golds and treasures for his own vanity, even if they are totally useless to a dragon such as him who has no need for such treasures. Smaug is a solitary creature who pays little concern for the world around him and exists purely as an evil menace that has to be destroyed by the heroes. He is unwilling to cooperate or co-exist with other races. Furthermore, Smaug's need for treasures also does not resonate well with readers who view him as he is unable to spend those treasures. Smaug represents only a single aspect of human nature; that of greed. He is a reminder to readers about the negative impacts of excessive greed and violence of human nature. As a result, Smaug's entire story is that of a final enemy to be defeated by the heroes, akin to the "Others" in Said's theory that must be subjugated or destroyed by the Europeans.

This dragon-hunting plot was very typical of old dragon writings ever since the folk lore in the west and was something that happens because the dragons were actively portrayed as evil antagonists that must be defeated by the protagonists. This evil depiction, based on Andrew Forbes's research, was due to the Christian religious

belief that dragons were physical manifestation of evil, and these images have been portrayed for a long time. Forbes states that dragons were used as symbols to represent all the sins of humanity by the Christian mythology in the western culture (Forbes, 2013).

Paolini, on the other hand, uses human's history as an inspiration to create the relationships between dragons and men. In his story, dragons are not depicted to be evil by nature and are capable of co-existing with other races. Initially, dragons are hostile to the elves, the first race to come into contact with the dragons. This is because the elves mistake the dragons as wild beasts and hunt them like other animals in the forest. The dragons would in turn raid and attack elven villages in retaliation (Eragon, 50). This animosity continues up until one day, where an elf by the name of Eragon (Not to be confused with the main protagonist Eragon who is a human) discovers a dragon egg and raises it to be her companion. Through their efforts, they are able to bring the dragons and elves together and establish an alliance. The dragon riders are then formed to keep the peace between all sides. The dwarves and human would later join this alliance.

During the discussion regarding the dragon's history, Brom further explains to Eragon that the dragon riders, the peacekeepers of the realm, are the result of the alliance between dragons and other races. "To protect and guard was their mission, and for thousands of years they succeed" said Brom (Eragon, 33). Though there is initial hostility between dragons and elves, it is technically elves who are the aggressor as they try to hunt down dragons like other animals (50). Desiring not to cause more loss for both sides, the dragons agree to end hostility and begin friendly relationships with the elves and later on with humans. This demonstrate how dragons

are designed by Paolini to have high morality, for it is them who are the victims of unwanted aggression, and them who are the one that chose to end hostility. The dragons are even willing to go as far as forming a peace-keeping force to maintain the order to prevent further bloodshed. This relationship between races is remarkably close to the formation of the real world's international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), where various countries across the globe establish a united front to keep the peace between all nations. Dragons and their riders in this case, are akin to the UN agents and representatives.

Many countries and civilizations in the past, similarly to Eragon, started their first contacts in great hostility due to cultural differences and conflicts of interests. But because we human are capable of understanding the consequences of mutually assured destruction or the impacts of long-term aggression, most countries are able to eventually find common grounds to unite together. United Nations, European Union, or even ideologies such as Communism or Democracy are the results of our ability to stand together, much like how the dragons and men in *Eragon* unite together to form the Dragonriders, eliminating any concept of the "Other" between them as a result.

Another concept that makes human morally superior to animals are self-consciousness. According to Scott Wilson (2010), animals no matter how intelligent, are not morally equal to humans because they are autonomous, driven by animalistic instincts rather than rationality, autonomy, and self-consciousness. In his view, a being must be able to choose his or her own actions rather than being led by blind instinct. Wilson states that humans are considered to be morally superior to animals due to our capacity to use reason to guide our conduct (Wilson, 2010).

As a result, while many past dragons are intelligent, they cannot be counted to have the same level of morality as humans. They may show some form of intelligence, but they operate on animal instincts and are simply terrestrial creatures. They cannot choose or change their actions based on circumstances, only follow what their instincts compel them to do. An intelligent dragon like Smaug, for example, cannot truly be considered to have the same level of morality as humans. Smaug lacks the ability to understand the concept of surrender or admission of defeat. His rage compels him to fight to the death, which led to the total extinction of dragons in *The Hobbits*. Smaug's disregard for self-consciousness, according to Wilson's theory, prevents him from being considered to be morally equal to humans as he is driven purely by instinct even in the face of death (Wilson, 2010).

Paolini's dragons, however, displays a greater level of self-consciousness. For example, When Saphira foresees the threat of dragon-hunting by Galbatorix's forces, she is initially fearful of her life and attempts to flee in panic. She is, however, quickly able to overcome this predicament after being encouraged to fight by Eragon who turns Saphira's fear into anger and motivation to protect her pride as a dragon and to fight for justice. In this instance, Saphira shows superior morality true to Wilson's theory because she chooses her own action, to fight for what she deems is right and just, rather than being driven by animalistic instincts to flee in fear or to attack in blind rage like Smaug.

4.1.2 Dragon's Plot Significance

Hero's Journey stories, of which *Eragon* is part of, should have a clear and defined plot structure. According to Sophie Playle (2016), the protagonist usually

follows three-act structure in their story. On the first arc, the story should introduce the protagonists as the main characters and their situations. This arc explores where the protagonist is coming from, what is his or her goal and why is such goal important to the story. On the second arc, the story shows the opposing force of the protagonists, resulting in the conflicts or struggles. These are usually depicted as antagonists or villains whose actions or desires drive the Protagonists to oppose or resist them. In the third arc, the story should aim to create a satisfying conclusion that ties up all loose ends and finish the story either in happy, sad, or tragic ending. The protagonist's current journey is completed, and the story either comes to an end, or leaves room for future expansions (Playle, 2016).

Past dragon stories such as *The Hobbits* that follow this setup tends to depict dragons as the primary antagonist based on the second act of the three-act structure. For example, Smaug is the sole dragon in the story of *The Hobbit*. Tolkien's bases Smaug after the narrative poem *Beowulf* of English/Anglo-Saxton origin (Tolkien, 1937). Both stories have a single powerful dragon as the antagonist, and they would be the only dragon in the plot. This means that the confrontation and interactions between the protagonists and the antagonist dragon typically comes at the end of the story, which generally ends with the dragon's defeat and death at the hands of the heroes.

