

The Monster in Disney's Closet: Critiquing Queer Representation and Narrative in Luca



[Figure 1] Official poster of Luca (Enrico Casarosa: 2021).

Name	Sasha Lyn Dominique Wessels
University	University of Witwatersrand
Student number	1170259
Degree	Master of Arts in Animation
Course Code	WSOA8000A
Supervisor	Gillian Wittstock (IACS Department)
Word Count	44476
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Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
S Schoeman

Shaun Schoeman (Administrative Officer)

Solomon Mahlangu House, 10th Floor, Room 10004, Jorissen Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050

T + 27(0)11 717 1408 | E Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za | hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za

www.wits.ac.za/research/about-our-research/ethics-and-research-integrity/

Title: The Monster in Disney's Closet: Critiquing Queer Representation and Narratives in Luca

Author: Sasha Lyn Dominique Wessels

Abstract:

Queer bodies in animation have been a topic for discussion in many academic papers – particularly in their portrayal in children's films. They are either considered problematic in their portrayal or made to be invisible to the eye by being pushed into the background (Tieszen 2017:2). In particular, queer characters are typically found in two situations in the history of Disney's animated feature films: Either a character is queer-coded and made the villain of the story – linking villainy to queer bodies, or is found in an interaction where same-sex desire is hinted at or shown, but is quickly shut down by a joke of disgust or awkwardness (Tieszen 2017:7).

This dissertation will analyse to what extent the recent Disney Pixar film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be considered a progressive and/or regressive feature film regarding queer representation within the history of the Disney franchise. Since the release of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), there have been multiple discussions about how this film has been queer-coded and is potentially queer-bait – as noted by scholar Kodi Maier (2021). This dissertation will discuss firstly, how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) has improved the representation of the villain through not queer-coding Ercole Visconti (the antagonist). Following this, how they portray male-on-male relationships and whether or not *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be perceived as a step forward. Thirdly, I will dive deep into the narrative's plot points, highlighting how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) has a clear underlying queer narrative, and how certain characters can be perceived as queer bodies, thus making it a queer film. Finally, I will discuss whether or not *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be labelled as queer-bait, and highlighting the outcry that came from *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) and how it showed the need for more queer representation.

This paper will make use of a multimodal qualitative analysis in order to achieve the aim of this paper due to its many unique components: a discourse analysis will be used to discuss the broader prospects of this paper such as the history and current socialization of imagery and narratives alongside its influence on the public, whilst a semiotic analysis will help dive deeper into characters and how they are projected and/or represented.

Acknowledgments:

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Introduction



[Figure 2] Lip Bite. (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 00:13:54)

It all started with a lip bite. A lip bite from Alberto who gazes at Luca up and down, with his brow slightly raised (Figure 2). Roughly around *Luca*'s (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) release of the trailer in 2021, on all platforms of social media, I kept on encountering what is known as a 'meme'¹ of Alberto's lip bite and I had questions: who were these boys? Is the boy on the right queer? What is their relationship? Is there an actual queer film between two boys that exists? I needed to know. Upon doing very little research, I instantly found the film it had come from: *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021). Shockingly, a Disney Pixar film. Traditionally, the significance of a lip bite is usually to indicate some form of attraction to someone, and here were two young boys sharing this interaction – what could this mean? A lip bite between two boys in a *Disney* film? Was this to be their first gay characters? Again, I had to know more. Upon looking on the Pixar YouTube page, I found both trailers of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) and watched them to understand what this narrative was about. And upon watching the trailer, I questioned if what I thought was correct; this didn't

¹ A 'meme' is a concept, belief or practice of a unit of cultural information that is passed from one person to another. It is used as a form of cultural, social or political expression expressed through humour. (Benveniste 2022)

seem like a queer story at first glance but more of an adventure between two boys. The trailer in no way hinted at any form of relationship between Luca and Alberto – I was tricked by social media. Even so, however, I was nonetheless excited about their new film and was still adamant to go watch it – which I did. However, after watching the film, I was once again conflicted with what I was seeing; there was a very clear queer underlying narrative to *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), and upon doing my own research to see what others had said, I discovered that the film was being labelled as ‘queerbait’. Unsure about how I felt about the film, and about labelling it ‘queerbait’, I decided to make my goal to deconstruct the film and understand why I consider it to be a queer narrative and why it would be queerbait.

Queer bodies in animation have been a topic for many academic writers such as Dion McLeod and Sean Griffin, wherein they discuss the roles that queer bodies are placed in within children’s films and how this can affect how we perceive queer bodies. This research has shown that they are either considered problematic in their portrayal or made to be invisible to the eye by being pushed into the background (Tieszen 2017:2). In particular, queer characters are typically found in two situations in the history of Disney’s animated feature films: Either a character is queercoded and made the villain of the story – linking villainy to queer bodies, or is found in an interaction where same-sex desire is hinted at or shown, but is quickly shut down by a joke of disgust or awkwardness (Tieszen 2017:7). For example, this is seen in *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson & Hamilton Luske: 1950) between Gus and Jaq: two mice who help Cinderella. We see Gus and Jaq sitting next to each other on a rock enjoying a romantic story from Cinderella. Gus snuggles up onto Jaq’s shoulder, laying his head on it and closing his eyes, to which Jaq responds by sliding his arm around Gus and embracing him [figure 3]. Moments later, Jaq realizes what he is doing and his expression turns into a shocked expression [figure 4] as he quickly pulls his arm back and looks angrily at Gus [figure 5].

Furthermore, this interaction of Gus showing affection to his friend and Jaq pulling away mocks the homosocial relationship between them. By homosocial relationship I mean the social bonds between two persons of the same sex, and is frequently used in studies on men and masculinity, however, is overexploited and use to refer to how men, through their social relations with other men, uphold and maintain the patriarchy (Hammaren & Johansson 2014: 1). In *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred

Jackson & Hamilton Luske: 1950), we see an example of this: there were no indications of Jaq and Gus being queer, therefore this interaction was not sexual or romantic but simply Gus showing how he feels, leaning on his friend, only to have Jaq pull away almost as if labelling it weird: this, in turn, can portray affection between two men as weird and shameful which can impact the outlook of homosexuality, deeming their interaction weird and shameful. Furthering on from this, it can then label a physical or emotional interaction between two males 'gay' – which is used in a negative and mocking sense, thus strayed away from. This inherently creates the picture of an emotionally-stoic male character – a common trend found in Disney's portrayal of the male body (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 50). This concept of homosociality will be further discussed in chapter 3.



[Figure 3] Jaq Jaq and Gus cuddling (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske 1950: 00: 56: 24)



[Figure 4] Jaq Jaq realises (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson,
Hamilton Luske 1950: 00: 56: 24)



[Figure 5] Jaq Jaq side eyes Gus (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson,
Hamilton Luske 1950: 00: 56: 24)

Disney's history of queercoding their villains is situated in the creation and implementation of The Hays Code in the United States film industry between 1934 and 1968 during the peak of Classic Hollywood Cinema. The Hays Code set the bar

on what could and couldn't be within a film according to Christian and Catholic standards (Abreu: 2021). The Hays Code also reinforced what was morally and ethically 'good' and 'bad' through depictions of the characters found within the film (Abreu: 2021). Typically, the morally-just hero/ine embodied characteristics deemed favourable – specifically that of cis-heteronormativity where the male characters were made to be emotionally stoic, brave, strong and always ready to save a woman in need (Al-Jouri & Pomerantz 2020: 50), and the female characters were made to be gentle, kind, a damsel in distress that needed saving, that can talk to animals and always had a high pitched voice. The villain was then created that embodied unfavourable characteristics - that which went against the normality of cis-gendered heterosexuality: these included characteristics that were opposite of the characteristics found in the hero/ine. This was a practice that started with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* and continued on for many decades before change was seen. Within Disney animations, the company upheld this image of cis-heteronormativity throughout their films labelling certain behaviours as 'good' and 'bad' (Brown 2021: 3), and in turn created problematic gender practices of what a man and woman should and shouldn't be.

An example of this can be seen in *Kronk's New Groove* (Elliot Bour, Saul Blinkoff: 2005). After trying to kill Kuzco (the emperor), Kronk tries to make a new life for himself as a chef in the town he loves until one day when he receives a letter from his father who wishes to come visit Kronk and see his lifestyle. It becomes clear from his shock and worry that their relationship is slightly complicated and all Kronk desires is to please his father – who he feels will judge him. It becomes apparent here that he has been lying to his father about his life, saying he has a huge house on the hill, with a wife and children. The thought of judgement from his father's disapproval started when Kronk was just a boy and took an interest in baking and talking to animals, which are characteristics linked to the female gender seen in examples like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (David Hand, Perce Pearce, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, William Cottrell, Ben Sharpsteen: 1937) and *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson & Hamilton Luske: 1950). While his interests were not clearly stated to be 'girly', it was implied. In this example of Kronk, we see the pressure he has learned from his respective society of heteronormativity – of being married, having a house and children in order to be successful as a man

and accepted by his father. Whether or not at the end his dad accepts him for who he is, the fact alone that that is how he thought a successful man should be and have is a reflection of what our society deems acceptable as a 'man'.

Within these stereotypes associated with the female and male body, The Disney Company paints a picture of how we as a society should act according to Christian and Catholic values through the continuation of the abidance of The Hays Code, and have upheld it over the course of their existence. A by-product of this practice lead to the vilification of queer bodies and queer characteristics and othered them, showing them to not be a part of the norm of society. However, over the course of recent decades, the outcry from the queer community to be accepted as a part of society couldn't be ignored by The Disney Company, and as a result pushed them to change these out-of-date stereotypes and create a more inclusive environment within their children's animated feature films.

Aim

Luca is a film released in June of 2021 by director Enrico Casarosa. The film follows two boys, Luca (voiced by Jacob Tremblay) and his newly found friend Alberto (voiced by Jack Dylan Grazer) during their coming-of-age adventure into a seaside Italian town named Portorosso. The only problem these two friends face is that they have a secret – they are sea monsters disguised as humans. *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) was the first Disney Pixar movie that represented Italy and the Italian culture appropriately, in comparison to Disney Pixar's first Italian based film – *Pinocchio* (Ben Sharpsteen, Hamilton Luske, Norm Ferguson, Wilfred Jackson, Bill Rogerts, Jack Kinney, T. Hee: 1940). And while some received it well others had concerns; these concerns included the topic of this paper being the underlying queer narrative found within *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa : 2021) that ultimately lead to it being labelled queerbait, as well as the question of Hollywood and American influence on the film as a result of the main characters having an American accent whilst other side characters from the town of Portorosso having Italian accents. Regardless of these critiques, *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) was considered a success with a 91%

Rotten Tomato² score, and was well received with many comments focussing on the beauty of the animation and the joy-filled adventure that ensued. As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Disney decided to release *Luca* onto its streaming website Disney+ rather than showcase it in movie houses under the concern they would not make as much money, however, it still did well grossing a total of \$49 750 471.

This dissertation will analyse to what extent the recent Disney Pixar film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be considered a progressive and/or regressive feature film regarding queer representation within the history of the Disney franchise. Since the release of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), there have been discussions made by queer-centric blogs about how this film has been queer-coded and is potentially queer-bait – noted by Kodi Maier (2021), a queer animation researcher at the University of Hull.

Sub-Questions

To achieve the aim of claiming *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as progressive and/or regressive with regards to queer representation, I have to start at the beginning where queer representation started: How does the villain in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), Ercole Visconti, compare to other previous villains? Here, I will examine how the franchise's history of queer-coding created the villains we saw growing up, giving insight into the problematic representations through aspects such as physique, costumes, props, body positions, and dialogue. Queer-coding is defined as inserting queer themes, characters, and relationships into a narrative without explicitly claiming them to be queer (Jaigidar: 2021). McLeod explains that Disney has repetitive coding of certain character types and tropes that span over the few decades the company has been open (McLeod 2016: 2). Through this analysis, a pattern arises of characteristics that are associated with the Disney villain (McLeod 2016: 9), such as the tendency to feminise the male villains and masculinise the female villains (McLeod 2016: 9). Here, this paper breaks down Disney's history of queer-coding addressing the 'how' aspect of how the villains are queer-coded in comparison to the main hero/ine, and how, within *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) a

² Rotten Tomato is a website where hundreds of film and television critics critique movies and series essentially scoring them with a number on the Tomatometer, giving the film or television series a rating that is trusted worldwide.

shift happens in that Ercole Visconti does not embody these same characteristics of a typical villain.

This brings this dissertation to the next subquestion: Can Ercole Visconti be seen as an improvement of villain creation? As a result of Ercole not being created with typical villain tropes, this section will address the way in which he has been villainised in that it is not through physical appearance, but rather through his actions. In comparison to the townsfolk, Ercole has no distinct abnormal changes to his character creation, other than being an egotistic teenager that enjoys bullying younger children. The shift from an old Disney villain to that of Ercole Visconti is significant in that they now do not queercode villains but rather villainize them through harmful actions – such as that of bullying.

After having discussed that the villain in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) was not created with abnormal features like that of a typical Disney villain and queered, but rather villainized through his actions, a shift begins to take place in that it is noted that the physical monster of the feature film is in fact the main protagonist, Luca. Within this shift, not only do we get a new type of villain (one that is not queer-coded) but also a new type of protagonist. Which brings me to my next question: With the shift of the monster to the protagonist, have the negative connotations attached to this label shifted with it? To answer this, this dissertation takes a look at Hawley and Lester's writing on the monstrous other and how it can be perceived as a queer body. Here I discuss Luca as a queer body in reference to how he can be considered a queer monster due to the queering his character does throughout the film.

As a result of Luca being deemed a queer body, How can *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) be seen as a queer narrative through its characters and story progression? A discussion around this question will entail an analysis of queer experiences that can be compared to Luca and Alberto's adventure together. Here, I will discuss the journey Luca and Alberto find themselves on and how through aspects such as running away, being closeted, and homeless, they go through what many queer youths experience today. Furthermore, highlighting how through their adventure, they come across allies who help them, such as Giulia, and parents who eventually accept them for who they are, such as how Massimo accepted Alberto even though at first we knew him to be someone who wanted to murder sea monsters.

After having identified *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) to have a queer narrative, and Luca and Alberto to be queer bodies, this dissertation then turns to the relationship found between Luca and Alberto: How has Disney Pixar improved the narrative surrounding male-on-male relationships? My final question with regards to Luca and Alberto as queer bodies surrounds their relationship. This comes as a result of many characters labelled as straight and narratives assumed as heterosexual spaces as a result of the way society has instilled cis-heteronormative thinking onto us. Here, I argue that this is not the case with Luca and Alberto as firstly, they are queer bodies within a queer narrative – how can their relationship still be considered platonic? This discussion moves towards an analysis of their relationship in comparison to other male-on-male relationships, and furthermore, how their friendship alleviates the homophobic aspect of male-on-male relationships.

My final discussion in chapter 5 will revolve around whether or not *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be deemed queerbait. Given that *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) has been labelled queerbait by some, and having discussed the clear queer underlying narratives and characters found in the feature film, I deem it important to address these accusations and understand how and why it may be considered queerbait. An explanation into what ‘queerbait’ is will be had and an example of *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019) will be used as a way of explaining what queerbait may look like. Furthermore, a small insight into the directors choice in creating the narrative of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) to understand the directors view on it. Then will then be followed by a brief understanding of the term ‘slash fandom’ which ultimately highlights the outcry still found within the queer community for Disney to have their first outwardly queer protagonist.

Rationale

Utilizing central scholars such as Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, Jack Zipes and Henry Giroux and their observations on the queer body, straightness, Disney’s history of appropriation and Disney’s capitalist agenda respectively, this paper addresses a lack of inclusivity and representation with a focus on the queer body. It also seeks to question to what extent Disney Pixar’s *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be considered a progressive and/or regressive milestone in the corporation’s quest for

inclusivity and its representations of queerness – which is explicitly outlined in their Social Responsibility memorandum (Anonymous (Disney Impact): 2023) on their official website.

In order to be able to discuss the possibility of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) being a queer narrative, this dissertation needs to address key concepts to further understand the idea of queerness and where and how it came to be. As a result of this dissertation discussing queerness and queer bodies in cinema, it cannot ignore the political parameters that firstly created the queer body, secondly, the influence of creating the queer body within cinema and portraying it as evil creating a certain type of political pedagogy, and thirdly, the impact queerness has in cinema.

Speaking on the creation of the queer body, this dissertation will discuss queerness and how it intersects with body politics; here intersectionality will be explained and defined by Nikki Sullivan. On this topic, Sullivan explains how queer studies attempt to question and challenge the boundaries set on gender and sexuality, and simultaneously provide a politics of difference on identity politics (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). Here, Kathy Ruth will further this by defining and explaining Queer Theory, which further leads this section into Judith Butler, where Butler will be used to explain performativity and how gender can be seen as a social construct and ultimately a performance (Ruth 2000: 198; Butler 1993a: 225). Sara Ahmed's *Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology* (2006) will also intertwine itself in this discussion where Ahmed discusses how we are orientated into and around "straightness", and how, from this, we are accepted and normalized in the respective society. This comes as a result of the institution³ that has enforced obedience onto citizens to comply with these set 'norms', not only by the threat of punishment, but also as a result of behaviour where the institutional beliefs and values are sculpted and internalized (Pollard 2019). Should one veer from this, they are labelled a 'delinquent' and othered.

³ When I speak of the institution, I speak of an organization that operates through the state that implement rules reflective of human interests and objectives of that organization and individuals who hold authority (Shand 2015: 7).

Politics (specifically that of body politics⁴) becomes an important factor when discussing queer bodies and their representation within Disney's animated feature films. *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* (Miguel Picker: 2002) is a documentary that will be used as a supplementary source to help support my argument, which highlights the importance of questioning Disney as a result of the propagated narratives that are created around gender, race and class. This documentary explains how imagery can influence children as they grow and the effects it may have on them during their development. Henry Giroux was a part of this documentary, the author of *The Mouse That Roared* (1999), and discusses the social impact the Disney franchise has on not only children, but our society, which he further elaborates on in this documentary. His work is put into context when examples are discussed by other interviewees on the impact of Disney narratives on not only children, but all viewers of Disney. It becomes apparent that through the relationship between Disney and the institution, Disney feature films sculpt the values of the institution into their narratives, which leads to imposing 'acceptable' attributes onto the viewer and creates censorship around what is deemed 'unacceptable' (Giroux 1999:29).

After having explained the importance of imagery in animated films, and its influence on children and their interaction with the world around them, it is imperative to also briefly address how they have interacted with these films. Hawley writes about children's films and how they endure a 'dumbing-down' process under the premise that children cannot understand certain topics, but can consume them when they become simplistic (Hawley 2015: 1), and yet simultaneously believed to educate children on certain matters – such as friendship and the importance of family. But the issue I raise here is the idea that, according to Hawley and Lester, it is thought that children apparently cannot 'comprehend' complex topics above friendship and family – such as that of politics, and yet through animated films and other forms of media, they manage to learn heteronormativity and what is deemed 'normal' and reciprocate these ideologies from a young age. If children can learn and engage with a film in this manner, it becomes important for larger organizations, such as The Disney Company, to show variety in order for children to pick or choose what they want and

⁴ By body politics, I refer to the body as a site of social construction that is subjected to systemic regimes to ensure that bodies behave in a socially and politically acceptable manner (Waylen, Celis, Kantola, Weldon 2013).

need for their own self-development. Furthermore, by exposing children to more types of representation, it can create a more accepting and more understanding nature of the child, teaching them to shun concepts [such as bullying] rather than a person who is deemed different from the apparent norm.

Censorship will also be a topic discussed as it is put in place by both The Disney Company and the institution. In an example of institutional censoring, the film *Onward* (Dan Scanlon: 2020) experienced censoring in a handful of countries due to a scene in the film that contained Pixar's first outwardly queer lesbian character: In a few countries it was completely banned, whereas in others the term 'girlfriend' was changed to 'partner'. Censoring within the Disney Company looked a little different as they can't ban a film, however, what Disney as a film company can do is limit the screen time and the possible interactions between two gay characters – or in *Lightyear's* (Angus MacLane: 2022) case, take the scene out completely in order to avoid scrutiny and their film from being banned. With Disney aligning itself with societal values, they decrease any tension that may form from crossing a line of what is deemed 'acceptable' and not, and by abiding by these values they are allowed to continue day to day (Giroux 1999:29).



[Figure 6] Same-sex couple in *Lightyear*. (Angus MacLane 2022: 00:22:24)

Advancing this, queer cinema will aim to be contextualized using Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt's book *Queer Cinema in the World* (2016): this will aid in the topic of queer cinema and its position within a global narrative of activism. This will be achieved by discussing how queer cinema disrupts the conventions of 'world making', which they refer to as "worlding"(Schoonover & Galt 2017:5), by presenting a new structure that begins to question cultural boundaries and offers an alternative to embedded capitalism and patriarchal notions (Schoonover & Galt 2017:5).

As this paper is about Disney's journey to positive representation of queer bodies, it cannot exclude recent events happening around Disney's recently released film *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022). This film is making headlines as it includes Disney's first-ever feature film to show a gay kiss (figure 6). As a result of this, it has been banned in several countries, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) being one of them as they claim it violates the country's media content law (Lodewick: 2022), and in others – such as Singapore – has placed an age restriction on it (Lodewick: 2022). Allegedly, Disney executives cut the *Lightyear's* (Angus MacLane: 2022) kiss scene only to add it back after the harsh *Don't Say Gay*⁵ bill backlash received in March earlier this year (Lodewick: 2022). This choice made by Disney to include this scene is important when discussing the progression or lack thereof of the Disney Company; with the rumour of this scene initially being removed and then replaced after Disney's publicity, a question that arises is why Disney initially removed the scene and then replaced it later on account of their publicity and promise to the queer community.

In March 2022, Disney was met with harsh backlash from the Republican Party after denouncing a bill nicknamed the "Don't Say Gay" bill and pausing their funding for the party (Maruf: 2022). As a result of Disney not showing support, and challenging the party in power, the Republican Party currently seeks to revoke a bill passed in 1967 which gave Disneyland the freedom to control construction permits of roads and buildings and their own fire department; Disneyland essentially was its own little country with minimal interference of the government and the Republican Party seeks to take this away (Durkee: 2022). With the refusal of Disney to support the party and

⁵ The "Don't Say Gay" bill is a bill that was brought forward and passed by the state of Florida that limits discussions around the topic of sexual orientation or gender identity, and as a result was nicknamed the "Don't Say Gay" bill (Aljazeera News:2022)

its ideologies, they were met with resistance and punishment from The Republican Party. I deem this important within my argument considering it revolves around The Disney Company and its progression, but also as an example of how the institution has such a firm grasp on many aspects of our lives, and their desire to maintain control and punish those that go against their decision.

Limitations

Throughout this dissertation I will be consistently using the terms “Disney” and “Disney Pixar”. I’d like to take a moment here to distinguish between them seeing as my dissertation revolves around both studios. While Pixar was its own unique studio created in 1986 by Steve Jobs, Disney and Pixar still collaborated on many films up until 2006 when Disney officially bought Pixar (La Monica 2006). When I refer to ‘Disney’, I refer to the animation studio created, maintained, and passed down by Walt Disney himself - the animation studio that has been around since 1923. When I speak about ‘Disney Pixar’, I speak about the Pixar Studio alongside the influence that The Disney Company has had on the studio throughout their cooperation. This influence is noted in the film *Lightyear*, where The Disney Company has been called out for censoring the same-sex kiss scene, reinforcing its long history of portraying heteronormativity onto Pixar Studios.

While I am also on the topic of Disney and its influence on Disney Pixar, a big portion of this dissertation focussed on the consumption of media – namely Disney and Disney Pixar films – by children. Within understanding how the institution enforces its power over us through mediated imagery of their standards in children’s films, it becomes important for those who absorb media in all forms to be critical of what is seen and what is censored from us in order to not be manipulated. We consume media in all of its forms which depict how we should live our lives, and because of how normalized these images have become in our view we tend to ignore their influence and follow it unknowingly. And while this dissertation doesn’t address media in general, it does still address the consumption of a particular type of media, this being a Disney animated feature film). Considering both Henry Giroux’s and Sara Ahmed’s writing on influences that include mediated imagery, it is important to note that media consumption differs from viewer to viewer. The mass media is

rooted in engaging with audiences through deliberately providing information systems that involve maintenance, change and conflict processes, on top of providing entertainment and persuasion (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur 1976: 4 - 5). It is through this media interaction that people's realities are regarded as a by-product of their social histories and interactions as well as them being connected to the structural conditions of the society in which they find themselves living in (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur 1976: 4).

