Archetypes, Me Too, Time's Up and the representation of diverse women on TV

Arquetipos, Me Too, Time's Up y la representación de mujeres diversas en TV

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Abstract

The feminist movements Me Too and Time's Up have showcased the power of the audiovisual industry and social networks denouncing sexual harassment and promoting gender equality. Nevertheless, women in the media –and, specifically, on TV– continue to be underrepresented and stereotyped. Then, according to Time's Up, it is urgent to increase the number of women in front of and behind the cameras, as well as to embed social movements' influences on media productions in order to broaden the archetypal models used for characters' design/analysis. Despite the benefits of archetypes in storytelling, they are based on patriarchal and ethnocentric myths that undervalue female diversity. In response, this paper explores the transference of these feminist movements in terms of female presence and representation on TV series broadcast in the Peak TV era. From an intersectional approach, 25 feminist series were identified, and good practices in the portrayal of female characters are presented as useful role models for co-education which can contribute to egalitarian attitudes in youth. These female characters amplify typical archetypes (i.e., Knower, Carer, Striver, Conflictor, Everywomen) by defying stereotypes. This study concludes that there is a feminist trend in streaming platforms' content, especially in series with a high female presence on-screen/off-screen (many of them linked to feminist movements), that sheds light on a more egalitarian and inclusive television landscape.

Resumen

Los movimientos feministas Me Too y Time's Up han mostrado el poder de la industria audiovisual y las redes sociales para denunciar el acoso sexual y promover la equidad de género. No obstante, las mujeres en los medios –y, específicamente, en TV– siguen estando infrarrepresentadas y estereotipadas. Por ello, como señala Time's Up, es urgente aumentar la presencia femenina delante y detrás de las cámaras, así como integrar las influencias de los movimientos sociales en las producciones para ampliar los modelos arquetípicos utilizados en el diseño/análisis de personajes. A pesar de los beneficios narrativos de los arquetipos, estos se basan en mitos patriarcales y etnocéntricos que infravaloran la diversidad de las mujeres. En respuesta, este estudio explora la transferencia de los movimientos feministas a la presencia y representación femenina en las series emitidas en la era Peak TV. Desde una aproximación interseccional, se identifican 25 series feministas en Netflix y HBO y se presentan buenas prácticas de construcción de personajes femeninos útiles para la coeducación y el desarrollo de actitudes igualitarias en jóvenes. Estos amplían los arquetipos típicos (es decir, Conocedora, Cuidadora, Luchadora, Conflictiva, Cualquier mujer) y desafían los estereotipos. Se concluye una tendencia feminista en el contenido emitido en plataformas streaming, especialmente en series con alta presencia de mujeres delante/detrás de las cámaras (muchas vinculadas a movimientos feministas) que arroja luz sobre un panorama televisivo más igualitario e inclusivo.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Feminism, Me Too, Time's Up, archetype, stereotypes, TV serials.
Feminismo, Me Too, Time's Up, arquetipo, estereotipos, series de televisión.

1. Introduction

During the past years, feminist movements have had a major boost in terms of audiovisual content and social networks, with Me Too (#MeToo) and Time's Up (#TimesUp) as their best examples. #MeToo, aimed at denouncing sexual harassment and supporting victims, has highlighted the capacity of the Hollywood women and social networks to advocate for gender equality (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). Moreover, #TimesUp calls for increasing women's presence on-screen/off-screen and for showcasing their diversity partly influenced by #BlackLivesMatter. It seeks to confront the female underrepresentation and misrepresentation in the media, which contribute to gender stereotypes (Lotz, 2006; Ward & Grower, 2020).

Psychosocial research has systematically shown that TV can be a strong socializing agent igniting social innovation (Miller, 2010). In this vein, TV storylines and characters are essential for new and diverse female images that could offer role models for viewers, mainly young ones (García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011; Lotz, 2006). This is particularly significant in shaping attitudes toward minority groups, especially when some people draw information solely from TV (Kidd, 2016). Media portrayals usually employ archetypes based on patriarchal myths that maintain gender and ethnic stereotypes by undervaluing women's experiences and excluding their multicultural backgrounds (Enns, 1994). Therefore, the analysis of how TV represents women and their diversity is needed, embedding the social movements' influences (Enns, 1994; Lotz, 2006; Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018).