While this setup allows for the depictions of awe-inspiring and fearsome antagonist dragon, it leaves little room to explore the dragon as a character. The story is mostly focused on the struggles and developments of the protagonists and their comrades and the villainous dragons only come to play at the end of the story. While there may be a chapter or two dedicated to exploring the villain dragon's motives and

origin, it is often not part of the journey itself and simply a background history for the protagonists to reaffirm their commitment to their goal.

Paolini's dragons, however, are not the major antagonist of the story. Rather, they are introduced as the means in which both the protagonist, Eragon and the antagonist, Galbatorix need to achieve their goals. Eragon wishes to become a dragon rider and restore peace to the land and avenge his foster family. Galbatorix wishes to use the dragons to further consolidate his position as absolute authority.

The significance of Paolini's dragons to the plot allows them to have much greater presence within the story. Not only are the dragons being introduced much earlier, but they are also used as the driving force of conflict to the story. Saphira, who is Eragon's companion, is a dragon that follows his journey as a deuteragonist. Her development is as important as Eragon's. Finally, other dragons appear and serve the role of supporting characters as well, each with their own unique personalities and stories. As a result, the dragons play a significant role across the three major arcs as described by Playle (Playle, 2016).

This significance not only makes *Eragon's* dragons more unique, but also make the audience more likely to be invested in their story. As Weiland aptly describes "In order to write a story worthy of your amazing character, you must learn how to write character arcs that resonate with readers, and leave them gasping, cheering, or crying." (Weiland, 2017). Paolini applies this statement into *Eragon*, and the result shows. *Eragon* has gained various positive reviews by critics for the interesting and powerful story of Paolini's dragons, something that which separates the story from other similar Hero's Journey of the time such as *Star Wars* or *Harry Potter*.

Driving Force of Conflict

In Hero's journey plot structure, there is generally a conflict of interests or desires for good and evil. This conflict can be many things, objects of power, love interests or authority. According to Weiland, this conflict of interest is what creates motivations and struggles between the protagonists and their adversaries.

Dragons are the center piece of the entire conflict of *Eragon*. Galbatorix the antagonist turns into a villain as the result of the loss of his dragon as explained by Brom who states, "Tragically, during the fight a stray arrow pierced his dragon's heart. Without the arts to save her, she died in his arms. Then were the seeds of madness planted" (*Eragon*, 2002, p. 32). The loss of his dragon drives Galbatorix to madness, and he would later seek the powers of new dragons to exact his revenges upon the Dragon Riders whom he believes to be responsible for his loss. To combat such adversary, Eragon must learn to become the dragon rider and harness the power of dragons himself. Dragons are thus the focal point of *Eragon's* conflict and become the driving force for both the protagonist and antagonist's side.

Furthermore, the near extinction of dragons is used to further emphasize the importance of surviving dragons as the driving force of the conflict. Because there are only few dragons left, the survivors become one of the most sought-after powers by all. In his first interaction with Saphira, Eragon quickly thinks on the possibility of becoming a dragon rider, and the future it may bring. At the same time, the dragons become the object of Galbatorix's obsession, the only few dragons left being his means to absolute power. If we are to apply Weiland 's concept of the clash between the protagonist and antagonist, Eragon in this case wants to use the dragon to restore peace, whereas Galbatorix wants the dragon to further hold the land in his grip. Thus,

the dwindling numbers of surviving dragons does not diminish their importance, but further increase their relevancy to both parties. The dragons remain the driving force of both side's conflict throughout the story.

This scarcity of surviving dragons is akin to the real world's resource scarcity. According to Bingham Kennedy Jr, resource-scarcity is one factor that causes conflict between societies. When there are few resources left, people will fight to claim these resources for themselves. In *Eragon*, the powers offered by dragons are similar to oil, electricity, money, and food. As such, the conflicts between Galbatorix's tyrannical reigns against the resistance forces who oppose him are not too dissimilar to real world's wars. Perhaps Paolini may be inspired by large conflicts such as World Wars, Cold Wars or Medieval Wars and use them to create the dragon conflict in *Eragon* (Kenndy, 2001).

Dragons as Main and Secondary Characters

Main and secondary characters are the core elements of every story. They drive the plot forward, attract the reader's attentions and carry the story along. Main characters are the focus of the story, their goals, desires, and fears are what drive the story forward. Secondary characters are also just as important, for their stories support the depth of the main characters, they may have dedicated scenes, sometimes even stealing the spotlights of the main characters, but the story is not about them. Even so, good secondary characters can just be as memorable as the main characters (Weiland, 2017).

Characters that do not follow these two sets are generally known as minor characters. Minor characters appear briefly and are used to explore the depths of main

and secondary characters. They tend to have little background, do not have names and are not given deep backstory. Examples of minor characters are commoners in *A Song of Ice and Fire* who all appear only as props in the city to show the audience the poor living conditions of the major cities but has little importance beyond that.

The surviving dragons in *Eragon* are made to be either main or secondary characters. They are given unique details, designs and personalities that make them stand out from each other. The few surviving dragons allow Paolini to write his dragons to never look or act the same, all play important roles to the story. Saphira is a blue female dragon who is ferocious and loyal to Eragon. Thorn is a red male described to be honorable and humble. Firnen, a green male dragon, is young and optimistic, and Shruikan, the black dragon enslaved by Galbatorix is tormented, suffering and mad due to the enslavement at the hands of his antagonistic master. These surviving dragons have dynamic personalities and histories, expanding their importance beyond that of minor characters.

For example, Saphira is considered a main character because the story is about her and Eragon. Her introduction to Eragon drives the plot forward by motivating him to become a dragon rider. From then on out, she becomes integral to his journey, and the story is rarely told without her presence. The audience gets to experience her growth as a character, to explore her fears, goals, and desires.

