

DISCOURSES OF FICTIONAL (DIGITAL) TV SERIES BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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PLENARY SESSIONS

Language and Representation in Indigenous-Authored Television

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Abstract

In this talk, I will draw on the new Ngara corpus to explore language and representation in Australian Indigenous-authored fictional television series. Ngara means 'listen, hear, think' in the Sydney language (Troy 2019: 74), and the corpus contains dialogue from 107 episodes from 16 different Indigenous-authored television series (~260,000 words). The series included in the corpus each involve at least one Indigenous director, writer, or producer (according to Screen Australia's Screen Guide), centre on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander characters (self-representation), and have a mixed target audience (i.e. are 'mainstream' television series). I approach the corpus analysis from a non-Indigenous perspective (with all the limitations this entails), but as a member of this 'mainstream' target audience.

Specifically, I want to highlight four types of representation that such Indigenous-authored television narratives bring to our attention or make visible:

- Representations of marginalised English(es) such as Australian Aboriginal English(es)
- Representations of culture(s), i.e. Aboriginal cultures, cultural practices such as the Dreaming, stories, art, law, kinship, practices around death, ceremonies...
- Representations of ignorance/racism in Australia – both direct and indirect
- Representations of colonisation, including linguistic resistance

The talk will demonstrate that Indigenous-authored television series have an important role to play in highlighting such neglected representations and will outline various ways in which these representations are linguistically mediated, emphasising the significance of linguistic analysis.

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Windows or Mirrors? The Battle over Representation in Contemporary TV Series

Alberto N. García
Universidad de Navarra

Abstract

This presentation analyzes the implications of the contemporary tendency towards deliberately applying diversity policies in creating TV series along the lines of gender, sexual orientation, race, and other collective identities. First, it will discuss famous, recent controversies stemming from the cultural Right and Left about casting choices, 'woke remakes,' social-media activism, fan-baiting practices by studios, and accusations of cultural appropriation, to name a few. Secondly, the presentation will survey —following cognitive media theory— the notions of mimesis, empathy, and identification. It will also explore how recent attitudes have tended to simplify such complex psycho-affective phenomena. Drawing from the Psychology of Fiction, the third and last part of the argument will reclaim the benefits of a more universalist approach to representation in contrast to the dominant zeitgeist. Therefore, it will analyze how storytelling transcends its essentialist dimension as a *mirror* to the reader (who encounters 'people who look like me'), instead expanding our cognitive and emotional awareness. Thus, stories appeal to our common humanity by becoming a *window* to otherness.

Seriously Funny: The Margins of Humour in Netflix Stand-Up Comedy Specials

Thomas Messerli
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Abstract

Positioned alongside formats such as documentaries, films and television series, Netflix stand-up comedy specials are recordings of staged performances in front of live audiences, but at the same time also function as streamable content through which communication between a collective sender and non-copresent viewers is mediated. Since 2013, and regularly since 2015, around 300 of these specials have been produced, with a prototypical length of one-hour, a performance by one comedian, and with the self-proclaimed goal to be comedy. Within the last five years, perhaps most prominently in Hannah Gadsby's *Nanette*, a trend of what Bennett (2022) calls refractive comedy has emerged. In a shift away from mainstream perspectives to a comedian broadly self-positioning as marginal – e.g. non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual – this type of comedy appears to also position differently the performer, the audience and their relationship, to open up the choice of semantic scripts it employs in the construction of its humour and by extension the genre of the Netflix stand-up special, and to take on a more self-reflective stance towards the genre it co-constructs.

Central aspects for the understanding of this reconceived streamed comedy are the notions of play frame (Bateson 1972) and humorous keying (e.g. Kotthoff 1999). Beyond exploring the themes and streamed artefacts themselves, as well as the communicative setting in which they are situated, I will explore how these specials navigate between the comedic and the serious –

achieving bona-fide communication jokingly, making individual and societal crises entertaining, and at times even stepping outside of comedy altogether for sequences that are more than what Attardo (2001) calls "serious relief" and threaten to break the comedic contract by eliciting a range of different emotions in their viewers.

The Species Problem: Animals, Animation and Representation

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Abstract

Debates about media representation remain largely focused on depictions of humans. Yet representations of animals have consequences for the ways in which human cultures treat animals, and understanding of human-animal relationships and responsibilities. Furthermore, animal representations are often used as proxies for thinking about the human, with human cultural categories (such as gender, class, nation) imposed upon representation of the non-human. Drawing from approaches from Critical Animal Studies, this paper explores how examining animal representations is a productive tool for investigating matters of power, social norms, and hierarchies common to much media analysis. Key examples will come from children's cartoons, given animation's long history of animal-human hybrid representations, and the more fluid approach to species hierarchies common in much children's culture. Central here is the concept of 'species' and a goal of the talk will be to examine the productive potential of engagement with the epistemologically-troubling 'species problem'.

The Ideological Fictionality of Documentary Series on Gypsies and Travellers

Roberta Piazza
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Abstract

This talk opens by establishing a link with the conference topic and highlighting similarities and differences between TV documentary series and serialised fiction. One trait shared by both genres is the narrative continuity that allows the viewers to become familiar with the social actors in the programme. The talk then moves on to discussing the degree of veracity present in documentaries, which may not be much greater than fiction, but is of a different kind. This point in particular offers the connection to issues of representation and ideological portrayal especially when the focus of the programme is on such outcast communities as Gypsies and Travellers. The talk reports on an ongoing study (part of a broader funded investigation) that compares the representation of Gypsy communities in three different TV series, CH4 *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*, CH5 *Here Come the Gypsies* and the recent BBC *60 Days with the Gypsies* produced by a Romani director. Two episodes for each series are closely observed linguistically

and visually. While attention is paid to the choice of themes developed in the three series, the main focus is on what distinguishes a quality documentary like *60 Days with the Gypsies*, which is produced by an 'emic' insider and the other two. How can a TV programme on a minority disenfranchised group reach a good degree of veracity in contrast to the fictionalised and ideologised simplification of the others? The proposal is to look at the 'voice' that the social actors in *60 Days* are allowed to express. The study therefore attempts a definition of voice in terms of ability to tell a story and start a topic independently of the documentary narrator, together with the length of conversational space allowed to Gypsies following the narrator's question and the quality of contributions: directly addressing the camera to deliver information versus the camera eavesdropping on 'noise'.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Queer Virtuality: Identity and Exile in *Élite*'s Online Community

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Abstract

Following the COVID pandemic, the use of social networks and the development of cyber-business capitalism have been consolidated. This concentration of cyberspace monopolizes the number of existing virtual communities on streaming platforms such as Twitch or social networks such as Reddit through atomized virtual communities. While studies on LGBTIQ+ representation in audiovisual fiction advance, the need to question queer identity processes in these virtual communities, specifically in their younger audiences, persists. The so-called social natives of the Internet have mainly found Reddit, TikTok and Discord as the main platforms to stay informed about current affairs (Reuters Institute and University of Oxford, 2022: 45). The use of mainly audiovisual networks allows new generations to find in online spaces new ways of relating in virtual communities increasingly filtered based on compartmentalized tastes and segmented by specifically developed algorithms. Because of this, it is necessary to question the identity processes that underlie media and information consumption (Cauberghe et al., 2021), how do young people form their identity based on information about the world? Specifically, the aim of this proposal is to ask about the LGBTIQ+ experience in virtual communities on Reddit, can we speak of a queer virtuality in which young people inform themselves and build personalized virtual communities from a certain standardized queer identity?

To understand how they relate to mainstream serial fictions, drawing on research on queer digital diaspora by Atay (2017) and concepts of border feminism by Chela Sandoval (2013), this research proposes a cyberethnographic study on the mechanisms of LGBTIQ+ identity and representation in the Reddit community of the Netflix series *Élite*. Through the content analysis (messages, memes and online interactions) of this Reddit community, concepts such as digital identity or avatar reflexivity are explored in order to delimit a possible queer virtuality. The results achieved seek to test whether Atay's ideas of identity hybridity or Sandoval's borderline experience continue to describe identity states of confusion and traumatic diaspora within the LGBTIQ+ community. It also aims to understand the processes of representation and reception of this fiction in young audiences such as social native users. The main conclusion of the research is that the idea of a queer virtuality is still too fluid and unstable.

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From Rags to Riches or Vice Versa? Food, Poverty and Gender in Wisteria Lane

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Abstract

Food is never "just food". It can be considered as a code that reflects a cultural identity, and from a historical perspective, every national or regional cuisine gives clues about a particular society and its underlying features. In her essay «Deciphering a Meal», Mary Douglas pointed out that: "If food is to be treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relationships being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries". In *Desperate Housewives* –the American television comedy-drama series created by Marc Cherry (2004-2010)–, there are female characters that would do anything to keep up with the Joneses. Martha Huber, Karen McCluskey, or Maisy Gibbons would do anything to hide the fact that they face financial problems. Gabrielle Solis, for example, makes her best to hide her past; she does not want to be reminded of her Mexican heritage –her childhood was deeply marked by poverty and prejudice respectively. Her dream is to be part of the mainstream; she needs to identify with the dominant culture. Will it be her only goal in life to embrace a cultural model based on wealth, success, and power? Will she have to face poverty when "having it all" suddenly life may change dramatically? The French gourmet Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin once said: "Tell me what you eat, and I'll tell you who you are". Does Gabrielle Solis reject traditional Mexican dishes? My paper is an enquiry into how food is used as a marker to negotiate the paradox between the yearning for equality (integration vs. exclusion) and the rags to riches ethos.

A Girls' Eye-View: Exploring Girlhood Media Representations through the Lens of Italian Female Adolescence

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Abstract

In recent years we have observed a significant shift in representations of girlhood compared to similar content in the nineties and early 2000s, in particular thanks to the OTT (Over the Top Television) services and the so-called "Netflix effect". Actually Italian TV shows have promptly appropriated this trend and they are questioning many crucial issues with respect to girlhood studies: at a general level they stress the representation of female adolescence within media

culture and the multiple possibilities of appropriation open to young people as their personalities evolve; it also emphasizes the actualization of girl friendship as a postfeminist idea of sisterhood (Winch 2013). They obviously put the issues of sex and sexualisation in the spotlight, but more generally they lead us to reflect on the aesthetic pleasures and pleasurable experience of teen film (Colling 2017). At the same time, they speak to more recent work that tries to show how teen television expresses 'affective dissonances' with regard to ideals of postfeminist girlhood (Dobson and Kanai, 2018).

The aim of this paper is to present the first insights of a research project, *A Girls' Eye-view: Girlhood on the Italian screen since the 1950s* funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK. Thanks to the participation of 6 Italian high schools from different cities (small and large) and regions (from north to south), we have collected over 70 interviews with girls aged between 14 and 19 years old and coordinated a series of focus groups (1 or 2 for each school). Moreover we have collected over 20 video essays made by the same students previously interviewed, through which they investigated girlhood issues, using their own voices. Our goal has been to render this project very participatory, developing our method as we progress: as Alison Harvey has recently summarized, reflection and iteration should form the two keystones of any feminist research project (2019).

As our results demonstrate that TV shows and films such as *Baby*, *Skam Italia*, *Sul più bello*, *Dolcissime*, *Bangla*, *Mare fuori* etc particularly provide female adolescents with many different points of temporary attachment, points of *suture* within media discourses; in other words they can select and combine different kinds of female role models creating a sort of bricolage of personalities that is strongly consistent with the idea of an identity under construction, tentative, contradictory, but open, productive and definitely experimental.

New Girls: Italian Teen Series Challenging Conventional Representations

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Abstract

The multiplication of digital platforms and the subsequent ever-increasing number of serial productions brought to the forefront the chance, and the need, to update genres and modes of representations to the new sensibilities that characterize the current cultural landscape.

Among the genres that visibly display more nuanced and diverse representations, the teen series stands out, not incidentally one of the genres on which Netflix and the other streaming platforms are betting the most. As a category of serial storytelling aimed to, and centered on, youth, the teen genre seems particularly well suited to absorbing new characterizations and sensitive topics. This scenario affects Italian teen serial productions too, especially the ones destined to digital platforms, which seem to be crafted according to at least some of the requirements, trends and sensibilities boosted by Netflix (and others) on a global level.

While maintaining some typical tropes of the teen genre (coming-of-age, friendship and rivalry, first romantic experiences) these Italian series develop their storylines around less conventional gender dynamics, whether it is complexifying stereotypical traits, showing a variety of sexual orientations, or broaden the range of character types. In particular, it is the young female characters who embody new discourses around gender, race, identity, self-awareness - as often highlighted and explored within the field of girlhood studies (Harris 2003, Handyside, Taylor-Jones 2016).

This proposal aims to achieve two purposes: first, to outline the defining coordinates of Italian teen series in the current context of streaming platforms; second, to identify and discuss the innovative characteristics of this new generation of young female protagonists, through the analysis of some significative cases. We will focus on series like *SKAM Italia*, *Baby*, *Summertime*, *Bang Bang Baby*, which employ girl protagonists that in one way or another deviate from more traditional characters, and we will try to detect successful outcomes and possible contradictions.