To address this challenge, our paper aims to explore the translation of #MeToo and #TimesUp in female presence and representation in the Streaming era of TV which implies new forms of production and content consumption, particularly for youth (Bucciferro, 2019; Budzinski et al., 2020). From an intersectional feminist approach, this paper identifies feminist serials and presents good practices of female characters that amplify typical archetypes and promote an inclusive TV. First, #MeToo and #TimesUp are introduced. Second, the model of archetypes, widely used in the design and analysis of characters is presented, linking them with female TV portrayals. Finally, we will describe the methodology in order to present and discuss the results.

1.1. The impulse of feminist movements from the audiovisual industry

#MeToo was popularized in October 2017, when several actresses accused Harvey Weinstein –an acclaimed film producer– of sexual harassment and abuse, breaking the culture of silence rooted in Hollywood for decades. As a form of public denouncement, the actress Alyssa Milano told her story on Twitter appropriating the hashtag #MeToo (Figure 1), which quickly became viral. It was used 12 million times in the first 24 hours alone and shared in 85 countries in the first month of the campaign (CBS, 2017). Thus, many women began to share their experiences and create online communities of trust, exposing the magnitude of sexual violence and condemning patriarchy (Khomani, 2017). The movement had a great impact on the audiovisual industry, with allegations of sexual misconduct by public figures in other areas (e.g., music, education, science, policy). Following Chandra & Erlingsdóttir (2020: 1), "the movement has burgeoned across social media, moving beyond Twitter and into living rooms and courtrooms. It has spread unevenly across the globe (…) and interacted with existing feminist movements, struggles, and resistances".

Figure 1. The tweet that made the #MeToo online call

Alyssa Milano ✓
@Alyssa_Milano
Follow

If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet.

Me too.

Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

1:21 PM - 15 Oct 2017

The origins of #MeToo date back to 2006, when Tarana Burke, an African-American activist working with ethnic minority youths, launched a campaign under this name when she could not respond to a girl's confession of sexual abuse. While initially a grass-roots movement, #MeToo eventually through virtual communities overcame socioeconomic classes, reinforcing the idea that social networks are powerful tools that diffuse feminism and that digital activism enables more effectively raising awareness (Berridge & Portowood-Stacer, 2015).

Despite its achievements, #MeToo was also criticized. Mainly, for its failure to address long-term political advocacy, and most of all, for focusing on socially privileged women –making racialized and LBTIQ+ women invisible or underrepresented (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). In response, on January 2018 #TimesUp was founded by Hollywood celebrities (i.e., Rhimes, Longoria, Stone, and Witherspoon), so as to tackle down male domination, breaking the glass ceiling and achieving greater gender equality and diversity within and beyond the audiovisual industry (The New York Times, 2018). Since then, it has promoted initiatives like the #4percentchallenge, announced in the 75th Golden Globe Awards by Hollywood personalities, which aspired to increase women's involvement in filmmaking crews. It was named after the analysis of the high-grossing films during 2007-2017 developed by the USC's Annenberg School of Communications and Journalism (Smith et al., 2019), which revealed an outrageous percentage of female directors in the film industry. Additionally, #TimesUp, clearly influenced by the Black Lives Matter and sexual rights movements, has been commended for ensuring that the voices of racialized and LBTIQ+ women are equally heard (Desta, 2018). Both movements have also been questioned for instigating a gender battle and generating rejection or indifference in men, who preserve high levels of hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance (Kunst et al., 2019). Hence, it is vital to work in alliance with men, promoting their critical thinking and developing strategies in order to overthrow sexism and gender inequality (PettyJohn et al., 2019). This paper sustains that fictional TV productions could be powerful tools in achieving this, promoting co-education and contributing to the construction of an equalitarian society (Belmonte-Arocha & Gillamón-Carrasco, 2008).

1.2. Female representation on fictional TV: Between archetypes and stereotypes

#MeToo has coincided with the increased use of mobile devices, allowing people to access social media and consume audiovisual contents whenever they desire. This led to the era of streaming television, which is extremely popular among younger generations (Budzinski et al., 2020). Thus, the massive number of streaming platforms brought a wide range of content (Peak TV) responding to current social demands, such as the inclusion of the gender perspective, as seen in Netflix's "Women who rule the screen" and HBO's ''Series starring women'' categories (Bucciferro, 2019). Nevertheless, it is imperative to wonder whether these content advances in the female presence and representation on TV, are overcoming their historical underrepresentation and misrepresentation (Lotz, 2006; Smith et al., 2019; Ward & Grower, 2020; Zaptsi & Garrido, 2021).