Glaedr, on the other hand, plays the role of a supporting character. As an elder dragon, he appears later in the series, acting as a mentor to Saphira in the same manner as when Brom was Eragon's mentor. Glaedr teaches Sapphira the ways of the dragons, such as how to tame her fiery breath, and to properly fly. Even after his

physical death, Glaedr remains a spirit guide for the main characters, and further support and strengthen both Eragon and Saphira as characters.

Dragon as Deuteragonist

Many stories, in addition to a protagonist, contain a deuteragonist as well. According to Carmel Sealey (2017), a deuteragonist is a protagonist's sidekick, a helpful companion either physically or intellectually. Although she also adds that a deuteragonist may not need to always serve to help the protagonist, but hinders him or her, or even be the antagonist. The stories often involve around the relationships and contrasts between characters, and the relationship between protagonist and deuteragonist is amongst the most important elements. The relationships between these two characters will create focal points in which the readers explore their relationships and better understand the story. Therefore, a deuteragonist is best summarized as the second most important character, whose story is intertwined with that of the protagonists (Sealey, 2017).

An example of a protagonist/deuteragonist is found in *Shrek* (2001). In the movie, Shrek is the protagonist, and the story focus on his adventure. But the story also introduces the audience to Donkey, who acts as a deuteragonist sidekick to Shrek. Donkey initially annoys Shrek with his talkative nature, and the two often argues with each other. Gradually, their bonds develop over time, and the two become best friends. In addition, Donkey becomes an integral part the story, always appearing in every successive title as Shrek's trusty sidekick (Jenson, 2001).

As for Paolini's story, Saphira plays an important role as *Eragon's* deuteragonist. Her importance as Eragon's bonded dragon makes her journey and

development as important as Eragon's own story. The readers can see her growth from the beginning as an egg to an infant to a proud dragon who stands alongside Eragon as he embarks on his quest to avenge his foster family. Like the protagonist, Saphira develops her personality and mentality, making her story as a character much more interesting than a simple loyal pet companion. In addition, her role as Eragon's bonded dragon plays a major factor in developing Eragon's character.

As a deuteragonist, Saphira is given much greater developments and details than past dragons. She is introduced much earlier in the story in Eragon's first character arc, being first mentioned during the fourth chapter "Dragon Tales," which are 19 pages from the start of the story. In the next chapter "Fate's Gift" the readers are introduced to Saphira in page 35. In a few chapters, the readers learn the importance and histories of the dragons. And after her introduction, Saphira continues to play an important role throughout the rest of the story as a deuteragonist ever since. Paolini wants his story to be about dragons and he has made it his priority to introduce Saphira to the readers as soon as possible and that her role in the story remains the focal point of the plot.

Eragon and Saphira's relationships as a duo are what make the story special and unique. Saphira is able to communicate and express her feelings in regard to Eragon's decisions especially during his early days as a novice dragon rider. She sees the world on a more pragmatic fashion, such as believing that no mercy should be given to enemies, as surviving enemies will come back to attack them later or warn the comrades of Eragon and his company's existences. Her realistic approach to most situations acts as a foil to Eragon's more naive and human nature. Yet she stays loyal to Eragon and abides by his decision, no matter how foolish or naive the decision may

be and is willing to risk her life for him. True to Sealey's description, Saphira supports Eragon's journey, but is also her own character with her own story.

As a deuteragonist, Saphira undergoes realistic character development and is not one-dimensional like other companion animals. She is quite independent, tends to form her opinions, and does not shy away from complaining when Eragon does something she disagrees. She dislikes when Eragon takes unnecessary risks and prefers a more direct, if somewhat merciless approach when dealing with their enemies. Regardless, she shows great concern over Eragon's safety and become enraged at one time during the Admonishment chapter when she sees Eragon being hurt. She growls and demand to know who did this, and that she will tear them apart (*Eragon*, 2002, p.135)

Saphira exhibits certain negative traits which further explores her dynamic personality as well. She is being shown to have a level of vanity and arrogance. For example, being the last living female dragon, she wastes no time in boasting about her beauty and magnificence to other male dragons. She also displays a sense of superiority over other animals, being disgusted towards the cowardice and inferiority of Eragon's horse mount, Cadoc; "Cadoc pranced nervously as Saphira approached. Saphira eyed the horse with something close to disgust..." (p. 123). Her confidence also grows as she matures, becoming less afraid to fight against impossible odds and is willing to fight for her friends. These negative traits make her more relatable to the audience as a character who has flaws that she must be overcome.

The powerful bonds between Saphira and Eragon also extends somewhat to romantic fashion. When Eragon is partially seduced by another woman, Saphira is quick to snap him out of it stating that she knows what the woman is up to, but also

states that since Eragon and her are linked together, if Eragon are to be married, she will also be somewhat married as well, and the idea is not welcome to her. She is slightly possessive of her unique bonds with Eragon and does not wish to share it with another woman she does not trust. This challenge the past concept of dragon's depiction as well, as prior to Eragon, the concept of romantic relationship between a dragon and a human was rarely explored. However, despite their relationships, Eragon and Saphira, being of different race, cannot marry and do not share intimate feelings. This means that Saphira as a dragon, still retains some elements of the "Other".

This style of character development is not typically found in dragons from other stories prior, as they tend to be portrayed as minor characters or antagonists instead. Because they are rarely given enough spotlight to develop, their characters suffer from a lack of depth or development. An example of this depiction can be found in *A Song of Ice and Fire* by Goerge R. Martin, where dragons are depicted as intelligent, but do not grow much from their primitive, reptilian natures. They act mostly the same throughout their story, serving as their master's mount and living weapons, and do not participate in any important discussions, nor do they appear enough in the story to become more important characters (Martin, 1996).