Ball-Rokeach and Fluer continue onto how mass media can influence one's morale and alienation; a key element to reduced alienation and increasing morale is positive information about groups and categories to which people belong (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur 1976: 16). This is ironic considering Disney's history with villainising queerness and unwanted behaviour with fairly negative imagery. The only positive imagery they give is toward the cis-heteronormative leads who reinforce heteronormativity which causes alienation to the characters who don't conform. Audiences frequently encounter media messages which contain pre-established beliefs that anchor themselves within their group associations that recreate messages to conform to the established social realities of that audience. (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur 1976: 4). The realities people hold from mass media consumption is a product of a process in which the system encultures and socializes people and structures their social action (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur 1976: 18).

On the topic of queer bodies within animation I would like to address a limit of this dissertation with regards to queer characters found in Disney feature films: I acknowledge that many villains in the Disney franchise are queercoded, but that's not to say every queercoded (or queer) character is a villain. In chapter 3 when I discuss characteristics found in queercoded villains, I speak of Ratcliffe being a part of the group of villains from the Disney film *Pocahontas* (Eric Goldberg, Mike Gabriel: 1995). In this same film, Ratcliffe has an assistant, Wiggins, who is also queercoded but not a villain. This is the case for a few other characters who are queer but are not villains. While I acknowledge their existence as side characters, this dissertation and particular section is about queercoded villains – of which Wiggins is not.

I further want to emphasize that this dissertations aim is to further the conversation about representation of queer bodies within western animations and within The

Disney Company, and is not focussed on what queer representation should or can look like, but rather what it should not and the glimmers of accidentally positive representation as a means forward.

Methodology

In order to discuss the concepts and achieve the aim of the dissertation, and ultimately answer the question on the progressiveness and/or regressiveness of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), this dissertation will make use of a multimodal qualitative analysis. A discourse analysis will be used to discuss the broader aspects of this paper such as the historical imagery and current socio-political imagery and narratives we find in public spaces that maintain a normalized power that reinforces itself through social constructs. Alongside a discourse analysis, a semiotic analysis will be used in order to dive deeper into the characters found in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), breaking down the characters in order to understand how they are represented, as well as analysing key moments in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021).

This will entail an in-depth analysis of academic texts paired with a case study discussion around the Disney Pixar film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021). Furthermore, this methodology will explicitly frame focus by investigating characters in the film and will be analysed in terms of their actions and gestures used in the creation of the character. This representation analysis will include an in-depth reading of various scenes and film stills from the film. The narrative will also be critiqued in how the plot progresses and how the narrative can be understood as a queer one. Therefore, this investigation will spend a considerable amount of time analysing the narrative structure of the film, as well as character development and relationships.

This approach is suitable for this paper as it uses interlinking concepts that require a high level of understanding and interpretation of the concept of 'queer', 'queer cinema', and the idea of 'monster', as well as the intersection that arises between queerness and body politics. This will be achieved by using the knowledge of past academic texts, documentaries as well as published articles that speak of these topics extensively, or have provided examples within their work that this paper may make use of.

The reason this paper has chosen this method is that the ideas I have chosen to write about require a nuanced understanding not only of how they function as a concept by themselves, but also how they interlink and begin to speak to each other. Through this interlinking, we begin to understand the power the institution holds on influencing our society, and keeping itself in power, and we begin to understand how important it is to unlearn these old habits that reinforced heteronormativity, and become aware of them as we step into a new era of inclusivity and acceptance. *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) is still a relatively new film as its release was in 2021, and not much writing has been done on it other than those who brand it as 'queerbait' or those who praise it for its visual aesthetics. This limits my research on what others have said about *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), making my understanding of the topic of 'queer' and the constructs of power that created that 'queerness' that much more important in order to discuss this feature film. However, because of the strong base of academic research on queer bodies (and the queercoding of villains) within Disney feature films and the queer body, this will aid in my analysis and set guidelines that I can make use of in order to apply their writings to *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021).

Chapters

As a result of my understanding of the topics to be important to both myself and my reader, my chapter 2 begins with the subtopic of queerness. *Queer and Queerness* will address the main topic of discussion – the definition of queerness, how queerness is created, how I will identify a queer character, and a brief background into the problematic representation found in Disney films. Furthermore, I will discuss the heteronormative aspects that Disney upholds, and how this affects male-on-male relationships found within Pixar films. Then the subheading *The Monstrous Other* will entail a detailed explanation of the monster typically found in the horror genre. This is vital to understand as the monster within this genre stands for an invasion of the normality of the narrative, which coincides with my definition of queer. *Animation Intersections with Queer Bodies* will address Queer Theory and its intersection with queer bodies; here gender will be discussed explaining that cis-heteronormativity is a repeated action that is performed and how queer bodies question this apparent 'norm' of sexuality. This section then moves to *Disney's Capitalist Agenda* when we

are taken back in time with Jack Zipes who gives a brief history of The Disney Company and Walt Disney, explaining how he appropriated fairy tales and recreated them to uphold American patriarchy. Henry Giroux then furthers this conversation explaining the pedagogical imagery that arises from this history and how The Disney Company is intertwined in the institution, still maintaining their history rooted in upholding the patriarchy. *American Queer Cinema* furthers the point of the need to critique Disney as here it is explained how Walt Disney, the founder of The Disney Company, appropriated European fairy tales and remade them to suit the American patriarchy of the time. Furthermore, how Queer Cinema begins to break these stoic conventions and brings forward a new narrative and in doing so invites trouble by going against the institution.

Chapter 3 begins by explaining The Hays Code and how it influenced films from roughly the 1930s to the 1960s and how this code still affects films made by Disney today. From this, it shifts to the [problematic] representation of villains throughout Disney's film history with a focus on Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker, Ron Clements: 1989) who was based on the drag queen Divine. This will outline the standard that was set for villains which will be compared to Ercole Visconti to understand how his creation as a villain can be assessed. The focus then shifts to discussing the relationship found between Luca and Alberto and explains how their male-on-male relationship is different from that of previous male-on-male relationships throughout Disney Pixar's film history. Finally, with the creation of a new villain and the shift of the monster from antagonist to protagonist, here, I discuss this shift and how it has created a protagonist who is othered in their narrative instead of the villain, and how queerness has shifted with it.

Chapter 4's main focus is understanding how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be seen as a queer narrative through its underlying allegory of queer experiences. It begins with showing side by side how Luca's and Alberto's experience of running away, becoming homeless and closeting their identity in a town out of the fear of their lives can be seen as a queer experience. It then moves towards explaining how Luca can be seen as a queer body, how Giulia can be seen as an ally among other characters and finally, an explanation of parental love and acceptance: here Massimo, Giulia's dad, will be discussed in how he accepted Alberto into his life,

even though throughout the film we know Massimo to be a person who hunts sea monsters like Alberto.

Finally, chapter 5 will address whether or not *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) should be labelled queerbait, and what implication follow by giving a film this label. Here I discuss the example of *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019) where the director was ambiguous about their answer with regards to Elsa getting a girlfriend or not, giving a false sense of hope to certain audience members. This will then be compared to the interview given by *Luca*'s (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) director, Enrico Casarosa when he speaks of his film. Furthermore, a dive into slash fandom will be made in order to highlight the fact that there is a clear need by queer audiences to have a queer protagonist and feel represented. This action of slash fandom also portrays to us how a fandom may queer an assumed platonic narrative and understand a different underlying narrative.

Chapter 2:

Literature review and Theoretical Framework

In order to achieve the aim of this paper, the following spheres, terminologies and concepts will be discussed: Queerness – how it is created and used, this will be linked to the monstrous body in how the monster of the narrative can be seen as a queer body. This will then shift to the intersections found within animation and body politics, and how pedagogical imagery inform these politics. And finally, queer cinema on understanding how queerness creates a new type of world building by questioning conventional choices seen within cinema.

Numerous major and minor corporations within the 21st Century context have topically promoted social change campaigns to better their client relations (Spry; Figueredo; Vredenburg; Kemper; Gurrieri: 2021). One such company following this social movement [of claiming inclusive] is the Disney global franchise. Offering insights into this is Alexander Lindgren (2020) who reflects on how the multibillion-dollar Disney Corporation has followed this trend by discussing the company's move towards inclusivity, and whether or not it is that of a genuine nature or to avoid falling victim to cancel culture. 'Cancel culture', in short, entails when someone – typically a public figure – says or does something that undermines a community or outwardly expresses something offensive, and is met with harsh backlash from social media (Romano 2020) that usually results in some kind of punishment; for example being cut from a film or fired from a job.

The paper titled *Animated Stereotypes: An analysis of Disney's Contemporary Portrayals of Race and Ethnicity* (2020) by Lindgren reflected on the Disney Company and whether or not their portrayals have become more or less culturally sensitive with time with regards to their portrayal of racial and ethnic minorities. Lindgren looked at 7 films (ranging from 1992 to 2016) where racial stereotypes and problematic narratives were outlined in each film and discussed in immense detail. Although Lindgren's paper is based on a similar but slightly different topic than this paper [of queer body representation], it offers good insight into Lindgren's process of thinking and in-depth analysis, where Lindgren analyses each film in its own subheading, highlighting the problematic components found in the cultural

stereotypes, discussing if and how Disney has become more or less culturally sensitive with their representation. This paper will be utilized using Lindgren's approach to analysis and their findings to dive further into Disney's history of representation.

In the first subheading "Queer and Queerness", using multiple sources such as Sean Griffin, Nikki Sullivan, Jack Tieszan, and G. D Shalsko, I will define the concept 'queer' and what it means to each individual writer. Multiple definitions will be discussed ranging from it being a term used to describe delinquency, to a term that defines one gender that lies outside the norm. From this, my own definition will be discussed on how I will be using the term 'queer' and how it will define my body of work. This section will also make reference to Sara Ahmed who speaks extensively on the term 'straightness', and Stuart Hall on how culture can be used to perpetuate concepts such as straightness. Furthermore, under the discussion of queerness, I also discuss the importance of critiquing the types of masculinity that Pixar films put forward that situate themselves between the homosocial relationships between male-on-male characters.

Secondly, "The Monstrous Other" will look at *Re-Imagining Horror in Children's Animated Films* (2015) by Erin Hawley and *The Children's Horror Film: Characterizing an "Impossible" Subgenre* (2016) by Catherine Lester, where they discuss the horror genre found in children films. Whilst *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) is not a horror film, what is important in these writings is how within the horror genre, the monster is othered, and the presence of the monster creates the boundaries of what is deemed normal and non-normal. Through this othering of the monster, I will link it to queerness, thus creating the queer monster found in the Disney Pixar film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021).

Thirdly, following queerness and the monstrous other, a subchapter on the intersection between queer bodies. "Animation Intersections and Queer Bodies" speaks about the queerness found in queer bodies, how it is created, and how this creates an intersection with politics. Furthermore, insight will be given into queer theory, and furthered by Judith Butler who speaks of gender being a performance.

Fourthly, in 'Disney's Capitalist Agenda' we are introduced to a brief history of The Disney Company and Walt Disney himself, explaining the history of how the company came to uphold and maintain American patriarchy⁶ as a result of Walt Disney's influence. This is then followed by Henry Giroux who questions Disney and its narratives, stating that they hide behind their innocence, and as a result are not critiqued often by the public. Giroux goes on to explain that a company as big as Disney, who aligns themselves with the institution, should be questioned on what narratives or stories they present to our children, and how these imbue us with [potentially] unconscious social constructs. Furthermore, how through this innocence, Disney creates consumers by selling fake dreams, growing their business, and in turn, also their status with American family values.

From this, we lastly venture to "American Queer Cinema" where we shift to *Queer World Cinema* (2016) by Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt, where they critique the role of cinema and its relation to queer world politics. By proposing a queer cinema invites trouble as it brings anxieties to the table by questioning epistemologies, and in turn has the potential to reconfigure 'worlding' (world making).

In order to understand how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be understood as a queer narrative with queer characters, it becomes important to understand certain terminologies and their origins (such as queerness, straightness and heteronormativity) and how they affect our perceptions of the world. By doing so, it opens up new conversations such as why we perceive all characters as straight, why the Disney Company cannot make a queer main character on account of their relationship with the institution in power, how they create characters that subtly influence our ways of thinking, and why we as viewers did not critique The Disney Company sooner.

Queer and Queerness

⁶ The Disney Company is not solely responsible for upholding the ideals of Western American Patriarchy (nor be held responsible for creating it), however, given their worldwide appeal and dominance of the Western media market for youth, I argue that they have a significant influence on maintain and promoting the societal structures surrounding patriarchy.

Sean Griffin defines the term queer as a term that can “either can be used progressively to deconstruct the stability of “straightness” or can be used to minimize specific historical group definitions, depending on the contexts of its use and reception.” (Griffin 2017: 181). Queerness poses a challenge to conventional categories, however, these categories are never constant as boundaries change throughout eras and cultures (Griffin 2017:18). Over time, conventions and what is deemed ‘normal’ change; therefore that which is ‘othered’ changes with it. Furthermore, Nikki Sullivan explains that the term “queer” does not only refer to the challenging of social constructs, but also to signify something that is out of place or strange, or to connect ‘strangeness’ to someone and not the self (negatively), or to use this ‘strangeness’ positively in order to gain power over that concept, and lastly, a sometimes abusive way of referring to homosexuality (Sullivan 2003: v). An overall understanding of the term queer is written throughout many other papers; such as in *A Queer Utopia: An Exploration of Queerness in the Golden Age of Animation* (2017) by Jack Tieszen who uses Alexander Doty’s definition being to describe a non-normative expression of gender, including those that are connected to straightness, and to also refer to non-straight things that are not clearly marker gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, and transgendered, but rather alludes to one or more of these categories (Tieszen 2017: 3).

Another interesting explanation is given by G. D. Shlasko in the article *Queer (v.) Pedagogy* (2005); they offer not two, but three main ideas of what ‘queer’ could be. Shlasko starts off by explaining the two main ideas it can be: that of a subject’s position and that of a politic. As a subject, it can describe people whose gender and/or sexuality fall outside the cultural norms and describes their location in relation to those norms, or possibly one’s point of view as an outsider (Shlasko 2005: 124). As a politic, queer challenges the idea of “normal”. A queer politic asserts as an outsider of gender and hetero-norms and opposes the very existence of the norms and the structures that serve as their boundaries (Shlasko 2005: 124). Shlasko then invites a third explanation – that queer can also be looked at as an aesthetic based on the conceptualization of reading practices that influence some pedagogical writing. Here, queer seeks to subvert content in cultural texts found in media from academic writing to graffiti (Shlasko 2005: 124). The texts themselves are not queer, but rather ones reading of the texts as ‘politically radical’ (Shlasko 2005: 124).

Finally, my last explanation can be found in an article on Queer Cinema, where 'queer' is explained to be a term that is simultaneously contested and inclusive, and its inclusion relies on the contestation of it (Marshall 2018: 1).

Using these explanations, I will not be using it as an umbrella term for someone who only identifies as a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, but rather 'queer' meaning to describe one that challenges a social construct that is deemed 'normal', to signify something that is out of place, a politic in that they challenge the normality of relationships and boundaries between people and communities and that the narrative, relationships and actions and interactions can be read as queer. One such social construct I'd like to look at is "straightness" as this paper talks about queer in all aspects – including the exclusion of certain people due to how they identify. Straightness is also relevant as society is based on an unconscious heteronormative space, and those that do not fit within this space are considered an 'other' as they go against the 'normal' social practices and therefore are deemed queer.

In the paper *Unmasking the Quillain: Queerness and Villainy in Animated Disney Films* (2016), McLeod explores Disney animated films and the characteristics of the villains and how they appear as 'queer'. An example is given of Scar from *The Lion King* (Rob Minkoff, Roger Allers: 1994), Jafar from *Aladdin* (Ron Clements, John Musker: 1992), and Ratcliffe from *Pocahontas* (Eric Goldberg, Mike Gabriel: 1995): the example of Scar is that he has no mate, nor were there any hints or signs that he had or was interested in anyone; even once he took over Pride Rock, he still did not take a mate like Mufasa (McLeod 2016: 11). Jafar also had a lack of female interest - that is until he wanted to become Sultan and gain more power (McLeod 2016: 11). It is also known that Jafar was based on a gay man, and McLeod furthers this by saying that it does not matter what the encoder *meant*, but rather when the decoder reads that deciphers a queer body (McLeod 2016: 24). Jafar is also known to wear eye shadow and has his face emphasized through the use of cosmetics (McLeod 2016: 25). Finally, it is also noted with Jafar, and the same can be said for Ratcliffe, they both wore finer looking clothes as compared to the other male characters – and sometimes even female (McLeod 2016: 26).

McLeod's research goes on to discuss the function of queerness within these films – being that of disruption of the hetero-reproduction - and argues explicitly on Disney's

heteronormative culture; how they perpetuate it through repetitive representation of a queer villain (which has been combined to form the word 'quillain'), which acts as a threat to heteronormativity and the "happily ever after" of the narrative (McLeod 2016: 1). McLeod starts the paper by specifying that they will be critiquing negative political and social meanings found in the queer coding of villains, but also acknowledges that interpretations are subjective (McLeod 2016: 2). Whilst it cannot be stated that Disney does contain "message launching devices", Disney does have repetitive coding of certain character traits and stereotypes, and through textual analysis a judgement can be made as all texts have a political and social meaning (McLeod 2016: 2). Disney films tend to perpetuate heterosexism through the linking of a villain and queerness and the elimination of the 'quillain' (McLeod 2016: 2).

A study was done by Karin Martin and Emily Kazyak on the top-selling G-rated films from 1990 to 2005 (which consisted of 20 films), studying how heteronormativity and heterosexuality were constructed within these films. Of these 20 films, eight were noted to have a hetero-romance as a main plot line, and a further seven were noted to have hetero-romance as a secondary plot line (Martin & Kazyak 2009: 323). Finally, only two of the 20 films were noted to not have hetero-romantic themes to it (Martin & Kazyak 2009: 323). What was further highlighted in this study was that those films not made by Disney had much less hetero-romantic content than those made by Disney (Martin & Kazyak 2009: 323), proving McLeod's claim that Disney has a tendency to perpetuate heterosexism through their hetero-romantic plot lines.

McLeod then shifts his focus onto how Disney perpetuates hetero-romance through the creation and elimination of the villain. There are three ways in which Disney approaches this: Firstly, Disney differentiates queerness and heterosexuality through spatiality. Visually, in the space, the quillain is seen as the gender deviant and the protagonist or hero/ine seen as the gender 'normative' (McLeod 2016: 8). A second way is through the trajectory of the heterosexual presence as an inspirational, resulting in a "happy ending" being synonymous with 'heterosexually oriented happiness' (McLeod 2016: 8). The third and final way is in the fact that queerness is showed and used as a disruption to the "happily ever after" in order to keep the heterosexual couple (the hero and heroine) apart. As a result of this, Sean Griffin explains in *Tinker Belles and Evil Queens: The Walt Disney Company from the Inside Out* (2000), that "Disney consequently posits heterosexual courtship as the

only 'true' (if not the 'only') method by which individuals may conceive of sexuality." (Griffin 2000: 4)

McLeod then shifts to the topic of "happily ever after" by stating that villains go against the very nature of Disney endings, which can be seen as the beginnings of heterosexuality (McLeod 2016: 16). With elimination being the main way in which a villain is removed from a narrative, once the villain is gone they are no longer mourned, and the narrative goes on as if they were never even written into the story (McLeod 2016: 16). Elimination of the villain through death is extreme, but also reflects the films political need for certain characters to be removed for the prevalence of heteronormativity (McLeod 2016: 17). While the elimination of the villain is often seen, there are queer characters that are allowed to survive but are invisible.

Here, I'd like to briefly bring in Judith Butler's writing on precarious bodies. McLeod speaks of the elimination of the villain which we know to be a queer body, and that as a result of them being a social deviant in the narrative, are not mourned when they die. In Butler's writing in *Precarious Life, Grievable Bodies* (2009), Butler explains that the frames through which we constitute a life as a life are politically saturated (Butler 2009: 1). When one is constituted as a life, one will resolve to protect and secure the conditions in order for that life to flourish (Butler 2009: 2). As a result of villains being a social deviant against the heteronormative hero/ine, their life is not classified as a life according to the social structures of the respective film, and thus when they die it is not seen as a loss as they were never recognized as a 'life' even though they were living. The hero/ine on the other hand, as the protagonist of the story, is recognized as a precious life and thus worth saving and flourishing come the ending of the film.

On the topic of 'happily ever after', McLeod turns toward Sara Ahmed and her writing in *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), where Ahmed argues that heterosexual love equates to happy endings and a complete story. If this [heterosexual love] is what gives life purpose, then disrupting it is the equivalent of denying life (McLeod 2016: 20) – which is a repetitive villain trope. Narratively, it becomes impossible for the villain in Disney movies to be convincingly heterosexual as their very role is to disrupt the heterosexual happiness and be a threat to 'productive futurism' (McLeod

2016: 20). This threat occurs in two ways: firstly, the threat of no reproduction through a disruption of marriage for example, meaning no children, and second the attempted murder which also prevents future children (McLeod 2016: 21) – this is the threat to a reproductive future (McLeod 2016: 21).

McLeod furthers on from this discussion of heteronormativity found in Disney narratives stating that just because a character has a girlfriend or boyfriend within the narrative, does not rule out the possibility of the said character being bisexual, and that non-queer-coded characters must be read as straight (McLeod 2016: 22). Furthermore, that it is a mistake to decide which characters are and aren't straight based on common stereotyping (McLeod 2016: 22). This raises the discussion that all Disney characters could potentially be bisexual as no characters have explicitly expressed themselves as heterosexual. Furthermore, "queer" is not an umbrella term in this dissertation used to describe a character as gay or lesbian, but rather one that deviates from the norm within its narrative, therefore Disney villains that are queer-coded are not necessarily gay or lesbian, but rather a deviant of the narratives normalcy. That's also not to say that other characters that are not the villain, are not part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Looking at the documentary, *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* (Miguel Picker: 2002), there were moments within the film where a few people were interviewed and questioned on their reasons for loving Disney, to which the general consensus was that it brought back good childhood memories and magic. And while this is the target of Disney, they have managed to excuse themselves from analysis and critique because of their acclaimed 'innocent fun' and are "socially harmless" (McLeod 2016: 4). However, these feelings of nostalgia linked to childhood need to be brushed aside in order to critically engage in the company's influence (McLeod 2016: 4). As Disney films are so widely accessible, it becomes necessary for viewers of all ages to critique the ideological messages that have the potential to become pedagogically influential. This becomes important as there is a vast misrepresentation of marginalized groups by Disney, and it needs to be acknowledged and critiqued based on the fact that these films with misrepresentations are marketed toward children (McLeod 2016: 7).

While McLeod's writing explains how Disney narratives tend to perpetuate heterosexism and heteronormativity through the creation of the queer villain, Gillam and Wooden, alongside Al-Jbouri and Pomerantz, argue that even though Pixar has improved their representation of the 'new man' from hegemonic masculinities that legitimated patriarchy (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 46), the company still in some ways upholds this hegemony – but much less than their Disney predecessors (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 58). While Disney has been in the spotlight with the critiquing of its representation of girls and women and perpetuation of heteronormativity, Pixar has been largely overlooked in their representation of boys and men (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 44) while simultaneously being celebrated for their vision of the 'new man' in their films (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 45).

Within discussing Luca and Alberto as queer bodies, this dissertation also aims to explain the difference between Luca and Alberto's queer relationship and relationships found between other male-on-male relationships as seen in Disney Pixar films, for example, Buzz Lightyear and Woody from *Toy Story* (John Lasseter: 1995), Scully and Mike from *Monsters, Inc* (Pete Docter: 2001), and Ian and Barley from *Onward* (Dan Scanlon: 2020). This discussion will aid this dissertation in discussing the progressiveness of queer body representation in not perpetuating homophobic actions – like that found in *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske 1950), but also showcasing that not all male-on-male homosocial relationships are platonic. To address this, this paper will make use of *Post-Princess Models of Gender: The New Man in Disney/Pixar* (2008) by Ken Gillam and Shannon R. Wooden, who break down the masculinity found in Pixar films and the homosocial relationship found between the male characters. In addition, Elizabeth Al-Jbouri and Shauna Pomerantz in their writing *A New Kind of Monster, Cowboy, and Crusader? Gender Hegemony and Flows of Masculinities in Pixar Animated Films* (2020) will be used as they too speak of the masculinity found in Pixar and Disney films, and question how the masculinity found in Pixar films uphold hegemonic values.

