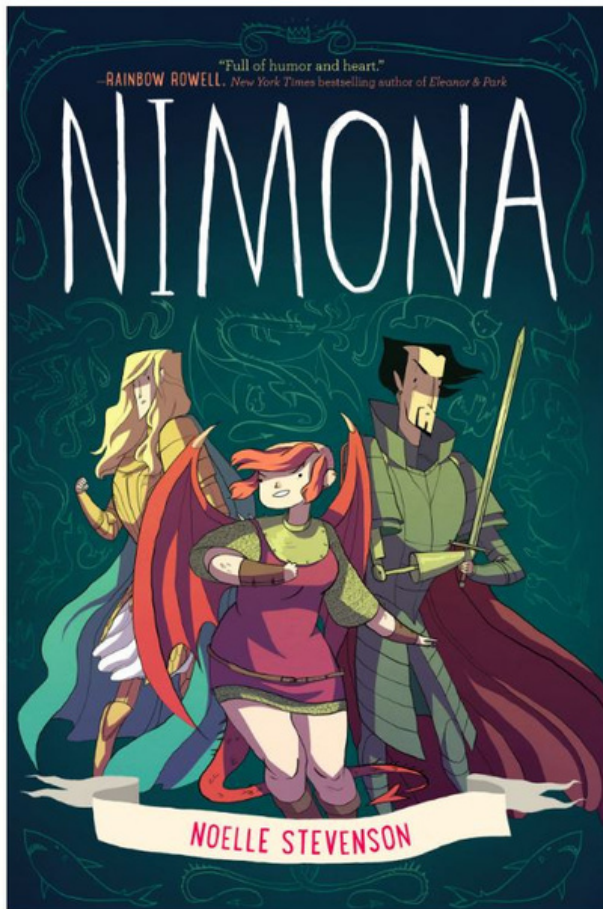# ANALYSIS OF NIMONA BY CAROLINA GONÇALVES

COMMLD 534 VISUAL STORYTELLING AKA COMICS AS COMMUNICATION AND TRANSMEDIA | PROFESSOR: ROB SALKOWITZ

Nimona is a fantasy fiction graphic novel written and illustrated by ND Stevenson. Published in 2015, the story follows the protagonist Nimona, a young shapeshifter who can transform into any animal, such as a shark and even a dragon. The young woman is a battle partner of the villain Lord Ballister Blackheart, who was thrown aside by the Institution, a government organization that runs the city in which they live. The story is set in a medieval world, with heroes, villains, and magic. Nimona and Blackheart execute plans to destroy the Institution and as the two goes in adventures to complete their objectives, surprising stories emerge and secrets are discovered, bringing conflicts, and intriguing the reader to understand the limits of heroism and villainy.

The humorous narrative features many action scenes, as well as a lot of emotion and surprises throughout the protagonist's journey.

Nimona is a different story from what we are used to seeing in superhero comics, despite red, one of the main colors used in superhero uniforms, being part of Nimona's look, the character would not, initially, be taxed as a heroine in Marvel comics, for example. One of the reasons for this is shown right at the beginning. In the first chapters, we notice the protagonist's certain obsession with being a villain, with killing people, and how she doesn't care about the deaths of civilians. "We're villains! Villains kill people sometimes" (pg. 21).

An important point to highlight and one of the strengths of the graphic novel is the contradictions and the limits between heroism and villainism throughout the narrative. Since the boom of comic books and the rise of Marvel and DC superheroes in the mid-1960s and the relationship of these heroes with human problems, such as Spider-Man, has created an ideal about what to be a hero and what it is to be a villain. In Nimona, morality and the perspective of this ideal are questioned all the time. One of the examples is on page 87, the character Sir Ambrosius Goldenloin, considered a hero in the plot, who is part of the Institution, receives the order to kill Nimona. But, if we analyze the ideal of heroism created by pop culture, the hero's role will always be to save people, never kill, not even the villain, but rather bring him redemption and make that villain become a good person. ND Stevenson knew how to explore this question a lot, making the reader question their principles around this, and one of the iconic moments of the comic is when, on page 99, in a discussion with Goldenloin, Blackheart says that he will not harm Goldenloin and completes "And I'm the villain".