This perspective change of dragon depiction as a deuteragonist companion rather than an antagonist is perhaps related to human's societal evolution. It is possible that without major religious influences, human cultures no longer need to craft stories to justify their holiness or righteousness against the "Other" like in Said's theory. Modern stories tend to depict humans as the oppressors and the other races as the oppressed such as in *Avatar* (the 2009 film) where humans are the ones to invade another planet to rob its natural resources (Cameron, 2009). Nowadays, humans have

come to regard animal life with much more importance, such as the establishment of PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals) in 1980. The depiction of dragons in *Eragon* is one of these examples to coincide the narrative with the ever-changing human society. Following *Eragon*, more and more are dragons being depicted in a more positive light, they are no longer prime representatives for the “Other” in Said’s theory.

In conclusion, *Eragon* seeks to eliminate the concept of “Other” in its dragons by depicting them with more humane traits and making their roles in the story more prevalent. By adding humanity to the dragons, the audiences can relate to them as intelligent species that are comparable to humans. And the importance of dragons to the plot of *Eragon* make their existence something to be respected and considered. These elements are used as counters to aspects that are often used to describe the “Other.”

When compared to the past depictions, the evolution of *Eragon*’s depiction displays humanity’s awareness of Orientalism in the early 2000. Dragons in western literatures appears to move gradually towards more positivity. Based on Guðmundsdóttir (2012)’s research on *The Hobbit* and *Dragonriders of Pern*, dragons have been gradually shifting from monsters with no intelligence and background to beings with greater intellect and story (Guðmundsdóttir, 2012). Paolini expands upon this evolution further by eliminating some negative elements associated with the “Other” that still lingered in Tolkien’s and McCaffrey’s works, and managed to create a unique dragon story that has even less association with the “Other.”

4.2 The Depiction of Dragons in *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn (FFXIV) is an online game where players assume the role of the Warriors of Light who fight to protect the world of Hydaelyn. During the story, the players will meet many characters, both friends and foes. Among them, dragons make up a sizable number of appearances, appearing to support or oppose the player. Like *Eragon*, the overall plot of *FFXIV* is a Hero's Journey story, where the protagonists must undergo many trials to accomplish their goals.

FFXIV introduces many new unique depictions of dragons in the story. For example, there is a greater emphasis on the dragon's diversity as a species. Rather than classifying dragons as one single species, the dragons in *FFXIV* are depicted as a large family of beings similar to insectoid or aquarian species. Furthermore, many modern technologies or theories are introduced in the story to create a more sci-fi approach to the settings. Dragons can no longer rely on their superior strength and flight to fight against men and must use cunning and strategy as part of their plan to fight. Both of these elements are introduced to bring new and unique perspective to the depiction of dragons in FFXIV that make them appear less as the "Other."

4.2.1: The Diversity of Dragons

The primary argument in Said's theory of the "Other" is the prejudice of non-western cultures by the West. The theory explains the concept of Orientalism, where the acknowledgement of other cultures has been put under the single category of the "Other", weaker, inferior, less educated, and less civilized than the West. Orientalism essentially rejects the importance of diversity and stereotype all eastern people as part

of one single group whose cultures are made to be less important than the West (Said, 1978).

Past depiction of dragon appears to have been influenced by Orientalism as well in terms of diversity. The dragons were previously very straightforward, mostly following materials local to the author's culture. The dragons, regardless of numbers, were simply stereotyped as a single species, all having similar physical designs with little diversity. For example, western works such as *The Hobbits*, *A Song of Ice and Fire* and even *Eragon* depicted the world with mostly western inspiration and settings in mind, resulting in the dragons also being western in concepts. There appears to be a stereotype for western dragons that limits their depictions as reptilian creatures with wings. In turn, past Eastern works like *Dragon Ball* depicted the world and the dragons heavily towards Eastern culture. The ways in which dragons are "expected" to look like have been set in stone by previous stories. In essence, if the story's settings are a mirror to the western world, then they would only have western dragons.

Eastern and Western Influences

Most past dragons were stereotyped as one single species, leading to a lack of diversity. Many past dragon stories were based off Tolkien's fantasy mythology which was influenced by western folklores. Tolkien once explained to his friend that his work was primarily based off the fundamentals of the religious and catholic (Shippey, 2000). As a result, many fantasy races of his work, such as elves, dwarves and dragons were also influenced by the Germanic, Celtic, Finnish, and Slavic stories, all of which were western. The popularity of Tolkien's work, in turn, has set a standard for many following works such as *Dragonriders of Pern*.

This, however, is not the case with FFXIV which depicts dragons from both Western and Eastern Culture. In fact, the world of FFXIV mirrors that of the real world, with multiple continents. These different continents have their own cultural references such as Othard being similar to Asia and Eoazea being similar to Europe. In each of these continents, there are multiple dragons or dragon-like creatures that are distinct from one another in terms of their cultural depictions.

For example, the war between the nation of Ishgard and the Dravonian Horde is heavily inspired by western culture. Ishgard is depicted as a powerful religious city-state with gothic styles and architectures, and its ruling government being the Holy See, a powerful church that believes in their race's divinity. On the other side, the Dravonian Horde is led by a powerful greatwyrm called Nidhogg. His dragon horde is depicted with the usual western concepts of dragons, sporting wings, limbs, spiky horns, and carapaces with dark scale colors. This war between men and dragon, called the Dragonsong War, is perhaps a representation of the Christian Religion and the Satan like the comparisons drawn by Ku about the relationships between western dragons and the church (2012). Meanwhile, final battle of Ala Mhigo is inspired by the eastern culture. Ala Mhigo is a contested territory between two factions and this final battle takes place at the royal palace. During this battle, the antagonist Crown Prince Zenos merges himself with Shinryu, a draconic being who is inspired by the eastern legend of dragons. Zenos intends to become a god by borrowing the power of Shinryu, in manners similar to how Chinese emperors were believed to be avatars of dragons.

Varieties in Design

Beyond the simple diversity between Eastern and Western depictions, there is also the varieties in the dragon designs of *FFXIV*. The game creates multiple type of dragon subspecies by combining draconic elements with other species. For example, dragonflies in the game are actually dragons with thin bodies and insect-like pair of wings. Dragon turtles are massive turtles with dragon heads and are used as the Dravanian Horde's siege weapon. Aevis are avian-like dragons with no arms, as their wings occupy that space akin to birds. Many animals have been used as inspirations to create a much more expansion sub-species of this fantasy creature. The past, solely reptilian depictions of dragons have been challenged with many new possibilities in the game.