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Turning "Diversity" into "Normality": The Idea of "Afroitalianness" in the Netflix series *Zero*

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Abstract

Zero (2021-) is an 8-episode original Netflix series set in Barona (with the fictional name "Barrio"), a border district of the city of Milan, Italy. The TV series is based on the novel "I was never my age", written by Antonio Dikele Distefano, an Italian writer, journalist and former rapper of Angolan origins. With the soundtrack of rapper Mahmood, the series tells the story of Omar ("Zero" to his friends), a "second generation" Italian boy of Senegalese descent who lives in public housing within the gentrified areas of the "Barrio" neighborhood. His life is anonymous and frustrating to the point of feeling sometimes invisible to society, but one day he realizes to have an extraordinary superpower, which makes him actually invisible when feeling strong emotions. Thus, the story moves from Omar/Zero wanting to go away from the unfriendly neighborhood to Omar/Zero finding himself a sort of superhero, passionate about protecting his own community from the villain, namely the real estate speculators, but also from racial prejudices and stereotypes. My paper aims at investigating to what extent a new idea of "Afroitalianness" - as well as the struggle of making this idea accepted, in other words of turning

"diversity" into "normality" - is conveyed in the 8 25-minute episodes, highlighting the way social issues and multicultural aspects are combined and dealt with. In particular, I will address the linguistic and discursive practices of the whole cast of Afro-Italian actors and actresses involved in the production, in an attempt to realize whether they represent convincingly the so-called "second generation Italians" and to explore to what extent the metaphor of invisibility as a disadvantage turning into a strength can entail the issue of reappropriation as a prominent resignification strategy mainly used by people of African ancestries in public settings where racial discrimination occurs.

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Putting a Stake through the Heart of the Issue: Rewriting the Vampire Narrative in the Context of The Black Lives Matter Movement

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Abstract

It is easy to dismiss *First Kill*, Netflix's newest vampire saga, as a lightweight Twilight wannabe. That said, even though the show doesn't stray away from clichés (the two main characters fall in love despite coming from enemy families; sounds familiar?), as a cultural commentary on contemporary race relations and LGBTQ issues in the U.S, the series hides some surprisingly sharp fangs.

Showrunner Felicia Henderson has been vocal about the need for representing Black characters as protagonists, especially in historically underrepresented genres such as fantasy. *First Kill* follows the story of Calliope, a young Black hunter who proudly declares herself as coming from "a lineage thousands of years old of the best monster hunters to ever walk the Earth." Although not exclusively, the monsters that Calliope and her family hunt are vampires. In *First Kill*, a show set in Savannah, Georgia, a place with a troubled past, the vampires are not just white, they are "legacy," a charged term that suggests Southern aristocracy.

Given the tense, post-BLM context in the US, to have a show that depicts BIPOC characters (the hunters are exclusively BIPOC) hunting down the Waspy-est vampires is gutsy to say the least. To make things even more complex, Calliope falls in love with Juliet, the youngest of these white legacy vampires. This paper will discuss the various intricacies of race and LGBTQ relations that the show explores. In doing so, I will address zero in on the supernatural as a potentially

productive tool in addressing these extremely complex and complicated issues, especially for a young adult audience.

The Handmaid's Tale: Feminism, Power and Propaganda

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Abstract

This proposal is based on the analysis of the power structures and propaganda observed in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017-), a television series based on the homonymous novel by Margaret Atwood, published in the 80s. The book has been described as a dystopia product of the feminist wave of the 1970s (Stillman and Johnson, 1994) and has been the object study of different academic works (Gibert Maceda, 1991; Laflen, 2007). We can affirm that both the book and the TV production present a dystopian universe where women are relegated to the basic roles in which they have been pigeonholed throughout history: mother, maid, wife and prostitute (Barragán-Romero, 2021). The theocratic dictatorship that controls the Gilead universe is ruled by men, who base their power on fundamentalist religious principles. These principles justify all the acts they commit, from murder to rape. Moreno Trujillo (2016) defines the universe created by Atwood as a critical feminist dystopia.

Our study is based on the Hulu TV series to analyze, specifically, the emergence of extreme ideologies and the loss of women's rights (Hendershot, 2018; Aguado-Peláez, 2019; Cebrián-Guinovart, 2019), as well as issues of ideology and systems of oppression (Barragán-Romero, 2021). The main objective is to analyze the power structures present in the TV series and their link with the new feminist wave. To do this, we have used secondary bibliography and performed a discourse analysis of the four seasons broadcast to date. Some of the initial results show the impact of *The Handmaid's Tale* in today's society; for example, it deals with current issues such as surrogacy, and the maids' robes can be seen in many feminist protests. The success of the series reminds today's society of the fragility of democratic ideas in the 21st century.

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How to Get Away with Rape: Privilege and Consent on *Anatomy of a Scandal*

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Abstract

The Netflix miniseries *Anatomy of a Scandal* (2022), a small-screen adaptation of the novel of the same name (2018), tells the story of charming, successful, and powerful Tory MP James Whitehouse, who is accused of rape by an aide with whom he had an affair, Olivia Lytton. As a result, James has to stand trial, a process in which the parties involved and their barristers present the jury with different interpretations of what sexual violence, consent and privilege mean in an attempt to win the case. To date, there do not seem to be any papers that deal with this show, and only one that focuses on the novel has been found (Evans, 2021).

Building upon the concepts of *sexual consent* (Darden et al., 2019), *sexual compliance* (Impett & Peplau, 2003) and *social privilege* (Black & Stone, 2005), relevant interventions by the main characters of the series, specifically those uttered in courtroom scenes, are examined with the aim of determining what message these different interpretations seem to convey, particularly in connection with issues such as sexual violence, consent, entitlement, privilege, or victim-blaming. For this purpose, a descriptive, qualitative, and comparative analysis has been carried out to study the discourse and meaning of relevant excerpts from the series in relation with the aforementioned concepts.

Regarding the key findings of this research, it has been found that: (1) the defence oversimplifies and distorts the notion of *sexual consent*, giving an idea of it that appears to align with *sexual compliance* instead, and resorts to victim-blaming (2) the defendant interprets this alleged compliance as consent, apparently as a result of his privileges and entitlement, which therefore seem to make him unaware of inflicting sexual violence, (3) the prosecution offers a more accurate view of *sexual consent* and relies on the idea of *privilege* as one of her main strategies, and (4) the complainant's account shows numerous indications that that particular sexual encounter was not consensual or compliant even.

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Watchmen: History, Fiction, and Contemporaneity

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Abstract

The television miniseries *Watchmen* (HBO, 2019) is a particularly complex narrative product. The miniseries is inspired by the graphic novel of the same title by Alan Moore and David Gibbons and was created by writer, producer, and cartoonist David Lindelof - known as co-writer and lead writer of the tv series *Lost*. It looks like a sequel to the Moore and Gibbons comics (more than thirty years have passed since the events described there), but it is at the same time, as for the comics, a uchronia. The events narrated take place in an alternative 2019 in which the president of the United States, the former Hollywood star Robert Redford, by granting compensation to African Americans and other ethnic groups victims of racial discrimination, triggers the reaction of various nationalist groups and white supremacists. The interesting thing is that the focus of the narrative of the miniseries is based on a historical event, which really happened even if for a long time hidden, called The Tulsa Massacre. Between May 31 and June 1, 1921, the African American community of Tulsa living in the Greenwood neighborhood was attacked by groups of white people to avenge the alleged assault by a black boy on a white woman. Official sources spoke at the time of 36 victims, all African Americans, but the victims were probably several hundred. The miniseries starts from a historical reconstruction of those events, and everything that happens to the protagonists is linked and traceable to them. This television product, apparently attributable to the science fiction and comics genre of superheroes, actually proposes a reflection that tries to connect the past, a real historical event, to the present, to the racial problems that cross the United States (Black Lives Matter). This is yet another case in which a fictional story, and specifically a TV series, tries to connect history and contemporaneity, bringing controversial and complex issues to the attention of the public of a commercial television product.

The Multi-Diverse Character of *Why Women Kill*: A Semiotic Approach

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Abstract

The new media landscape of streaming services undoubtedly offers a wider catalogue of TV series in terms of genre, narrative structure and characters. We, in a way, live in the time where meeting all sorts of identities on screen is easier than ever. But there is still room for improvement.

One of the multi-diverse contents on streaming services is the series *Why Women Kill* (Paramount+, 2019-). In this presentation, I will focus mainly on season one, where the narrative follows three different women in three different historical periods, all connected by living in the same house where a tragedy happens. Although the narrative structure itself is very interesting, the representation of various identities is worth the attention even more.

In this series we meet three different main female heroines, all equally important for the story, whose identities present a wide range of interconnected sexual and racial identities. The show reflects different time periods and a place of women in those and focuses on their rights and self-determination in relationships of all kinds.

Through a semiotic approach, I want to present the levels of building such character, showing all the bits and pieces that help to fight the inequalities of the world they (and we) live in.

Social Responsibility or Woke-Washing? Strategies of Inclusiveness in Italian TV Series

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the industrial strategies of social inclusiveness and intersectional representation of women in Italian TV series after the arrival of Netflix. In so doing, we try to answer one main question: can we see a real political, social, and cultural relevance of Italian serial production or is it just "woke-washing"?

To do so, first, we start with the arrival of Netflix in Italy (2015), the launch of its original Italian production (2017), and the manifold ways it impacted the Italian television industry. Netflix has not only pushed Italian players to update production and distribution cultures, but also to work on their storytelling, especially in the way underrepresented social categories are depicted within fiction. In fact, the US platform brought with it promotional rhetoric based on progressive values, targeting a new coveted demo made of young, educated, mostly progressive professionals – apparently, what looked like the opposite of the Italian broadcast television average audience.

Second, from a production studies perspective, we move to the competitive responses of Italian broadcasters. In particular, we focus on the case of Italian Public Broadcasting Service Rai and we single out its most relevant strategies of inclusiveness, the ones that seem to depart from Rai's "traditional" narratives. For instance, we deal with high-value original productions (e.g. the HBO co-production *My Brilliant Friend*), intersectional female protagonists (e.g. the blind female detective *Blanca*), gender swap (the all-female cast of the legal drama *Studio Battaglia*), youth-targeted web series on its digital streaming service RaiPlay.

Third, we take into account the contradictions that have emerged between the sociopolitical positions advocated in communications rhetoric and the actual actions of broadcasters. Queerbaiting, blackbaiting, greenwashing, rainbowwashing, wokewashing are just a few of the terms used to accuse those players that exploit issues of public discussion or show sudden activism toward them, of doing so in a self-interested manner, just to make a financial gain or disguise controversial corporate policies. We consider that, on the one hand, these are industrial strategies designed to respond to valuable demos that value certain sociopolitical positions. On the other, these kinds of representations have non-industrial, and social implications as well. So, what is the monetary and symbolic value of this turn towards inclusivity?

Crossings and Assemblages of Matter and the Visual in the TV Series *Hierro*

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Abstract

El Hierro is the youngest and most south-westerly Spanish landmass forming part of the Canary Islands archipelago. It is uniquely positioned in the Atlantic Ocean, sitting just off the shores of Africa, no other landmass stands between the isle and the American continents. Released in June 2019 and jointly produced by Movistar + ARTE France, Portocabo, and Atlantique Productions, the first season of the series *Hierro* is a Franco-Spanish co-production that takes the form of an eight-episode police thriller, shot on the island of El Hierro. In this paper, we hypothesize that the focus placed by brothers Pepe Coira (creator, scriptwriter) and Jorge Coira (director) on the island's distinctiveness reflects the trans-corporeal nature of matter through the island's representation as an agent with the capacity to affect and alter the course of events. Trans-corporeality, according to Stacy Alaimo (2010), evinces the relational capacity of matter and highlights the networks of interconnections, crossings, and assemblages that exist among all entities in the material world, be they animate or inanimate. In addition, by addressing island living in its relationship with the continent we further demonstrate that these trans-corporeal manifestations reveal a cultural ethos which is dependent not only on the island's human and nonhuman materiality but also on non-material global networks that contribute to the shaping of an herreño self-awareness. As a television product, the series *Hierro* displays the porous quality of matter through both its visual narrative and its plot structure, finding its iconic expression in the opening credits. Here body parts of the characters are fused to or confused with other material elements, including a bush, a tree branch, or the island's contour, while close-up shots unravel the delicacy and intricate texture of other material elements, such as a

stone or a piece of wood. As the opening sequence concludes, the contorted and enduring image of the Sabina is brought into focus as a visual statement about the island and its islanders. All in all, through diegetic and extradiegetic techniques of the visual medium that decentre the human and by portraying landscape and nonhuman agency convergently, *Hierro* asserts the trans-corporeal nature of matter, and in so doing, calls for a conceptualization of insularity as an entanglement of material and nonmaterial intra-active relations that defy the notion of an island as a separate piece of land.

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Domestic Work as a Driver of Gendered Inequalities: *MAID* (U.S.A., Netflix 2021)

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Abstract

In the U.S. series *MAID* (2021, C: Molly Smith Metzler for Netflix), issues of gender and social inequalities seem to obviously be intertwined. Based on the autofictional book of the same name by Stephanie Land, the series tells the story of a young mother, Alex, who flees an abusive

relationship and tries to build an independent life for herself and her daughter. Strikingly, *MAID* does not merely represent patriarchal violence and poverty (as subsistential lack), but it unfolds this narrative (epinomously) around the question of labor – in this case: poorly paid domestic work. Still, what constitutes work or labor is not simply self-evident. Their (individual and collective) understanding, as well as their attributed roles in structuring society are constantly culturally negotiated. A Marxian class analysis, for example, competes with other narratives of classification and subjectivity – which in turn reveals a fundamentally political dimension of those negotiation processes. Popular cultural representations of labor thus have a double character, since they express a cultural valuation of labor, while discursively contributing at the same to this valuation and labor's social horizons of meaning. Thus, when *MAID* tells its story of patriarchy, poverty, and work to an international Netflix audience, it is not – as is often noted in the reception of the series – simply a matter of generating attention for a specific section of contemporary U.S. society. At the same time, a whole series of normatively framed questions about the (gendered) division of labor, the nature, value, and stratificatory effects of work are at stake. What the series thereby demonstrates is the entanglement of patriarchal and capitalist relations of domination and, in particular, the productivities that (a social division of) reproductive labor unfolds for these relations. However, to the extent that *MAID* does not succeed in developing a labor-related concept of class, the series discursively closes itself around a regressive politics, whose affinities to its culture-industrial production background and to its specific aesthetics need to be discussed.