Gillam and Wooden begin their article by explaining that most movies since 1990, made by Pixar, have featured masculine protagonists who are remarkably alike and are progressive in their creation in a postfeminist model of gender (Gillam & Wooden

2008: 2). Each male character goes on a journey – through a ‘homosocial’⁷ relationship and matures to the point of accepting his feminine traits (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 2). In movies such as *Toy Story* (John Lesseter: 1995), *The Incredibles* (Brad Bird: 2004) and *Cars* (John Lesseter: 2006), the main protagonist male strives for alpha-male identity, only to be met with failures; however within these failures they find their new feminist self that turns out to be more caring, kinder, gentler and understanding of what it means to be a man (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 3). Sedgwick refers to this change as the “homosocial desire” that links a desire to a feminized object and/or feminized values (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 3).

All the films mentioned above begin with an outdated, two-dimensional alpha prototype to expose its failings and ridicule its logical extensions: the devastation and humiliation of being defeated in competition, the wrath generated by power unchecked, the paralyzing alienation and fear inherent in being lonely at the top. As these characters begin the film in (or seeking) the tenuous alpha position among fellow characters, each of them is also stripped of this identity— dramatically emasculated—so that he may learn, reform, and emerge again with a different, and arguably more feminine, self-concept. A large part of Disney’s historical representation of men was deeply ingrained in hegemonic masculinity as an honourable way of being a man (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 46), however, towards the 1980s and 1990s this began to shift in that male characters now embodied a ‘new man’ role of which still maintained hegemonic traits but with an increased level of sensitivity and emotional growth (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 50).

As a result of Pixar still adhering to fragments of hegemonic masculinities such as the homosocial relationship between men being deemed homophobic in the patriarchal system (which is structured as homophobic) in that the same-sex relationship demands an opportunity to prove his heterosexuality⁸ (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 6), the company does offer more modern and complex versions of masculinities than The Disney Company (Al-Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 58).

⁷ The social interaction between members of the same sex – typically men.

⁸ In this case of *Toy Story*, when both Woody and Buzz Lightyear compete for Bo Peeps affection and attention (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 6).

Taking a step back to queerness, I'd like to [briefly] elaborate on the term "straightness" with Sara Ahmed's *Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology* (2006), where Ahmed touches on this, and explains that "one is not born, but becomes straight" (2006:553). This is a result of a history of repetitive gestures and an orientation throughout our lives to stay within [heterosexual] boundaries. These actions that are repeated lead us in certain directions. This is what influences the action of our 'orientating' and influences our abstract objects such as thoughts, feelings, and judgements, as well as aims and objectives we sometimes wish to achieve. This direction we are pushed in leads down a path – a path that we are made to follow. A pressure is put on us to stay true to it, to not veer off and to embody its presence; the social pressure of following this path, to live a certain way and to re-enact the life of the previous walkers (Ahmed 2006: 555). Within these boundaries of this path, we are naturalized and normalised if we comply, however queer subjects within this 'straight' culture are socially presented as a deviant (Ahmed 2006:553).

We see through Ahmed's text that one is orientated to be straight. In *Animating Revolt and Revolting Animation* (Halberstam 2011), chapter one starts out by stating that childhood is a queer experience in a society that uses extensive training of heterosexuality – that children are not born heterosexual but made (Halberstam 2011: 27). If we were heteronormative to begin with, why do we need strict parental guidance to encourage heterosexual marriage, childbearing and hetero-reproduction (Halberstam 2011: 27)? By acknowledging this need for training, it allows for the belief that children are born rebellious and it needs to be corrected.

From Sara Ahmed's explanation of the orientation through 'objects' (such as mediated imagery), this dissertation shifts to Stuart Hall's take on culture and representation in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), where he questions the connection between 'representation' and 'culture' (Hall 1997: 1), to which Hall answers that culture is about shared meaning (Hall 1997: 1). However, this meaning can only be shared through a 'common access to language' (Hall 1997: 1). Through language, meaning is produced and exchanged through this common access and 'made sense of' (Hall 1997: 1). Within language,

representational systems are created of signs and symbols that represent or stand for our concepts, ideas and feelings when express to others (Hall 1997: 1). 'Culture' can refer to multiple forms of [for example] popular music, art, designs and literature to name a few; its leisure-time activities that make up the lives of 'ordinary people' – which is referred to as 'mass culture' or 'popular culture' of an age and/or era. The word can also be used when describing the 'shared values' of a group or society (Hall 1997: 2). Hall explains that culture is not necessarily physical objects such as novels or Television programmes, but rather a process or a set of practices (Hall 1997: 2).

It is important that we highlight the participants in a culture who create meaning towards objects, people, and events through cultural practices; it is how we give them meaning through interpretation which we bring them. People create meaning through the ways in which we give things meaning and integrate them into our everyday practices (Hall 1997: 3).

According to Hall, meaning is created by several different sites and produced through several different processes. Meaning is what gives us our unique sense of identity – who we are and where we belong – and "is tied to questions of how culture is used to mark out and maintain identity within and differentiate between groups" (Hall 1997: 3). By incorporating cultural 'things' into our daily rituals and practices we give them value and significance (Hall 1997: 3).

Members of similar or same culture share sets of concepts, values and ideas that allow them to think and feel, and interpret things in similar ways. They share the same cultural codes, and thus systems of representation (Hall 1997: 4). This allows them to read visual images in a similar manner, or be able to produce roughly the same sound that could be recognized as 'music', or interpret body language in a similar sense. Meaning becomes a dialogue – only partially understood and an unequal exchange (Hall 1997: 4). Within recent years, meaning has taken a turn and become more concerned not with how 'language' works, but rather a broader sense of discourse in culture: Discourse referring to a cluster of ideas, images, and practices, that "provide ways to talk about, forms of knowledge and conduct associate with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society" (Hall 1997: 6).

Representation is an important part of the process by which meaning is created and shared between cultural members but it is not always this simple (Hall 1997: 15). We recognize these cultural 'things' through thought processes that help us understand our visual perception of the object with regards to the concept which one has in their head about it (Hall 1997: 16)

Representation links the meaning of concepts to language which enables us to refer to a 'real' world of objects, people or events, or imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events (Hall 1997: 17). Meaning therefore depends on a system of concepts and images that have been formed in our thoughts that 'represent' the world around us; this enables us to refer to things inside and outside our heads (Hall 1997: 17). This is not the result of individual concepts, but rather the different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts and the complex relations between them (Hall 1997: 18). Meaning is the relationship between things in the world, such as people, objects and events, real or fictional, and the concept system, which operates as mental representations of them (Hall: 18). We interpret the world in roughly similar ways because we "belong to the same culture", and are able to create shared meanings and create a social world which we inhabit together (Hall 1997: 18).

Hall then shifts his attention to two new concepts in his text that further explain our cultural understanding of society: the "signifier" and the "signified", which are both fixed in our cultural codes but not permanently (Hall 1997: 32). The "signifiers" are "forms of expression formed by language (such as speech, writing and drawing)" and the "signified" which is the conceptual image associated with the signifier (Hall 1997: 35). The connection between these two terms create signs that we organize into languages to produce meanings that can be used to reference things like objects, people or events (Hall 1997: 36).

We are then introduced to the terms "denotative" and "connotative" which require the use of these codes. "Denotative" is the basic descriptive level that is widely agreed upon (such as dress and jeans), whereas the term "connotative" acts as the signifiers which help us decode at a simple level using our conceptual classifications to address their meaning. Here, signs begin to be interpreted by a wider belief in social ideologies and conceptual frameworks (Hall 1997: 38).

Combining these texts together, we get an understanding of the straight culture Sara Ahmed speaks of and how it can begin to influence the perception of those who are drawn in through re-enacting the culture. In McLeod's writing, they point to the notion that within Disney films, the only true sexuality is that of a heterosexual (Griffin 2000: 4), and that endings to these films comprise of heterosexual couples (McLeod 2016: 20) that lead to heterosexual reproduction (McLeod 2016: 20). Thus, this dubs the idea of family being something that can only happen between a heterosexual relationship comprising of the hero and heroine. From Ahmed, it is said that 'straightness' is a culture (Ahmed 2006: 553) and that within this culture, objects are used and given that affect one's consciousness and perception of how we perceive things (Ahmed 2006: 548). As Hall states, within cultures there is a shared language and thus a shared meaning (Hall 1997: 1), and these meanings are created as a result of the objects Ahmed speaks of that influence our perception of certain signifiers that we may come across. For example, how we are made to think that a family can only comprise of a man and woman due to the heteronormative aspects found in films that eliminate any obstacle that may hinder the futurity of the main couple. Furthermore, through the presentation of the hero and heroine, we are given an example of what a man and woman should act and look like. Here, through the influence of straight culture, the connotative aspects that we use to decode an image is influenced by the culture that has created a social world that we all inhabit.

An understanding of what queerness is and how queer bodies are created and represented in films is imperative to my dissertation in understanding how over time, representation under The Disney Company's influence has changed from their very first film. Chapter 3 will discuss the history of Disney's representation of villains and queer bodies, looking particularly into how old Disney antagonists were created versus Ercole, the antagonist in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021). This discussion will be around how Disney vilified queer bodies through antagonists and understand how this notion has changed with a character discussion of Ercole Visconti. While we are on the topic of the queer other, what the shift of the physical monstrous attributes to

the main protagonist could mean and how it creates a new type of queered other and a new type of protagonist. Finally, the discussion around Luca and Alberto's relationship; how and why it is different from other male-on-male relationships and why it shouldn't be brushed off as a platonic friendship under the premise that they are both assumed heterosexual.

Moving onto the next subtopic, having described the definition of queer and the creation of the queer body, I now move onto another way in which queer bodies can be created whilst still being considered a social deviant: through the idea of the 'monster'.

The 'Monstrous' other.

Re-Imagining Horror in Children's Animated Films (2015) by Erin Hawley and *The Children's Horror Film: Characterizing an "Impossible" Subgenre* (2016) by Catherine Lester are two readings I deem important to this dissertation as this dissertation follows the sea monsters Luca and Alberto, and Hawley and Lester explain the significance of the presence of the monster – that being that it confirms and simultaneously questions conventions that are said to the norm. They further discuss that the monster, because of its questioning, becomes a queer body and queers the narrative it presents itself in. Hawley also speaks of the simplification process found within children's films under the premise that it is believed they cannot comprehend complex topics, but Hawley argues otherwise; here, I speak of sexuality as a topic that is deemed too complex for young children (according to some) and how it is hypocritical to say children cannot comprehend sexuality when they can clearly learn cis-heteronormativity through places such as social media.

The presence of the monster creates an "invasion" where "normality" is the dominant social ideology, and the "monster" is seen as societies repressed fears (Lester 2016: 29). While *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) is not of the horror genre, it does still contain the monstrous other (that being the sea monsters), and these readings will be utilized to explain how the monster questions boundaries, blurs these boundaries and helps establish the norm. By the presence of the monster, the 'Human' acts as an umbrella to signify an amalgamation of acts, identities, and manifestations that are attached to the human body and its constitutive elements, limits, and exclusions

within a range of cultural, historical, and theoretical contexts (Giffney, N., Hird, M. J. 2016: 7 - 8). Furthermore, in these readings, Hawley and Lester explain how by being a monster, one is othered, and through this othering, how sympathy for the monster creeps through. When I say 'monster', I refer to actual physical monsters (such as Frankenstein) rather than 'realistic' monsters such as serial killers.

We begin with Hawley, who states that in the eyes of others, 'horror' as a children's category is 'dumbed-down' and needs to be restricted and stripped of its original text - lowering its complexity - to be more easily consumed by younger audiences (Hawley 2015:1). This comes under the preconceived idea that children are vulnerable and impressionable and therefore are in need of protection (Lester 2016:22). The concern is that if the animation does not go through this 'dumbing-down' process it may possibly lead to an emotional scar or lead to confusion on "mature" topics they may not 'understand' (Hawley 2015:1). While this is understandable for the horror genre considering the tropes that are distinctly linked to it, I don't think the simplification process is exclusively linked to only the horror genre: While it is understandable that the producers do not wish to scare the child viewer, there are other topics that are not related to horror that are also deemed too advanced for the understanding of children – such as the subject of sexuality (for example). Hawley however argues against this claim that children cannot comprehend complex topics: Hawley puts forward the notion that children can understand complex concepts that are labelled as "mature" and uses the examples of *ParaNorman* (2012: Sam Fell & Chris Butler) and *Frankenweenie* (2012: Tim Burton). In these examples, 'mature' topics are spoken about - ones such as death and loss - where the parents in these films fail to effectively guide the main protagonists (namely two young boys) through their loss of a loved one (Hawley 2015:4). In each film, both boys are confronted with a death that the parents have failed to guide them through, which they both seem to understand, whilst the parents are unable to speak about the "mature" topic of death in a meaningful way (Hawley 2015:4).

In this text, Hawley re-imagines the horror genre in a different way – a way in which much like how adults consume and get entertainment from the horror genre, so can the younger audience (Hawley 2015: 3). Within this reimagining, however, questions are raised; such as questions about consumption, commercialization and the

recreation of material that is deemed “high culture” (Hawley 2015: 2). Hawley quotes Paul Wells, who furthers on the topic of child consumption of horror, stating that there is constant concern that these types of films are harmful to children, and that these films are not made for children (Hawley 2015: 2). It was feared that the influence of horror comics would transform children who engage with the genre, into juvenile delinquents (Lester 2016: 23). This, in turn, places the responsibility of who views them with adults, giving them authority to determine who, how and when horror films are seen (Hawley 2015: 2). The power of what children can consume, and what they are allowed to watch and talk about, falls into the hands of the adults thus shielding them from certain topics. This takes away a chance for them (the children) to engage with these complex topics, and becomes a missed opportunity for the adult to engage with the child on that particular topic they are veering them away from. However, a problem arises here that the adult then shares their opinion onto the child, and that’s not to say their opinion may or may not be wrong, but can be potentially troublesome and perpetuate certain ideologies that lead to exclusion and the othering of a body. Buckingham suggests that it’s how they perceive and interpret it that is important; as well as the social contexts in which they consume it and talk about it with others in (Lester 2016: 23 - 24).

This becomes vital of Hawley stating that children can indeed comprehend complex topics, as that is a common excuse used by many adults claiming that certain topics are far too complex for children to understand and engage with. I highlight this moment as a similar response was seen in the film *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022) where many caregivers of children were hesitant when viewing the film in cinema’s as a result of a kiss between two woman (Jalinous 2022). Events such as schools cancelling field trips to watch the film and cinemas putting up warning signs about the kiss scene were the type of responses seen towards the film (Jalinous 2022). Here, I want to highlight the double standard and undermine this idea that children cannot comprehend complex topics: While it is all fair and well for children to experience a romance and kiss between a male and female character (as seen in multiple children’s films from Disney), and understand the normativity of heterosexuality through media (Martin & Kazyak 2009: 316), it suddenly becomes a problem when the child is confronted with a different type of sexuality; that which isn’t heterosexuality. To this, the response is usually that the child is too young and

that sexuality isn't a topic for young children. However, if a child can clearly comprehend the idea of heterosexuality through films and media, they can surely comprehend the idea of homosexuality through the same means.

Moving forward, the subject of Hawley's paper is shifted to an explanation of the concept of the 'monster' and states how the idea or presence of the 'monster' challenges cultural boundaries and ideas, and questions where this 'monster' situates itself within these boundaries (Hawley 2015:5). The presence of the 'monster' creates an 'othering' in that their existence confirms the cultural ideas and boundaries (Hawley 2015:5). By their presence, they confirm what is deemed 'normal' and lay the foundation for what is and is not acceptable in the fictional world. Furthermore, their presence also outlines the fragility of these boundaries and "marks the faultlines" (Hawley 2015:5) of what is and isn't deemed 'human' (Hawley 2015:5). Another definition of the monstrous other is given by Katerina Mehigan in her paper *The Perspective of the Monstrous Other* (2018), Mehigan summarises Julia Kristeva's writing on 'The Abject', explaining 'The Abject' as a feeling of terror and disgust when an individual is faced with a threat that breaks the border between the human subject and the inhuman object (Mehigan 2018: 4). Within the space of children's horror, when they are introduced to the monster, a space is opened in which children can engage with the destabilising figure when viewing the film, which threatens the 'normality' (Hawley 2015:5). Here, children become aware of the monster, they become aware how the monster is different from those around them that are 'normal'.

The importance of understanding the monster here is that it originates from a place of othering in that its existence challenges the social boundaries that are acclaimed to be rigid. This is similar to the understanding of queerness and how in being queer, one questions boundaries and by existence, opposes the very existence of the norms and structures that serve as boundaries (Shlasko 2005: 124). The monster, in their respective film, becomes the destabilizing figure, questions apparent rigid boundaries, and is 'othered' as a result of this. It is here that I deem monsters to be queer bodies, and is important to make this connection as I argue later that through the idea of the monster, Luca is seen as a queer body in his existence within the human town as a sea monster. In the town of Portorosso, sea monsters are thought by the humans to be monstrous evil beings that they are afraid of. However, Luca

and Alberto adventure into the town disguised as humans and prove this label to be wrong, thus questioning the town's knowledge of the sea monsters.

With the aid of these texts on understanding how the monstrous other comes into existence as an othered body, and how their existence exposes the fragility of boundaries set by the norm, aided by an understanding of queerness and the 'other', I aim to discuss two aspects regarding the monster. Firstly, the idea of a queer monster that questions and blurs boundaries of the apparent rigidity of heteronormativity: In chapter 2, Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker & Ron Clements: 1989) will be used as an example to convey how Disney created and vilified queer bodies, and following this, an analysis of the antagonist in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), Ercole Visconti, on whether or not he has any similarities to the queer villain Ursula, and if not, how is he different? Following on from this, Chapter 2 also discusses the shift of the idea of monster: Throughout Disney's history, typically the antagonist is associated with the monster and given monstrous attributes, whereas in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) the main protagonist now has the monstrous attributes and thus a shifting is seen. Here I analyse how within the shift of the monster, the queerness typically associated with it has potentially shifted along with the monstrous attributes to the protagonist creating a new type of queer protagonist. Furthermore, as a result of this shifting, can Luca and Alberto be considered queer bodies?

Animation Intersections with Queer Bodies

Surrounding the topic of queer and queerness, and deconstructing straightness and the idea of subverting cultural boundaries, I have to consider where these boundaries have come from and how they have formed, and how they affect us; which brings this paper to an intersection of queerness and [body] politics found within animation. Monsters within the horror genre do a great deal of cultural work in that they challenge and question boundaries put in place (Mittman 2012: 1). They call into question our epistemological worldviews, highlighting their inadequate and fragmented nature, and ask us to acknowledge the failures found within our system (Mittman 2012: 8). In this particular section of academia, I highlight how the creation of the 'other' has changed consistently due to the fluidity of social norms over time.

Here, Queer Theory will be used in order to understand the assumptions of the norms surrounding politics of the body and how these norms have inserted themselves into the lifestyle of queer bodies and defined them, and how through a queering done by the existence of the monstrous body, these norms are questioned.

As defined by Aristeia Fotopoulou, "Intersectionality is the systematic study of the ways in which differences such as race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity and other socio-political and cultural categories interrelate" (Fotopoulou 2012:19). Research stemming from queer studies often examine intersections of one's social position and the space 'in-between' (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). Destabilizing categories is important here, however, what constitutes as 'queer' may be contested depending on the geographical context or the change of time; for example, as of now, queer studies is concerned with deconstructing homo- and heterosexuality, whereas in the future this may not be the case (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). Initially, queer studies attempted to question and challenge the boundaries about sexuality and gender, however, this changed when using literary approaches such as feminism and psychoanalysis. Queer studies have attempted to unlink sexuality, gender, and nature as a greater extent than the social sciences (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). Similarly, queer studies have "evolved as a response to identity politics to propose a politics of difference" (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). Queer theory questions the assumptions of identity politics, which, sexually constitutes an identity which can, in turn, find its way to particular lifestyles, practices and cultural expressions of gays and lesbians. (Fotopoulou 2012: 25).

The requirement is, as Kath Browne (2006) noted, to render fluid the categories of sexualities and genders and to stress the artificiality of boundaries. More importantly, it is the hierarchical division of certain desires, sexual practices and categories of desiring subjects, frequently excluded as 'dissident' or 'other', that need to be made visible, as these divisions operate within established norms of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality

(Fotopoulou 2012: 25).

Here, Fotopoulou goes on to say that 'queer' can nor should not be used as an umbrella term to stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBTQIA+) community, nor activism, but rather against homogenizing and contesting normativity, whether

they come from hegemonic heterosexual discourses or mainstream lesbian and gay politics (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). Reducing this concept of 'queer' to an identity category heavily limits its political potentials. Queer theory lies in the framing of 'queer' as a way of 'becoming' and of constantly questioning norms (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). Therefore, a 'queer' approach to research aims to perform an act of 'queering', or to de-naturalise taken-for-granted categories of analysis beyond issues of sexuality and gender (Fotopoulou 2012: 25). In *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), the queering that is done is not stating for definite that Luca and Alberto *are* queer, but rather that in the way they act, can possibly be seen as queer. Luca questions everything as a result of his curious personality– from Alberto to the anchovies that are seen in the night sky, and this is where his queering starts. It is also the underlying narrative that can be seen as queer as it reflects the queer experience of queer youth who closet themselves and run away in order to be able to be themselves.

But, we cannot talk about queerness without addressing its intersection with politics and how it can shape the world around us (as previously mentioned by Sara Ahmed), and in the context of this dissertation, how politics has shaped our bodies through mediated imagery. Queerness is an 'othering' that is created through the rejection or challenging of political ideologies – these are beliefs or opinions that occur repeatedly and deliberately in order to justify, explain or contest the social and political arrangements of a community (Freedden 2001). These ideologies create a culture in which the institution declares we must conform to or be labelled a 'deviant' (Ahmed 2006: 553). Within this intersection, I aim to briefly touch on Queer Theory and its relevance to this dissertation. Previously, I spoke of cultural boundaries in defining the term 'queer'. Queer Theory, as Sullivan explains, is cultural in the fact that it concerns itself with ways in which cultural media inform our lived experiences of sexuality and subjectivity (Sullivan 2003: 190). Queer Theory here becomes a way of studying or engaging with media through a queering to help explore ways in which meaning is created through imagery to inform social norms.

In *Queer Theory and Feminism* (2000) by Kathy Ruth, Ruth attempts to define queer theory, according to her, in four loosely constituted assertions of what is new, innovative and exciting about queer theory (Ruth 2000: 196). The first is the recognition of interpretations of understanding of all aspects found in human life.

What is observed is in fact filled with glitches, of which are smoothed over to make things 'normal'. It thus becomes vital to reread past events, texts and social theories with an eye of disruption (Ruth 2000: 197). The second is the idea that sexual identity and gender are socially constructed categories that can and have been changing in different eras (Ruth 2000: 198). This alludes to the idea that gender is a social construct and a matter of performance. Thirdly, the progression of politics will not easily be accepted by those in power reigning the institution; this leads to aggressive confrontations by queers, letting their political activism be known to all (Ruth 2000: 203). Queer politics have the intention of making 'straight' people uncomfortable in order to make them think about the foundations on which 'normal' was created (Ruth 2000: 204). And finally, the fourth, that of sex positivity. The idea that sex no longer is about procreation and intimacy, but rather that consensual sex is good sex and that it has no 'normal' parameters (Ruth 2000: 205).

I'd like to further emphasize Ruth's points on sexual identity and gender, and how they are socially constructed through performance with the aid of Judith Butler's work on gender performativity. Butler explains performativity as acts that are forms of authoritative speech and that performatives are statements, and in their utterance, exercise a binding power on the subject (Butler 1993a: 225). And it is these acts that are implicated in a network of authority and punishment that include things such as statements which does not only perform an action on the subject, but enforces a binding power on the action that is performed (Butler 1993a: 225). For example, the statement "It's a girl" enforces a binding power over a new born baby, reinforcing a gender norm that is to be reinforced repetitively as the said baby grows up.