Despite the significant increase in female presence on-screen (30-40%) observed in 916 shows broadcast during 2017-2019, their off-screen presence is still unequal (less than 20-30%) and female representation is characterized by gender stereotypes (Hunt & Ramón, 2020). For instance, women are more likely to be linked with care roles or victimization, so as emotional and sensual (Belmonte-Arocha & Gillamón-Carrasco, 2008; Lotz, 2006). Furthermore, these women tend to be white, heterosexual and middle-aged (Smith et al., 2019). When media erroneously attribute certain features on social groups– such as women, ethnic or sexual minorities –sexism, racism or heterosexism are reinforced, resulting in social injustice (Signorielli, 2009). Although media research developed various theories for character design/analysis, most of them are based on archetypes, defined as "story characters –prototypes of culturally important figures–that are learned and recognized implicitly, and whose historical and personal significance evoke emotional reactions" (Faber & Mayer, 2009: 310). These hail from the classical Jungian archetypes (1968), currently employed and updated by psychology and media research. Archetypes offer role models and manifest how the audience reacts upon characters of classical stories that represent universal symbols based on ancient Greek mythology, though present in popular stories of different cultures (Enns, 1994; Jung, 1968).

This study is framed within the Neo-archetypal theory (Faber & Mayer, 2009) that upgraded Jungian premises including knowledge within contemporary psychology. It proposes that archetypes possess five key characteristics: (1) to be story characters; (2) psychologically represented as mental models; (3) they often elicit intense emotional responses in people; (4) most are universal and easily recognized; and (5) some operate at an automatic or unconscious level. Furthermore, this theory gathered archetypes into five clusters, broadly used on media (Faber & Mayer, 2009): (1) Knower: Sage, Creator and Magician; (2) Carer: Caregiver,

Innocent and Lover; (3) Striver: Hero and Ruler; (4) Conflictor: Outlaw and Shadow; (5) Everyperson: Every(wo)man, Explorer and Jester. Archetypes on movies and series tell a complete story in a short time successfully, where the audience can identify basic characters and comprehend the basic storyline, but they can also promote stereotypes representing certain groups (Kidd, 2016). According to Enns (1994), their major problem is that they "are based on patriarchal myths that undervalue women's experience and reinforce traditional visions of masculinity and femininity" (p.128). Moreover, the archetypes are based solely on the white history, excluding multicultural myths and perspectives (Kidd, 2016). Thereupon, the challenge is to "identify contemporary archetypal models who defy stereotypes" (Enns, 1994: 131) offering new role models for young people and contributing to their co-education. To address this challenge, our study employs an intersectional feminist approach (Crenshaw, 1991) that enables the simultaneous analysis of how interdependent categories (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation) define the experience of women within their socio-political and historical contexts.
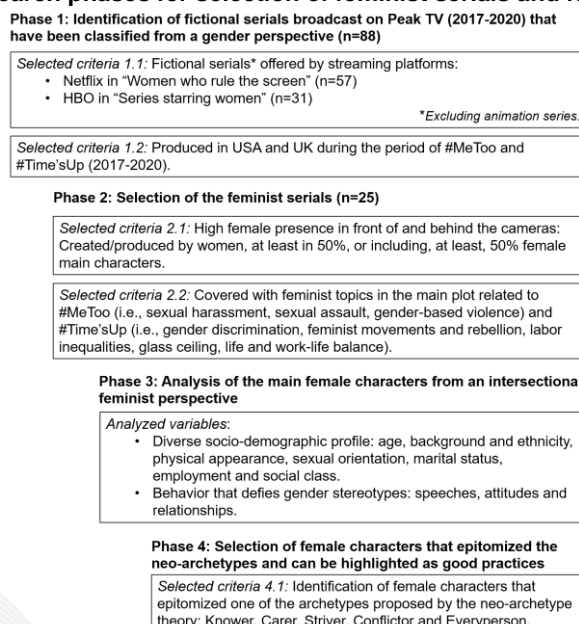
1.3. Objectives

This study aims to (1) identity feminist serials broadcasted on Peak TV between 2017-2020 (when #MeToo and #TimesUp were popularized) and to (2) describe good practices of female representation, amplifying archetypes and defying stereotypes in terms of gender and diversity. Specifically, we explore (a) the on-screen/off-screen presence of women in these serials and their relation with feminist movements, and (b) the representation of neo-archetypes from an intersectional feminist perspective.