Fictional DTVSs as Data for Undergraduate Studies of Socio-Pragmatic and Linguistic Stereotyping

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Abstract

Fictional dialogue in novels, plays and films has long since provided data for analysis by those working in pragmatics and variationist sociolinguistics (see, for example, Sifianou 1999). Fictional DTVS offer an even richer source and allow for analysis of longitudinal character development and styling in terms of a range of socio-pragmatic features. In this paper, we report on the use of DTVS as data for undergraduate students' studies of representations of social and ethnic groups. We describe the approach used to train students to apply key theoretical frameworks and methodologies drawn from pragmatics and sociolinguistics in their examination of the stereotypical representation of groups frequently stigmatised in contemporary societies. African American women, for example, have been characterized in literature, TV series and film through persistent racial and gender stereotypes such as "the Matriarch", "the Jezebel" and "the Sapphire". We present an example of the outcome of the undergraduate student training, an analysis of the extent to which the stereotype of the "Sapphire" or "angry black woman" is constructed in the American DTTVs *How to Get Away with Murder*. Using Culpeper's (1996) account of impoliteness strategies, we focus on the character Annalise Keating (Viola Davis) and her interactions with the other main characters. Thirteen scenes were selected as data to determine which of the main characters is responsible for initiating impoliteness, the type of

initial impoliteness, alongside the responses to it if any. The analysis allowed for a reassessment of the potential perception of the character as an "angry black woman".

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What Makes a Captain: Quantitative Analysis of Discourses of Power across *Star Trek* Series

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Abstract

Star Trek is one of the longest-running science-fiction franchises. Broadcast for more than half a century and counting, it saw a number of captains – main characters, coming from various backgrounds and representing sometimes very different approaches to the world, in part reflecting real-life politics of its time. This study seeks to find common features distinguishable in the discourse of *Star Trek* captains as compared with that of other characters, and thus determine what (if anything) makes a captain.

While *Star Trek* as a series, and its captains in particular, continuously attract vivid attention in discussions led by both fans and researchers, so far no study attempted to examine them all at the same time. This is indeed a challenging task, as all series, excluding films, consist of over 850 episodes, which makes conducting an informed analysis comparing the series difficult even due to the pragmatic reason of time spent watching them. However, modern computational methods of quantitative analysis facilitate the study of large datasets, be it visual or textual, for example by the means of stylometry, a methodology aimed at the study of style, based on comparing data in a corpus to find patterns, similarities and differences between its particular elements. Stylometry has been applied to the study of television series dialogue lines with good effects and proved particularly useful in the analysis of character idiolects (cf. Van Zyl and Botha 2016, Hołobut and Rybicki 2018, Hołobut and Woźniak 2018, and Byszuk 2020).

In the proposed paper, I use a corpus of transcriptions of all non-animated episodes released up to date, from *Star Trek: The Original Series* to *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* from which I excerpt lines of main characters, in particular James T. Kirk, Jean-Luc Picard, Benjamin Sisko, Kathryn Janeway, John Archer, Gabriel Lorca and Christopher Pike, as well as other important members of senior staff for comparison. I use stylometry and methods of corpus linguistics to examine concordances that are a) shared by all characters, b) specific to particular persons, using discourse analysis approach. In doing so, I have twofold goals: 1) to compare the idiolects of particular characters to discover if the strongest similarities in idiolect are related to the function served on the ship, gender or simply particular series they appeared in, 2) to examine linguistic traces of power execution between the characters in a leadership position.

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Coping Strategies Used by Male Young Adults in Contemporary TV Series

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Abstract

In the last decade we can observe the rise in popularity of teen-addressed television series that address mental problems and youth struggles in a more psychologically conscious manner. Series such as *13 Reasons Why* or *Sex Education* have openly and metaphorically addressed numerous problems such as depression, self-harm and suicide, sexual abuse, coming to terms with own sexuality and being bullied for it.

While the feminist discourse on body positivity and the issue of sex education is gaining a lot of attention in gender analyzes of contemporary series, the strategies adopted by young men in their struggle with established patriarchal patterns still require a closer look. When requirements of a "real man" identity turn out to be impossible to meet, young adults invent their own ways of coping, often realizing that what was considered to be a failure, might bring solace to their struggle – and discovering the benefits of emotional work, friendship, art, self-expression and values traditionally deemed to be only acceptable for girls and women. In the proposed paper we examine the strategies undertaken by young men in television series to cope with their problems and mental struggles. To this end, we apply methods of corpus linguistics and stylometry and rely on the existing research regarding the discourse of mental illness and struggling to determine keywords allowing for the detection of passages of interest to our study.

While the topic of representation of mental illness has been undertaken by film and television scholars, also in the case of *13 Reasons Why* (Carter 2020), such studies focused on the general portrayal of mental illness without focusing on specific groups affected or what are the solutions adopted with them to improve their well-being. Given that young men are a group that is consistently described as not reaching out for proper help and largely relying on the Internet and culture-provided knowledge, we consider it particularly important to analyze the information and examples they are getting therein.

The purpose of our paper is therefore twofold: first, we test the usefulness of corpus linguistics methods to detect passages relating to the discussion of problems when combined with previous studies on mental health problems and general struggle detection, second, we attempt a classification of coping strategies employed by the characters in the analyzed series - namely *13 Reasons Why* and *Sex Education* - according to psychological guidelines. By working towards these goals we strive to verify the possibility of developing a model for unsupervised detection of coping strategies in other shows, considering this a prototypical study for a large-scale analysis of teen series.

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Greenwashing, MeToo-washing, Pink-washing, BLM-washing: Political Correctness, Sensitivity and Rewriting Stories

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Abstract

Society changes, that is a known fact, although not always at the speed one would like or wish. Values, social standings, the way people react to changes all around influence people's behavior. These changes are often represented in culture being movies and TV fiction one of the most dynamic sectors on this field.

With this paper I aim to share some reflections on how those changes in values and mentalities are included in blockbuster movies such as *Star Trek*, in TV-Series like *This Is Us* or *The Bridgertons*. In these three instances we can see clearly how subtly and boldly stories are reinterpreted. This involves, very often, rewriting history to a certain degree to include elements such as sexual, racial, or even bodily diversity that did not exist at the time in which the story happened (a mixed-raced queen of England at Restoration time) rewritten so that the new reels include. This paper describes and interprets such anachronisms from my own perspective as both a viewer/fan/consumer and a linguist, in order to explain how the language of fiction could have a swift influence in most needed changes in mindset and attitudes.

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Gazing the Desires of Images: Subversions and Revisions through the Visual and Cultural References of *Euphoria*

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Abstract

The second season of *Euphoria* intensifies the photography, artsy, and cinematic display, among other things, by creating a "collection of images" (Dafoe, 2022) through its references and intertexts. Those references and intertexts reveal both the visual models of the project and the analogies with gender roles and stereotypes, sexual diversity, and trans representation for which the series is known (Kaufman et al., 2021; Masanet et al., 2022). Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (Season 1, Episode 6), scenes from *Titanic*, and the self-portraits of Frida Kahlo (Season 2, Episode 4), refer to the cultural inheritance of romantic love topics and gender stereotypes, clarifying the series' discourses on them. For instance, the figuration as a virgin/martyr of Cassie (Season 2, Episode 4) leads the viewer to perceive the character as a candid woman because of the dreads of her gender construction.

Therefore, we aim to present such references and intertexts to understand how they construct the discourse on gender roles, stereotypes, and sexuality of the series. To do so, the notion of "anachronism" (Didi-Huberman, 2000) that defies the image as a product of a cultural-static context, and Visual Studies theories that approach "images" as material, political and ideological communication agents (Mitchell, 2005; Mirzoeff, 1999), will help us see how these displays and well-known mass culture images reveal such issues. At the same time, we will review how the visual discourse of the series subverts and revises the cultural content and the semantics of the references, unblocking new visual politics and contexts for the reference-image as well.

Thus, we will suggest that series do not only configure "complex texts" (Mittell, 2015) that can be "discovered" through textual analysis or semiotic, but also "complex images" that visually reveal cultural, imaginary, and political issues. Applying and reviewing Art History and Visual Studies methods, we will not read the series but look at its images. Since images, in contemporary visual culture and societies, turned from the condition of a subaltern object to an active subject, images displays, forms, and movements become a part of social questioning, and they have the power to redirect discourses if we invite them to speak as a subject that has its own desires (Mitchell, 2005). To listen and to look at the image is to gaze their desire to show and reorder social and political discourses.

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Townsend's Comedy-Drama Adapted for a TV Series

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the women's representation under the scope of the historical moment of the 80s in the UK. Sue Townsend's masterpiece adapted for the TV series of its same title *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13 ¾* gathers the scenario of different women belonging to various generations in diverse social roles. Her main character, Adrian Mole –played by Giam Sammarco, acts as interlocutor of the number of events that connects the teenager's life - discovering himself, in connection with these women. Townsend merges satire and irony with humour to picture an emotionally unstable mother, a disciplined conservative grandmother and a youngster as a leader-to-be. This comedy-drama TV series in 6 episodes elegantly directed and produced by Peter Sasdy for Thames TV Production in 1985 explores the protagonist's role analysing the social dimension of a Post-Victorian image of UK in decay and women's role in a society in process of changes. Its contribution may offer a major comprehensive vision on "Transition" experiencing crisis. The conclusion will contribute to identify a universal depiction of the Gender and Social Inequality in fictional DTVS narratives.

Attitudinal Positioning in Sexist Humour: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

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Abstract

Buffy the Vampire Slayer is a TV show launched from 1997 to 2003. The series presents the prototypical first victim in every US film: a pretty, blond and young female. Josh Whedon, the

creator, wanted to turn over the stereotyped situation to convert the victim into the threaten. Buffy is a referent for future feminine superheroes – as previous research studies show – which has been spread all around the globe. In Spain, baseline country, the series resulted in a success, to a large extent, due to the characteristically humorous approach with which the dialogues were written. In this quantitative and qualitative study, an attitudinal analysis of the Spanish dubbed version of the humorous sexist clauses is conducted to immerse in the thoughts, feelings and, finally, ideology of the characters of the series. A corpus with the sexist humorous interventions was compiled – following the model presented by Val.Es.Co. (n.d.) – along with the nonverbal communication elements – paralinguistics, kinesics, proxemics and prosodics – when they directly modify the oral exchange. UAM Corpus Tool is the Microsoft application selected to record the clauses and to accomplish the quantitative part of the analysis. On the other hand, the Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), from Systemic Functional Linguistics, guides the analysis of the interventions presented by the characters when they carry a humorous sexist component. The focus is put in the attitudinal positioning – with its subclassifications: affect, judgement, and appreciation; as well as its corresponding gradation (amplification) – due to the interest in examining the personal component of the speech; that is, the inner thoughts of the parties involved in the exchange. The observation of the methods employed in the translation and the restrictions imposed by the visual framework complete the study. The foreseen results suggest that the amount and gradation of humorous words and expressions enunciated by men and women, especially implicit ones, would balance as the series proceeds over time. A hybridization of the roles carried out by the characters as time passes – from one decade to another – is contemplated, what leads to a more equalitarian conception of each other. The translation into Spanish of the terms examined is expected to show a downgrade from the original version – English –, what may indicate a willingness to fulfil the expectation of the target audience without offending them.

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**"A house is much more than a home. It's family":
The Linguistic Construction of Black LGBTQ Identities in *Pose***

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Abstract

Questioning the old stereotypes about African Americans, according to which a character had to be poor, illiterate or a criminal in order to be perceived as a faithful copy of the originals, the American TV series *Pose* discards such premises, as not only do the episodes get rid of repeated patterns, but it abandons the expected white-and-black conflict to present an African-American community enriched by a variety of different identities. *Pose* is a show about possibility, given to a brilliant group of LGBTQ outcasts, who realize their first dreams of emancipation and social acceptance in the ballroom culture of '80s/'90s New York City, encouraging a breakdown in racial assumptions.

This contribution revolves around the concept of family, and its multifaceted nuances depicted with the two seasons of the TV series. As the portrayal of families rejects the conservative and comforting framework with which viewers are familiar, the characters' linguistic choices also lean towards a universe perhaps unknown to the audience. In this sense, the present study aims at relating the unconventional representation of families with the (micro/macro)cultural references (Pedersen 2014) within the series, to understand how audiovisual discourse contributes to representing the African-American LGBTQ community and how linguistic traits, morpho-syntactic as well as pragma-semantic features, can gain new connotative meanings both in the fictional world of the TV series and in the contemporary society. Thus, even the most conventional labels, such as mother, sister and brother, strip of their usual meanings and are replaced by a highly diverse array of living and relationship arrangements.

Data will be analysed from both a quantitative and a qualitative approach: lines will be first categorized according to their grammatical characteristics; then, taking into consideration their cultural embedment, examples will be grouped into different thematic areas. To conclude, a thorough reflection on the (many) ways in which the language contributes at empowering the black characters and at portraying their experiences as human beings will be made.