Furthermore, along with this binding, naturalised knowledge (Butler 1990: xxii) is enforced onto the subject. By naturalized knowledge, taking Butler's example, we assume autonomy by (for example) the clothes one would wear or the way in which someone wears them (Butler 1990: xxii). However, our naturalized knowledge of gender is restricted to mainly the embodiment of certain ideals from femininity and masculinity to idealize heteronormativity (Butler 1993a: 232), which in turn establish what is and is not intelligibly human, and what is and is not real, and through this limit which bodies are allowed legitimate expression (Butler 1990: xxiii). Furthermore, this can be linked back to Sara Ahmed in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), on how someone is not born straight but becomes straight (Ahmed 2006: 553) through

repetitive gestures (Ahmed 2006: 553; Butler 1993a: 231) that become a norm, and through utterances that reinforce heteronormativity.

Disney's Capitalist Agenda

In order to further analyse and discuss the topic of this dissertation, there is a need to understand the history of The Disney Company and a brief history of Walt Disney himself: how Walt created what Zipes calls 'The Disney Spell' in how he appropriated European Fairy Tales and reimaged them according to American middle class values (Garlen, Sandlin 2016: 4). Following this, how over the decades Disney has upheld the ideologies of the institution through the use of pedagogical imagery (Giroux 1999: 2 – 3). The reason for this history to be understood lies in that Walt Disney upheld hegemonic values through his work, and thoroughly believed in education being not only in the classroom, but also outside of schools – such as his films (Giroux 1999: 18). A combination of the Hays Code and Walt Disney's beliefs manifested into the films we saw released prior to his death in 1966 that continue to hold onto the company until present day.

This section will make use of two main readings in order to understand the history of The Disney Company: Firstly, Jack Zipes in *Breaking the Disney Spell* (1999) where Zipes journeys back into the history of Walt Disney, explaining how he appropriated fairy tales and sanitized them and altered them in order to aim for a domestication of the imagination. And secondly, Henry Giroux's book *The Mouse That Roared* (1999), where Giroux writes on Disney politics explaining that big corporations (such as that of Disney) regulate modern culture and ideologies through their films by the use of pedagogical images (Giroux 1999:2 - 3). He explains how Disney creates a space within their brand where a merging happens of corporate power, entertainment, and pedagogical imagery that inform how we are to live and how the world is shaped (Giroux 1999:18). Pedagogy refers to the messages that are relayed to students about the power positions of different groups and individuals; what subjects and aspects of those subject are appropriate to study (Murphy 1996: 28). The pedagogical imagery that Giroux refers to, can be seen as images found within Disney films that inform and attempt to enforce political ideologies of what is and is not acceptable onto children, and furthermore, its older viewers. This can lead to

censorship of what corporate power deems morally 'correct', erasing any tension that might manifest itself (Giroux 1999: 29).

Zipes begins his explanation with a history of oral folk tales explaining that they were told by gifted tellers, intended to give meaning to the daily lives of communal members; that they told stories of natural occurrences and emphasized communal harmony (Zipes 1999: 333). These tales come from common beliefs and experiences, and were altered as the beliefs and behaviours of particular group members changed (Zipes 1999: 334). With the introduction of the press in the 15th century, the reception of fairy tales was transformed (Zipes 1999: 334). Fairy tales started to become institutionalized by the creation of a genre where the social means through which issues and questions of behaviour and demeanour in all types of situations, began to be mapped out in narrative strategies for 'literary socialization', as well as subversion to question ruling standards of behaviour (Zipes 1999: 334). Unlike within the oral tradition, the literary tale enabled the reader to withdraw from society and to be alone with the tale (Zipes 1999: 335). This violated the communal aspect of folk tales.

Following this, Zipes explained that most fairy tales were made for adults as they were symbolic and could be read on many different levels; this labelled them dangerous. Social behaviour could not be controlled through fairy tales, and there were subversive features in the language and themes (Zipes 1999: 336). This became a reason fairy tales were not approved for children. However, when fairy tales started being made for children by the end of [roughly] the 18th century/beginning of the 19th century, they were sanitized and censored versions of the adult version (Zipes 1999: 336), and were aimed at the domestication of the imagination (Zipes 1999: 336). The form and structure were regulated carefully so improper thoughts and ideas would not be stimulated in the minds of the young (Zipes 1999: 337). However, that's not to say the imagination was domesticated; rather, it became a multi-vocal network of discourses in which similar motifs were shared. Writers began using protagonists and plots to comment on the civilizing process and socialization of their respective countries (Zipes 1999: 337). With this, tales did not represent communal values anymore, but rather the values of the individual writer (Zipes 1999: 337): Therefore if the writer aligned themselves with the hegemonic value system of their respective society, they would in turn write a

conventional tale with conservative values, whether for adults and/or children (Zipes 1999: 337).

Here, Zipes begins to address Walt Disney in that his appropriation of European fairy tales resulted in him robbing the literary tale of its voice and changed its form and meaning (Zipes 1999: 344) and that he used technology (in this case the emergence of animation) to his advantage and did nothing to help the people or the community (Zipes 1999: 345). His adaption of fairy tales were instilled with American patriarchal codes, resulted in keeping those in power, like himself, who felt empowered to design and create new worlds (Zipes 1999: 351). Zipes then continues to list multiple ways in which fairy tales had been altered and westernized, mentioning that these changes brought on the re-imaging of plots and characters that now reinforced patriarchal notions on sexuality and gender (Zipes 1999:338). This set the bar on which The Walt Disney Company built themselves on, and in our modern-day society, this is the bar the Disney Company is trying to overcome and correct.

While Zipes speaks of the history of both The Disney Company and Walt Disney himself, Henry Giroux writes about the more modern implications of The Disney Company and its ties with the institution, and how through this, The Disney Company perpetuates pedagogical imagery that reinforces patriarchal notions through not only the images we see on screen, but also through merchandise that consumers purchase.

Giroux starts his book with this sentence: “The organization and regulation of culture by large corporations such as Disney profoundly influence children’s culture and their everyday lives” (Giroux 1999: 2). With the emergence of new technologies, the influence of producing, circulating and exchanging of information and has changed culture with it, especially popular culture, which is the way in which many youth learn about themselves, their relationships to others and the big world (Giroux 1999: 2).

Walt Disney, the man and the company, has become [synonymous] with notions of childhood innocence (Giroux 1999: 17). Disney defined innocence as a part of home entertainment, and also, pedagogically, as values and practices that associate themselves with the safeguarding of childhood alongside a strong investment in the market as a sphere of consumption (Giroux 1999: 18). For Walt Disney, education was not just confined to the classroom, but rather that education can be found

outside of school; such as within his films (Giroux 1999: 18). Education is not only found in schools, but also within the realm of popular culture with its own mechanism of knowledge and values. Walt Disney knew that education had to also be lively and enjoyable (Giroux 1999: 18). However, when public culture (that of media outlets that inform our everyday lives) and commercial interests (the attraction of a Disneyland theme park or a Disney film) intermingle, the boundary between entertainment and education begin to blur when commercial interest becomes an informant for public culture (Giroux 1999: 18).

Here, the issue is raised for parents, educators and others, is how media culture has become possibly our primary education in regulating meanings, values and tastes that set norms and what it means to have and claim an identity as a male or female, black or white, citizen or non-citizen (Giroux 1999: 3). Disney, as such a large influential corporation, can and does act as an educational force in shaping [American] popular culture (Giroux 1999: 3), and as an educational force that produces meaning, social practices and desires, it becomes necessary to critique it as both an educational issue and a matter of politics and institutional power (Giroux 1999: 3).

What cannot be underestimated is the threat that The Disney Company, alongside many other corporations, bring forward within their control over public information and their monopoly over public spaces (Giroux 1999: 4). Here, the media becomes the ground from which a major intellectual shift happens with regards to public discourse: Disney is not merely creating harmless family entertainment. What needs to be recognized is that this pleasure that Disney provides us should not blind us nor does it remove them from the realm of power, politics and ideology (Giroux 1999: 4 – 5). Disney's power lies partly in its ability to "...discover some nostalgic connection to [their] childhood" (Giroux 1999: 5) where they tap into lost hopes and dreams and a 'utopian' potential for popular culture (Giroux 1999: 5). However, as we've come to realize, the dreams Disney provides to children are not so innocent and must be interrogated for the values they hold and forms of identification they offer (Giroux 1999: 7).

Giroux's writing is a 'pedagogical attempt' to challenge meanings and common sense rendering what we bring into our encounter with the Disney franchise, while

simultaneously interrogating historical, institutional, and political conditions that shape, limit and condition these mediations (Giroux 1999: 8). It has been established that audiences take in and interpret texts differently in various ways, and the ways in which some audiences interpret Disney texts may not be as significant as how some meanings and messages under certain political conditions have become more valued as representations of reality than others (Giroux 1999: 8). Furthermore, how these representations take shape of an ideology by making an 'appeal to common sense' while simultaneously shaping political policies and/or programmes that serve specific interests (Giroux 1999: 8). The intake and creation of meaning is subjective and is not said in stone that *that* is what this means, however this does not eliminate the excessive power of megacorporation's, such as Disney who control a wide range of meanings that flow through our society (Giroux 1999: 9).

Critiquing Disney and the imagery the company puts forward becomes important to the public eye when a corporation holds such a vast amount of power in shaping children's culture, and using their various technologies as teaching machines to buy, sell, and make uniform aspects of everyday life, posing a [potential] threat to "real freedoms" that are associated with substantive democracy (Giroux 1999: 11). It becomes essential to democratize the media and hold it accountable for citizens that also demand engagement in hard political and pedagogical tasks of opening these megacorporation's, such as Disney, to public interrogation and dialogue (Giroux 1999: 11).

What is important to take from these academic texts is how Walt Disney appropriated European fairy tales and recreated them in order to perpetuate his ideological beliefs situated in American patriarchy, and that carried on through the years of The Disney Company's existence. It is these beliefs that perpetuated, alongside the existence and implementation of The Hays Code, the creation of the queer villain and the vilification of queer bodies within children's films. Whether it is conscious or not, The Disney Company still partly upholds the ideology of the American patriarchy in order to diminish any tension that may arise between the company and the corporate world. If we take a step back to Ahmed's writing, one that goes against the grain is typically deemed a social deviant and is in some way

punished: as Giroux stated, The Disney Company aligns itself with the institution in order to not accumulate tension between them and the corporate world, but to give an example of what could (and did) happen, this paper will address the events that transpired in Florida 2022 between Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis and The Disney Company.

The Disney Company came under fire from its employees and members of the LGBTQIA+ community when Bob Chapek, the CEO, refused to comment on the HB1557 Bill, otherwise known as the "Don't Say Gay" bill, that was about to be passed in the Florida region of The United States. HB 1557, or the "Don't Say Gay Bill" is a bill that was brought in to give parents greater control over the education their children receive in schools. While this bill does not explicitly have the word "gay" in it, it does include the words "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" (Lavietes 2022). In the bill, it states that teachings on sexual orientation and gender identity is banned from kindergarten up until grade 3, or in any manner that is not deemed appropriate for students by the state, and a third party (Lavietes 2022). In this case, third-party participants could include parents who believe conversations about LGBTQIA+ people is problematic and inappropriate, regardless of the child's age, thus the topic may never arise, and should it – the teacher could be dismissed (Lavietes 2022). But from what has been derived from all the texts above about society being a heteronormative one, and its repeated enforcement on us, a bill such as this could be seen as an anti-queer bill solely in that they want to speak of sexual orientation so long as it refers to a cis-heteronormative male and cis-heteronormative female, because as Butler puts it, all others that are situated outside this realm of gender, has no place for expression or existence (Butler 1990: xxiii).

A letter from the Disney employees was posted onto the internet, proclaiming their disappointment of Bob Chapek and the Disney Company for not standing by the inclusive narrative they put forward (Vary & Jackson:2021), furthermore, how Disney enforced censorship on same-sex affection within their films (Vary & Jackson: 2021). Here, they speak of the lesbian kiss that comes from the Disney Pixar film *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022). Allegedly, this moment was taken out of the film, but was reinstated not long after the uproar (Vary 2022). Furthermore, according to former Pixar employees, this was not the first time an effort to be inclusive towards queer characters was thwarted (Vary 2022). After all this had been brought to the surface,

Bob Chapek publicly condemned the bill and withdrew their donations to the party, however was met with harsh backlash from the Republican Party who withdrew Disney's independence within their park (Lodewick: 2022).

Publicly condemning Disney and taking away their long-standing rights to independently govern their own parks not only showed the power that is being held by the institution over the public, but also becomes a broad statement from those in power: if such a powerhouse as Disney can get its independence revoked, what message does that give smaller businesses with less influence? This will be used as an example to showcase how the institution enforces its power over the public, and should we veer from this we are met with punishment. With Giroux explaining that Disney tends to align itself with the institution, it also means the company aligns itself with the morale that these institutions uphold. Aligning themselves with the institution makes the institution [almost] turn a blind eye to them knowing they are not rebelling in any way, and in a sense leave them to their own devices. However, the spotlight gets put on them the moment they go against what the institution believes, and their deviancy from this causes backlash, and essentially, punishment. In Ahmed's writing, the socially present deviant is 'othered' and cast aside, and in Disney's case, certain privileges were taken as a result of their deviancy.

American Queer Cinema

Within discussing *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as a queer narrative, and Luca being a queer body, I now move to the topic of queer cinema. In the book *Queer Cinema in the World* (2016) by Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt, they question queers in the world and the role of cinema in queer world politics. Here, I deem it important to mention that in this particular context, even though the feature film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) is situated in Italy, it was created under the influence of American cinema and therefore American politics and its Westernizing qualities. However, even under Western ideologies, the feature film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) seems to present alternative narratives to that of the usual protagonist and antagonist within the history of Disney animations. After discussing queerness and the creation of the queer through a monstrous body, and the history of the queered

villain, *Luca's* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) narrative seemingly presents us with a non-queered villain and a queer main character, thus changing the dynamics of the typical world building found within cinema that perpetuate heteronormative conventions. This results in challenging and questioning political ideologies that cinematic conventions generally abide by, resulting in a queering of a narrative. *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as a film offers an alternate reading of the assumed heterosexual narrative found in American cinema, thus challenging the existing norms that are associate.

Within queer cinema the viewer is brought to an intersection of queer politics and [American] world cinema, and questions how both queer films 'construct ways of being' in a world and 'what political values or ideologies queer cinema starts to create' (Shoonover & Galt 2016:4). Incorporating what Henry Giroux has stated about Disney and its use of pedagogical imagery, this paper can begin to question how political ideologies (such as that of gender and sexuality) has informed cinema and its creations, and how Queer Cinema begins to challenge these notions. Schoonover and Rosalind explain how cinema is always involved in worldmaking (which they refer to as "worlding") (Shoonover & Galt 2016: 5), and is situated heavily within topics like globalization, identity, post-colonialism and so on, so to propose a queer cinema invites trouble as it begins to offer alternatives to such ideologies as well as capitalism, hetero- and homonormative conventions (Shoonover & Galt 2016:5). Political ideologies that inform society in real time, begin to spill over into worldbuilding in cinema which become a representation of our society in some way or form be it through a socio-, political or economic situation.

To propose a 'Queer/World/Cinema' invites trouble according to Shoonover and Galt, as this combination of words invites anxieties into the conversation about the "certainty of knowing and the privilege of position" (Shoonover & Galt 2016: 5); it brings to the table a fear of "mistranslation, of neo-colonial domination, of homogeneity and the levelling of difference" (Shoonover & Galt 2015: 5). Queer/ World/ Cinema creates new ways of being in a world as well as the ability to create different worlds (Shoonover & Galt 2016: 5).

Cinema is constantly involved in world-building or world-making, and by adding queerness to it, questions conventional epistemologies, and thus has the potential to

reconfigure models of 'worlding' (Shoonover & Galt 2016: 5). This queerness within worldmaking is important as any utterance about any world always involves a 'scale of politics' - which includes specific parameters for that world, and queerness promises to de-reify these qualities this world possesses (Shoonover & Galt 2016: 5).

Many films engage with queer issues or contain queer characters, but are not always analysed by queer film studies and are constantly not recognised by their straight advocates as queer endeavours (Shoonover & Galt 2016: 8). The re-coding of "straight" films to queer is neither discrete with symbols or signs nor is it a private practice: the appropriation of queers in film contaminates a wide cultural perception of cinema. A question or concern that is constantly raised in this context, is how to define these boundaries of queerness across a multitude of audiences and texts (Shoonover & Galt 2016: 9).

This chapter highlights the topics that will be discussed in the following chapters of my dissertation. To begin with, I defined queerness as being something that challenges the social normality of relationships and boundaries found between people and the community they find themselves in. I employ it here as a way of unpicking binaries and rereading gaps and queering in-between spaces. Linking this to the monstrous other, by utilizing how Hawley and Lester have identified the monster of a narrative as being 'othered', I link this 'otherness' to being queer – as the purpose of the monster is to highlight the boundaries of the norm, as well as challenge them – much like how queerness challenges the normality of heteronormativity. This will aid in my argument surrounding Luca and Alberto as queer bodies and how they are represented in this narrative. After having shown how Luca and Alberto can be seen as queer bodies through their association with the monster, this dissertation then shifts to explaining how their homosocial relationship is not that of a typical platonic one that is generally found within Pixar films, but rather that of a queerplatonic; this will be further discussed in chapter 3. This is to question the assumption of characters being heterosexual in a heterosexual space.

This chapter then shifted to queer bodies and politics that surround the queer body; here we looked at Judith Butler who explained that all gender is performed, and through this constant re-enactment, becomes normalized. Here, the politics arise in

that queering these so-called solid boundaries becomes problematic as through this queering, it becomes apparent that boundaries are not as solid as the institution might think. While on the topic of the institution, Henry Giroux gives us great insight into The Disney Company and their political relationship with the institution; here we saw how Disney aligns itself with the institution in order to continue the company's business, however, as a result of aligning themselves with the institution they reciprocate what the institution wants to see in order to relieve any tension that may occur. Thus, creating the pedagogical imagery within children's films that become necessary to critique. Jack Zipes then explains a bit of history showing the connection of why The Disney Company has aligned itself with the institution, showing us how Walt Disney appropriated European fairy tales and warped them to represent the American patriarchy. This will aid in my discussion around the politics of The Disney Company and how it dictates what they can and can't produce [with regards to films] as a result of this alignment, and what may happen should they take a stand.

Finally, the emergence of queer cinema and its history in revolting against the institution and its cinematic standards. Having explained through Giroux's writing and the pedagogical imagery put forward by The Disney Company through their films, we stumble across a revolution that questions these imageries – much like Giroux himself. Following the response of many claiming *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) being labelled queerbait, I can't help but notice that there is a niche market ready for an outright queer protagonist – something *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) almost achieved. Through the use of Queer Theory, diving deep into a queering *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) brings out the underlying queer narrative that is clearly present, and ultimately offers an alternative to the assumed heterosexual space of the film. In doing this, as Schoonover and Galt say, it does invite trouble; by queering the film and understanding it as a queer one, taking into consideration it is a children's film, invites trouble from [possibly] conservative audiences who deem sexuality to be a topic far too advanced for a young audience, and inevitably, raise arguments about ~~being a grooming~~me⁹. In chapter 4 this dissertation will unpick and

⁹ According to the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), "grooming" is a term used when someone builds a relationship with trust and emotional connection with a child or young person, only so that they can manipulate, exploit and/or abuse them (Anonymous (NSPCC):2024).

films narrative and characters to understand how it can be considered queer: here, a breakdown of narrative will happen to highlight queer moments and plot points and how they can be seen as queer moments. Furthermore, an analysis of queer characters and queer allies will be discussed, highlight characters that perform allyship towards the queer characters, and finally, a discussion around queer parents who are present in the narrative and how they come to accept the queer characters.

Chapter 3:

“We’re going to catch a sea monster”- Queering Villains vs platitudes of the platonic vs Loveable Monsters; A Trajectory of Queer Narratives and Representations.

Having discussed many different political and academic stances on queerness, animation and the cinematic American context in chapter 2 – I now move on to the analysis of my dissertation. In this chapter, I will be discussing Disney’s history with The Hays Code and its influence on Disney films through the company’s existence and how it brought about the negative representations that we see in the queered villain. I will then move to analyse Ursula as a villain and how she was queered and why this was problematic, followed by how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) changed this ideal through a recreation of a new villain type. Following on from this, homosocial relationships will be analysed and discussed in order to differentiate Luca and Alberto’s relationship to that of (for example) Woody and Buzz Lightyear from *Toy Story* (John Lasseter: 1995). This section will question how Disney Pixar has moved forward with a new type of male-on-male relationship. Finally, the discussion of how in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), the shift of the monster – typically associated with villains – is now a part of the protagonist, and how this shifting has created a queer protagonist.

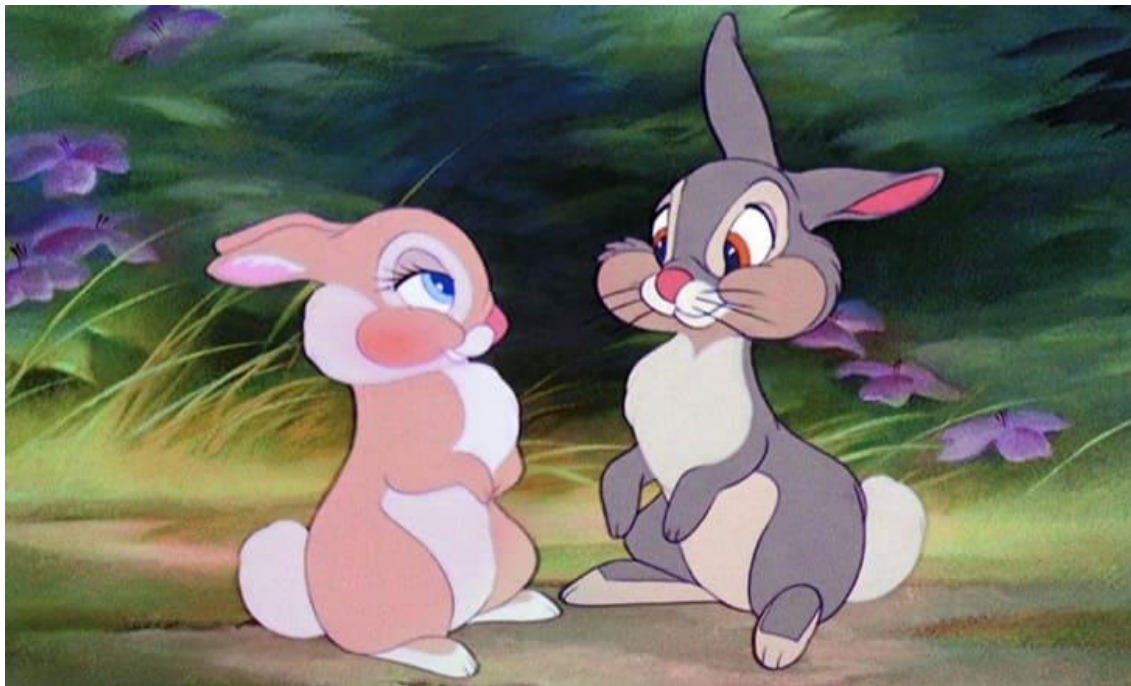
Disney’s Implementation of the Hays Code

Throughout the course of Disney’s existence, the Disney company has aimed to produce an image as an outstanding, upstanding morally correct organization that according to Brown, could be trusted to influence children and their development (Brown 2021: 2). To understand how Disney obtained this family-friendly label this dissertation needs to address the creation of The Hays Code and how it set the bar on what could and couldn’t be within a film. The Hays Code was introduced in 1930 as a set of moral guidelines that were used to make Hollywood films ‘safe’ to watch (Abreu: 2021). In the early twentieth century when film became accessible to everyone, it became (to some) a symbol of important changes that were taking place in the power structures that governed them, but simultaneously, was seen as a

threat to those in power (Vaughn 1990: 39) which resulted in the creation of the Hays Code that attempted to bind films to Judeo-Christian morality (Vaughn 1990: 39). Religious individuals pushed for the film industry to commit cinematic material to the Ten Commandments (Vaughn 1990: 41) while also pushing for the suppression of controversial themes such as criminal violence, birth control, suicide, racial relations, drinking and abortion to name a few (Vaughn 1990: 40). This also came as a result of Alice Mitchells writing, where they wrote about the relationship between film and children, stating that the youth tend to think the images before them on the screen are real, which they are, but reflect experiences above what they can comprehend and thus robs them of their childhood (Vaughn 1990: 41). Prior to the 1930 Hays Code, the government was still censoring a lot of Hollywood films, and Hollywood took it upon themselves to self-regulate and self-censor as the best option in order to keep their films being released (Vaughn 1990: 43), otherwise the film was banned and never shown, thus making Hollywood lose capital on the film.