This is a stark contrast to how the media used to perceive dragons in the past. Past depictions of dragons tended to follow similar concept of how dragons were expected to look like, large reptile with wings and limbs. The past depictions stereotype how dragons were supposed to be portrayed. Much like Orientalism, the dragons whose primary purpose was to be presented as evil, might had their depictions stereotyped to simplify their existence and reduce their values to being one group, the "Other." This would have made the past dragons easy to be classified as indistinguishable, less important species no better than typical animals, much like how Said believed that the Americans have devalued all middle eastern cultures and nations as "the Arabs."

There are also other possible factors that influenced the depictions of past dragons. For example, religious influences, which sought to associate dragons with evil have caused dragons to be depicted in certain aesthetics that satisfy the religion's

concepts. In addition, it could also be due to the limited space of books and movies as the story has to move constantly forward, with little room to explore the various subspecies of the dragons. Also, it was due to the limitations of the books which cannot easily describe the dragon's appearances with mere words. Regardless, the end result was that the dragons in the past were made to look like their historical depictions as the audiences are more familiar with and can easily identify a creature with horns, wings, and reptilian appearance as dragon.

Humanoid Dragons

Another aspect used to further diversify the dragons in FFXIV are the depictions of humanoid-shaped dragons. In the past chapter, *Eragon* depicted dragons with more regal, human-like characteristics such as more complex facial expressions or human-like eyes. But much more has been expanded upon in *FFXIV*, with many dragon's sub-species being humanoid in appearance, possessing a pair of arms, legs and standing tall. For example, brutes or ogres are dragons with humanoid shape, possessing two legs, two arms and stand tall and have a single dragon head. These humanoid dragons are shown to be capable of working in capacities similar to workers or crafters and are the one who are responsible for construction various buildings for the dragon empires. In one of the events that happen during the course of the story in the game, it appears that these humanoid dragons are byproducts of Ishgardian citizens that drink the blood of dragons, whose magical properties allow them to transform into dragon-like bodies. This "mutation" allows them to keep their knowledge and profession from their times as men and use their skills to work for the dragons as engineers and architects.

Another example of humanoid dragons is the race of Au Ra. Though not related to dragons by lore of the game, the Au Ra represents new cultural development of the fantasy genre which typically have other humanoid races such as felines, elves, or orcs. An Au Ra is almost similar to a human in appearance with the only notable exceptions being visible scales on certain parts of their bodies, dragon-like tails, and horns in place of ears. Their overall aesthetics and designs appear to have been heavily inspired by the Eastern culture, especially Japanese. They have Japanese-like names such as Mikoto, Yugiri or Kumokiri. The females are feminine, being short and slim and the males being tall and muscular. According to FFXIV community moderators, the Au Ra are especially designed to appease Eastern, particularly Japanese audiences, hence the heavy emphasis on the eastern cultures and values.

The depiction of humanoid dragons was usually rare in the past. As with the findings made by Forbes or Yuan, past dragons were associated with religions and later, the dinosaurs (Forbes, 2013). It would likely be considered inappropriate for the time period to associate creatures of evil with humans, or in the case of eastern culture, to associate heavenly creatures with downtrodden humans. Perhaps due to Orientalism, the dragons have previously been used in literature to present something that could not have been “human,” something that allow the real humans to look down upon.

4.2.2: Modernizing the Dragons

While the dragons have evolved in terms of their physiology or mentality in the past, the basic premise, and settings in which they are part of usually are not. The dragons have been primarily written to be part of medieval fantasy in the past and

little was changed in how they adapt to the environment around them. This means that past dragons were expected to fight against conventional primitive weapons such as swords, arrows, or spears. Magic is used as a substitute to technology, but it is not utilized enough to be a reliable way to fight the dragons. Because men cannot match the dragons in power, the dragons were usually depicted to be outsmarted by men instead. This leads to the same conclusion in which past dragons will be fought and defeated by enemies who, while physically weaker, possessed superior skills, intellects, or strategies. This, in part, may be due to Orientalism as one of the premises of Said's theory; the "Other" are inferior in terms of intellect, rationale and wisdom. This idea is clearly shown in the case of past dragons; they have usually been written to be outsmarted by their enemies and lost despite their innate superior physical strengths. Even with their impressive size, flight capabilities or fire-breathing powers, the dragons are depicted to succumb to attacks that they should be resistant to such as melee weapons or arrows.

Dragon's Equalization of Power

The limitations imposed by the medieval settings required past dragons to be defeated. Medieval weapons such as swords, spears and arrows are inefficient against the dragons who can fly and possess tremendous strengths. The protagonists need to employ their intelligence, playing around the dragon's arrogance and trick them into exposing their weakness. For example, in both *The Hobbits* and *Game of Thrones*, the dragons were defeated not by equal forces, but by the clever strategy of their physically inferior enemies. Smaug is lured into a clear shot by an arrow to his weak spot, while Daenerys's dragons in *Game of Thrones* are killed by spears and bolts in a

surprise attack. In both instances, the dragons are killed by enemies who are smarter than them. It would be difficult for the story to depict strong dragons in a world setting where their enemies simply cannot match their strength.

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn, however, challenges this common narrative by modernizing the settings with many sci-fi elements. The nations of men in Eoazea possess many advanced technologies and powerful magical powers. For example, Ishgard military have many modern weapons such as guns, cannons, and defensive wards that can stop dragons from flying. These technologies enable men to fight dragons on equal terms, and thus allow the outcome of the fight to be relied on both strategy and strength. On many occasions, the dragons won against men through clever use of tactics, while at the same time the men have defeated dragons through sheer brute forces alone. For instance, the dragons manage to infiltrate the ranks of Ishgardian soldiers by indoctrinating many low-born citizens or soldiers to accept the dragons as gods. These infiltrators proceed to disable the primary ward that protects Ishgard during the battle called “The Steps of Faith”. This equality elevates the dragons to be above the “Other” in Orientalism because the dragons are not considered less wise or rationale than their enemies and are not always beaten through tricks and deceptions as the past dragons.