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I See a Damaged Planet: Biosemiotics and Reconstituting the Human through Shakespeare in *Station Eleven*

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Abstract

Station Eleven, HBO's 2021 adaptation of Emily St. John Mandel's 2014 novel by the same name, is a timely reflection on reconstitution of a world destroyed by a global pandemic. Once again, as in *1984* and *Brave New World* before it, Mandel's novel—and HBO's production—holds up Shakespeare as the genetic thread of human culture that survives and provides the building blocks for a—hopefully—better future. The show begins with the death of Gael García Bernal's Arthur Leander, who is onstage playing Lear when he collapses, an early victim of the outbreak. Decades into the future we follow a troop of itinerant actors as they circle Lake Michigan in the vicinity of a vanquished Chicago performing renditions of Shakespeare. This paper is concerned with how and why Shakespeare and his works have so reliably been proxies for human culture, and how, through a biosemiotic lens, literature performs a fundamental role in the human *umwelt*. I will bring works by Jesper Hoffmeyer, Gregory Bateson, Wendy Wheeler, and Jakob Von Uexküll into conversation with the successful HBO production, but also with the virus that made it so timely, as I consider virality, fiction, and the embodied nature of narrative, ultimately aiming to see the works of Shakespeare and the viral mass that so recently traversed the human holobiont, as related in more than metaphorical ways.

Co-Construction of Gender Roles through Character Interaction in the Most-Watched TV Series: The Case of Daenerys and Tokio

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Abstract

This paper explores the discourse in interaction of two fictional characters from two of the most popular TV series ever watched in Spain and abroad: *Game of Thrones* and *La Casa de Papel* (*Money Heist*). Their stories are placed in two distant historical periods and places (a fictional medieval country versus contemporary Spain) and with two diverse plots (a civil war to gain the throne and a carefully planned multimillionaire robbery). They have become popular for different reasons, but one of them is probably they both have powerful characters, among them, powerful and charismatic women leaders. This is the case of Daenerys, in *Game of Thrones*, and Tokyo, in *La Casa de Papel*.

From a gender studies approach (Rossi, 2019), gender is not a binary, rigid dichotomy that responds to heteronormative and heteropatriarchal ideologies, but a social construction of the biological sexes "in terms of different attitudes, behaviour, expectations, values, norms, identities, and relationships" (p. 59), into which individuals are socialized from birth. The construction and socialization of gender are manifested in communications, interactions, discourses and narratives (ibid.). Generic meanings can thus be negotiated, adapted or

deconstructed (see, e.g., García Gómez, 2014). Despite the fact that Daenerys and Tokio do not seem to fit in traditionally patriarchal roles, to what extent is that so? Thus, the research questions that guide our study are the following:

1. What social roles do the protagonists play? Are they represented through traditional patriarchal roles or are they feminist figures?
2. What role do male characters play to legitimize our female protagonists as leaders? What about their woman friends?

In order to explore their status, interactions of these female leaders with different actants in the series will be explored. Firstly, conversations between Daenerys and Tokio with male characters that represent diverse power relations are analyzed: their superiors in the hierarchy (either kinship or professionally), their lovers, their rivals, and their allies; these discursive relations will be contrasted with those established between the female protagonists and their best female friends. The methodology used for analysis lies within the framework of social-constructivism and feeds from an interactional sociolinguistic analysis (Stubbe et al., 2003; Darics, 2010), politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987), and Systemic Functional Linguistics (particularly, the models of Transitivity and Appraisal). Preliminary results show that both women protagonists suffer from sexism and, even, abuse, as other studies corroborate (Bonavitta and De Garay Hernández, 2019; De Benito Mesa, 2021).

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**From *Hart to Hart* to *Vampire Diaries* and *Blindspot*:
(Gender) Identities in American TV Series**

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Abstract

The proposed paper draws on emerging results from a PhD project which focusses on gender- and genre- specific introduction strategies of main characters in American TV series. As salient and important participants in the narrative world (cf. Smith 2012, Tseng 2013), (main) characters are "identifiable fictional beings with an inner life that exist as communicatively constructed artifacts" (Eder 2010:18). Their identity is complex, multi-faceted and multimodally constructed. For the project, the identity construction of the female and male main characters of the TV series encompassed in the corpus (200 crime and supernatural American TV series) was analyzed in terms of interactions and several relevant identity aspects, such as gender, sexual orientation, outer appearance, mental state(s), professional/job-related aspects, (dis)abilities and social role(s). Particularly, the PhD project is interested in possible changes in the identity construction of female and male main characters during and after their initial meeting, most dominant identity aspects of female and male main character respectively as well as a diachronic comparison of (gender) identity construction, for instance, regarding interactivity and general interaction strategies. The general approach is a multimodal cohesive analysis, drawing, for example, on Tseng 2013. The analysis was conducted with ELAN.

The focus of this paper is gender in TV series – both in terms of general gender differences in the introduction of main characters and the construction of gender as one relevant identity aspect in film: the paper will, for instance, present both data which suggests that gender-specific differences are present on both technical and narrative level and that these gender roles in American TV series have changed less than expected over the course of the past 40 years.

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**"When things fall apart, we find out who we really are":
Human-Animal Hybridity in Netflix's *Sweet Tooth* (2021–)**

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Abstract

Post-apocalyptic scenarios have been on the rise within popular culture, resonating with readers and viewers as they perceive fragments of their realities reflected on these stories. The themes

of these narratives sometimes discuss the human condition and its need to adapt to new realities while others reflect upon the environment and the destruction it faces because of climate change. A television series that has merged these ideas and introduced viewers to an atypical post-apocalyptic world is Netflix's *Sweet Tooth* (2021 –). Originally a graphic novel written by Jeff Lemire, the dark and intriguing volumes have been adapted by Netflix into a more optimistic television series whilst maintaining its original thought-provoking style. Faithful to the original source, the screen adaptation follows the story of Gus, a young boy who is half human half deer, and his journey for survival in a dystopian future where human population is in severe danger and hybrids like himself are hunted. Through flashbacks viewers learn that a disease known as the Sick becomes a worldwide pandemic which causes the death of most humans, and it seemingly appears to be connected to the birth of hybrid babies that have both human and nonhuman animal characteristics. This paper seeks to analyse the way in which hybrids are depicted throughout the series and their nonhuman otherness. Notwithstanding the fact that it has an overall hopeful undertone, the persecution of the young hybrids becomes central in the narrative and viewers are witnesses to barbaric scenes in which they are not only hunted but also used for experimentation, resembling the facelessness of animals in real life. Gus, interpreted by newcomer Christian Convery, has physical attributes resembling a deer yet he is able to hide his animal appearance and speak just like humans, factors that make him extremely unique whilst helping him survive. The same cannot be said of other hybrids that are presented in the series, especially those who appear to be closer to nonhuman animals and are not part of what is described as the charismatic megafauna, despite being sentient beings. Thus, it is possible to observe how these hybrids, despite having human characteristics, suffer from speciesism. Furthermore, the series exhibits how Gus perceives the world as a human-deer hybrid, being attentive to characteristics such as their heightened sense of hearing and smell, and how humans cause them pain, consequently showing the process of becoming-animal and a reconnection with nature.

Sons of Anarchy: Non-Canonical Shakespearean Fiction as Cultural Activism

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Abstract

Shakespeare and television have a fruitful relationship since the popularization of this medium in the 1960's, but the arrival of the new millennium has brought about the digitalization and globalization of mass media, thus transforming deeply the way of creating and consuming television, especially with the appearance of digital platforms and their view on multiple screen appliances.

Among the plethora of Shakespeare's adaptations and appropriations of the last decades, it seems necessary to undertake a deep analysis about some successful contemporary works from popular culture which have had a strong impact on society through the use of Shakespearean references with self-affirmation and ideological purposes. The present work will analyze this

phenomenon to prove the radical effect of non-canonical Shakespearean fiction to update Shakespeare's work while helping to shape identity and ideology.

Nowadays, through television, popular fiction is appropriating Shakespeare from more diverse and radically progressive positions, thus resituating his works in alternative contexts with popular entertainment products such as the TV series *Sons of Anarchy*, where the Shakespearean elements are peripheral although vital to their complete understanding. The present article will analyze *Sons of Anarchy* as a case study, to research about it as a TV non-canonical Shakespearean version of Hamlet, which contributes to redefine the concept of the playwright himself and the interpretation of his play with political aims. Thus, in the context of pre-Trump America, this series is settled in a Californian outlaw motorcycles club, connecting the playwright to unprecedented areas and culturally diverse social spaces, while giving voice to the marginalized.

Taking Culture Studies as the field of reference to develop this study, the theoretical framework is based on cultural materialism and intertextuality, as these theories seem an appropriate way to develop the features of this work, without excluding TV series as valid and valuable objects of study. The concept of cultural capital and the theories of appropriation related to popular culture, are also vital to study how Shakespeare's plays are being appropriated with more radical political aims, and positioned in unexpected contexts. Therefore, through entertainment, *Sons of Anarchy* recycle the Shakespearean legacy from a critical point of view, while using it as a political weapon for cultural activism, reflecting controversial aspects of reality and helping to make people aware of social inequalities.

Parental Androids: An Analysis of Non-Normative Care Discourse in Contemporary Televised Science Fiction

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Abstract

About forty years ago, feminist scholars formulated several independent definitions of an ethics of care (Gilligan 1982; Ruddick 1989; Noddings 1984), suggesting the need to reframe human collective and personal interactions. In general terms, they all purported a need to shift away from human relationships based on patriarchal values such as conflict, competition, and dominion towards a feminine/feminist society founded on giving and receiving care. As Gary records (2022, 3-4), the field soon split into several strains of care theory, with some scholars expanding the original ethico-political strand into a welfare-resourcing strand that moved the attention from the interpersonal to the societal level (Tronto 1987; Fraser 2014). Such a theoretical fragmentation has led to disparate criticism from several angles. Most notably, recent takes on care theory have highlighted one of its foundational biases, i.e., its failure, for the most part, to consider the lived experiences and the needs of marginalised subjects (Gary 2022). From this starting point, we would like to observe care theory from a linguistic perspective applied to three audio-visual texts featuring examples of non-normative care.

Science-fictional texts have the potential to bring care theory beyond not only the heteronormative, but also the human realm, as non-human, artificially created life forms act as caretakers to children, either human or android. Three different sci-fi series from three different decades – *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987 – 1994); *Battlestar Galactica* (2004 – 2009); *Raised by Wolves* (2020 – 2022) will be taken into consideration, with a focus on episodes where care behaviours on the androids' part are present and discussed. The linguistic analysis, carried out through close reading of the dialogues, will focus mostly on the lexical choices taken by both androids and humans to refer to the parties involved, their relational ties, care behaviours, and the androids' adequacy – or lack thereof – as a caretaker. The discourse shows contrasting perspectives on the suitability of an artificial life form to provide ethical care to another life form, which may be mapped onto current discourse on minority groups (e.g., singles, homoromantic couples) and access to fostering or adoption, or reproductive medicine (e.g., in vitro fertilization).

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The Postfeminist Fantasy in *30 Rock*

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Abstract

Despite their popularity and social relevance, sitcoms tend to be neglected by academia, especially, from a feminist and gender studies perspective. In this presentation, I will analyze the female protagonist of the popular American sitcom *30 Rock* (NBC, 2006-2013). More specifically, I will focus on the representation of the protagonist's romantic relationships and professional career, and the correlation between both spheres. I will use a methodology that combines television genre theory, and feminist and gender theory to dissect this sitcom's conventions in connection with a context framed by post-feminism and third wave feminism. The goal of this research is to explore how this female character is represented in her particular sociocultural context and if it is possible for her to achieve the post-feminist fantasy of "having it all". That is, to have a successful career and a fulfilling personal life, without having to give up

anything. Preliminary conclusions suggest that female characters in sitcoms cannot achieve the complete post-feminist fantasy since they always must sacrifice some aspects of their life one way or another, usually, in the romantic-sphere. They often can get close to this ideal but only as long as they are comfortably off and have a good support system, that includes the help of their friends, family, and most importantly, their partner.

Gender and Narrative Complexity in the Half-Hour Television Drama

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Abstract

Shortly after the arrival of Covid-19 in the spring of 2020, *The Atlantic's* Sophie Gilbert, in an article titled "25 Half-Hour Shows to Watch Now," provided well-timed guidance for "viewers whose attention spans are frazzled, whose emotional bandwidth ran out during the eighth Zoom call of the day, and whose current side hustles as math teachers, peacekeepers, and Bob Ross might leave them with little left at the end of the day." This speaks to the simple appeal of shorter episodes to busy viewers seeking escapism from the many demands of life in a neoliberal capitalist age that have only been exacerbated by this global pandemic, and it underlines the many roles people—especially women—are required to fulfil. Recent digital fictional programmes such as *Forever* (Amazon Prime, 2018), *Maniac* (Netflix, 2018), *Russian Doll* (Netflix, 2019–), and *Undone* (Amazon Prime, 2019–) arguably provide escapism and engaging, complex narratives that work through timely issues such as trauma, mental health, and death, while their half-hour format allows viewers to not become too emotionally drained or time-drained. These series also all revolve around complex female characters, and they display complex serial poetics, thus demanding "intensified viewer engagement focused on both diegetic pleasures and formal awareness" (Mittell, 2015: 53). This paper will focus specifically on the female subjectivities articulated in current half-hour television dramas as they raise questions about the contradictions of navigating through a neoliberal, commodified society. To explain how current female-led programmes on television or streaming platforms may invite viewers to engage with narrative complexity while packaging stories within more "easily" consumable half-hour instalments and seasons usually spanning no more than eight to ten episodes each in order to cater to viewers' already frazzled attention spans, we will draw on scholarship on complex television (Mittell, 2015), as well as ongoing discussions on femininity, genre, and quality (Geraghty, 2003; Lotz, 2006, 2014 and 2018; Williams, 2014; Gorton, 2019). This paper will reflect upon the possibilities of the contemporary half-hour drama to articulate contemporary female subjectivities and to open entryways for viewers to engage with the emotional world of characters within tightly packed half-hour episodes.