The Disney Company followed these guidelines of The Hays Code in order to be synonymous with the American public considering their films were aimed at mainly children. Through Henry Giroux and Jack Zipes's writing, it is noted that Walt Disney westernized fairy tales, reimagining the plots and characters that reinforced patriarchal notions of sexuality and gender, and this became the base on which The Disney Company built their empire (Zipes 1999: 338). It is then pointed out through Giroux's writing that Disney, as a megacorporation, creates a space within their brand where corporate power, entertainment, and pedagogical imagery intertwine and these images begin to inform us on how we should (according to corporate power) live (Giroux 1999: 2). Between 1934 (the forceful stamp of approval) and 1968 (the end of the Hays Code) Walt Disney Pictures released a handful of animations that are dubbed as "classics" today, such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand, Perce Pearce, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, William Cottrell, Ben Sharpsteen: 1937), *Bambi* (Clyde Geronimi, Samuel Armstrong, David Hand: 1942), *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske: 1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (Wolfgang Reitherman, Eric Larson, Clyde Geronimi, Les Clark: 1959). Within these films, the influence of American patriarchy and The Hays Code becomes apparent in how the characters and plot progress. Snow White and Cinderella in their respective stories take on feminine roles such as cooking and

cleaning and are able to communicate with animals within their vicinity. And while Belle from *The Beauty and the Beast* (Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise: 1991) does not take on these roles, she is still made the woman of the house within her narrative and presumably does do the cooking and cleaning however this is not made explicit. All three characters are also courted by a man whom they fall in love with and end up marrying towards the end of the film. It is noted here that the only marriages that are presented in these films are marriages between a male and female. While *Bambi* (Clyde Geronimi, Samuel Armstrong, David Hand: 1942) is a film primarily containing animals, it is noted that even these animals have gender constraints in that certain features are accentuated in order to emphasize their gender: in figure 7 Miss Bunny (on the left) clearly has feminine features such as big eyelashes and rosy pink cheeks, whereas Thumper (on the right) has none of these features.



[Figure 7] Thumper and Miss Bunny. (Clyde Geronimi, Samuel Armstrong, David Hand 1942: 00:51:48)

While The Hays Code ended roughly around the 1960s, The Disney Company still held on to these standards. Through *Bambi* (Clyde Geronimi, Samuel Armstrong, David Hand: 1942) there were clear signs of anthropomorphism, and this same process was used in the feature film *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton: 2008) – a film about

robots of which were given genders. This film focuses on two robots – Wall-E and Eva – who fall in love. However, these two robots are anthropomorphized and assigned a gender even through the absence of genitalia. The studio made Wall-E ‘male’, and Eva ‘female’ through their actions, their voice, their physical look, and their interactions with each other that show a clear sign of attraction.

Whilst Disney was portraying and reinforcing heteronormative standards through their films, they also created problematic representations of homosexuality.

Homosexuality was considered one of the controversial topics of The Hays Code and was usually avoided, however, there were exceptions; if the controversial topic showed that that path lead to unhappiness it was allowed (Ward 2016: 96). This lead to popular gay stereotypes we know today; that gay men were feminised and sashayed when they walk with limp wrists, talking with a lisp, and lesbians were butch who tried their luck with the protagonist female before the male did (Ward 2016: 97). It was these characters who almost always experienced misfortune in that they never were in a relationship, never happy, hopelessly in love and almost always died towards the end of the film (Ward 2016: 97). It was possibly here where Disney’s problematic representation of the queer body began where they queered their villain and eliminated them at the end of the film. Within doing this, problematic representations of homo- and heterosexuality became apparent within Disney films: Within the representations of homo- and heterosexuality, what also reared its head was what was deemed “good” and “bad”. In the case of most films, the good side wins and the bad side loses (as per The Hays Code). While this is not the main focus of the paper – it is worth noting as it had a negative impact on both representations of homo- and heterosexuality.

Disney’s Drag Villains

Having dived into The Hays Code and understanding how certain taboo topics were not to be shown, or could be shown so long as they depicted unhappiness and were unsuccessful, I now move to the discussion of Disney’s villains and the historical background. Here I discuss the negative representations of queer bodies and how the Disney Company achieved these negative representations by portraying them to

have unfavourable characteristics and physical features. With the use of Butler's writing, I aim to show how drag can be [sometimes] deemed political by its role in exposing heteronormative gender traits and thus can be considered queer according to my definition. Furthering on from this, Ursula and all her quirks will be compared to other villains who showcase similar traits and how these traits were vilified in Disney films rather than celebrated as an art form.

The term "drag" was created in the 19th century as a way to describe the act of men dressing up as women, however in the 21st century it has become a way of popular expression of performers dressing in drag and accentuating feminine characteristics in a performance. In *Gender is Burning* (1993b), Judith Butler includes a review of Bell Hooks¹⁰ on the film *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston: 1990), where Butler explains that Hooks sided with feminist theorists who claimed that drag was offensive to women, and that its ridicule of feminine characteristics and degradation could be seen as misogynistic (Butler 1993b: 126). However, Butler points out that claiming drag as misogynistic labels it a male homosexual activity – which it is not always – and roots male homosexuality in misogyny (Butler 1993b: 126). Drag is something that is not always a model of political agency, nor is there a relation between drag and subversion (Butler 1999: xxiv; Butler 1993b:124), however, it could be used to both denaturalize and re-idealise heterosexual gender norms through its parody (Butler 1993b: 124). Butler furthers on from this by stating that hegemonic heterosexuality is something that is a constant repetitive effort that imitates its own idealizations, which in turn, creates its own claim on originality and naturalness (Butler 1993b: 124). In this sense, drag becomes subversive in that it reflects this imitative structure and disrupts heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality (Butler 1993b: 124).

Knowing that drag has the potential to undermine heterosexual standards whether it be purposeful or not, leads me to believe – according to numerous definitions of what queer can be from chapter 2 – that when one dresses in drag, they become a queer body and queer heteronormative standards. As mentioned, drag is not always

¹⁰ Bell Hooks was an academic writer who encouraged people to think critically about race, sexuality, love and feminism within our communities and work place (Asare 2021)

a political matter, however, it was consistently used as an influence on many Disney villains in their character designs.

A famous example of where drag was used as an influence in a Disney film is Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker, Ron Clements: 1989), whose character was based of the famous drag queen Divine. Divine was a drag queen from the 70's and 80's who took part in many John Water's films that were 'trash' films that transformed her career and she became a famous indie star (Wintemute, D., Furdyk, B. 2023). A famous film of Divine is *Pink Flamingos* (John Water: 1972) which became infamous for Divine's most iconic scene; Divine ate dog faecal matter. Within *Pink Flamingos* (John Water: 1972), the monstrous body is shown to be positive and creative: it was clear that Divine was a male playing a female role as Divine did not resemble a female. Drag queens typically embody the beauty aspects of femininity whereas Divine exaggerated feminine traits to the point of being grotesque (Hallan 2010). This can be seen by the thick application of makeup, going so far as shaving her hairline back in order to make space for more eye makeup (Hallan 2010). Furthermore, it is shown through her potbelly in a skin tight outfit that shows her folds rather than hides them (Hallan 2010). Divine embodied what is known as 'camp': a style that emphasises exaggeration, creating a tension with popular culture (Kates 1997). The tension lay in that Divines character, that was a female, was not very feminine in that her character was invested in the grotesque – such as eating dog faecal matter. Divine was not aiming to be realistic, but rather comment on femininity and masculinity through the use of comedy, make up and costume.



[Figure 8] Divine in *Pink Flamingos* (John Waters: 1972)

Ursula's character, designed by John Musker and Ron Clements, took inspiration from this famous drag queen, Divine, and incorporate certain physical aspects of her that can clearly be seen. In figure 9 and 10, we can distinctly see the direct influence that Divine had on Ursula's character creation: The noticeable white hair that stands up high can be seen in both images. While Divine's hair seems a bit more eccentric standing in an upright position and heavily teased, Ursula's is a bit more refined and gelled together neatly in an upward style. Then we turn to the makeup seen on Ursula's face: much like Divine, her eyebrows are angular – almost like arrows pointing upwards, and are placed fairly high on her face. Ursula is shown to have large eyelashes and full eyelid coverage of eyeshadow that extends quite high up. Ursula also has vibrant red lipstick that defines her lip shape. Our attention is then brought to her jewellery, where Ursula wears very big earrings, accessories also favoured and exaggerated in Divine's costume. Divine constantly wore eccentric jewellery – mainly earrings – but Ursula also wore a very big necklace. Her necklace consisted of a big, gold shell that captures Ariel's voice and is seen wearing it for most of the movie until it is broken. Furthermore, Ursula's voice is quick rough and deep, reflecting the masculinity of Divines voice. Finally, much like in *Pink Flamingos* (John Waters: 1972), Ursula wears skin tight clothing that shows her rolls and does not conceal her large body.

If we further analyse the personality of Ursula we know she is a cunning woman; there are three notable instances of this. Firstly, when she convinces Ariel to sign a contract and give up her voice in order to be human. Ariel is confused by this and questions how she could possibly get Prince Eric to fall in love with her, to which Ursula starts singing again telling Ariel to not underestimate body language and sways her hip from side to side alluding to Ariel being suggestive, and that men on land enjoy a silent girl rather than a loud one. Secondly, she puts Prince Eric under a spell to fall for her instead: Here, her cunningness is interfering with the main heterosexual couple and as we know this in turn messes with the 'happily ever after' trope of the heterosexual couple. Finally, we learn her end goal was King Triton's crown – which can be taken as a thirst for power.

When we begin to dig deeper into Ursula as a character, we start to realize that she is no longer just a plain villain; firstly she begins to embody drag-like characteristics that defy the cis-heteronormative ideologies of the state, secondly, she is portrayed as cunning alluding to the fact that drag queens or queer bodies can be cunning and can't be trustworthy. Then, in her song *Poor Unfortunate Souls* she showcases two images of a fat woman and a skinny man singing "this one longing to be thinner, that one wants to get the girl, and do I help them? Yes I do." and she transforms the large woman into a tiny woman –reflective of Ariel's body – and transforms the man's skinny body into a muscular one. Here, it is suggested that in order to obtain love one must be a certain weight or body type – in this film, it is Ariel's body type as only she finds love in this narrative and not Ursula. In fact, Ursula's character begins to embody characteristics that, according to cis-heteronormative standards, are unfavourable for a lady to embody.



[Figure 9] Ursula (John Musker, Ron Clements 1989: 00:42:40)



[Figure 10] Divine. (Gorman 2020)

We see through the influence of Divine how Ursula's character creation came into being and how they used the influence of Divine's style to create it, and whilst this was not a problem in how Divines style was replicated, something must be said at the fact that Ursula as the villain of the story embodied these characteristics along

with other unfavourable one. As a result of Disney being synonymous with the idea of innocence, most may overlook Ursula as a character who was simply the villain of the story, and while it was noted that not all drag is a site of politics, The Disney Company persistently created a pattern within their villains that showcased these drag-like characteristics, which in turn began to vilify drag and queer bodies. This can be seen in the examples given of other villains from other Disney films: In figure 9, we see four villains; Queen Grimhilde from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (David Hand, Perce Pearce, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, William Cottrell, Ben Sharpsteen: 1937), Jafar from *Aladdin* (Ron Clements, John Musker: 1992), Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker, Ron Clements: 1989) and Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty* (Wolfgang Reitherman, Eric Larson, Clyde Geronimi, Les Clark: 1959). If we first look at the physical appearance, Queen Grimhilde, Jafar and Maleficent are skinny characters – this is noted through the harsh edges found in their character creation such as the pointed nose, the pointed eyebrows, the pointed clothes, and the multiple triangle-like shapes found hidden in their designs. Furthermore, if we look at makeup we notice that all characters are wearing make-up: we have already discussed Ursula, and like Ursula, all characters have a defined brow and wear makeup: Jafar looks as if he is wearing eyeliner along with Queen Grimhilda and Maleficent who are also wearing eccentric eye shadow. If we then move to the villains in their respective narratives, each villain somehow attempts to get in the way of a heterosexual couple in a cunning way: Queen Grimhilde tries to kill Snow White in order to be the fairest in the land, Jafar tries to hypnotize Jasmine to fall in love with him, and Maleficent puts Sleeping Beauty to sleep for the rest of her life.



The issue in this is not how these villains are created physically nor their personality – but rather that their character is distinctly linked to evil - being a character that is involved in ‘evil’ doings, and simultaneously having the qualities of queerness. This link can potentially cause an unconscious bridge between queer bodies and evil, villainous behaviour (Brown 2019: 7). This, subconsciously, leaves a tangible mark on the conditions of our existence; of what it can and can’t be (Martinez 2016: 29), and through this, we begin to understand how Disney created pedagogical imagery through their films as a result of the merging of corporate culture and entertainment; shaping children’s culture through the imagery of what is and is not acceptable (Giroux 1999: 2 – 3).

And while Disney has created this history of villainising the queer body, I also argue that they have begun the process of unlearning old rules and re-establishing new ones within their company, and are slowly taking steps to broaden their perspective on how they approach numerous projects. I argue that this can be seen through Ercole Visconti’s creation as the antagonist [or villain] of the narrative (as one of few examples). If we have a look at Ercole Visconti and the physical aspects of how he was created, we notice that in comparison to the villains I previously discussed, he does not show the traits of being queer. Like every other townspeople, he does not look any different from a normal human being. He wears stylish clothes, has slicked back black hair, skew teeth and a rather big nose. Shifting the focus of Ercole to his personality, we see him to be vain, bossy and an outright bully to not only Luca and Alberto, but to other children as well. I’d like to emphasize here that Ercole, in this narrative, was made the villain not through his physical attributes but rather his personality and its traits; that of being a bully. Ercole was not queered physically, thus unlinking queerness to this particular bully of a villain. Furthermore, Ercole is vilified because he is a bully and treats people with disrespect. Here, we see how Disney has moved away from the typical villain who interrupts the heterosexual couple from their happily ever after, and rather produces a narrative where societal issues are raised and vilified – such as bullying in this case.

Through Ercole's bullying, he purposefully tries to 'other' Luca and Alberto within the film. He does this by insulting them – such as commenting on their clothes asking if they got them from a dead body and trying to push Luca into the fountain as a joke [to him]. However, it does not stop here. Further on in the film, we see Ercole go as far as punching Alberto in the stomach, telling both him and Luca that they're hiding something and that they don't belong in his town. Finally, towards the end of the film when Alberto and Luca reveal who they truly are, Ercole is determined to assault them with a harpoon.

Throughout the film, Ercole also belittles and bullies two characters who are at his beck-and-call: Ciccio and Guido. After putting up with his bullying, they finally decide to stand up to him and throw him in the fountain. This is another way in which Ercole and his character is different: while Disney is accustomed to eliminating the villain through a violent way, Ercole is simply thrown into a fountain and humiliated the way he has humiliated others.



[Figure 12] Ercole Visconti (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 00:30:08).

Through this analysis we can see that in no way was Ercole Visconti queered; and instead, portrayed a social problem that faces our society today. As seen in his introduction in the film, he is clearly disliked by many noted by the unpleasant reactions he gets from the townspeople being eye rolls and complaints, yet it

appears his ego is far too high to take note that his presence is deemed annoying. I defined queer as something that poses a challenge to conventions that normalize certain traits and ideals, or something as misplaced: Ercole is firstly not misplaced as he is a fellow human and thus does belong in the town (even though he seemingly annoys its residents). Secondly, he challenges no conventions but instead enforces them through his bullying; he has a clear idea of what 'normal' should look like in terms of clothing and smell and calls Luca and Alberto out for not following this normality. Unlike the villains I have previously discussed, he does not have any make up (or hints at it), sharp triangle-like shapes within his design, he is not unnecessarily thin or thick nor is he ultra-feminised or ultra-masculinized. This I consider a significant step forward for Disney in breaking the tradition of giving villains queer characteristics, and thus begins to dismantle the grip The Hays Code has had on The Disney Company.

Furthering on from Disney's queer representation, there are still hiccups along the way: while Disney has seemed to dismantle their history of queering the villain, their main Disney Animation Studios has yet to bring forward a film with a clear queer protagonist. However, Disney Pixar has made this leap forward. Under the strict eye of Disney, Pixar created the film *Onward* (Dan Scanlon: 2020) where a scene was included of a female police officer expressing her difficulties with her 'girlfriends kid'. This was one of the first on-screen queer character created in a Disney Pixar film. Pixar did it again with *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022) two years later, however, there was controversy around this film in that The Disney Company had allegedly taken out a scene between two lesbian women who share a peck, but restored it in the film following the allegations of them not being ally's when the Don't Say Gay Bill was threatened to pass.

Pixar's Platonic Homosocial Men

Having discussed Disney's problematic connotations with drag and villainy and how they moved forward towards reforming these characteristics within their films, I now move onto a section that discusses the homosocial relationships found between male characters within Disney Pixar films. Here I will discuss how Disney Pixar has consistently made films that revolve around male-on-male relationships, and how the

portrayal of these relationships and their link to masculinity is changing towards a more positive and gentle representation. I will discuss how they are formed, the problems that arise with them and how this effects the creation of Luca and Alberto in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021). Given Disney's homophobic history of vilifying queer bodies homosexual relationships between characters we're not often seen. In this section I will be using the reading *A New Kind of Monster, Cowboy, and Crusader? Gender Hegemony and Flows of Masculinities in Pixar Animated Films* (2020) by Elizabeth Al-Jbouri and Shauna Pomerants, who write on the masculinities found throughout Disney's history and how Pixar, even after being bought by Disney in 2006 (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 43), still maintained their innovative plots that comprised of friendship, loyalty, bravery and male bonding (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 44). Secondly, *Post-Princess Models of Gender: The New Man in Disney/Pixar* (2016) by Ken Gillam and Shannon R. Wooden will be used to explain how Pixar has created a new type of masculinity that opposes Disney's historical [negative] take on masculinity, and how Luca and Alberto's relationship is different from that of a typical male-on-male relationship found in a Pixar film.

Looking at Disney's history of male representation, male masculinity representation has remained fairly static for the first several decades (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 50). The first heroic Prince Florian of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (David Hand, Perce Pearce, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, William Cottrell, Ben Sharpsteen: 1937) to Prince Eric from *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker, Ron Clements: 1989) changed subtly, still showing a strong, handsome hero who saves the damsel in distress, however, there was an increase in sensitivity and portrayed emotional growth. These heroes typically followed a tradition that included brute strength, being adventurous, emotionally stoic (except when disappointed or hurt in which they did respond primarily with anger) and defaulted to heterosexual (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 50). While they portrayed heroes as such, they portrayed villains with a slightly more complicated relationship to hegemonic masculinity: they made villains out to be more effeminate in the way they were portrayed (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 51). Furthermore, these effeminate villains were punished by the masculine hero who represented hegemonic masculinity in its 'true' form (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 52). As such, children are presented with what masculinity should look like with its association to risk and strength, and that anything other was lacking

and 'non –manly' (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 52). With subtle shifts from 1930 to 1990, Pixar then entered the race and entered with a new form of masculinity that they portrayed; one that is sensitive, complex and [possibly] feminist (Al-Jbouri & Pomerants 2020: 52).

On that note of masculinity, it is not so easily portrayed if the narrative does not have a main male protagonist which is where Pixar excels. When the company started making films they wanted to produce something different from the typical Disney animated film – no musicals, no fairy tales, and (while John Lasseter¹¹ didn't explicitly say) no princesses - which we see throughout their history in how male-centric their animated films are (Ebrahim 2014: 46). To date, there are five films that are female lead out of the 27 the studio has made. This contrasts the make-up of many Disney's films, which have a tendency to be male and female leads – regardless of their relationship. Some examples are *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker, Ron Clements: 1989) with Ariel and Eric, *Atlantis* (Kirk Wise, Gary Trousdale: 2001) with Kida and Milo, *Frozen* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2013) with Anna and Christoph, and *Moana* (Ron Clements, John Musker: 2016) with Moana and Maui. While there are exceptions – such as *Treasure Planet* (Ron Clements, John Musker: 2002) that focused solely on Jim Hawkins, majority of feature films made from Disney Animation Studios have all had mainly male and female lead roles.

Within Pixar's films, considering the examples given above, how is Luca and Alberto's relationship different from theirs – for example Woody and Buzz Lightyear? To address this we will look at *Post-Princess Models of Gender: The New Man in Disney/Pixar* (2016) by Ken Gillam and Shannon R. Wooden, who break down the masculinity found in Pixar films and the relationships found between the male characters. To explain the difference between [for example] Woody and Buzz Lightyears relationship to that of Luca and Alberto, these next few paragraphs will go into detail on how they differ in certain aspects and dive deep into details found in both examples: these paragraphs will entail a detailed analysis on how Buzz Lightyear and Woody's characters go from hyper-masculine to being feminized

¹¹ An animator and producer at Pixar Animation Studios (Craine 2023)

through a realization that takes place after tearing each other down. Following this, an analysis on how Luca and Alberto's relationship differs from that of Woody and Buzz Lightyear because they do not start out as hyper-masculine characters but rather already embody a sense feminized characteristics, and rather than breaking each other down for character development, Luca and Alberto build each other up. This will ultimately lead to a discussion on the difference in homosocial relationships between Luca and Alberto and Woody and Buzz Lightyear.

Gillam and Wooden start their article by explaining that each male character goes on a journey – through a 'homosocial' relationship and matures to the point of accepting his feminine traits (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 2). In movies such as *Toy Story* (John Lasseter: 1995), *The Incredibles* (Brad Bird: 2004) and *Cars* (John Lasseter: 2006), the main protagonist male strives for alpha-male identity, only to be met with failures; however within these failures they find their new feminist self that turns out to be more caring, kinder, gentler and understanding of what it means to be a man (2008: 3). I'd like to highlight that these moments are not meant to be queered, but are aimed at creating a more progressive and gentle male character lead. The example I'd like to discuss is Woody and Buzz Lightyear from *Toy Story* (John Lasseter: 1995).

As a result of Woody being Andy's (the owner) favourite toy, he took a leadership role and strived to stay Andy's favourite toy (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 4). His position reflects both a paternalistic and patriarchal dominance over the other toys. This is where Woody gets his sense of power from. Buzz Lightyear, however, gets it from his own belief that he is the best space ranger in the galaxy – a galaxy that he must save. Here we see a difference in where Woody and Buzz Lightyear get their sense of power from. When the toys start to follow Buzz Lightyear instead of Woody, it exposes Woody's strength as fragile and artificial as we can derive from this his 'friends' did not follow him for his character but rather his authority (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 4). From this, Woody and Buzz Lightyear both experience the same emotions of anger and frustration for different reasons; Woody's thought is that he would be replaced by both Andy and his toy friends, and Buzz Lightyear is worried he has crash-landed on a strange planet (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 4). Both characters go through a moment where they reach the realization of their own limits and alpha male power – something that does not last very long in Disney Pixar movies; Woody

realizes Buzz Lightyear may become a replacement for him as Andy's new toy and Buzz Lightyear realizes, when he watches a television advertisement of himself at Sid's house (the neighbour), that he is not as powerful as he thought (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 4).