Another example where this equalization of power is demonstrated is the battle between Midgardsomr’s dragonflight and the Garlean Empire. The Garlean Fleets have multiple high-tech gunships and a powerful aerial flagship equipped with powerful weapons that can fight the dragons face-to-face, while Midgardsomr commands a large host of powerful dragons with magical powers. Both sides have equally impressive aerial power, and the outcome of the fight is determined by force

and strategy. Midgardsomr's dragons do not succumb to traps or tricks and manage to win the battle by disabling the Garlean Flagship. Because both sides have equally impressive forces, the fight itself is more akin to a battle between two powerful nations with equal chance of victory. This equation would be impossible without modernizing the story; otherwise, the dragons would be too powerful in terms of their forces and would have to be defeated by other means. They would need to become the "Other" for their smarter enemies to exploit.

Dragon Colonization

One of the key points of Orientalism is the attack on the Western's colonialism. Colonialism, which is the process of taking over lands of other native inhabitants, require a deception that conveniently justify the attack on the natives in order to "educate" them. Past western literatures often depict these "Other" inhabitants to be uneducated and uncultured, and needed to be taken over by the western colonial force. Colonialism allows the Western countries to exploit the natives by taking away their lands, their resources, and their identities under the pretense that the natives or the "Other" lacks the required education, rationality, and logic to use them.

Past dragons were depicted to be the "Other" in colonialism as well through the reasons of which they must be defeated. The dragons would often be depicted to be native terrestrial creatures, causing trouble and destruction to other societies around them. In these past narratives, the dragons are depicted as uncultured, irrational beasts that may be local to the environment, but the dragons still present a clear threat to the ongoing expansion of men. Thus, the story typically plays around

their downfall at the hands of men, who want to take over the lands the dragons once controlled and establish a more peaceful and humane society.

This is also, in part, due to lack of modernization of the story. Because past narratives often establish their settings in a single world, or even a single continent, the dragons must have been part of the world already. As past dragons typically lack real motivations or goals to create or expand their empires, they are often used as obstacles for men who want to create and expand their sphere of influences. Men in the dragon stories are the imperialist who seek to colonize the lands, and the dragons are the “Other” who obstructs men’s colonial expansion.

FFXIV developers seek to eliminate this notion by altering their origins to be interstellar. The dragons in the story are not native to the world but are space-faring species from afar. They settle on lands that have already been claimed by other species, so this alone already challenges the possibility of them being the victims of colonization. More than that, the dragons are willing to engage in diplomacy and share some of their knowledge and power to the men, while not trying to invade or alter men’s beliefs, religions, or ideologies. In this sense, the dragons are not part of the “Other” as they themselves are arguably expansionists who colonize foreign lands.

The concept of space-faring dragons is made readily easy to understand through many modern theories regarding space and dimensions. Past dragon stories could not properly depict this concept due to the lack of materials and understanding of the greater expanse beyond our Earth. Although some stories like *Dragonriders of Pern* may have touched on space travel, the story itself is still mostly self-contained in a single planet. The native fire lizards are invaded and colonized and then genetically modified to be dragons by men to serve.

In conclusion, *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* make several changes to the depictions to the dragons to make them more unique. The dragons are given greater diversity by exploring the legends of western and eastern dragons, adding varieties to the types of dragons as well as creating various humanoid dragons. Furthermore, dragons are modernized, making them fight against technologically advanced enemies with cunning and strategy over brute force. The dragons are also interstellar in nature and seek to expand their territory by creating their own empires, making them colonizers in their own right. These elements challenge the typical depictions of the “Other” in Orientalism, and make dragons appear more unique compared to the past.

When compared to the dragon depictions in the early 2000 such as *Eragon*, FFXIV looks for different approaches to broaden the dragon’s perspective. The story shifts the focus away from emphasizing on dragons as non-antagonist force, to the equalization of their powers against men. In this depiction, the dragons stand as a powerful empire, able to fight against men on equal grounds using both force and diplomacy.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

With the information taken and studied from the previous chapters, the conclusion to the research question and analysis can now be made. This chapter will review the overall goal of the research first followed by a summary of the findings. Finally, discussion of the findings, limitations of the study and future recommendations will be provided.

5.1 Conclusion

The overall aim of this research is to study the roles of dragons in modern entertainment media. Two types of popular entertainment media within 21st century was selected as data samples, *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*. The objectives of the study are as followed: 1) To study the changes in depictions of dragons in *Eragon*. 2) To study the changes in depictions of dragons in *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*. Data and information have been gathered to perform content analysis of both entertainment media by using Edward Said's Orientalism theory as the theoretical framework. The analysis shows that in contrast to the past depictions which present dragons as the "Other", dragons in both *Eragon* and *FFXIV* are more unique and appear less like the "Other."

The depictions of dragons in *Eragon* are more unique by challenging how dragons are usually depicted in the past. Past dragons are depicted with much less humanity. They have terrifying and aggressive appearances and lack greater morality, intelligence, and rationality. They are also usually depicted mostly as antagonists or

enemies that need to be defeated or subjugated by the humans. The nature in which they are depicted make them appear like the “Other” because they are considered troublemakers, uncivilized brutes, and untamed savages that are a plague of society and should be destroyed.

On the contrary, the author of *Eragon* depicts his dragons to be more humane. This is accomplished by making them more regal in appearance, giving them more vibrant colors, showing them with greater intelligence, literacy, and superior morality. He also expands the roles of the dragons in the story by making them appear as deuteragonists, supporting characters and have them appear as a driving force of the conflicts. By emphasizing on the dragon’s values as human-like beings, and improving on their roles in the story, the author is able to move the dragons away from typical stereotypes that are used to classify past dragons as the “Other.”