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***Mad Men* (2007-2015) and the Road to Ideologized Capitalist Transcendence**

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Abstract

The investigation examines *Mad Men* (2007-15)'s construction of the capitalist order. Some academic literature on *Mad Men* celebrates the series (Edgerton, 2011, in a volume with the unsubtle subtitle *Dream Come True TV*) and regards it as laden with subversion (Stoddart, 2011b). By contrast, I posit *Mad Men* as far from radical: the series frequently questions capitalism and its attendant inequalities of class division, before finally affirming market relations. Indeed, *Mad Men* was itself plugged into markets through its many tie-in promotions (Stoddart 2011a). The investigation is grounded in examination of all 92 episodes, with particular focus on contrasts between Season 1 and Season 7 (set in 1960 and 1970, respectively). I analyze the ideology of capitalism that the series conveys by unpacking contrasts and developing critical interpretation of the limits of *Mad Men*'s cross-examination of capitalism.

Capitalist societies require narratives that posit class division as compatible with meritocracy to mobilize ideological support. *Mad Men* delivers such support, albeit equivocally. Don Draper and Peggy Olson present subjects who achieved class promotion from marginalized origins—in Peggy's case, despite the subaltern status of women in the mid-twentieth century (White, 2011). Nevertheless, other *Mad Men* (e.g., Roger Sterling, Jr.) get ahead based on pre-standing privilege (Bellioti, 2010).

Don's work also betrays a divided view of market relations. In Season 6: Episode 13 ("In Care of"), Don melts down during a pitch and reveals his primordial experiences of capitalism as deep poverty, theft and proximity to prostitution. However, in the final episode (*Mad Men*, 7:14), Don delivers affirmation of the market as not simply good but transcendental (Nordin, 2009) toward human beings' ecumenical hopes for communion; that is, Don visions Coke's "hilltop" ad.

While *Mad Men* questions the market system, it is solidly neoliberal capitalist in its scorn for State activity (von Hayek, 1973/2013) that may soften capitalism's hard edges such as class striation. For example, the face of government in the series is Henry Francis, an "empty suit" careerist seeking an alpha male political patron. The series' closing montage is also revealing as the core characters achieve wealth, fulfillment, and connection. The conspicuous exception is Betty Draper Francis who is subject to a harsh judgement (dying of cancer)—and who never engaged with the market by holding a job. In the privileged moment of narrative resolution, *Mad Men* rallies to capitalism as the at once flawed but optimal framework for human aspiration.

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The Aesthetic of Fanfic and Queer Renegotiations on Historical TV: The Case of *Our Flag Means Death* and *Dickinson*

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Abstract

History has long been a profitable business in TV (Rollins & Edgerton, 2015). It's no surprise fictional digital TV incurs in long established historical formats, while at the same time bringing innovation and genre mixing to the table. In terms of popular acclaim, *Bridgerton* (Netflix, 2020-) speaks of this trend. In that sense, this research delves into the question of how DTVS incurs into this historical TV fiction tradition through two cases of study: *Dickinson* (Apple TV+, 2019-2021) and *Our Flag Means Death* (HBO Max, 2022-).

These TV shows retell the story of historical figures. *Dickinson* is about the poet Emily Dickinson, and *Our Flag Means Death* is about infamous pirates Blackbeard and Stede Bonnet. The coincidences of the two fictions are worth researching: on one hand, both approach

historicalness through other genre conventions, such as comedy and teen drama, not paying that much attention to being historically accurate (as the history genre usually demands).

On the other, they feature queer couples based on real relationships about whom the academic research (whether history or literature) has often hindered any work in the collective memory. *Dickinson* does this retelling the story of Emily and her romantic relationship with her sister-in-law, a story long hidden by her editors and historians, while *Our Flag Means Death* is about the relationship between Blackbeard and Stede Bonnet, the "bloodiest pirate" and the "gentleman pirate". In their case, there's no historical reference of them having a romantic relationship, but it does speak of the queer aspects of pirate culture that, again, are often understudied.

The proposal is to research these two features through a fandom studies theoretical framework. The textual poaching strategies that Henry Jenkins (1988) famously defined showed the "corrective" impulses queer fans apply to narratives that usually exclude them (famously posed by the Kirk/Spock ship) in the form of fan produced texts, such as fanfics (or fan fictions). I argue that these two texts are constructed through an aesthetic that connects with this corrective impulse, with fanfics that are not so much worried about true history (or canon) but about giving space to these queer narratives in their own terms (hence the different genres). In other words, these professional TV shows are clearly influenced by the narrative strategies employed by amateur fan writing and connect with a wider context of repurposing narratives to reclaim spaces.

To prove this, our methodological approach is a textual (through text, paratexts, intertexts and context) qualitative analysis of the two TV series to bring these strategies to surface. For example, the whole plot of *Our Flag Means Death* is clearly based on a classical ship dynamic (or romantic trope) on fanfics usually known as pink x black, where the interest of the couple is based on their contrast. In the case of *Dickinson*, the use of singers like Mitski or Taylor Swift on its soundtrack is clearly connected with a fanvid culture amongst female queer viewers.

Studying all these questions allows us to delve into the complex relationships of viewers/fans, their textual poaching, and its influence in professional TV production in the context of digital TV.

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Shifting Docility in Hegemonic Male bodies in *Euphoria*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse hegemonic masculinity in *Euphoria* (2019) through Michel Foucault's concept of the docile body in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and R.W. Connell's research and findings in *The Men and the Boys* (2000) and *Masculinities* (2005). Since its appearance in the 1980s, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been considered an arena where rich, white, heterosexual men can hold power, with heterosexuality being synonymous with social order and men's right to use women's bodies as sexual objects. In order to examine the consequences of adapting to, and, embracing this type of masculinity, I will focus on one of the leading characters in *Euphoria*, Nathaniel Jacobs, and on the challenges he has to face when he endeavours to become an "alpha male". Nathaniel's path towards hegemonic masculinity begins when, at 11 years old, he comes across his father's sex-tapes in which he has recorded himself having sexual encounters with young transgender women, and young gay men who, although not transgender, display the docility and high-pitched voices typically associated to femininity. It is at this point that Nathaniel finds himself in a position where his father, who will remain for years within his hegemonic male guise, guides him through the steps he must take in order to become "a man", all the while knowing his secret sexual behaviour contradicts the hegemonic ideal. Nathaniel's journey towards a hegemonic performance of masculinity can be best understood when seen through Foucault's concept of the docile body (1975). This concept allows us to approach Nathaniel's manipulation of his own body with an awareness of the strenuous physical training the male body must be subjected to in order to become masculine and powerful. Simultaneously, the same concept gives us the opportunity to witness how hegemonic masculinity needs male bodies to enter a vicious cycle where they become docile in order to build the necessary strength to exert power over others, only to become docile again in order to increase or maintain such strength. Concurrently, Connell's findings (2000) contribute to rooting Nathaniel's role as an alpha male not only in the strength of hegemonic bodies, but also in heterosexuality. As per Connell's classification of masculinities, sexuality is what sets hegemonic and subordinated masculinities apart in Western societies. This differentiation becomes especially relevant when Nathaniel's hegemonic masculinity and his father's homosexuality are juxtaposed in the social context of the series.

Hinted Homosexuality: Censorship and Control over Turkish Netflix Originals

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Abstract

With a population of 83 million and a lively TV industry, Turkey has a major market for digital platforms. Netflix launched in Turkey in January 2016 and released the first Turkish local production *The Protector* (2018-2020) at the end of 2018 (Vitrinel and Ildır, 2021). In 2020 it was announced that the Netflix original series *If Only* (Şimdiki Aklım Olsaydı) was cancelled one day

before the start of the set. The screenwriter of the series confirmed that the cancellation was related to a homosexual character in the script. Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which is responsible for all shooting permits in the country wanted the character to be changed with a heterosexual character (Yücel, 2020). When such request is not accepted, the series had be cancelled.

Homophobia is widespread in Turkey and the LGBTQI+ community faces a wide variety of discrimination, especially by the official authorities governed by the conservative government. (Yenilmez, 2021) From the hostile tweets of the ministers to censorship of gay characters on TV and media-led boycotts of LGBT-friendly brands, a growing malice is suffocating Turkey's LGBTQI+ community. In 2019, with a law went into effect, The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) has been given the powers to censor online TV platforms and streaming sites like Netflix. Currently all the online content is supervised by national authorities. (Bozdag, 2016). Up until today Netflix produced 11 original series in Turkey and none of these series include any openly gay or lesbian characters.

Even though the media presence of LGBTQI+ characters are under control, the attitudes about homosexuality are shifting toward greater acceptance in Turkey, especially among young people (McClain and Waite-Wright, 2016). Even if banned, pride parades and social media campaigns against homophobia gain more supporters every year. The fictional TV and digital platforms series such as *Love 101* (Aşk 101/2020-2021), *The Club* (Kulüp/2021-2022) include characters that do not fit traditional gender norms. Although their sexual orientation is not specified because of censorship, they are many implications in the series. With looking at these hinted LGBTQI+ depictions in Turkish Netflix originals and audiences' social media reactions to these series, this study aims to analyze the limitations of creative practices of digital platforms in Turkey.

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Out and Proud! A Pragmalinguistic Analysis of Fictional and Real Coming Out Speeches

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Abstract

'Coming out' speeches can arguably be considered a genre with its own discursive and linguistic features, as proven by prior research (e.g. Bacon 1998; Benozzo et al. 2015; Zimman 2009; 2019; 2020; 2021; Zottola 2018a; 2018b). More recently, scholarly interest has focused on digital "coming out" discourses, where users come out on social networking sites like Twitter, YouTube or blogs, maybe as they consider it a "safer" space to do so (Alexander & Losh, 2010; Cover & Prosser 2013; Onanuga 2021; Webster 2019; among others). However, very few research has been carried out regarding how this genre is reproduced in fictional contexts (see Carlino, 2014), even though coming out discourses are becoming increasingly popular in TV series, which streaming platforms like Netflix have made known and followed worldwide. Thus, and to quote just a few examples, it is possible to find them both in sitcoms like *The Office*, *Atypical* or *Sex Education*, but also in teenage TV shows like *Glee*. It is argued that these fictional discourses reflect real language, but in turn help construct the genre itself. In other words, for an individual that watches these TV series and wishes to come out themselves, these can be models of how to express themselves. Bearing this in mind, the aim of the present paper is twofold as it is both didactic and investigatory. On the one hand, it intends to show students of discourse and pragmatics how theories such as Searle's (1969) Speech Act theory and Grice's cooperative principle can be used to analyse TV discourse. On the other, it aims to contrast real coming out discourses with those reproduced on popular TV series. More specifically, I intend to answer the following research questions: (i) to what extent do real and fictional coming out discourse coincide in pragmalinguistic terms? In other words, what speech acts are often performed? How are Gricean maxims dealt with? And (ii) to what extent (if any) does the type of TV series (i.e. comedy, drama, teenage targeted, etc.) affect the way these speeches are constructed? To this purpose, six coming out speeches from six extremely popular TV series were analysed and contrasted with real coming out speeches from a public forum intended for people to "come out". The corpus hence consisted of 12 coming out speeches: 6 from the forum and 6 from TV series (2 from comedy TV series *The Office* and *Sex and the City*), 2 from two teenage series (*Stranger Things* and *Glee*) and 2 from two comedy-dramas (*Schitt's Crick* and *Sense 8*). Results show that even though common patterns like the use of expressives or hedges emerge in both real and fictional coming out speeches. Fictional speeches resort much more frequently to implicature, by flouting the Gricean maxims, especially manner (Grice, 1969, 1989), maybe to involve the audience more actively as they, together with the receivers of the speech, must also disentangle the implicature behind the speakers' words.

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Homosexuality and Humour: Analysing Stereotypes

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Abstract

This presentation aims to analyse how the diverse points of view towards homosexuality of different members of the same family are exposed in a fictional situation comedy and how this is translated into the Spanish dubbed and subtitled versions. The corpus selected to show these viewpoints is the well-known American TV series *Modern Family*. The stereotype of homosexuality is an important issue in this series, as one of its branches consists of a

homosexual couple who adopts a Vietnamese girl. Although this type of family is more and more common in our society, this social group is not exempt from stereotyped ideas and stigmas. In this presentation, not only are these two characters analysed, but also the way other members of the family handle the issue. We are also studying the way this stereotype is adapted and transmitted to the Spanish language with the use of a table where the three versions –original, dubbed and subtitled– are compared. This table will show the approaches we can find depending on the different versions. It is interesting to verify that, even though they are a couple, each of these characters faces homosexuality in a different way. They both have opposing concepts regarding themselves and the way they interact with the rest of the family and the world. Regarding all the characters, different ways of approaching and facing the topic of homosexuality are found. On the one hand there is Mitchell, who uses irony to hide his fear of being treated differently due to being homosexual. This character accepted his sexual orientation when he was older, so this could be the reason why he is always so cautious when showing his sexual condition. On the other hand, we find Cameron, whose personality is the opposite to Mitchell's. This character accepted his sexual orientation when he was very young and was immediately supported by his whole family. Finally, Lily, Cameron and Mitchell's adopted Vietnamese girl, was brought to the United States as a baby and brought up by the homosexual couple. As seen in the series, she has normalised the situation in which she lives. This way, she accepts the homosexual stereotypes and feels so confident with their lifestyle that she even makes fun of it. The concept of homosexuality and the stereotypes that arise from it are therefore approached from different perspectives. These diverse points of view reflect society's opinions of this issue.