Each of these [Pixar] films is about being a man, and they begin with an outdated, two-dimensional alpha prototype to expose its failings and to ridicule its logical extensions: the devastation and humiliation of being defeated in competition, the wrath generated by power unchecked, the paralyzing alienation and fear inherent in being lonely at the top. As these characters begin the film in (or seeking) the tenuous alpha position among fellow characters, each of them is also stripped of this identity— dramatically emasculated— so that he may learn, reform, and emerge again with a different, and arguably more feminine, self-concept. However, as mentioned in the beginning of this subsection, this masculinity is situated in the formation of the heterosexual male and not the homosexual male. As a further way to reinforce this masculinity and heterosexuality within homosocial male-on-male relationships, there is a typical trope by which a cis-female character is inserted into the film to prove this: In the case of *Toy Story* (John Lasseter: 1995), when both Woody and Buzz Lightyear compete for Bo Peeps affection and attention (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 6).

Finally, I'd like to clearly establish that the relationship found between Woody and Buzz Lightyear is clearly a homosocial platonic one rather than a homosexual one. The narrative found between Buzz Lightyear and Woody was not to establish a relationship between them homosexually, but rather develop themselves and their masculinity through each other's help. Their journey was about how they both realized they needed each other in order to reform their identity and re-evaluate their power positions within Andy's room.

After having discussed the journey of the heterosexual male on their journey to self-discovery through another character, I'd like to argue how Luca and Alberto's relationship is different and simultaneously progressive in Pixar's continuous path toward representing masculinities that are a reflection of our current society (Al-

Jbouri & Pomerantz 2020: 54). Here, I will discuss instances that prove that firstly, their relationship did not start with two masculine male characters striving for alpha dominance, nor did they need this masculinity to be broken down and remoulded into a more effeminate version of themselves, like Buzz Lightyear and Woody. But, rather that their relationship lifted each other to bring out a better version and overcome a fear: Luca discovered his dream and overcame his fear of the surface humans and Alberto overcame his loneliness.

Within the Disney Pixar film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), we are introduced in the beginning to our homosocial male relationship – that of Luca and Alberto. According to the ‘New Man’ model they firstly strive for an alpha-male identity: by this, I mean that they have unquestioned authority, have physical strength, are socially dominant, and are competitive for a role in leadership (Gillam & Wooden 2008: 3). This was not the case of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021). Firstly, the adventure of the ‘New Man’ was to eventually find himself and discover his more feminine traits of being caring, kind and gentle; this was already shown in Luca’s character. We see him to be a respectful, young boy who dreams of exploring the world. We also see this from him referring to Alberto as ‘sir’ when they first meet. Secondly, if we shift our focus to Alberto, his goal was not to socially or physically dominate Luca in any way (or anyone in the town for that matter), however, does take a somewhat alpha role in their relationship due to the fact that he [pretends] to know all about the human world and human town. In this homosocial relationship, unlike others before, there is no competition to become the alpha male between them and thus provides us with a new model of masculinity; it’s not always a competition.

While Alberto does take on the somewhat alpha role due to his knowledge and confidence of the real world, there are instances where we see him get upset when Luca and Giulia start to prove him wrong. I don’t necessarily want to label this as an unquestionable authority, as I argue that this anger is placed somewhere else: Luca became his friend because he took an interest in the human world, and Alberto knew a lot about it and thus a friendship was created. After meeting Giulia, Luca and Giulia begin to bond over knowledge where she introduces him to even more of the human world, giving him information that contests Alberto’s, and in Alberto’s frustration of

being corrected, is scared that he will lose his friend. Here, I also argue that Giulia was not included as a way to reinforce Luca's heterosexuality, but rather as a guide to both Alberto and Luca in the human world. Furthermore, he is scared that Luca will no longer want to own a Vespa with him, and he will go back to being all alone. I deem this more as a plea to not lose his friend than a conscious decision to create a friendship with unquestionable authority over Luca.



[Figure 13] Alberto is worried (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 00:52:31).

In *Toy Story* (John Lasseter: 1995), as a result of jealousy for a power position, we see the two dominant personalities of Woody and Buzz Lightyear clash and break each other down. As a result of this breaking down, they reform their identities to become someone different and more feminine. In *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), though, this is different: There was no fight for control – they were not threatened by each other's presence, and instead got along very well from the get-go. Their goal was always to work together towards a Vespa and travel the world. Furthermore, it was through each other that they progressed further in their character development; Luca was a worried, almost anxiety-ridden character who towards the end learned to stand up for himself, and Alberto developed from being a person who pretended to be happy with their life to showing his real emotions and how broken inside he really

was. Through their friendship, both characters gain a new sense of identity without breaking each other down but rather supporting and building each other up.

Luca's Pioneering Monsters

Having discussed Disney Pixar's movement from problematic representations of villains, to gentle masculinity, this dissertation will now shift to the company's innovative representations of the queer body that can be found in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021). After having discussed how Ercole Visconti, as a villain, is no longer linked to queerness nor is represented as a monster, I move to the idea that as a result of the shifting of the monster from antagonist to protagonist, the queerness has followed the monster thus creating a new type of protagonist and monster.

In the history of Disney, the villain or protagonist is typically 'othered' in their respective narrative by having qualities that are queer and unfavourable (as discussed with Ursula and other villains). By this, I mean that they do not conform to the norm that has been set as a standard within their realm that is also reinforced by the protagonist: for example how Ariel set the norm on what a body should look like versus Ursula's body. This forms the idea that the role of the antagonist is to create an idea of what is not socially acceptable, to enforce what is socially acceptable otherwise is met with punishment, and not to deviate from it. Due to the villain's actions they make and their physical appearance, they are typically referred to as 'monsters'. In Ursula, it's the fact that she isn't human, but an octopus, and is villainized by both her appearance and personality. In *Aladdin* (Ron Clements, John Musker: 1992), it is Jafar with his long, slender – with an inhumanely thin body partnered with his sadistic personality who can shapeshift into a snake. In *Sleeping Beauty* (Wolfgang Reitherman, Eric Larson, Clyde Geronimi, Les Clark: 1959), Maleficent transforms into a dragon; a non-human entity. In *Beauty and the Beast* (Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise: 1991), Belle exclaims to Gaston that he is a monster [figure 14]; not through how he looks but rather his actions. In some way, shape, or form they are created to portray a 'monster'.



[Figure 14] “He’s not a monster Gaston! You are!”

(Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise 1991: 01:05:40).

In terms of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) and the sea monsters found in the film, I argue that these monsters are created in a different way from the typical Disney trope. Firstly, within their narrative, Luca and Alberto, and the other sea monsters are not the villains of the story. Secondly, they do not reciprocate typical physical monstrous attributes: they do not have makeup of any sort, they are not excessively skinny or fat, they are not violent beings that plot to take over the town, and they are in no way cunning.

Rather, according to Hawley and Lester’s writing, they portray qualities found in monsters that are in children’s horror films, even though *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) itself is not of that genre. In Hawley’s writing, they state that within horror films monsters are created to mark the fault lines and expose the fragility of structured boundaries (Hawley 2015: 5); this goes back to my point on how the protagonist sets the norm, however by the existence of the monster, it proves that the norm can be deceived and changed and what is thought to be impossible becomes possible. By the presence of these monsters, it gives children a chance to engage with their existence in the narrative, and how they threaten the normality that they challenge;

from this, children become aware of how this monster differs from those around them that are deemed 'normal' (Hawley 2015: 5). This enhances the characteristics of the other when the children start to differentiate what is related to the protagonist and what is related to the antagonist, and what the results are of embodying those characteristics.

In the films' town Portorosso, the 'norm' that is set is that of being human – which sea monsters are not – and therefore I argue that this creates a queer monster. This is made clear from the first scene of the film where we see Alberto have an interaction with two humans – Giacomo and Tommaso – that results in Giacomo throwing a harpoon in Alberto's general direction. As a result, from the get-go Luca and Alberto as sea monsters are othered within the town. Here, instead of having the protagonist set the bar of what is deemed normal, we have the antagonist of the story reinforce what is normal through his bullying, as well as the rest of the town who are obsessed with catching sea monsters and killing them. In this sense, they are queered in that they are firstly misplaced in the town as sea monsters. Secondly, because they are able to pass as humans in the human town and not be violent or scary sea monsters, questions the narrative the locals have created about sea monsters, thus questions the social knowledge that the townsfolk have – if they were wrong about the sea monsters what else could they be wrong about.

Furthermore, while they are deemed monsters by the land monsters (humans) of Portorosso, we see and know them otherwise; in the beginning of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) we are introduced to the community of sea monsters, and how they go about their everyday lives – much like the humans on land. We see similarities to the human world through their manual labour, crop harvesting, housing, and farming. We also know through an interaction Luca has with his mother, that the sea monster community is just as scared of the humans as the humans are of them, but with one difference; the sea monsters don't have the intention of killing a human but rather hide from them. This brings up the question then of who the real monsters are in this narrative.

Finally, I'd like to point to the acceptance of the monster. It is clear that Luca and Alberto are queer bodies in this narrative due to the shift of the monster. This shifting in monster places the othering on the main protagonist of the narrative, showing that

they are clearly different from what is considered the norm. However, even though this othering exists, it is accepted towards the end of the film. Historically, Disney's 'monsters' were not only defined by how they look but also how they acted; typically they were associated with evil and villainous behaviour alongside queerness. In Disney Pixar's feature film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), we see how Disney and Pixar have begun to rebrand their villains by commenting on more modern social concerns that plague children – such as that of bullying. Furthermore, they have begun to exclude queering their villains showing that villains are not necessarily people who are different, but can also look just like us; that villainy and villains should be associated with how people interact and treat others. Furthering on from this, by shifting the monster from antagonist to protagonist, I argue that Luca and Alberto created a new type of monster; this shifts the physical monster from the villain, to the protagonist and with it changes its persona: Yes, the monster is different, but different does not always mean that they are villains. *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) creates a kind monster and portrays how someone who doesn't fit in, simply wants to be accepted for who they are – and can be.

Historically, we can see not only the influence that the Hays Code had on Disney feature films, but also the influence of American middle-class culture influence from Walt Disney; we see their influence in Disney's historical feature films of how villains were created and their monstrous attributes, and we see how masculinity was portrayed as someone who is strong and saves damsels in distress. However, according to the discussions and analyses I have made in this chapter, I deem *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) a progressive step forward for the following reasons: Firstly, Disney has clearly taken a step forward in the right direction with regard to disregarding their historical narratives around villainizing queer bodies. This can be seen not only through *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), but through their other feature films as well that I have not mentioned because it would create an off-topic tangent. But, with *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as an example, we see how their focus has shifted from villainizing the queer body to commenting on more modern social concerns that face our society. Secondly, the improvement of the representation seen in male masculinity: In this subsection, we saw how the idea of masculinity has changed from setting a high standard for boys to be unemotional, strong, handsome,

and needs to save a girl in order to be a man, to what we see in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) where Luca is a soft and kind-hearted boy to those around him and shows he cares about them, as well as Alberto who learns it's okay to be vulnerable and to cry. Furthermore, that their relationship with each other is not a competition to see who is better or who comes out on top, but rather how to support each other through hard times and lift each other up. Finally, we have the recreation of the monster. In Disney's history, the monster is usually the body that is othered in the narrative, which typically ends up eliminated because they are distinctly linked to villains or the antagonist; in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), we see the shift of the monster to the protagonist and how in this narrative it is the protagonist that is othered. And then, towards the end of the film, the othered body is accepted for who they are even though they are different which teaches acceptance of someone who is different to you. I deem these points a progressive step forward taken by the producers of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), who have clearly begun the process of unlearning their problematic history in order to be more inclusive and aware of the power they have through the representation of topics like the queer body and masculinity.

Chapter 4:

“Some people, they’ll never accept him, but some will and he seems to know how to find the good ones.” – Understanding Luca as a Queer Narrative.

In the previous chapter, I looked at the history of Disney’s representation of villains, highlighting the tropes Disney included in their character designs and why this was problematic. Furthermore, I discussed how within *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), this dynamic had changed and the villain was vilified through other means – such as how Ercole treated those around him. I then analysed the difference in the relationship between Luca and Alberto and other male-on-male relationships found in the Disneyverse showing how Luca and Alberto had a new and unique relationship and how the representation of masculinity changed over time. Lastly, I spoke about how the monstrous other – typically associated with villains – has shifted within the film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) to the protagonist, and how within this shift, Luca became a queer body. Shifting the focus in this chapter, I will start by discussing the narrative discussing whether or not it can be seen as a queer one; to do this, I will be comparing *Luca*’s (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) narrative to that of the queer experience to highlight the similarities it possesses. Secondly, I will be defining the term allyship and discussing which and how certain characters can be seen as allies and what evidence there is to support this. Finally, I will be discussing the parental figures in the narrative, such as how Massimo (Giulia’s dad) has become a stand-in parental figure to Alberto and the significance of this as a queer experience, as well as how Luca’s parents and grandmother eventually accept his desire to be in the human world, showing support as parents.

Queering a Seemingly Platonic Narrative.

Whilst some viewers may perceive *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) to be a simplistic platonic narrative about the friendship between two boys, I argue that this is not the case and that *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be seen as an allegory of queer experiences and thus a queer film. The following academic pieces will be used to aid my discussion: *Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion*

(1993c) by Judith Butler whose take on *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston: 1990) will be utilized to highlight Venus Xtravaganza and her death, alongside how she used “realness” in her performance to attempt to pass as a ‘real’ woman. This will speak to how Luca and Alberto attempt to pass as humans in the human town and stay hidden for their safety. Robinson’s paper, *Conditional Families and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth Homelessness* (2018) is situated around interviews with queer youth that are homeless and the possible reasons for this homelessness; here I argue that Luca and Alberto experience this homelessness as a result of them running away. And finally, *Coming Out in College: The Struggle for a Queer Identity* (1994) by Robert Rhoads who discussed multiple queer people in college who talk about their struggles of being closeted in fear of not being accepted, and then coming out; in hiding their (Luca and Alberto) identities, I deem this an act of being closeted and how throughout the film they have moments of coming out where they reveal their true identity as sea monsters. With these points, I argue that *Luca’s* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) narrative has many moments of portraying the queer experience.

Paris is Burning (1990), the film mentioned by Judith Butler, is a film by Jenny Livingston about drag balls that took place in New York City, typically performed by African-American and Latino “men” (Butler 1993c: 386). They compete in categories, most of which are comprised of societal norms; of which are established in white culture (Butler 1993c: 386). Other categories include military garb and replications of straightness. Within these balls, “realness” is not particularly a category, but rather a standard used to judge the performances (Butler 1993c: 387). “Realness” shows the capability to compel belief and produce a naturalized effect by embodying these norms through performativity (Butler 1993c: 386).

Within *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston: 1990), we are introduced to the drag performer Venus Extravaganza. She was used as an example because of how she approximated “realness” of being a woman, which led to her untimely death. I deem it necessary to mention her story as Venus was a queer person who attempted to pass as a woman, and even though she did successfully, when one of her dates found out about her ‘little secret’¹², she was killed, and this speaks vastly to the

¹² Her ‘little secret’ being that she had male reproductive genitalia.

dangers of the queer experience and being queer. Within the drag community, over time, as it slowly included itself in cultural and social spaces, new vocabulary started to arise; such as that of 'fishiness' which is the presentation of hyper-femininity alongside a constant portrayal of feminine characteristics (Gonzalez, Cavazos 2016: 663). Venus performed this fishiness consistently in hopes that she'd get her dream of having a husband one day that would save her from poverty and racism, however, her dream was short lived. Even though Venus clearly showed her realness through crossing gender, sexuality, and race through her performativity, the hegemony that rules over our immediate society re-inscribes and privileges femininity and whiteness as natural by crossing out the crossing of Venus's performance through her death (Butler 1993c: 133). Her performance disrupted the 'norm' of the time, and through her removal, these 'norms' are re-instated, and a fear is put forward to those who try and disrupt these 'norms' again.



[Figure 15] Venus Xtravaganza and fishiness. *Paris is Burning*

(Livingstone 1990: 00:22:18)

Moving forward onto my analysis, these concepts of "realness" becomes apparent in its relationship to this dissertation in that Luca and Alberto enter a town where sea monsters strike fear into the townsfolk and as a result they have chosen to hunt them in order to stay safe. Much like the plight of Venus, Luca and Alberto must adapt to the 'norms' of the town to fit in, and hide in plain sight without being too inconspicuous and arise suspicion out of fear they may die.

The first narrative example I'd like to discuss in showing how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be deemed a queer narrative is when Luca runs away from home as a result of his parents wanting to send him away in hopes his mind-set will change about wanting to go to the surface. During a heated argument between Luca and his mother, Luca lets slip that there is someone else that he's been going to the surface with. This brings forth a comment from the uncle "Ah yes. There's always a bad influence." (00:24:18). According to statistics given by Robinson, 26% of bisexual youth report parental disapproval as their main reason for homelessness, and 68% of queer youth experience family rejection as a cause of their homelessness (Robinson 2016: 282). Within a few of these interviews, a handful said they had run away when their parents attempted to enforce control over them and their bodies; this can link to the reason Luca ran away from his home. He felt strongly about his thought of the surface and didn't see it as the dangerous place his parents warned him about. In an attempt to try and convince his parents that it was safe and have a say, he is immediately shut down with the threat of being sent away even longer. This causes Luca to run away from his parents feeling misunderstood. Once Luca runs away, he runs straight to Alberto and explains everything. Alberto, possibly concerned about losing his newly found friend Luca, suggests that they run to the human town – where he is sure his parents would never go. They then leave for the human town.

The second narrative example I'd like to address is when Luca and Alberto first arrive in the town where they are hiding from Luca's parents. However, in order to fit into this town, they need to blend in. Here I argue that Luca and Alberto try incorporate "realness" into their life now that they're in the human town in fear for their life. Upon entering the town, the camera flashes to multiple different works of art that depict the killing of a sea monster – this makes Luca uneasy. This results in them stealing human clothing off a washing line in order to pass as human. However, this is proven difficult as their clothes get ridiculed by Ercole asking if they got it from a dead body, or when Luca attempts to kick a ball – which he was not very successful in. Another example is when Alberto and Luca try eating pasta for the first time at Giulia's house, but not knowing how to use utensils, they end up using their hands. But after becoming friends with Giulia, she slowly starts to show them how to 'act' more human-like by teaching them (for example) how to eat with a

fork and how to ride a bike. These are the attempts of Luca and Alberto to pass as 'real' humans, and thus attempting to show 'realness'. This is a way in which queer people try pass as straight in order to not be outed, mistreated and in the films case, to not be killed by the townsfolk.

Thirdly, as a result of this "realness", Luca and Alberto become characters that become 'closeted' in their narrative as a result of them being the apparent violent sea monsters that the townsfolk want to kill. As such, they know they have to disguise themselves as humans and not show their true inner sea monster. Rhoads describes 'closeted' as being socially imprisoned where a significant aspect of one's identity remains hidden and is a by-product of political silencing (Rhoads 1994: 76). Luca and Alberto need to keep a significant aspect of their identity hidden in order to safe guard their lives in this town that they ran away to. This speaks to the queer experience of a queer person that remains hidden for numerous reasons; perhaps it may not be a safe enough environment to be themselves – as is portrayed in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) where there is a high possibility of being killed, or maybe they do not wish to disappoint those around them – mainly their parents. This could be argued for Alberto: we don't know much about his parents, but from what Alberto tells Luca, Alberto seems to think it was his fault (he was abandoned) because of the way he is.

Furthering on from being closeted, after one has been closeted for many years, there comes a time where they decide to [perhaps] 'come out' – whether that be to friends or family. Rhoads covers the topic of 'coming out' which they describes as a step to ending self-denial and claiming their own sense of gay identity (Rhoads 1994: 79). Throughout *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), we see a few moments where Luca and Alberto 'come out'. Here I want to point out that in these moments of coming out, it was not entirely a self-motivated 'coming out' but rather an uncontrolled moment where the truth was going to come forth no matter what. We have already established that Luca and Alberto had to closet themselves, hiding their true selves from the town, but there are moments when their true selves are exposed. The first is when Luca and Alberto are fighting on the beach: Alberto reminds Luca that they are sea monsters and cannot go to school however Luca protests this causing a fight. This eventually results in Alberto going into the water in front of Giulia to show what he truly is – a sea monster. Looking to Luca, almost as an 'I told you so' after

seeing Giulia's reaction, Luca himself pretends to be horrified and Alberto realises what is happening. After Alberto swims away and Luca and Giulia go back to her house, Giulia seems to have her suspicions and in her kitchen she throws water on Luca revealing he is a sea monster as well. In this moment Luca looks worried. This first coming out was to a close friend – and wasn't exactly planned. Luca did not know if he could trust Giulia, but in this moment realized he could when Giulia accepts him in this moment but scolds him for being irresponsible and being in a town that wants to kill his kind.

The second 'coming out' I want to discuss is when Luca and Alberto come out and reveal who they are in the final moments of the race towards the end of the film in front of the whole town. Here, Luca and Alberto ride in the rain, drenching themselves and transforming back into sea monsters. At this finish line the folks stand in shock as Luca and Alberto dismount their bike to help Giulia who has just crashed into Ercole. They help her up when Massimo comes rushing forward with a harpoon, looking confused at Giulia who mumbles but can't find the words to explain what he is seeing (Giulia being supported by two sea monsters). They immediately get swamped by townsfolk with harpoons, however back away once Massimo stands behind them raising an eyebrow at the townsfolk. In this moment, Luca made a decision to save Alberto by coming out himself – unlike the previous time when he let Alberto come out alone. His fear becomes true of possibly being impaled when he and Alberto get surrounded by the townspeople with harpoons but loudly states to Ercole "We're not afraid of you!" (01:17:14), however for the sake of Alberto and his safety, Luca decided to come out as well and was no longer afraid to and embraces who he is.

A final moment of coming out I'd also like to address is the coming out to Luca's parents. Luca's coming out to his parents was a bit different from previous examples in that he did not directly come out to them, but rather in a roundabout way which was by running away. As a result of this, his parents felt the need to try and save Luca from the town, and whilst trying to save him by bringing him home, they realized that that would not contain him nor possibly stop him from his interest in the human town. Later on when eating pasta served by Massimo, watching Luca and Alberto boast about their Vespa, she poses the question "But we can't let him stay in this world, can we?" to which the grandmother responds "Some people, they'll never

accept him, but some will, and he seems to know how to find the good ones.”.

Throughout Luca's adventure of running away, his parents got to see that even though he was an outcast and different, he could manage on his own and that there were people who would accept him for him, thus leading to her acceptance of him and his dreams.

Furthering on from coming out, I'd like to shift the focus onto another experience that queer folk also experience; that of homelessness. When Luca and Alberto run to the town and upon meeting Giulia, she invites them over to her house for dinner. After being attacked by their cat, the scene shifts to them walking out the back door with Giulia apologizing about the cat. It's late at night and Luca exclaims it's fine but fumbles over his words when thinking of where they were staying the night, to which Giulia excitedly asks if they needed a place to stay. Luca and Alberto then get comfortable in her tree house where they sleep for the next few days. According to Robinsons' statistics on queer youth homelessness, queer youth makes up 40% of youth homelessness (Robinson 2018: 383), and of that, the main reason was because of parental disapproval and family rejection (Robinson 2018: 383). In this case, Luca ran away feeling misheard and misunderstood, not wanting to be sent away and has resulted in him and Alberto being offered a place to stay in someone's tree house – that is not their home. In this instance, I argue, they experience homelessness.

Finally, I'd like to highlight the discrimination that happens within *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021). With Luca and Alberto being new to the town, and to the human lifestyle, they do not know anyone or anything of the town. Ercole Visconti introduces himself to them when he realises they are 'out-of-towners' as he describes them (00:31:3). He rudely refers to them as 'number 1' and 'number 2', commenting on their clothes and asking if they got them from a dead body. He further insults them claiming they smell horrible. This moment implies that the clothes that Luca and Alberto are wearing do not match in any way and that they do not smell nice – understandably so as they have just come straight from the ocean and have no idea of hygiene being in the water. In this moment, Ercole has distinguished that as a result of their odd sense of fashion and their smell, they are different and thus makes fun of this difference. This speaks a lot to the queer experience in that Luca and Alberto experience discrimination by a 'normal' human of the town who can clearly

identify that they are different. The queer community experiences this aggression and ridicule at the fact that they are different from what the 'norm' is of where they are, and experience harassment and violence; such as how Ercole was on the verge of throwing Luca into the fountain. While pushing Luca into a fountain may not seem excessively violent, Ercole does attempt to kill both Luca and Alberto towards the end of the film when he sees their true form after telling them that they do not belong in his town and to get out.