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn presents its dragons even more unique by adding the elements of diversity and modernization. Firstly, the game expands upon the diversity of the dragons. The dragons in this game are made with many details taken from both Eastern and Western cultures, as well as drawing many inspirations from other animals to create dragons that were appealing to both target demographics. Secondly, the game modernizes the dragons and the settings. Many modern concepts are added to the story, like the use of technology and the depiction of space dragons. With the world being technologically advanced, the dragons lose the usual past advantage of flight and superior physical forces, forcing them to fight against their enemies through cunning and strategy over brute forces. The dragons are also space travelers who come to the world to settle as colonizers, rather than being original inhabitants whose land are invaded. The diversity within the dragons, as well as their

abilities to adapt to the technologically advanced enemies, make the dragons in *FFXIV* unique and different from aspects used to describe the “Other”.

These elements distinguish *FFXIV*'s dragons from the past depictions. Past dragons are generally monotonous in their designs, with their physical appearances being stereotyped to be reptilian with wings. In the medieval settings that these dragons are usually part of, they can use their superior strength and flight capabilities to overwhelm their enemies, leading these dragons to rely on brute strength over cunning or strategy. They are also depicted to be terrestrial creatures whose domains were often invaded and conquered by other races. Their tendencies to be stereotypes of savage brutes and terrestrial creatures made them appeared similar to the “Other” in Said's theory.

Although both *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV* depicts dragon to be unique in order to remove their similarities with the concept of the “Other,” the ways in which each entertainment media accomplish this task are slightly different. For *Eragon*, Paolini emphasizes on the positive aspects of dragons, making their existence and society something that should be preserved. On the other hand, *FFXIV* does so by introducing flaws and problems within human's own depictions and goals that make them not inherently better than the dragons. However, both *Eragon* and *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* succeed in challenging the depictions of dragons as the “Other” in Orientalism as the theory involves the exaggeration of one society's inferiority while glorifying another's superiority.

Other examples of the more different depictions in modern time in addition to *Eragon* and *FFXIV* are the dragons in *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, *Genshin Impact* or *World of Warcraft*. All of these games have some similarities and patterns regarding

the dragons; they are both powerful allies and fearsome enemies at the same time. Those who treat them fairly, receives their blessings and friendship. And the opposite is true, for any who threaten their lifestyles will be met with hostility and retribution.

5.2 Discussion

Both *Eragon* and *FFXIV* make significant changes to the depictions of dragons to make them appear less like the “Other”. Generally, their depictions have branched out from their initial negative conception into neutral, if not positive one. In terms of their characteristics, the dragons from both entertainment media have been depicted to be less monstrous and savage. *Eragon* accomplished this by making the dragons more human-like and expanding their roles in the story, while *FFXIV* did so by diversifying their appearances and modernizing their concepts. These changes have also been found in other studies about dragons’ stories. For examples, Guðmundsdóttir studied on *The Hobbits*, *Dragonriders of Pern* and *How to Train Your Dragon* and discovered the gradual process of removing the concept of the “Other” in each work (Guðmundsdóttir, 2012). Unerman also made another study on the dragons of the 20th century and found that writers continued to change the roles of dragons, challenging the norms established by past fictions (Unerman, 2002). Both studies documented how dragons have been slowly evolving from the concept of the “Other”.

These changes may be due to the globalization of the world. As the world reach globalization stage, so does the ways in which dragons are depicted. Elements from both Western and Eastern cultures have been introduced into this fictional being, shared by societies all over the world just like the results found on Unerman’s

research. The age where dragons are depicted as one-note antagonist, the evil of the “Other” that must be silenced is fading away, paving ways for a new age where dragons are being depicted as respectable beings whose wisdom and culture should be studied and preserved. This also coincides with Guðmundsdóttir’s research which found that modernists and postmodernists have become major influences in changing the past beliefs and looking for a unity of cultures.

Because of this globalization, western authors need to take greater care in depicting their dragons. Eastern audiences, who are more familiar with benevolent, deity-like dragons would be alienated by the negative depictions of past Western dragons. As a result, western dragons may have gradually been shifted from purely negative creatures to have more positive aspects to accommodate the growing Eastern influences. This is further emphasized by the raised awareness of Said’s Orientalism which causes many western and eastern people alike to reexamine the past cultural values that may have been exaggerated to glorify the positive image of western religions and beliefs, while downplaying or lessen the importance of Eastern cultures and values.

In regard to their political portrayal, the dragons are slowly moving away from their association with religions. Much like how Unerman has discovered in her findings, the dragons are beginning to be treated as majestic beings, akin to how Eastern cultures view them, but with enough flaws not to make them as god-like (Unerman, 2002). Furthermore, the dragons are given their own nations, cultures, languages, and structures that make them more humane and less animal. In addition, the conflicts between dragons and men are no longer about total annihilation of one side but finding ways in which both nations can co-exist. This development is line

with what Unerman study on how the roles of dragons changed due to the time period, as well as Gajek's study on the impact of human society on how dragons were depicted (Gajek, 2015).

The shift from religious-based depictions may be related to how modern human see themselves as a species. In the past, human societies were heavily influenced by religious beliefs. In the past, humans saw themselves weak and fragile, so stories about humans overcoming dragons which were stronger to be appealing. However, in the age of modern science, humans believe in their own strengths and seek to achieve greater heights and status, and the dragons may have been remade to fit the images of wiser and powerful beings that humans seek to become. The culture no longer needs to construct the image of fearsome creatures, but to create one of inspiration and a greater purpose. Dragons are no longer gods or devils, but simply positive aspects of humanity that authors believe humans should aspire to become.

Unfortunately, despite the changes to the depictions, both *Eragon* and *FFXIV*'s dragons still show signs that the dragons are part of the "Other". While the dragons in both entertainment media are no longer depicted to be purely evil, they are still victims of political plays of men in the story. Many dragons have been harmed or killed in conflicts that they did not start. And the ones to first seek to stop the conflict are the protagonists who are men. So, while the inferiority of dragons has been downplayed or removed, the dragons are still depicted to have elements of the "Other" in them because they are still being harmed by men at the start of the story

5.3 Limitation and Suggestion for Further Study

There were certain limitations to the study that should be noted. Firstly, while *Eragon* may be considered more recent compared to previous famous works like *The Hobbits* or *Dragonriders of Pern*, the book is still considered to be slightly outdated compared to the year this research was made. What the book provided, may no longer be entirely true for the current time period. Secondly, the depictions that a book such as *Eragon* or *The Hobbits* can describe may not entirely be comparable to *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* which is a video game. There are many elements that texts from books cannot provide compared to modern computer graphics with visual motions, animations, and sound effects. Finally, as the dragon's depictions are related to the time period in which the authors write their story, there is no guarantee that in the future, our society may regress back into Orientalism, which may cause dragon's depictions to gravitate back towards the "Other" again.