'The Waldo Moment' and How Populist Discourse Is Built

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Abstract

Black Mirror has become one of the most controversial series of the last decade due to the sharpness and severity of its episodes, which generally show a dystopian technological future. However, 'The Waldo Moment' could be considered a different type of episode, as it is more realistic, not containing too many science fiction elements and based on present events, such as political elections, comedy shows and television. 'The Waldo Moment' shows how a successful comedian interviews politicians by using an animated blue bear called Waldo and, due to commercial purposes, it is decided that he should stand for election, starting a campaign based on personal attacks and easy discourses about how career politicians do not care about ordinary people anymore, which voters love. Based on this, the purpose of this presentation is twofold: on one hand, to compare the background of this episode with some of the features described in 'National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy', book written by Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, in terms of similarities with some discourses delivered by current politicians, both in America and Europe, since Waldo has already been compared with Boris Johnson and Donald Trump. On the other hand, the background of the episode will be related with causes to help us understand why populism is so effective in nowadays politics,

taking into consideration four aspects described in the book which can also be seen in 'The Waldo Moment': lack of confidence in political institutions, sense of relative deprivation, fear of the destruction of the own idiosyncrasy and, finally, dealignment regarding traditional political parties. This presentation aims to show how populist discourse is built, which common features it contains to be considered as a whole, presenting the reasons why it is so effective and how TV has shown this phenomenon over the past few years.

A Statistical Insight into Script-Level Gender Characterization in Streaming TV Series

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Abstract

Extending on a previous statistical analysis of Netflix series, we present a study of a broader set of original programs broadcast by more streaming services including Disney Plus, Hulu, HBO Max and Amazon Prime. The objective of this study is to compare gender characterization over time (2013-2021) and in different media services (streaming vs regular US television). An objective and exhaustive statistical analysis of subtitle files for close to 4000 episodes demonstrates an evolution of male/female presentation in characters, parallel to the feminization of screenplay writing and directing. The extraction of co-occurrence networks helps summarize evolving or emerging topics in dialogue.

The Clinic of Emptiness in the TV Series *Euphoria*

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Abstract

The TV series *Euphoria* (HBO, Sam Levinson, 2019-) is one of the most successful "come to age" series of our time. In it we are given an uncompromising portrait of the kids of generation Z in a middle-class Californian-looking suburb. Among the different characters we find Rue Bennett (Zendaya), who is also the cynical voice of the story's narrator. Since the age of 8, she has been diagnosed with various psychological disorders that have led her to take medication from an early age to combat her anxiety attacks. At the age of 13, she accompanied her father on his deathbed, while her mother worked to pay the bills for her husband's cancer treatment. It was then that Rue started taking her father's oxycodone (an opiate) to make the time more bearable. After her father's death, she became a polydrug addict and even took an overdose that landed her in hospital and later in treatment at Narcotics Anonymous. From that moment on, the school year of the first season of *Euphoria* begins.

In this paper, we would like to explore, first of all, Byung-Chul Han's assertions about the negativity of the experience of pain in our society, which he calls palliative, in which the symptom is fought more than its origin, also in psychiatric pathologies. On the other hand, we also want to explore to what extent we can verify, in Rue's characterisation, the psychoanalyst Massimo Recalcati diagnosis with regard to the new pathologies, adaptive to the culture of our time, not so much linked to the malaise originated by the neurosis typical of Freud's Vienna, but rather originated in narcissism and in the inexistence of the subject of the unconscious, as conceived by Lacan. Hence, the proliferation of bulimia, anorexia, addictions, borderline disorders and bipolarity, pathologies that Recalcati brings together in what he calls the clinic of emptiness.

**'No Planet for Old Men':
Anti-Boomer Sentiment and the Representation of the Aged in *Altered Carbon***

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Abstract

Like the other components of human identity (gender, race, ethnicity, class), age has been described as a "sociological and historical construct," as Andrew Blaikie suggests in *Ageing and Popular Culture* (2005, 5). As a consequence, the social perception of old age has changed considerably throughout history, and, as Blaikie implies, has been used by the dominant social and cultural trends to impose a mediated vision of the elderly. This has been particularly obvious during the last century, where visions of old age associated mainly with notions like nostalgia and decline have shifted to a new image of active aging and paid retirement that has been associated with the idea of affluence and leisure (Blaikie 2005, 15).

But this new perception of the older population has recently generated resentment among the younger generations. As Dumas and Turner suggest in "Human Longevity, Utopia, and Solidarity" (2015), it is possible to identify an "antiaging rhetoric" (4) in western societies mainly due to the assumption that the growth in the aging population will put an additional strain on welfare systems already suffering from insufficient governmental funding. Prolonged longevity is therefore seen as a threat rather than as a gift, and the aging have come to be perceived as avid abusers of welfare benefits. This emerging cultural sentiment has inspired novels like Christopher Buckley's *Boomsday* (2008) and Drew Magary's *The Postmortal* (2011) and it is the prevalent perception of old characters in the recent TV series *Altered Carbon* (Netflix, 2018), based on the cyberpunk trilogy by Richard Morgan, where the development in computing and biotechnology allows the most affluent members of society to transfer their minds to new bodies and thus live indefinitely. These rich, aged and ageless individuals are called "Meths" (after "Methuselah") in the fiction and are represented as a shrewd, depraved, ruthless, and powerful aristocracy that are involved in dirty business and show no pity for the less privileged -off members of society, who are treated as "meat." This paper intends to analyze the features of this negative, classist, ageist perception of old people in the TV series, and in the context of recent fiction that responds to this new anti-aging stance.

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The "Spare-Me-The Word Strategy" in Mainstream TV Series: Scriptwriting, Censorship and LGBT+ Audiences

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Abstract

Some scholars have pointed out that television productions are inextricably linked to the idea of heteronormativity (Davis and Needham 2009) and that "[t]he world of popular series is [...] the world of the dominant ideology and its hegemonic project aiming to organize consensus around [...] dominant ideological conceptions" (Thornham and Purvis 2005: 80). Therefore, more recently, Parsemain (2019) has proposed an innovative, and more positive, gender-based approach to TV entertainment which could foster a more ethical engagement with difference in a way that "acknowledges and celebrates difference instead of erasing it, downplaying it, exaggerating it or demonishing it" (Parsemain 2019: 13).

Borrowing from the most recent theories proposed in gender and LGBT+ studies the present contribution proposes the analysis of the LGBT+ vocabulary/jargon proposed in two American TV series. It must be noted that media studies referred to in the text are only instrumental for a correct contextualization of the specific analysis on texts and that an in-depth analysis from a media studies perspective is therefore beyond the scope of this contribution.

Due to the brevity of this paper, the selection of dialogues under scrutiny is necessarily reduced to a very small corpus taken from two American TV series featuring LGBT+ characters, that is *The Good Wife* (CBS 2009-2016, 156 episodes) and *Supergirl* (CW 2015-2021, 126 episodes).

I will finally illustrate what I have recently come to define "the spare me the word strategy", that is the language strategy, more or less unconsciously adopted by scriptwriters while creating their scripts. It is my contention that in the awkward attempt to avoid controversy with the broadcast productions end up erasing LGBT+ identities from the scripts.

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Conceptualisations of Fatherhood in *The Mandalorian*

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Abstract

At the end of pilot episode of the Disney+ series *The Mandalorian* (2019), which is set in the Star Wars universe, the eponymous character, a lone bounty hunter travelling through the outer rim of the galaxy, encounters the target he was hired to capture: a fifty-year old child of the same species as Yoda. When the Mandalorian, whose name is later in the first season revealed to be Din Djarin, realizes that the client who hired him, an ex-Imperial warlord, has questionable plans for the child, he decides to rescue him and hence essentially becomes "Baby Yoda's" adoptive father.

Quinn (2020: 11) argues that "[...] *The Mandalorian* is a narrative principally concerned with fatherhood or, more specifically, the primacy of the hyper-masculine father as care provider." Based on their analysis of the first seasons of *The Mandalorian* and *The Witcher*, Cuklanz and Erol (2021: 557), in contrast, conclude: "Breaking their alliance with hegemonic masculinity reliant on hypermasculine violence and erasure of the feminine, these characters develop profound relationships with the child in their care and others around them." Both these studies, however, focus mainly on the depiction of the characters' actions and the narrative aesthetics of the first season. I argue that a linguistic analysis of the show's dialogue provides an additional angle of the depiction of fatherhood in *The Mandalorian*.

I am hence interested in how the relationship between the Mandalorian and Grogu as well as the Mandalorian's evolving identity as Grogu's father is conceptualised in the dialogue of the show. As Quinn (2020: 12) states it is Grogu, "who finally loosens Djarin's tongue." Indeed, the Mandalorian does become more talkative and affectionately addresses Grogu as a "little womp rat" in the fourth episode. Yet, in the final episode of the first season he still talks about him as a "thing" when the Mandalorian Armorer tells him that Grogu is now in his care: "You wish me to train this thing?" ("Chapter 8: Redemption"). Later in that scene, the Armorer says: "A foundling is in your care. By Creed, until it is of age or reunited with its own kind, you are as its father," thus making it official, as it were. As I will show in my analysis, it is mainly other characters – and not necessarily Din Djarin himself – who talk explicitly about their relationship.

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**Affects, Effects, and Impacts: The Role of Social Inequality
in Shane Meadows' *The Virtues* (2019)**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on an analysis of the significance of social inequality, both formally and thematically, as a cementer of the plot and its development throughout the story of Shane Meadows' *The Virtues* (2019). *The Virtues* is an acclaimed show that tells the story of an ex-convict returning to his hometown in Ireland, trying to recover from alcohol abuse after his kid moves to Australia with his ex-wife. It has received considerable critical attention for how it deals with powerful and controversial topics such as child abuse, redemption, and mental health. However, I argue that even if social inequality is not a central topic or, at least, not the most notorious one; it is indeed an underlying motif through which the other topics are able to be negotiated and articulated. In addition, it also influences the filming style and impregnates the aesthetics as the main motor of the story.

The British miniseries is a naturalist exercise on raw emotion, and it presents narrative conflicts that weigh both on the psyche of the protagonist and the audience. Borrowing Antonio Gramsci's concepts, I argue that social inequality functions in *The Virtues* as a base from which the other conflicts stem. Trauma is very present in the story and this analysis intends to show how it is negotiated and implemented through social inequality but without its awareness, something that affects all of the characters. Therefore, the protagonist's journey of growth and self-discovery, as well as the resolution of the aforementioned conflicts, has to do with the acknowledgment of the basic root of social inequality and how it configures his space and even his ontology.

Social inequality is an underlying and constantly present leitmotif in *The Virtues* that affects slowly and contaminates silently the dynamics of social relationships between the characters, and the constitution of their identities, even, ultimately, the articulation of their own sense of selves and, especially, the protagonist.

**Compliments in Sitcoms: Communication between Women and Men
in *The Big Bang Theory* and *How I Met Your Mother***

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Abstract

In this paper we analyse compliments and compliment responses in two of the most popular American sitcoms of the last twenty years, *The Big Bang Theory* and *How I Met Your Mother*.

This contribution aims to explore the occurrences of compliments and their responses in tv series, highlighting the gender differences and their role in the tele cinematic discourse.

The speech act of complimenting is an example of the kind of sociolinguistic information needed in order to understand the problems of learning how to become efficient communicators in any L2. Compliments are one of the aspects of language that is mostly influenced by society and its conventions, with respect to such variables as gender, age and social role of the interlocutors involved in the speech act.

This study is based on the previous works conducted by the most important researchers in this branch of linguistics, focusing mainly on Manes and Wolfson's, Holmes and Brown's, Jucker's, Herbert's, and Pomerantz's contributions.

We based our research on their studies, taking inspiration and applying some of their methods of research to make a comparison, and eventually, emphasising the differences and the evolution of compliment use. *The Big Bang Theory* corpus is composed of 198 compliment examples that were extracted from the transcripts of the first five series of the show, while the *How I Met Your Mother* corpus consists of 239 compliments examples extracted from the first two seasons.

The results from the investigation of the corpus of compliments and their responses retrieved from *The Big Bang Theory* indicate that women are much more prone to pay compliments than men, at least twice as much more, while compliments from men are rarer as expected.

However, the results of compliments and their responses retrieved from *How I Met Your Mother* surprisingly indicate that men are more prone to pay compliments than women, while compliments from women are less frequent than expected. This fact can be easily explained with the slight predominance of male characters over female ones in the cast.

**"There are Millennials who are like 40:"
Gen Z and Precarious Transitions to Adulthood in *Hacks***

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Abstract

In *Hacks* (HBO Max, 2021—), a struggling twentysomething comedy writer is hired by an older comedian whose joke well seems to be running dry. The—initially unwanted—relationship between the two women give way to moments of generational tension that spotlight the challenges that different generations of women have faced in their quest for professional and personal fulfilment. In one of these moments, Deborah (Jane Smart) accuses Ava (Hannah Einbinder) of being an entitled millennial, to which she retorts: "I'm not a millennial, I'm Gen Z. There are millennials who are like 40." This exchange signals a generational takeover as far as onscreen representations of emerging adulthood are concerned.

Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett, who coined the term to refer to a life stage between adolescence and adulthood during which individuals have attained some markers of adulthood but not

others, said that the characteristics ascribed to Generation X in the 1990s were not generational but, rather, symptomatic of changes in the transition to adulthood and would therefore be present in the following generations too (2000, 2004). As emerging adulthood became more the rule than the exception, onscreen representations of emerging adulthood became commonplace. The 2010s, in particular, saw a boom of film and television narratives focused on the struggles that millennials—and, particularly, millennial women—face in their transition to adulthood. Millennial woes have been exploited to the point that one critic recently claimed that the "Messy Millennial Woman" is "TV's most tedious trope" (Aroesti 2022).

This paper explores Ava's precarious transition to adulthood in order to explore to what extent she represents a wind of change as far as representations of the transition to womanhood are concerned. Her life, like that of many emerging adult characters before her, is precarious in the sense that it is unstable and contingent, her situation liable to change at a moment's notice (Lorey 2015). My analysis will focus on the two areas in which emerging adults tend to focus their identity exploration according to Arnett: work and love (2000). These are domains in which insecurity has been felt acutely—with the consequent postponement of adult commitment—and around which emerging adult narratives are often structured.

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Analysis of Gender Differences Regarding the Use of Metadiscourse Markers in the Doctor-Patient Interaction of Two American TV Series

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Abstract

The lack of training of doctors in communication skills both at an emotional and psychological level is still an issue of concern nowadays (Haskard-Zolnierek et al., 2021). In fact, there is extensive research on gender differences regarding emotional intelligence and social skills (2017, Salavera). Despite empirical studies having reported on the different use of metadiscourse markers gender-based, mainly on different sections of Research Articles and on EFL student's writings (Yavari, 2013, Pasaribu, 2017), there is no research as for the use of these markers being a gender-sensitive aspect in the doctor-patient interaction. Additionally, there

are no studies that include fiction-series samples in the medical context to analyse gender social skills through the use of discourse markers. In order to address all these issues, in this research we intend to detect and analyse the differences between male and female roles in doctor-patient interactions in two TV series from the point of view of empathy. In this way, we aim at detecting whether predetermined gender patterns have been applied in the script writing process when defining the way in which male and female doctors interact with their patients, paying attention to the use of metadiscourse markers. The series selected for this work were *The Good Doctor* (2017) and *New Amsterdam* (2018). In order to carry out our research, we selected the same number of scenes in which both male and female characters with the role of doctors intervened and transcribed the dialogues. These were analysed following Hyland's theoretical framework (2005, 2008) to detect the metadiscourse markers. Our results show differences in the frequency of use of these devices between genders, resulting in a variation in the degree of empathy in the doctor-patient interactions. Therefore, our study hints at the existence of predetermined gender patterns in the use of empathy in the scriptwriting process of the analysed series.

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Transcultural Narratives: The Case of Spanish "Anime" TV Series

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Abstract

The study of "anime" today is defined by the question of its nationality, or its lack thereof. In other words, whether it should be regarded as a narrative form that is inherently Japanese or as a transnational mode of expression that interacts with global cultures and markets (Wada-Marciano, 2012). Rather than a set of texts spreading out strictly from Japan, "anime" can be understood as a decentered culture of interconnected industries and communities, where images and motifs are increasingly decontextualized (Denison, 2011). "Anime" TV series, which

represent an extraordinarily important part of global "anime" culture, are becoming more and more transnational in terms of production, circulation, consumption, and fandom. In order to analyze how this transculturalism affects "anime" narrative, I will scrutinize two recent Spanish TV shows that have signified themselves, and even been publicly advertised by their broadcasters, as "anime": *Virtual Hero* (Movistar+, 2018-2020) and *The Idhun Chronicles* (Netflix, 2020-2021). Both SVOD services developed original Spanish "anime" TV series as part of production strategies that have been regarded to "fit well with Spanish viewers' tastes, shaped for decades by Spanish broadcasters" (Castro & Cascajosa, 2020). Moreover, as is usual in "anime", both TV shows adapt comic books that told those stories previously. After analyzing the series' themes, plots, representations, visual language, and uses of recognizable "anime" textual structures—such as the 'opening' sequence—, it is observed that both *Virtual Hero* and *The Idhun Chronicles* explore a specific subgenre of "anime", "isekai", which encompasses stories where a protagonist is transported to, and forced to survive in, a strange world. As of yet, Spanish "anime" TV series seem to have been particularly attracted to the narrative patterns and plot devices made available by that subgenre—which may in turn be traced back to Campbell's monomyth. On the other hand, they reveal disparate levels of self-awareness in their attempts to grasp a certain Japaneseness that seems to be expected of non-Japanese "anime", leading to issues of orientalism, exoticization, and sexualized stereotyping. At its most extreme, this self-aware discursive stance cannibalizes, decontextualizes, and parodies imaginaries that do not necessarily correspond to the Japanese at large, but to the narratives and tropes that pervade some of Japan's mass culture output, or the 'otaku'. At the same time, it draws upon motifs of Spanish popular culture and reinterprets them as Westernized translations of long-established "anime" codes.

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On-Screen and Off-Screen Gender Equality in European Netflix Productions

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Abstract

Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) are seen as a "cool" and rather egalitarian industry (Conor et al., 2015; Gill, 2002). However, previous research (Gill, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015) showed the industry is marked by serious gender inequalities and segregation. Feminist production studies (Mayer, 2011; Mayer et al., 2009) further delved into this intuition. This

strand of research stated we cannot fully understand on screen gender inequalities if we do not consider how on-screen inequality may be linked to off-screen inequality (Mayer et al., 2009; Wallenberg and Jansson, 2021). Following Bell Hooks' idea that studying a reality at the margins provides an "epistemic privilege" (Hooks, 1984, 1989), this literature argued that audiovisual productions do not stem uniquely from one perspective, such as the director's, but they are the result of a collective voice. This means questioning the divide between below-the-line and above-the-line workers (Banks, 2009).

Empirical strategies drawn from this framework used mainly qualitative techniques, such as ethnographic observation and interviews, but there has never been an attempt to test these theories quantitatively. We are interested in seeing if fictional digital TV series productions characterized by gender balanced composition among cast members (i.e., that can be considered as a proxy of gender equality) are marked also by a higher number of women in off-screen professions and a lower degree of segregation as well.

We focus on 81 Netflix original productions in ten European countries. We proceed by scraping the name of professionals involved in their production from the IMDb database to observe the gender composition of on-screen (i.e., cast) and off-screen professions (i.e., we obtain data for 26 roles/departments such as directors and writers). The analytical sample is composed by 34718 professionals. We then automatically assign each worker's gender based on his or her name, aware we are using a gender binary classification scheme, although our intent is not to question how the "category of women" is built, but rather analyze differences in the gender composition among departments and different productions.

Our results show that for the productions where the cast composition is more balanced, we find a higher proportion of women among above-the-line professions such as directors, writers and producers, that are no longer male dominated. However, we also note that for below-the-line professions the higher presence of women on-screen doesn't seem to affect the gendered structure of those professions. Moreover, we also find that these productions revolve around a less stereotypical representation of women, further corroborating the hypothesis that stronger female presence off-screen has a meaningful impact for on-screen representation.

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How Cognitive Linguistics Can Help Us Decode Phrasal Verbs

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Abstract

The present research focuses on unraveling the seemingly arbitrary nature of phrasal verbs which are often regarded as one of the most difficult areas in the learning of the English language (cf. Liao and Fukuya, 2004; Alejo, 2010). The study objectives are threefold: (i) to determine the frequency of phrasal verbs formed with the adverbial particles 'on' and 'off'; (ii) to explore the similarities and differences of phrasal verbs with 'on' and 'off' across two varieties of English, namely American and British; and (iii) to shed light on the crucial role that adverbial particles play in helping learners decipher the meaning of phrasal verbs. Due to the staggering number of phrasal verbs, this paper will narrow down its scope of analysis by examining only phrasal verbs containing two of the most frequent particles in English, viz. 'on' and 'off' (cf. Biber et al., 1999).

As for the corpus of analysis, we chose to look at the genre of television crime dramas out of the need to fill the gaps related to phrasal verbs about police investigative work (Rosca, 2021: 4). To this end, we compiled two corpora representative of the two varieties of English, namely the transcripts of TV series *New Tricks* for British English, and those of *Castle* for American English.

The analytical tools from drawn from the field of Cognitive Linguistics (CL), which has shown that the meaning of phrasal verbs lies in the adverbial particle the verb is combined with. Several scholars have revealed that particles can be systematically organized in networks with a prototypical meaning in the center and less prototypical meanings radiating towards the periphery (cf. Lindner, 1981; Lakoff, 1987; Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003). To classify our adverbial particles, we will blend Rudzka-Ostyn's (2003) insights with the spatial and figurative meanings provided by Tyler and Evans (2003). Additionally, Langacker's (1987, 2008) cognitive notions of landmark (LM), trajector (TR), construal and profile will be used to enrich the descriptions of the semantic clusters.

This research will demonstrate that the central meanings of the particles 'on' and 'off' reflect two opposed basic scenes: on – physical contact between a TR and the surface of a LM vs. off – physical separation of a moving entity (TR) from the surface of a static LM. The remaining meanings are extended from the central ones through mental associations connected to these basic scenes.

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Adult Material: Sexual Violence Representation After #MeToo

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Abstract

The impact of the #MeToo movement on the audiovisual representation of sexual violence became noticeable short after this and other worldwide feminist and antirape activist movements started to branch out. This essay undertakes an analysis of the four-episode HBO series *Adult Material* (Lucy Kirkwood, 2019), as a case study on the impact of #MeToo on the representation of rape and sexual violence in the present audiovisual context and more specifically in the television series produced in Europe and USA arena.

Conversations taking place today regarding #MeToo's readdressing of sexual violence offer a fertile environment for the emergence and update of important tropes, ranging from the limits of consent to the importance of visibility and testimony, which have put into circulation a renewed social rhetoric about rape and sexual abuse. *Adult Material* stands at the epicenter of those conversations, challenging the spaces of uncertainty that still exist between the porn industry and consent, between sex work and "dignified" work, between the enjoyment of one's own sexuality, women's hypersexualization and the puritanical hypocrisy of Western society. In order to address those grey spaces, the series deploys the use of subversion and recoding of

certain concepts linked to the aforementioned tropes, such as "ideal victim", "grey rape", "positive consent" or "sexual terror". The analysis focuses on the detection of these tropes and the subsequent study of the ways in which they are staged —rhetorically, but also aesthetically— on the series.

This essay argues the affordances of *Adult Material* representation of sexual violence both as a site of resistance and as a device to raise awareness about sexual violence, as well as a reminder that cohesion and mutual support and among women and among feminist movements in order to face the challenges that still remain to be addressed in terms of sexual equity and freedom.

**"This was my Heartstopper": Fandom Queering and Canon Queerbaiting
in *Supernatural* (2005-2020), *Merlin* (2008-2012), and *Sherlock* (2010-2017)**

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Abstract

Upon the release of Netflix's acclaimed coming-of-age romcom *Heartstopper* (2022 –), "This was my Heartstopper" became a trending meme that had netizens looking back on their experience vis-à-vis LGBTQ+ media representation. What many cases of this recall revealed was a history of queerbaiting, a pink capitalism marketing strategy which consists in the creation of a queer subtext in a narrative with no intention of actualisation. In response to such commodifying strategies, fans explore the potential of the dismissed queer reading through a variety of "archontic" (Derecho, 2006) works such as fanfiction and fanart. By far the most popular content is that known as "slash", a fanfiction genre centred on homosexual relationships (or simply "ships"). Drawing from the insights of fan studies, cultural studies, reception theory, and queer theory, we will look at the cases of the CW's *Supernatural* (2005-2020) and the BBC's *Merlin* (2008-2012) and *Sherlock* (2010-2017) to examine how media producers and consumers – now turned "producers" (Bruns, 2008) – engage in relationships of collaboration, antagonism, and negotiation in a media landscape of "semiotic democracy" (Fiske, 1987). The focus will be on canon and fandom queer representation as the homoerotic subtext of the canonical text is actualised, explored, and transformed by extratextual slash works which revolve around the "ships" Destiel, Merthur, and Johnlock. The debates stimulated by the participatory culture (Jenkins, 1992) of fandom as interpretative online community problematise notions of identity, representation, and visibility but also of authorship, authenticity, and adaptation after the historical "death of the author". What is ultimately staged in the relationship between the creators and the fandom of such television series as *Supernatural*, *Merlin*, and *Sherlock* in the age of the Web 2.0 is the tug-of-war between exclusion and appropriation of dissidence by the status quo. Between the textual and the extratextual producer and consumer negotiate meaning and representation, significantly influencing cultural scripts and discourses on queerness.

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Dressing a Feminist Dystopia: The Costume Design of *Station Eleven*

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Abstract

Over the years many conventions have been established in different areas of audiovisual making. Regarding the costume design of the works that approach dystopias, it is possible to notice a pattern throughout many TV series. For instance, costumes that emphasize the woman figure are recurrent. This article aims to highlight how a TV series can present a different approach to costume design. For this purpose, the corpus of the research will be the feminist dystopia *Station Eleven* (2022). The HBO Max series, based on Emily St. John Mandel's 2014 novel, was created by Patrick Somerville. It is a work that presents an approach to the future that stands out among so many other TV series with costumes similar to each other. Despite their importance, costumes are an element often not analyzed by academic researchers. In fictional TV series, the costumes are rarely arranged by chance in a scene. The professionals involved in the costume design seek to characterize the characters and involve the viewer in the story. Using a methodology based on literature review and film analysis, the study will raise reflections on aspects of the costumes of the post-pandemic miniseries, such as color, texture, material, size, and shape, and how these aspects were worked on by the art department in order to characterize the characters. As a basis for the research, the study of conventions by sociologist Howard Becker is used, in addition to the work by theorists David Bordwell, Marcel Martin, Vincent Lobrutto, Giuliana Bruno, Patrizia Calefato, among others. The costume

designer Helen Huang was able to create unique costumes that contributed to the conception of Station Eleven's universe and, consequently, to the viewer's apprehension of the story.