Queer Relationships

In chapter two, I elaborated on how Western society can be considered heteronormative, and how it attempts to enforce its ideologies on us and how we may perceive the world. As a result of this, we sometimes tend to assume: for example, we assume characters are straight even though they have never explicitly said so, or perhaps one may see Luca and Alberto's relationship as platonic and nothing more due to the idea that a romance can only be between a cis-female and cis-male. Through a queering of this narrative, I argue that the relationship between Luca and Alberto is that of a queerplatonic nature, and that this is emphasized through queer moments that stand out between Luca and Alberto's relationship. I'd like to emphasize that when I refer to their relationship being queer – I don't speak of a physical, sexual relationship but rather an emotional one with non-sexual physical contact.

First, a brief explanation on what I mean by queerplatonic: According to Stefani Goerlion in her article *Queerplatonic Relationships: A New Term for an Old Custom* (2021), they explain it to be a relationship between two people that has a deeper commitment than a simple friendship however is not meant to always be romantic or sexual to those involved (Goerlion 2021). These queerplatonic relationships value their independency but is a pledge to share a life filled with celebration, commitment and affection (Goerlion 2021). I argue that their relationship is queerplatonic for these following reasons: that they share moments with each other that follow a romantic trope – such as them standing arm-in-arm looking out into the sunset and the typical romantic train scene of watching a lover leave. I also establish in chapter 3 that their relationship is not like the typical male-on-male relationship found

between two male characters. Thirdly, according to Martin and Kazyak in *Hetero-Romantic Love and Heterosexiness in Childrens G-Rated Films* (2009), friendships within children's film are portrayed as silly and fun rather than serious, special, important and powerful, and are usually there for comic relief. Furthermore, that a friendship is there to aid the main character in advice and is not supposed to be transformative. Here, I aim to show how Alberto and Luca do not have a typical friendship according to these notes, and that Giulia is in fact that friend that lives up to these standards.

There are two particular scenes I'd like to discuss that, historically, are rooted in romantic conventions: Throughout film history, films make use of certain tropes in order to enhance the romantic scene taking place between two lovers and make it as romantic as they possibly can. These can include candle light, music, dim lights, flowers, dancing, fireflies, butterflies and sunsets (Martin & Kazyak 2009: 325). There are certain scenes in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) where we can identify these tropes: such as the musical sequence when Alberto and Luca bond over the surface world that ends with them linking arm-in-arm staring out into the sunset. Secondly, the ending of the film where Luca and Alberto say goodbye and Luca's hand slowly slips out of Alberto's; this too is a romantic trope of two lovers who are being separated for some reason, and one must leave. Unlike a typical friendship, I argue that these scenes prove that they are not the trope friend that simply exists on the side, but that their relationship was important and transformative for their personal growth. However, because there are not scenes distinctly showing physical romantic moments, I argue that their relationship is queerplatonic and in between friendship and romantic.



[Figure 16] Alberto and Luca (Casarosa 2021: 00:19:36).

When we look at the sunset scenes, an example can be seen in *The Little Mermaid*: Towards the end of the film when Ariel realizes it is Ursula who is about to marry Prince Eric, Ariel and her sea friends disrupt the wedding and break the coral shell necklace on Ursula's neck that has both Eric under a spell and Ariel's voice. Once this shell is broken, Eric comes to his senses and realises the person he is actually in love with and has been looking for is Ariel. And in the light of the sunset takes her hands and exclaims she is the one. This scene where Alberto and Luca are standing arm-in-arm can be seen as more than just an average scene; arm-in-arm, looking out into the sunset can be considered a [non-sexually] romantic scene between them. It has been established that a common trope within romance films or normal films with romantic scenes is that some scenes take place with a sunset in the back in order to bring forth the naturalness of that relationship in contract with the naturalness of nature (Martin & Kazyak 2009: 325). Furthermore, in the beginning of this dissertation I mentioned how there was a moment between Gus-Gus and Jaq in *Cinderella* where they embraced, but immediately let go as if what they were doing was wrong and weird; in this scene, this does not happen. Instead, they consciously link arms and stand within each other's embrace and stare out into the sunset together. Continuing on from this, there is another scene where Alberto and Luca are being shouted at by Giulia and again embrace each other (figure 17). Here, they

prolong this moment of embrace and gently part ways at the end of this embrace without an expression of shock or disgust as seen in Cinderella.



[Figure 17] Luca and Alberto embrace (Casarosa 2021: 00:34:50).

The second scene is towards the end of the film where Luca's parents have decided to let him go to school with Giulia. In his excitement realizes that Alberto is not coming with him on his new adventure. In this moment they have an emotional hug to say goodbye and Luca gets on the train. Luca and Alberto do their famous handshake and the train starts to move, and we slowly see Luca's hand slip out of Alberto's. This goodbye refers to yet another romantic trope seen in many movies of all genres of a love not meant to be: typically one of the lovers must leave for some reason, and the lovers' final goodbye is at the train station as they watch their beloved get onto a train and leave them behind. While *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) is the first Disney film to use this romantic trope, it is not new to animation; this romantic scene can be found in another animated film called *The Book of Life* (Jorge Gutierrez: 2014) where two boys – Manolo and Joaquin – run after a train that has their love interest – Maria – on board leaving for another town.

Lastly, the scene where Alberto goes running to save Luca in the rain. In hetero-romantic films, after the heterosexual couple has had some sort of implication –

perhaps being a fight – they realise that they actually need their counterpart in their lives. This then prompts them to run after their significant other and meet them again, and sometimes these scenes entail rain to show the trouble that this person would go through just to see their counterpart. In this scene, Luca is in danger of being exposed as the sea monster he is, and Alberto comes running up the hill with an umbrella to save Luca from being exposed. Furthermore, when Alberto is exposed as a sea monster and Luca edges toward him, he yells at Luca to not come to his aid and in this way is sacrificing himself for Luca – another show of affection.

With these examples given and the romantic connotations behind these scenes, it is difficult to simply see their relationship as just a friendship. We can clearly see that their relationship entails more than just silly moments as the typical friend-trope entails, and we see a more in-depth, powerful relationship that changed the way the townsfolk saw sea monsters. We also saw how through their relationship with each other, they grew together emotionally: Alberto learned to accept people and show his emotional side and Luca became more confident in himself. These are transformative moments found in the film that progressed the narrative.

Queer Allies

In this subsection of chapter 4, I'd like to dive into queer allyship and how throughout the film, there are moments of characters showing allyship towards Alberto and Luca, who we have established are queer characters. The four main characters I'd like to focus on in this section are Giulia, her father Massimo, and finally Concetta and Pinuccia Aragosta. But first a definition of what a queer ally is: an ally is someone who is typically from a nonmarginalized group (Kalina 2020: 478) becomes connected to a movement and provides social support efforts for marginalized groups, and potentially provides comfort and friendship to those people (Sumerau, Forbes, Denise, Mathers 2021).

Giulia Marcovaldo can be seen as a queer ally in the feature film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) through a multitude of scenes. The first scene I'd like to look at is when we first meet Giulia: Luca is about to be thrown into the fountain when Giulia comes speeding down on her bike stopping Ercole in the midst of his action. She tells Luca and Alberto to hop onto her cart attached to her bike and rides away with

them on the back. After having rescued them, she turns to them to rant about Ercole and how he picks on the underdogs, then further says “We underdogs have to look out for each other, right?” (00:33:05). Confused by this human-lingo Alberto and Luca look confused, to which she responds “You know: Kids who are different – dressed weird or a little sweatier than average” (00:33:11). In this scene, she noticed that Ercole was bullying two other kids, and not knowing who they were, she still helped rescue them because she too is a bully victim of Ercole. This is known by how calls her ‘Spiulia’ and makes fun of her throwing up at the previous year’s race. We have already established that in this scene, Luca and Alberto are being bullied for being different, and we have established that this difference was a result of them masking who they really are and not knowing much about the human world. While here, Giulia was unaware of what they were, I still argue this moment is an allyship moment because Giulia stood up for them; even though she possibly saw this as simply standing up to a bully, it was much more than that.



[Figure 18] Giulia: “Kids who are different – dressed weird or a little sweatier than average” (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 00:33:11).

Furthering on from this, after having picked up Luca and Alberto, she takes them back to her house where they are offered something to drink and a meal. Upon Luca

and Alberto getting ready to leave, with no hesitation, she offers them a place to stay in her tree house. This is because she is aware that Luca and Alberto are runaways. With them forming a team together, not only does she give them accommodation so they are not homeless, but she also slowly teaches them how to act human-like (unknowingly to her).

The second scene I'd like to analyse is the scene where Luca and Alberto come out to Giulia. In the beginning of this chapter, I covered the topic of them coming out to Giulia, but here I'd like to show how she accepted this and still remained their friend. Initially, when Alberto came out as a sea monster, this frightened her causing her to grab the nearest stick in an attempt to defend herself. However, upon Alberto's departure, she looks over to Luca with a confused expression as if she was questioning if he was a sea monster himself. In the next scene, she splashes a glass of water on Luca's hands which reveals his sea monster hands. Here, she does not act afraid anymore, but rather becomes angry with him; she knows the town's view and her dad's on sea monsters and is angry at the fact that they'd come here – a place that wants to kill them. Here, she becomes concerned with Luca's safety. In this scene, we see the acceptance Giulia has towards her friend Luca and convinces him into leaving town – which he does. Here, the allyship seen at this moment is that Giulia is aware of the dangers of her town and she doesn't want her friend to be killed. Later on in the film, Luca comes back to the town to complete the race, and when Giulia sees him is immediately concerned: in the following scenes she is seen constantly looking at him worried, yelling that it's a very bad idea.



[Figure 19] Giulia looks at Luca (Enrico Casarosa 2021"01:04:23).



[Figure 20] Giulia suspects something (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 01:04:51).

The third scene I'd like to discuss is during the race that Luca and Giulia take part in. Towards the end when the race is ongoing and Luca, Giulia, and Ercole are cycling up the hill in the last stretch. It had started to rain and Luca was sheltered under a roof, and Alberto came running up to him with a massive umbrella. However, at this moment he slips and falls, and sends the umbrella tumbling and revealing himself as a sea monster. Ercole looks back over his shoulders and glances at Alberto, noticing his transformation. Alberto gets cornered but Luca, through the rain, cycles past him

at full speed, picking him up, and begins riding down the hill towards the ocean. Ercole gives chase with a harpoon in hand, and Giulia not wanting her friends to be killed, eventually chases after him and purposefully crashes her bike into his, causing him (Ercole) to go flying through the air. Here, Giulia knew she had to save her friends, even if it cost her the race, and give up her dream of beating Ercole in a race. Once again, we see Giulia's concern for her friends, however now even more so as Ercole is determined to impale them with a harpoon. Since the beginning of the film Giulia constantly spoke about how she wanted to bring down Ercole's 'evil empire of injustice', and in this moment knew she had to choose her friends safety over her own dreams. So she put herself in the middle of this situation in an attempt to de-escalate it by causing Ercole to crash (figure 21).



[Figure 21] Giulia's crash (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 01:16:36).

Giulia is not the only ally we see throughout this film; Massimo can also be seen as a queer ally through his moment of support for Luca and Alberto once they win the race. In this final race scene, once Luca and Alberto have crossed the finish line and run to help Giulia up, Massimo gets taken aback when he sees them alongside his daughter – Giulia. Here, Ercole makes a scene calling them monsters and exclaiming that the town is afraid and disgusted by them, to which Giulia responds that they are not monsters. "Who are they then?" (01:17:24) Ercole asks, to which

Massimo responds that he knows who they are and begins to walk forward. He then says that they are Luca and Alberto – the winners of the Portorosso Cup and drops his harpoon. On the side of the camera shot, there are still some fishermen holding Harpoons and nets that edge closer to Luca and Alberto, however, Massimo stands behind them raising an eyebrow, to which they give up and walk away. The allyship we see here is of Massimo standing up for Luca and Alberto against his own people – he too is a fisherman, and also believed in killing sea monsters, however, when he realized who they were, he realized he was possibly wrong about what he knew of them, and cast aside his beliefs to stand behind and support Luca and Alberto. He is also a rather large man, thus using his big and strong physique to possibly intimidate the other fishermen into leaving the duo alone.

The final moment of allyship I'd like to refer to is the scene where a bunch of women decide to rip up a wanted poster of a sea monster. The two elderly ladies, Concetta and Pinuccia are seen throughout the film as passer-by characters that walk throughout the town and are assumed human. After Luca and Alberto come out, they decide too, to also show their true selves and lower their umbrellas in the pouring rain and transform into sea monsters. The camera pans to the right and we see a handful of women who are shocked at first. The policewoman standing on the far right looks down at the wanted poster in her hands and pauses, causing the lady to the immediate left to snatch the poster out of her hands and rip it up. They then proceed to clap. In this moment, these three women realize that sea monsters are not a threat, and from this wholesome scene they just witnessed, decide that the idea of killing a sea monster is ridiculous and show their allyship by tearing the poster up. As this is a chapter stating some characters can be perceived as queer, and while there is no evidence to show any form of relationship other than an assumed friendship between Concetta and Pinuccia, it is noted that these ladies are always together throughout the film and have clearly been a part of the community for a while as they are known throughout town. To call them allies wouldn't be a far step considering they too, did a coming-out in front of the town, and from this can potentially be seen as queer bodies and possibly have something more than a friendship.



[Figure 22] Concetta and Pinuccia Aragosta (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 01:19:17).

Queer Acceptance and Love through Parentages

After having discussed how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be seen as a queer narrative, how it comprises of queer relationships, and how allyship can be seen throughout moments in the film, I now move to the final point of my chapter; that of queer acceptance and love found through the parental figures found in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021).

In the film *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston: 1990), we are introduced to the idea of fraternity-like houses that the performers become a part of who have become homeless due to their sexualities being unaccepted in their homes. Within these fraternities, there is a head-of-house referred to as ‘mothers’ – who are not necessarily females. These ‘mothers’ accept ‘children’ (the performers) who face homelessness into their houses so they have a residence to stay in, and become substitute parents to them. While Massimo is assumed heterosexual due to his prior relationship with Giulia’s mom – and the existence of Giulia, I want to apply this ‘substitute parent’ to Massimo and Alberto’s relationship. How even though Alberto is a sea monster, Massimo still accepted him for who he is, and as mentioned in chapter 3, how sea monsters could be seen as queer bodies, could stand for Massimo as a straight parent accepting his queer child.

I'd like to take this idea of a substitute parent and apply it to *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), showing how Massimo became a substitute parent for Alberto, and how this helped Alberto heal from his past trauma of losing his birth parents.

To give some background into Alberto's past, after the scene where Alberto reveals himself as a monster to Giulia, and Luca betrays him, he swims off into the distance in a hurry to get away from the humans who have spotted him. Luca later follows him to their island where they met, and he finds Alberto's residence in ruins. Luca looks around and glances at the Vespa poster that now lay on the floor, and looks to the wall where it was once placed. On this wall, we see countless scratches into the wall, clearly scratches that were marked to count days; from these scratches, we can identify that when they started Alberto was determined, however as the days got more and more he slowly lost interest and stopped counting altogether. When Luca confronts Alberto about them, Alberto explains he started them when his dad left claiming Alberto was old enough to be on his own. Through tears, he furthers this by saying that he had hoped his father would come back but never did, and blames himself for being someone who is always in or causes trouble as another reason he (Alberto's dad) left. As a result of his parents leaving, we see the impact it left on Alberto through him crying in this scene by himself – all over again after Luca had 'abandoned' him when he reveal himself to Giulia.

Throughout Luca and Alberto's stay in Giulia's tree house, Massimo seems to accept them into his house but not without making up for it by helping him fish for his business. Throughout this time, we also see Luca, Alberto and Giulia train for the Portorosso Cup race. However, through several moments of the film we see how Massimo slowly warms up to Alberto: firstly, when he needed help with the nets and called Alberto to help him, referring to him as 'the big strong one', secondly, he chooses Alberto to help him fish: in this scene Alberto mimics Massimo pulling the net with one arm with a smile on his face [Figure 23]. And thirdly, while Alberto is trying to eat pasta with a fork, and it keeps slipping off, Massimo shows him how to twirl the pasta on the fork and eat it. Then after this montage of moments, after Alberto showed his true self to Giulia and swam away, just before Giulia and Luca enter the scene, we see Massimo standing over a bowl of pasta, and looking that no one else sees him, takes a handful of pasta in his hands and eats it the way Alberto and Luca did his first night there. After almost being caught when Luca and Giulia

enter, he notices Alberto is not with them. “Where is Alberto?” he asks concerned, to which Luca responds that he had left town. Massimo acts fast, asking Luca where he went, but Luca tries to tell him that he doesn’t think Alberto wants anyone looking for him. “Maybe not, but just in case” Massimo responds, grabbing his hat and lantern, signifying he was going out to wait or possibly look for Alberto.



[Figure 23] Alberto and Massimo fishing (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 00:59:07).

In these moments, we see how Massimo and Alberto have created a relationship between them over time, and we see how concerned Massimo got when Alberto suddenly disappeared. However, Alberto does not show concern for what Massimo thinks up until Massimo sees him as a sea monster at the end of the race: Towards the end of the film, when Luca and Alberto have revealed themselves as sea monsters, helping Giulia walk after her crash into Ercole, Massimo rushes through the crowd to Giulia and stops when he sees her being helped by two sea monsters. “Giulia?” he asks in confusion. At this moment he looks at both Alberto and Luca, realizing who they are. After Ercole’s outburst asking who they are, Massimo comes forwards stating he knows who they are: In this brief moment, Alberto has a worried look on his face [figure 24]. We see the trauma come back of Alberto’s parents leaving him: he is so worried that now that he is his true self again, he has disappointed another parental figure. Instead, Massimo announces that they are

Alberto and Luca, and are the winners of the Portorosso Cup and lifts Alberto's hand up (lifting him in the process).



[Figure 24] Alberto is worried (Enrico Casarosa 2021: 01:17:36).

Towards the final stages of the movie, when Luca leaves on the train, Luca asks if Alberto is coming with him – to which he responds he is not. In this scene, firstly, we notice that Alberto has the same hat as Massimo, from this we can assume that Massimo has accepted Alberto as he is and [possibly] sees him as a son, and secondly, after telling Luca he is not going with him, tells Luca that he's going to stick around for a while, and possibly move in as he thinks Massimo needs him. In these moments, Massimo has become a substitute parent for Alberto who was abandoned by his birth parents: While Massimo did not know at first what Alberto really was, he still accepted Alberto after he came out as a sea monster, to the point of still including him in his life and not abandoning him – and this meant a lot of Alberto. For many queer people when they reveal their true selves, they are not always accepted and either tend to run away or be cast out. In Alberto's experience, his birth parents abandoned him saying he was old enough to be on his own – which is clearly not true seeing as he is still just a child. So we can assume there was another reason, and Alberto seems to think it's because of the way he is – which he would not think if it wasn't true. However, Massimo accepted who he was almost instantly, even

though throughout the film we know Massimo to dislike sea monsters. But after all the bonding moments that they have had, it seems he could not sever his ties with Alberto for being himself.

Massimo was not the only parent to show parental acceptance in the film, and although I have already discussed Luca's parents and their acceptance, I did not elaborate fully. Here, I want to discuss the parent's journey to acceptance. We know that all Luca's parents want to do is protect him from the humans, but as a result of them threatening to punish Luca he runs away. His parents, worried for his safety follow him to the human world. I find this significant because not only does it show how much his parents care and worry for him, they simultaneously got to immerse themselves in the town – in what makes Luca happy, and they watch him thrive. They begin to understand this interest of his and see he is more than capable of living in this world that they don't understand. Through this experience, they learn to accept him and his dream of being in that world. The final acceptance that his parents show is letting Luca go to a human school; a dream he discovered whilst in the town. This moment is significant because not only does it show acceptance – which is something a queer person seeks from a parent or attachment figure – but after the acceptance, Luca was able to stay who he was and live out his dream with his parents' support.

In Disney Pixar's feature film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) combined with my analysis, it becomes clear that *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) does in fact hold a queer narrative to it. Starting off with the underlying queer narrative, we can see how it becomes an allegory for the queer community through moments such as running away, the homelessness of Luca and Alberto, and the idea of being closeted and coming out. I established in chapter 3 how Luca can be seen as a queer body, and as such pours into this chapter showing the problems that many queer people face in their lifetime. Within these moments of queering the narrative, we also find moments that enhance the relationship found between Luca and Alberto; that of a queerplatonic one. While there are no explicit scenes where they confess their undying love nor have romantic physical moments, their relationship much like other heterosexual relationships found in children's films is transformative and emotional.

Furthering on from this I discussed how Giulia can be seen as an ally to Luca and Alberto: even though Giulia clearly identifies them as being odd, she still becomes their friend – and stays their friend even after they have revealed themselves as sea monsters. Finally, I discussed the acceptance of the sea monster that can be taken as an acceptance of queer bodies; here I focussed on Alberto and his past trauma of being abandoned by a parent, however, Massimo shows parental love and acceptance in this moment of reveal. And while Massimo is not Alberto's biological parent, he becomes a parental replacement and furthers his relationship with Alberto. All these points that I have analysed and discussed lead me to believe that *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) does have a clear queer narrative supported by queer characters and allies that teach acceptance – acceptance of the monstrous other.

Chapter 5

The Implications of Luca as Queer Bait and a Shift Towards Queer Narratives

Having discussed how Luca can be seen as a queer narrative through moments that are similar to that of the queer experience, understanding how Luca is a queer character, and the existence of queer allies, I now move onto discussing whether or not Luca can be labelled queerbait and the implications that arises with this label. In this chapter, I will explain what queerbait is and explain how it can be used through using *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019) as an example: Here we will see how the director's ambiguous answer gave hope to a group of people who wanted Elsa to have a girlfriend. The purpose of this example is to compare *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) to in order to show that it is no way queerbait. Furthermore, this section will include a few comments made by Casarosa on the idea of Luca being a queer narrative – none of which intentionally alluded to queerness within the film.

Luca as Queer Bait

Queerbait, or “Queerbaiting”, is when LGBTQIA+ relationships are hinted at but never followed through in the narrative (Maier 2021). Paul Booth and Katherine Larsen define queerbaiting as a queer relationship that is suggested between two characters that is emphatically laughed off and denied (Booth & Larsen 2019: 1), as well as something that is used to name texts and actions that perform a policing function in that it refuses to follow through on its suggestion (Booth & Larsen 2019: 2 - 3). Queerbaiting is the result of the use of queer traces alongside a producer's denial and/or mockery of queer readings in a narrative which results in a narrative that poses no offense to the mainstream viewers at the expense of the queer eye (Booth & Larsen 2019: 4). It is in these moments that sexual ambiguity is often used in order to not offend the straight viewer. The result of a queerbaiting tactic and the use of a gender-neutral or androgynous style character is so that the straight person will perceive two guys [in a text] as friends, whereas a gay person might pick up on the subtle codes placed within them and assume them gay (Booth & Larsen 2019: 5). The term ‘queerbaiting’ has the word ‘baiting’ in it implying trickery of some sort.

Which we have identified as tricking a viewer into thinking there is more than just a friendship between two people of the same sex, or perhaps a character is queer.

Many fans face ridicule and censoring from authors and directors who police their ownership over the meaning of their texts and align this policing with a safe interpretation of their texts (Booth & Larsen 2019: 13). An example of this was seen before the release of *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019) when the hashtag '#GiveElsaAGirlfriend' went viral: After the hashtag went viral, it was not long before a counter hashtag was created to diminish the first one. This one was '#CharmingPrinceForElsa', and was aided by anti-LGBTQIA+ comments stating that this new hashtag was a better idea as it promoted 'solid family values' and represented 'natural families' (Ortiz 2016). Whilst members who label something as queerbait may be ridiculed for their opinion, queerbait also becomes a way for audiences to call for media producers to understand the intricacies of the queer identity and take responsibility for the strategies they use to bring in followings (Booth & Larsen 2019: 18). An interview with the creator of the hashtag '#GiveElsaAGirlfriend' stated that they were disheartened by the counter-hashtag stating that Disney creates films about princes and princesses, beasts and women, women and animals and yet no films about woman and woman or man and man (Ortiz 2016).