CLOSURE BY SCOTT MCCLOUD

Analyzing Nimona through Scott McCloud's concepts in "Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art" is realizing that the concept of closure, the phenomenon in which readers need to mentally fill in the gaps between panels to continue the narrative, is an essential element during the process of reading the graphic novel. Nimona is a shapeshifter, and can transform into any animal or person, most of the existing transitions do not show the transformation happening in detail, as can be seen in the images alongside. In one moment, the character is in her human form and in the next panel, she is in the form of a shark, or vice versa. It is also noted that in the action scenes, the character changes shape constantly and at an accelerated rate. Therefore, the concept of closure, as explained by McCloud in his book, is an essential part of reading Nimona as the reader's mind is automatically filling this empty space by imagining the protagonist's transformation. Certainly, all these transformations contribute to the reader's increased engagement with the narrative.

SOUNDS, PANELS AND COLORS

In Understanding Comics, McCloud analyzes some essential concepts developed over the years by authors to bring comic book narratives to life, for example, sound effects, panel composition and the use of colors. In Nimona, all of the author's decisions in each of the concepts transform the narrative and bring a significant interpretation. The graphic novel's typography, unlike most comics, is in lower case. However, in moments when the characters are screaming, this typography is placed in capital letters, emphasizing the emotions of the characters.

Another concept analyzed in McCloud's book is varying the lettering styles to capture the essence of the sound (pg. 134). In Nimona, Stevenson uses words and symbols to represent the visible and invisible. In one of the action scenes the author uses lines to represent the alarm/loud noise that is resounding through the panels. Other examples are the use of words outside the balloons to represent the sounds of battles in action scenes.

Two other concepts discussed in Scott McCloud's book that can be analyzed in the graphic novel are: panel composition and the use of colors. The author's decisions in these concepts are fundamental to the narrative of the story. First, it can be noted that the most common transitions in Nimona are action-to-action and subject-to-subject. But, the author is not limited to just these two.

Furthermore, on most pages we can see a 2/3 panel layout in sequence, controlling a faster pace of the story. On the other hand , larger panels that take up more space on the page, and sometimes occupy the entire page, emphasize dramatic scenes or moments that are very important to the plot.

Second, ND Stevenson uses colors to relate characters, space, and time. Considerably spectacular. It is noted that until halfway through the comic, the colors used in the scenes between Nimona and Blackheart has a pattern and transform into a stronger contrast as the narrative becomes darker. At another point, it is possible to notice that from the beginning, the scenes between Goldenloin and the Institution have a colder temperament, also a pattern. Other scenes also have their own identification, for example, those that represent the past with duller colors, and the scenes that represent the news/screen, with a green filter. This approach makes the reader quickly identify and relate to the scene in question and prepares them for more or less dramatic moments.

CONCLUSION

Finally, Nimona is a superhero comic, but it breaks the mold in all its aspects. The protagonist does not have a sculptural body like Wonder Woman, or bright blonde hair like Captain Marvel. Her pink hair and strong personality are just some of the aspects that make her unique. Nevertheless, what connects us with the character is not her desire to fight for justice, but all the difficulties she has experienced simply because she is different.

In essence, reading Nimona is a great reflection on the notions of heroism and villainism, the importance of friendship, the impacts and consequences of the choices we make, but most importantly, it is a reflection on identity. Nimona goes against the concept that comics are for children and uses the superhero theme to address problems in today's society.

NIMONA ON NETFLIX

In June 2023, Netflix released the animated film adapted from Nimona. With a 92% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes, the film is directed by Troy Quane and Nick Bruno. American actress Chloë Grace Moretz voices the character of Nimona. In 2024, the film was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Animated Feature category. And like every adaptation, the narrative and characters are not exactly the same as the graphic novel. However, this is a discussion for another analysis.