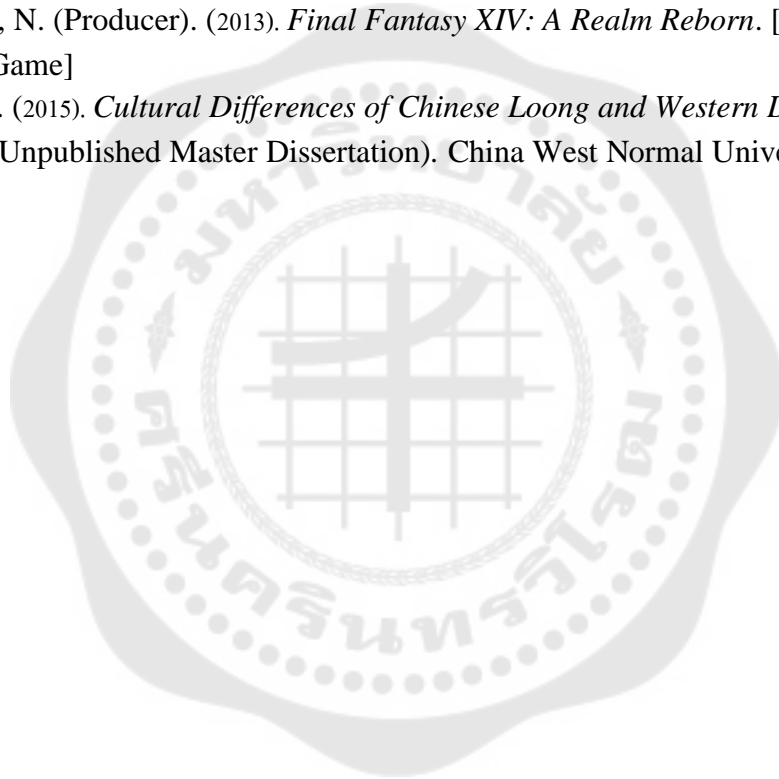
As a result, it is recommended that further study be made on future entertainment media. Studying the impact modern technology and society has on literacy, when compared to the past, will give future research more accuracy when determining the changes in dragon's depictions. Further studies will also benefit from examining more recent works to reaffirm that dragons continue to be depicted positively when compared to the past stories. Furthermore, future studies will benefit from expanding on other types of entertainment media such as movies, e-books or T.V. series.

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APPENDIX 1

CHRISTOPHER PAOLINI'S BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Paolini is an American writer and author of the *Inheritance Cycle* novel series. He was born on November 17, 1983 in Los Angeles, California. He was homeschooled and graduated from high school at the age of 15 through correspondence courses. Once graduated, he worked on and published the first book of the series, *Eragon* in 2002 through his own parent's publishing company Paolini International LLC. His work *Eragon* received attention from Alfred K. Knopf which offered to republish *Eragon* and all the rest of the series. The second edition of *Eragon* was released in 2003, an event that made Paolini a New York best-selling author at the age of nineteen. The Guinness World Records also recognized Paolini as the youngest author of a best-selling series on January 5, 2011.

In his interview, Paolini stated that his work was primarily inspired by the authors before him such as J. R. R. Tolkien and E. R. Eddison, along with the poem *Beowulf*. These inspirations led him to create *Eragon* and the rest of the *Inheritance Cycle*.

His work, aside from the books of the Inheritance Cycle main series, includes *Eragon's guide to Alagaësia* (2009), *Tales from Alagaësia: The Fork, the Witch, and the Worm* (2018), and *To Sleep in a Sea of Stars* (2020).

APPENDIX 2

FINAL FANTASY XIV DEVELOPMENT

Although *the Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, released in 2013, was the data sample used for the analysis, the game itself has been in development far longer. The first version of the game (known now as FFXIV 1.0) which was released in 2010. However, due to the massive negative reviews and many technical difficulties, the development team behind the 1.0 version was changed, and the game was brought offline for a total rework.

The new 2.0 version of the game, now known as *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, was released in 2013 under the direction of Naoki Yoshida. It received a much greater positive reviews from both the press and user alike. The game continues to receive further updates and developments, releasing three more expansions (*Heavensward*, *Stormblood* and *Shadowbringers*), with another expansion coming in late 2021. For the purpose of identification, the 2.0 version and its expansion are considered to be a separate game from its 1.0 predecessor. The data sample used for this thesis is thus, the 2.0 *A Realm Reborn* version, with additional plots and details from its following 3.0 (*Heavensward*) and 4.0 (*Stormblood*) added.

APPENDIX 3

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG)

MMORPG is a genre of video games that combines the elements of role-playing video game and a massively multiplayer online game. A role-playing game is a game where the player assumes control of a character, acting as if the player is the character, hence the term “role-playing.” Massively multiplayer online game is a game that is played by large number of players, the opposite of a single player game. So together, the term “MMORPG” can best be described as a role-playing game with large number of players in the world. Unlike most other genres, MMORPG has a persistent game world that connects all players together, meaning the game itself will continue to persist and evolve even should any players log off or go offline.

Imagine Games Network (IGN)

IGN is an American video game and entertainment media website under IGN Entertainment Inc. The website generally provides news and reviews for many video games, giving score reviews for the games they have covered. The scoring system and the criteria have changed over time, with the current scoring system being 10-point scale as of January 2020. IGN also holds out an annual “Best of Year” awards to games, films, shows and comics with the highest reviews of each year.

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