Examples such as this, where someone has thought or implied that a character may be queer, is shut down very quickly and ridiculed for the thought's existence. This is due to the fact that the larger audience of Disney movies are conservative cis-heterosexual's and assume that characters are defaulted heterosexual; therefore the idea of an assumed heterosexual character being gay is absurd. But it becomes contradictory when one can assume the character is straight, but another cannot assume the character is queer. Furthermore, the assumption of a character being queer also gives rise to another point; that these readings or interpretations of queer are a result of a recognition of the vast range of queerness that has always been present and popular in cultural texts (Doty 1993: 16). Making an assumption of a character does not create an alternative reading, but rather one interpretation among many equally valid interpretations (Doty 1993: xi-xii). Elsa as a character has never explicitly said what her sexuality is and neither have the creators.

If we're looking at queerbaiting from a director, we needn't look far with Disney: Disney's *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019). Elsa's song *Let It Go* written by Idina Menzel in 2013 become an anthem for queer people around the world about coming out (Lecourt 2019). After the announcement of *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019), many people took to social media begging for the director to give Elsa a girlfriend with the hashtag '#GiveElsaAGirlfriend'. In an interview, the co-director Jennifer Lee said that they meticulously had plentiful conversations about where they wanted *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019) to go, saying that they appreciate that people are thinking about the film in this way and that Elsa is a character that speaks to many people (Bradley 2018). Furthermore, Jennifer added that they (as a company) were having conversations about this topic and the director remained on the fence about denying it or not (Shepherd 2018). The response (or lack thereof) sparked a glimmer of hope for queer audiences as the concept of giving Elsa a girlfriend was addressed and not denied by the co-director; however, this spark was short-lived as within the film, Elsa was not given a girlfriend and queer audiences were left with no representation. In this instance, we see queerbait as a result of the director being vague about the topic that they were being asked about – namely if Elsa would get a girlfriend or not. This ambiguity created a hope that there would be a possible queer relationship or queer character, and thus sparks an interest on the queer community to go and watch the film to see the outcome of this ambiguity only to be met with disappointment.

Whilst researching how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) could be a potential queerbaiting film, a constant topic that kept rearing its head alongside my research, was how queerbaiting has intertwined itself throughout Hollywood, and potentially the world of television. The point of queerbaiting is to target and haul in new audiences by targeting a minority group, gaining their interest in representation, and having them engage with the film and spend money on going to watch it; for the business side of the film, growing one's audience is important to keep a constant income, however, the main audience (typically conservative people) cannot be offended in this step towards fake inclusivity. Professor Sean Griffin an ex-Disney employee, claims that Disney upholds the traditional 'American conservative family values' – the values that uphold heterosexual patriarchy within a family (Maier 2021); we see this in their films where they do not portray queer relationships the way they

portray heterosexual relationships, and queer moments are few and far in-between and delegate them to the background. This is because Disney is itself effected and controlled by the capitalist system: should Disney's attitude towards sexuality alter, and they put forward something that offends the conservative audience, it would limit Disney and their products that they produce for its consumers (Griffin 2000: xviii). And while Disney may have recognized a gay market, and are sometimes willing to create animated television shows and short films that include queer characters, their hands are still ultimately tied by the institution and their grasp on capitalism.

Analysing the trailer of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) in order to identify if it is queerbait or not, we get a brief overview of what the story is about; a sea monster with an obsession with going to the surface who eventually runs away to a human town. Throughout the trailer, we get glimpses of Luca's adventure on the surface, even though his mom clearly stated that he was not allowed to go there. In the town he ventures through with Alberto, they meet Giulia and we are introduced to the bully; Ercole. Furthermore, we get hints that this particular town is not sea monster friendly, and that they need to conceal themselves to not be found. There is also a motivational aspect from Giulia who gives Luca words of encouragement to achieve what he dreams. From the get-go, we see a simplistic trailer that simply reveals a narrative about two young sea monsters who venture into the human world on their own, and the implications that come with them hiding their sea monster selves. What we can conclude from the trailer is that the town Luca and Alberto are in, hunts sea monsters like them, and as a result, they need to be extremely careful. There were no indications of any queer relationships being hinted at, thus there was no queerbaiting in the released trailer to suggest this in any way.

A New York Times article reviewing *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) named "Calamari By Your Name" included a brief interview with Enrico Casarosa (the director of *Luca*) where he said that they had considered Luca and Alberto's relationship to potentially be a romantic one, and it was something that was [briefly] discussed. The article's name "Calamari By Your Name" was a clever thought up title that brought attention to *Luca*'s (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) narrative being somewhat similar to the summer love story found in proudly queer film *Call Me By Your Name* (Luca Guadagnino: 2017). *Call Me By Your Name* (Luca Guadagnino: 2017) is a film set in Northern Italy in 1983 that follows a coming-of-age boy of 17, Elio Perlman, and his father's student

assistant, 24-year-old Oliver, and the romantic relationship that develops between them over the summer. At first, Elio thought they had nothing in common, but over time they started spending more time with each other and feelings developed. Towards the end of the film, knowing Oliver was just a student of his fathers, it was time for Oliver to head back to his home, and this shattered Elio. This article review came after the release of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), and highlighted similarities to the film such as the summer in Italy, both contained a story about two boys and they both had a sad goodbye at the end of their respective narratives at a train station. While *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) is clearly not a replica of *Call Me By Your Name* (Luca Guadagnino: 2017), which is also emphasized by Casarosa, it shares very few similarities that some audience members cannot un-see, such as the similarity in curly hair in both main protagonists [figure 25], but for the most is a completely different story. Furthermore, while *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) had more undertone queer moments and characters, *Call Me By Your Name* (Luca Guadagnino: 2017) was explicit about a gay romance and did not hide it throughout the film. While this was a simple comparison of two films that are similar in some ways and different to others, I deem articles like this slightly problematic: As I mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation, due to social media my understanding and expectation of the film was altered into thinking this was a potential openly queer film and was untimely let down upon watching it. Articles like this one can also have this effect – not on everyone – but possibly on some people. And this may lead to some deeming *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) queerbait – which it is not.



[Figure 25] (left) Elio and (right) Luca

As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, there were multiple undertones of queerness in both the narrative and characters, however, even though I make this claim I argue it was an unintentional decision to make these moments and characters purposefully queer. The story, as described by Casarosa (the director), is purely about friendship and a summer of adventure in Italy and is almost a retelling of his childhood with his best friend named Alberto (Ellwood: 2021). With that in mind, in multiple interviews after the film was released, Casarosa was asked if Luca and Alberto were supposed to be gay or what he thought about that analogy, to which his response was that they were not gay – and that *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) was about friendship, not romance (Ellwood: 2021). During his discussion of the film, Casarosa mentions that their idea of the sea monster was something he loved because it became a metaphor for different kinds of differences, and that this metaphor allowed viewers to project their own issues on the characters (Ellwood: 2021). He furthers this by saying that he had never considered them romantically inclined because this was a retelling of him and his friend – who he states were both straight (Ellwood: 2021) but does admit that he is happy that his film strongly resonated with many audience members. The relationships and moments I discussed can be interpreted as queer moments, however, as the director has stated – it was never the intention to make them queer in any way. I, therefore, deem *Luca*

(Enrico Casarosa: 2021) a film that was not queerbaited. Furthermore, I argue that *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) was an unintentional queer narrative, and that it spoke of friendship from a straight person's point of view. Here, I contest that there was a limited understanding of growing up queer shown and that these moments found in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) that I dub queer, are possible moments that may [in their universe] result in an eventual relationship.

Looking at the history of Pixar, we know the company was bought by Disney back in 2006 and therefore falls under Disney's reign, and therefore their rules. Disney being a megacorporation must upkeep its status among its viewers by keeping things 'child-friendly', and keeping their relationship with the institution on good terms. However, in 2020 Disney was put in the spotlight when the CEO refused to comment on the passing of the nicknamed "Don't Say Gay" bill of Florida, where an outcry from employees across the United States reared its head. Then, when the CEO did eventually speak out publicly against it, was met by harsh backlash from the mayor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, who took Disney to court to remove their long-standing ability to self-govern its parks (Breuninger 2023). To make matters worse for Disney, a Pixar employee took to Twitter to admit to Disney censoring many of their queer ideas the Pixar team had had (Vary & Jackson 2022), as well as Disney's idea to take out the kissing scene between two lesbians in *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022) (Vary 2022). However, this scene was allegedly put back in order to show Disney's support for the LGBTQIA+ community during this publicity (Vary 2022). As a result of Pixar falling under the megacorporation Disney, and Disney falling under the influence of the institution, there are limits to what can and can't be included in a film labelled under the Disney name. However, I don't deem this an excuse to not have queer representation in their films, and even though the company is taking steps towards this inclusivity, there are clearly moments within their decision making where they recede back into their shells.

Luca as a Catalyst towards Queer Representation

What becomes evident in discussing *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as queerbait, is that there was a clear outcry for queer representation. When put into context, the feature film *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) was released after Disney Pixar

seemingly started to head in the right direction with queer representation. The film *Onward* (Dan Scanlon: 2020) and short film *Out* (Steven Hunter: 2020) were released prior to that of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), which included clear queer characters. With the release of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) being in June – the month of pride – with two male protagonists, people were possibly hoping for a third film with queer inclusion which did not happen. Instead, some saw the underlying queer allegory and ended up labelling it queerbait.

Onward (Dan Scanlon: 2020) was an urban-fantasy film released by Pixar about two teenage elf brothers who, through the use of magic, reincarnated their deceased father to spend one last 24-hour period with him. During the course of events of trying to find a crystal to properly reincarnate him because they failed the first time, they go on an adventure to a far away mountain where the crystal lies. Along this adventure they get stopped by cops as a result of speeding on a highway. During this interaction, they get stopped by two officers, one of which is a cyclops; Officer Spector. While letting the boys get on their way unknowingly, she mentions that she's been having trouble with her girlfriends children to the disguised teenagers who pose as a fellow officer of hers – Officer Colt Bronco. This was a minor reference to a lesbian couple. This was one of the first few steps forward to Pixar's representation of queer people, however, it was not accepted in some Middle Eastern countries, and the word 'girlfriend' changed to 'partner' in the Russian version (Wiseman 2020).

In 2021, a Pixar short was released called *Out* (Steven Hunter 2020) which was their first openly gay short film released on Disney+ (a streaming network mainly for Disney productions). It starts out with two gay men, Greg and Manual, getting ready to move into the city. During a conversation between them, we come to understand that Greg has not come out to his parents despite being a fully grown adult, and whilst packing to move his parents visit unexpectedly. Panicked, he asks Manual to leave in order to keep his secret. His parents then come in and his mom starts packing up the kitchen. Sitting in his room he tries to psych himself up to tell his parents he is gay, however, accidentally switches bodies with his pet dog when his collar magically attaches itself to his neck. Through his adventure in his dog's body, he comes to realize how much his mom loves him when she exclaims her feelings to the dog (obviously thinking it's just Greg's dog), and at the end of the film, we see

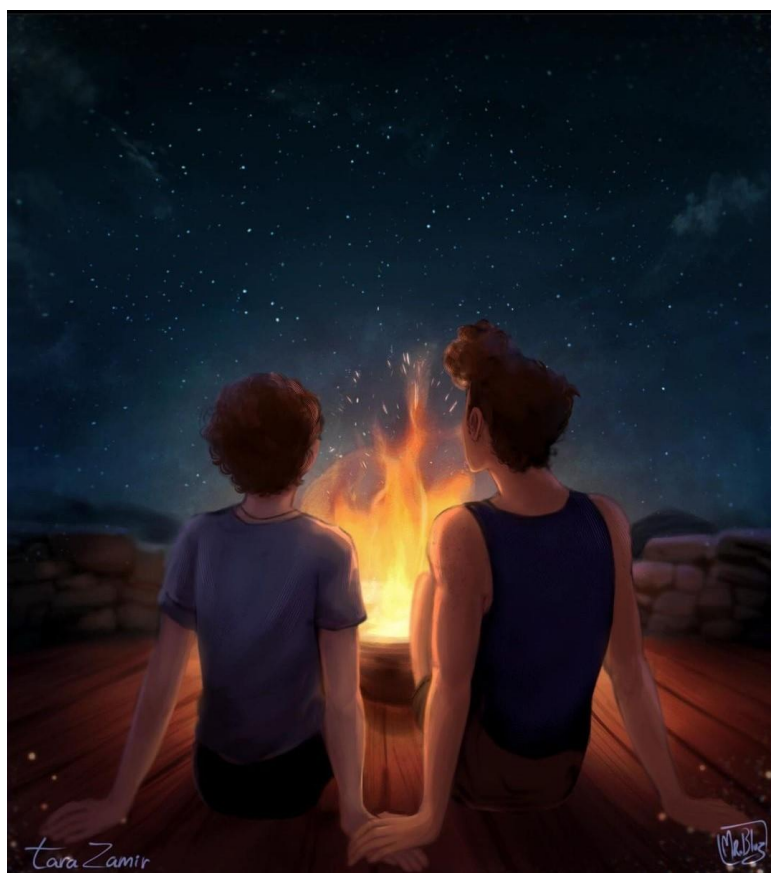
Greg introducing Manual to his parents after sharing an on-screen kiss making hot chocolate. In this moment of Manual introducing himself to Greg's dad, his dad hauls him in for a big hug.

In both these films, there was a clear queer character – and in *Out* (Steven Hunter 2020) the main character was gay and portrayed a gay relationship and the struggle of coming out to one's parents. With two films in a row representing the queer community, and the community feeling seen, followed by the step back of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), the film was not well received. This created an outcry and multiple analyses of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) to prove that it is a queer narrative, and that Luca and Alberto's relationship is that of a queer nature rather than platonic. The outcry that stemmed from *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), claiming it as queerbait shows there is still a niche market for Disney to acknowledge. And while they did try attempting to appeal to this market through *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022), we see there was harsh consequences that arose from conservative audience members.

Furthering on from internet articles claiming *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) to be of a queer nature, we needn't look too far in another direction to see this outcry being furthered by members of the artistic community through fanart and the creation of slash fiction. Fanart, or fan fiction, emerged in the 1960's and is defined as the use of canon characters, settings and plots generated by another writer or artist in creating unique works of art (Stepanova 2007: 1). Slash fiction is fan fiction but solely devoted to same-sex romantic pairings between two or more characters (Thurman 2015: 4). Slash fiction is known to be a major consumer frustration for the underrepresentation of non-male, non-straight perspective on screens (Thurman 2015: 4). While many people tend to consider canonical homosocial relationships as platonic, slash writers are not afraid to break this stereotype and blur this boundary of what is and is not acceptable in a male-on-male friendship (Stepanova 2007: 18). As discussed in chapter 3, I do not deem Luca and Alberto's relationship platonic, and clearly I was not the only one. Here are some examples of art pieces found on Instagram originating from the slash fandom using the hashtag “#LuBerto” (a combination of Luca and Alberto's name):



[Figure 26] “Mio duro lavoratore.” (Discobiscotto: 2022).



[Figure 27] Luca and Alberto by a fire. (Tara_zamir: 2023).



[Figure 28] Luca and Alberto as sea monsters. (Koinotea: 2023).

Slowly, American cinema is shifting their views on homosexuality and this shift is being seen in the media as can be seen by the films *Onward* (Dan Scanlon: 2020), *Out* (Max Sachar 2021) and *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022), and while there is clearly representation out there – it is not enough (Slonka 2013: 23). Within the slash fandom community, they have created safe spaces, such as the site Tumblr, whose sexualities or gender identities are yet to be recognized by society (Slonka 2013: 24). Fandom in general has become a big part of mainstream culture and is not something to be ashamed of anymore, to the point where many fandoms interact with creators of the source material directly without fear of retaliation (Slonka 2013: 24). The outcry of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) and its clear queer narrative, being labelled as queerbait, and the outcry of queer public when Disney did not condemn the ‘Don’t Say Gay’ bill, along with the accusations of The Disney Company taking out a same-sex kiss was clearly the push Disney and Disney Pixar needed in order to take a step forward and keep their promise for inclusivity. It is clear that both The Disney Company and The Pixar Company are slowly but surely creating more

inclusive content and while we're still waiting on an outwardly gay protagonist, having queer side characters is a [small] start.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, my aim was to understand how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as a film could be a progressive and/or regressive representation of the queer body. Through my analysis of all its components, I conclude that it's more progressive than regressive, but does have its flaws like many films do. I arrived at this conclusion as a result of this dissertation discussing the sub-questions as topics and going into depth in order to understand the concept, as well as understand how it can be either progressive or regressive.

My first subquestion was the difference between Ercole Visconti and previous Disney villains found throughout their history. Here I discussed the most famous villain – Ursula, and the negative connotations that came with her, and other villains' character designs. I discussed how these villains were problematic not in that they were queer bodies, but that they associated queer bodies with villainy and evil – and this was a narrative that stuck for many decades. In comparison to Ercole, we see a progressive step forward in that he did not embody the same characteristics typically found in the queer villain: he had no makeup, his body was not excessively thin or thick, nor did he have any queer-like characteristics about his personality. Instead, they vilified him through his narcissistic personality and as someone who bullies those around him. My second subquestion lead on from this, questioning if Ercole was an improvement in villain design – which he was. He had no excessive notable features that made him stand out in any way from the other townsfolk and instead looked normal; he was vilified through his actions which spoke about more modern-day problems – like bullying. This begins to teach viewers that a villain is not someone who looks physically different but rather should be vilified through their heinous acts.

My third subquestion pointed towards the shifting of the monster, and whether or not the negative connotations associated with the monster had shifted as well creating a new type of protagonist. No, it did not. Even though in *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021), the sea monsters were made to be the monsters by uttering of the townsfolk - they were not the villain of the story. They were made monsters by the townsfolk who were cautious of them because they were different and didn't look like a 'normal' human – and this created fear. However, when Luca and Alberto take on the

disguise as a human, they are welcomed to the town and treated like a normal human would be, and becomes a part of the community. The queerness typically associated with villainy questioned the boundaries and so-called rigid structure of knowledge of the respective narrative, much like how Luca and Alberto's presence of the monster questioned this one: The townsfolk thought of sea monsters as violent creatures who would harm them, and yet Luca and Alberto, by being in the town, proved this wrong. Thus, brings into question the boundary set by the townsfolk on their knowledge of the sea monster. Furthermore, with all the sea monsters' unwillingness to go near the town or the surface in fear for their life, and the humans' persistence to hunt and kill them, puts into perspective who the real villains are of the story – that it is not the ones that physically look like monsters. This furthers the image that someone may look or act different than what is deemed the apparent 'norm', but they aren't the villains of the story.

Fourthly, I questioned the representation of masculinity found throughout Disney and Disney Pixar films. I discussed how, originally, Disney created a picture of what the ideal male should be like; one that aligned itself with cis-heteronormativity. Pixar, however, changed this ideal of masculinity to include more feminist-like depictions of what masculinity could look like – and that included men being allowed to show more emotions, be gentle and kind and not emotionally stoic. Furthermore, that masculinity was not always about being lonely and striving to be the alpha male. I discussed how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be seen as an improvement of this in that Luca and Alberto do not compete to be the alpha of the story, and Luca can already be seen as having feminine traits in his kind and gentle nature. Furthermore, there is a lot of physical interaction that takes place between Luca and Alberto, and they do not pull away in disgust but rather embrace each other until one lets go gently.

The fifth subquestion required this thesis to understand how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be seen as a queer narrative. Here, I dived into comparing the narrative of Luca to various queer experiences such as homelessness, being closeted, and coming out. This comparison shed light on how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can absolutely be seen as a queer allegory as it represents and includes many queer experiences had by many queer people. Furthermore, I explained how Luca and Alberto's relationship is not like your usual male-on-male platonic relationship, but rather labelled it queerplatonic, explaining that their relationship was more than

friendship but never hinted at a romantic one. I then explained how allies can be seen throughout the film pertaining to Giulia, Massimo, and a handful of women seen tearing up a wanted flyer of a sea monster after Luca and Alberto are revealed as sea monsters. Finally, I highlighted the relationship found between Massimo and Alberto in that Massimo became a substitute parent to Alberto and accepted for who he was, even though Massimo was one of the townsfolk hunting sea monsters. Throughout this chapter, there were multiple moments where *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as a film could clearly be dubbed a queer one. While I deem this progressive in that queer experiences are getting their story and experiences across, and have some sort of representation to relate to, it was not outwardly made as a queer narrative. Furthermore, the director, Casarosa, did not accept it as a queer narrative but rather just two young boys during their pre-romantic phase having fun. This, to me, shows a lack of understanding of what it is to be queer, and that awareness of one's queerness can become apparent at a young age. He did acknowledge how *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be seen as a queer allegory, but insisted on his version of the film.

Lastly, whether or not *Luca* can be seen as queerbait – which I don't believe it is. Unlike *Frozen 2* (Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck: 2019), there was no publicity to even hint at *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) being a queer narrative or including queer characters. My interaction with it was purely based on social media misguiding me into thinking that this was a queer film when it never was. In having discussed the trailer as well, it does not outwardly allude to any romantic or queer relationships at all. I, therefore, do not believe it to be queerbait as many articles may label it. However, it is definitely a film with a clear queer underlying narrative. What was also noteworthy of this labeling, was the support *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) got through fanart; having seen multiple artistic creations depicting Luca and Alberto in a relationship shows that there is still a great need for queer representation. The outcry that came from *Luca* was pressure enough for the Disney Company and Pixar to continue their road down queer representation within their films and this was seen in *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane: 2022).

This research paper aimed to identify the regressive and progressiveness of *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as a Disney film regarding queer representation; progressively, and knowingly, *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) created a space where queer characters and a queer narrative was portrayed in all its realities, however regressively, even though this was very clearly queer, it was not acknowledged for its queerness. In my literature review and theoretical framework, I explained with the help of Henry Giroux that it, unfortunately, is not that simple: regardless of whether or not the director admitted it or not, the thought of an outright gay character might not happen anytime soon due to the fact that Disney represents the conservative side of our society, making gayness a taboo topic. Furthermore, as a result of their company aligning themselves with the institution, they also don't have much free reign on creating characters that do not conform to societal standards. However, simultaneously, Disney prides itself on claiming to be inclusive in all aspects; having acknowledged *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) as a potential queer narrative would have shown Disney's willingness to start expanding their representation field as they so state on its website.

Enrico Casarosa retold the story of his personal childhood with his friend in an attempt to relive those moments. However, he created this narrative from a straight cis-heteronormative perspective and thus didn't see the queer narrative he accidentally told. I feel this is due to a lack of information and knowledge about growing up queer. In saying this, I have questions to ponder about representing queer people and creating a queer narrative, and this is where I feel the conversation needs to be taken further: what does positive representation look like? How does one obtain knowledge of the queer experience and how to represent it properly? How can Disney be inclusive of all queer people and vastly represent them so all feel included? How does Disney represent queerness without it becoming a spectacle? How can we use animation films to safely and openly discuss sexual orientation with youth audiences? These are questions I feel need to be addressed by Disney if and when they intentionally create a queer main character, and considering their emphasis on their films being educational to the younger audiences, need to take part in the academic field in order to understand the imagery they themselves put forward as a company.

Throughout my dissertation, I have gained more knowledge through researching and reading academic texts above and beyond those I have included in this dissertation. As a result, I look back to my question of whether or not *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) can be deemed progressive or regressive, which I thought was a simple question at first, but upon doing my research and analysis I realize it wasn't. Nor did I understand the implications of bringing out a film with queer characters in and why Disney could not just do it. It became apparent to me how intertwined our society still is with conservative values, and how through this we obtained naturalized knowledge that can be difficult to unlearn, and simultaneously raises more questions in this process of critiquing and unlearning. What *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) showed The Disney Company was that there is a niche market for queer representation, and while Disney has produced some queer side characters, they have yet to bring out a film about a main queer character and their experiences.

My final thought on *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa: 2021) is that the film did get my hopes up, along with a few others, and is not the best example of an openly queer narrative. However, even though it may not have been the queer narrative I wanted it to be, I realize through my analysis that it has the potential to become an example and a reference point on how to represent queer bodies. Understandably, children may not fully grasp all the political ideologies this dissertation has covered as they themselves are still learning, but The Disney Company has made a point of simplifying these concepts as metaphors so that children may come to understand politics and be included in that conversation. In a society that is slowly becoming more inclusive and aware of its cis-heteronormative history, I deem it important to include our future generation in this movement and bring them into the conversation.

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