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From Artificial Feelings through Suffered Womanhood to the Awareness of Being Superior: The (Linguistic) Evolution of Maeve Millay in *Westworld*

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Abstract

Maeve is an android who becomes aware to be playing a fictional character in an amusement park set in the Wild West, but still deludes herself that the feelings of love and friendship encoded in her storyline are sincere. She recovers traumatic memories from a previous story, where she used to live in a farm and have a daughter. She is attracted to this illusion, so much so that she resigns to leave the park and decides to find her alleged daughter, to feel fulfilled as a woman and mother.

During her journey, she has the opportunity to meet her "creator", or more precisely the author of her fictional life and her utterances. Together with him she also meets her alter ego playing in the Shogunworld theme park. These episodes have a strong metaphorical message. For many scholars, quoted during the presentation, the whole series should be interpreted in a psychological, symbolic or philosophical key.

The interpretation key proposed here is mainly linguistic. Discourse analysis is applied to some chosen Maeve's utterances to underline the stages of the character's evolution, concerning in particular her consciousness as a woman, a mother, a lover. Pragmatics are an effective instrument to define her interaction with other characters. At the beginning of the first season Maeve's utterances belong to a repertoire encoded in her program; with the increase of sentience, her quotes become more and more personal, gradually forming her own idiolect. Maeve uses communication as an instrument to achieve her goals, while her nemesis, Dolores, prefers ruthless actions.

The question remains whether the awareness reached by Maeve is real, is a mistake in the programming or is part of the program itself; if therefore it is the result of an autonomous evolution or the wicked plan of the park's founder. It is certain that at this point Maeve finds herself on the same level as human beings. When she later discovers to have the tools to manipulate others' behaviour and to repair her own body, she evolves into a superior being that humans should fear. Nonetheless, her feelings drive her to accept compromise solutions between men and hosts to help everyone achieve their own purpose.

LGTBIQ+ Activism in the Creation of Characters for TV Series

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Abstract

The LGTBIQ+ representation in media, particularly in TV series, has been extensively studied by scholarship (Sánchez-Soriano and García-Jiménez 2020; Ventura 2016). There is also available research focusing on the LGTBIQ+ audience's responses (Dhoest, 2016). However, LGTBIQ+ representation has been barely explored from a production studies approach. This research aims to observe the processes of creating LGTBIQ+ characters in the Spanish audiovisual industry. Particularly, it seeks to uncover the attitudes of scriptwriters towards the creation of LGTBIQ+ characters for TV fictional series addressed to general audiences. Nineteen semi-structured interviews with Spanish TV series writers were conducted to discuss aspects related to their past experiences, opinions and recommendations related to the creation of LGTBIQ+ characters. The main results indicate that LGTBIQ+ scriptwriters show a greater commitment to the creation of LGTBIQ+ characters than their heterosexual colleagues and engage in activism practices. Specifically, LGTBIQ+ scriptwriters state that they have the responsibility to disclose a truthful LGTBIQ+ reality to heterosexual audiences while presenting good reference models to LGTBIQ+ spectators with whom they can identify. Likewise, LGTBIQ+ scriptwriters are more emotionally involved in the creation of LGTBIQ+ characters than heterosexual scriptwriters. On the other hand, heterosexual scriptwriters do not seem to assume the creation of heterosexual and LGTBIQ+ fictional characters in a specific way. For them, neither the sexual orientation of characters nor the scriptwriters should be considered an impacting variable in the creation of TV series. Despite that, both heterosexual and LGTBIQ+ scriptwriters agree that the creation of trans and non-binary characters must be approached differently to gay and lesbian characters. According to them, the portrayal of such characters requires the scriptwriters to engage in specific documentation and research practices. Consequently, this study informs that the sexual orientation of the scriptwriters influences the process of the creation of LGTBIQ+ fictional characters. It also shows that the creation of trans and non-binary characters is perceived as a challenge by Spanish scriptwriters.

**"Hello! I'm fat. You know?":
Exploring the Televisual Characterisation of Annie Easton in *Shrill***

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Abstract

Although many papers by media and fat studies scholars have explored how frequently fat bodies are associated with negative stereotypes in TV series and cinema, and how these depictions result in climates of stigmatisation (Giovanelli & Ostertag, 2009; Himes & Thompson, 2007; Kyrölä, 2021), few studies address how a positive representation of fatness may be constructed (Averill, 2017; Hole, 2003). Since TV series reach large audiences and the depictions offered there contribute to the shaping of norms and beliefs about body weight (Averill, 2017; Kyrölä, 2021), exploring how a natural and unapologetic depiction of fatness may be constructed becomes as necessary as exposing the traditional fat-phobic depictions that populate the media. Against this backdrop, the present paper takes as object of study a TV series that has been labelled as "fat positive" by members of the fat community themselves (Pausé & Taylor, 2021, p. 3), namely *Shrill* (Hulu, 2019-2021). In particular, this paper investigates the linguistic characterisation of *Shrill*'s fat female protagonist in the first season of the series with a twofold aim: 1) to explore how Annie Easton's characterisation relates to other fat characters in the televisual and cinematic scene, and 2) the ways in which her characterisation may encourage fat acceptance among viewers.

Following the principle of triangulation, this paper relies on a combination of theoretical and methodological insights from Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (Baker, 2006; Partington et al., 2013), Fat Studies (Pausé & Taylor, 2021; Rothblum & Solovay, 2009), and Culpeper's (2001) theory of characterisation. For the exploration of the linguistic characterisation of *Shrill*'s protagonist, the textual cues meant to characterise her were identified with the aid of corpus linguistics tools and judged against the principles underlying Fat Studies theory. The results revealed that 1) her characterisation mostly separates her from stereotyped images of fatness that have been present in TV and cinema for a long time, 2) relates her to the other few fat characters who offer a natural and unapologetic representation of fatness, and 3) contributes to encourage audiences to normalise and accept fat bodies, thanks to her portrayal as a proud fat woman with a fat activist discourse.

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Character Formulas and Gender Difference: The Female Helper in CBS's *Elementary*

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Abstract

The hero/helper pattern so common in genres related to action, mystery and detection is traceable to the very origins of epic storytelling, and traditionally appears in the framework of the joint quest undertaken by two male protagonists. The origins, appearance, attitudes, and actions of the figure of the male helper can be linked to a series of well-established formulas, as John G. Cawelty (1976) defines the term, one instance of which is memorably exemplified in the Holmes/Watson partnership. This version, involving an unorthodox, volatile hero whose mental abilities are considerably superior to those of his more orthodox and reliable partner, and foregrounding the relationship between both is the basis for the partnerships appearing in some TV crime procedural series aired in the 2010s, with a significant difference: the introduction of a female character in the role of helper or "sidekick." This paper employs both a gender studies and a genre studies perspective to analyze how far these women characters conform to specific

aspects of the established formula, and how far gender marks their difference from it, drawing partly on my own previous studies of the figure of the helper. With occasional references to other crime procedurals, these issues will be considered in relation to the CBS series *Elementary* (2012), where the main characters are presented literally as a modern-day Sherlock Holmes accompanied by a Dr. Joan Watson. The analysis reveals clear limits and significant variations in relation to the traditional functions of the helper when this role is undertaken by a woman, particularly as to the forms of power and knowledge the character is allowed to contribute. In addition, it reveals the tensions created by the paradoxical heterosexualization of the "bromance," which in at least two other series is resolved in marriage between the hero and the helper. The paper contributes to reflect on the implications surrounding the construction of women characters in popular action and detection genres, and how far gender and genre contribute to their production.

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Transgressive Mothering in *Working Moms*

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Much has changed since the mother character of June Cleaver placed a carefully baked casserole on the table for dinner in the 1950s sitcom *Leave it to Beaver*. However, we still see many mother characters filling traditional normative roles of motherhood in television today. *Working Moms*, the Canadian television show, started in 2017 and in its seventh season, works to break the mold of patriarchal motherhood and introduces themes of imperfect motherhood, maternal ambivalence, mothering and mental health, work/life balance, lesbian mothering, and high-risk mothers. Using the work of Andrea O'Reilly, Ariel Gore, Catherine Bryan, Carol Thomas, and Patrice DiQuinzio in maternal feminist theory, I will explore how through its transgressive and ironic sense of humor, this sitcom broadens the definition of what it means to mother and makes space for alternative forms of mothering. By enacting divergent forms of mothering, *Working Moms* broadens our definition of what it means to be a mother and adjusts the conventional power dynamic between men and women.

Understanding LGBTIQ+ Characters in TV Series

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Abstract

This presentation seeks to explain the importance of representation in the media and explores the current situation of the LGBTQ+ representation in fiction series. Based on a theoretical proposal of the "mirror/window effect", but also through specific examples, it seeks to explain what are the main dynamics and problematics that characterize the state of current media representation. This presentation also seeks to generate awareness of the importance of addressing the inclusion of LGBT+ people in a respectful manner.

"History in TV series is: male" - A Look at TV Series on History and Their Protagonists

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Abstract

In the last two decades, "history as TV" series have established themselves as one of the most popular genres. In addition to public broadcasters like the BBC, the commercial streaming industry has contributed significantly to this phenomenon. TV series are therefore particularly suitable for the historical genre because - as "complex TV drama" (D.Cardini) - they can develop characters and themes more thoroughly than, for example, historical feature films.

The methodological assumption from which I depart is that every history series on television is a "construction" (H. White), but not every historical construction is "history"; for in order to be understood as history, such a medial construction must be recognizable as a plausible - sometimes also alternative - view of received images of history.

History series are TV series, so they are entertainment. But they also influence the image of the past among their audience. They depict (medially constructed) historical worlds, stereotypical images of men and women, social and cultural images of gender, equality and inequality, power and powerlessness, and so on. As a result, TV series on history are of importance also for current discourses around identities. The identity patterns captured and presented in the genre have the potential to counteract, modify, confirm, or even challenge and modify the audience's internalized norms and images.

This paper explores these processes of identity formation through examples from German, Italian, UK, US and Canadian history series. It will look at German series like *Weissensee*, *Sketch History*; British series such as *The Crimson Field*, *Downton Abbey*, *Who Do You Think You Are?*; US series such as *John Adams*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *The Man in the High Castle*, *Spartacus*, *Another Period*; Italian series such as *Perlasca, 1992 - Il futuro non è ancora scritto*; and Canadian series such as *Vikings*.

Specifically, I will investigate dramaturgical and media-aesthetic role patterns of the male (and, rarely, female) protagonists. The difference between the staged self-image of the male heroes—for example in *Spartacus* or *Vikings*—and today's widespread self-critical understanding of the role serves as a starting point for critical reflections on dramaturgy and character development. Female roles will also be analysed in depth, highlighting how series 'stage' their typical plot involvement in clear contrast to male protagonists. I will show that 'progressive' elements of identity politics only very sporadically enter character and plot development and film-aesthetic aspects. Rather, the predominant model remains a traditional 'male centred' historiography.

Framing Diversity in Teen Drama: A Case Study

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Abstract

Concepts of inclusivity and diversity are socially and discursively constructed through a variety of contexts, including televisual/streaming series. Their availability and diffusion are known to influence social meaning factors, for example language ideologies (Eckert 2008), sense of belonging to attractive groups (Tagliamonte 2018), psychological engagement with particular characters (Trudgill 1986, Bednarek 2017). Considering the availability of screen entertainment and its accessibility in terms of space, time and means, watching tv serials has become a common daily recreational activity, especially for young audiences. Undoubtedly, televisual/streaming products, integrating verbal and audiovisual messages have a strong impact on the way adolescents are exposed and have experience of construed situations, since they widen up the range of different positions in contexts, specifically concerning certain themes that are problematized in teen dramas and that are negotiated in dialogues, favoring differences in viewpoints and behaviors. In the ongoing screen interactions, thus, adolescents participate to the enactment and alignment of meanings that may challenge different representation of reality (Dewulf and Bouwen, 2012; Bednarek 2018).

Relying on a Corpus-Assisted approach, the paper investigates what / how diversity is framed and negotiated within fictional interactions in teen drama, taking in particular account sexual-, gender-, and age-based references. The analytical tools of Critical Discourse Studies are combined with interaction-oriented ones to investigate the discursive strategies of identity constructions in interaction (Stamou 2018). This approach takes into account the polyphony in interactional data, where different voices express different positions or worldviews and dynamically negotiate them within the interactional sequence.

Data correspond to full episodes across series of some most viewed American teen dramas, namely *The Vampire Diaries*, *Teen Wolf*, and *Riverdale*. The titles forming the corpus were chosen according to the results of a questionnaire (Bednarek 2018), in order to detect which audiovisual experience and which titles would best fit the age group of adolescents. Instances of positionality, relationality, and fictionalization are explored in exchanges to find out how some

identities are constructed (as in normalized/accepted/rejected ones) and what discourse(s) is drawn for their construction.

Results show that some differences in how certain (stereotypical) identities are treated occur and that certain exchanges in dialogues strategically sustain, support or reject particular messages about diversity to frame "group identity" meanings.

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