2. Material and methods

Following Lotz (2001), there are three main tactics examining the inclusion of feminist content on TV series: the representation of female characters, the narrative strategies dealing with feminist issues, and feminism as a theme. Combining these methods with the #TimesUp recommendations for increasing female presence on-screen/off-screen, we developed four research phases described in Figure 2. Firstly, serials broadcasted on Netflix and HBO between 2017-2020 with a gender perspective were identified. Secondly, we selected those with feminist storylines and female presence. Thirdly, the socio-demographic profile and the behavior of the main female characters of these feminist series were analyzed using an intersectional feminist approach. Finally, researchers consensually selected the characters that epitomized the neo-archetypes and can be highlighted as good practices of female representation. Therefore, this study combines quantitative analysis for describing on-screen/off-screen female presence with qualitative content analysis.

Figure 2. Research phases for selection of feminist serials and female portrayals

Phase 1: Identification of fictional serials broadcast on Peak TV (2017-2020) that have been classified from a gender perspective (n=88)

Selected criteria 1.1: Fictional serials* offered by streaming platforms:
- Netflix in "Women who rule the screen" (n=57)
- HBO in "Series starring women" (n=31)

*Excluding animation series.

Selected criteria 1.2: Produced in USA and UK during the period of #MeToo and #Time'sUp (2017-2020).

Phase 2: Selection of the feminist serials (n=25)

Selected criteria 2.1: High female presence in front of and behind the cameras: Created/produced by women, at least in 50%, or including, at least, 50% female main characters.

Selected criteria 2.2: Covered with feminist topics in the main plot related to #MeToo (i.e., sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based violence) and #Time'sUp (i.e., gender discrimination, feminist movements and rebellion, labor inequalities, glass ceiling, life and work-life balance).

Phase 3: Analysis of the main female characters from an intersectional feminist perspective

Analyzed variables:
- Diverse socio-demographic profile: age, background and ethnicity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, marital status, employment and social class.
- Behavior that defies gender stereotypes: speeches, attitudes and relationships.

Phase 4: Selection of female characters that epitomized the neo-archetypes and can be highlighted as good practices

Selected criteria 4.1: Identification of female characters that epitomized one of the archetypes proposed by the neo-archetype theory: Knower, Carer, Striver, Conflictor and Everyperson.

3. Results

Following the selected criteria, 25 series were identified as feminist. Table 1 (available at https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.14109701) describes their main elements (i.e., title, original release, streaming networks, genre, accolades), so as their female presence on-screen/off-screen and their relation with #MeToo and #TimesUp, regarding their topics and the inclusion of feminist actresses, directors, etc. Results show a relation between a high female presence on-screen/off-screen (many of them explicitly linked to #MeToo and #Time'sUp) and the inclusion of feminist content. Thereupon, we will go deeper into this data while good practices of female portrayals are described following the Neo-archetypal theory (Faber & Mayer, 2009). Figure 3 offers an overview.

Neo-archetypes' characteristics and examples of feminist serials that include them

Clusters	Neo-archetypes [Characteristics]	Examples of feminist serials that include female characters that epitomize the neo-archetypes (Source of images: IMDb, https://www.imdb.com/)
Knower	*Sage* [Expert, counselor, scholarly, philosophical, intelligent]	
	Creator [Innovative, artistic, inventive, dreamer, internally driven]	
	Magician [Visionary, alchemist, physicist, teacher, scientist]	
Carer	*Caregiver* [Protective, sacrificing, parental, helping, trusting]	
	Innocent [Pure, faithful, naive, simple, tranquil]	
	Lover [Romantic, sensual, seductive, passionate, erotic]	
Striver	*Hero* [Courageous, warrior, rescuer, crusader]	
	Ruler [Influential, dominant, leader, boss, judge]	
Conflictor	*Outlaw* [Rebel, survivor, misfit, rule-breaker, destructive]	
	Shadow [Violent, haunted, primitive, rejected, emotional]	
Everyperson	*Every(wo)man* [Working-class common person. The neighbor]	
	Explorer [Independent, adventurer, discover, solitary, indomitable]	
	Jetser [Ironic, mirthful, fun, playful, irresponsible, comedian]	

3.1. The Knowers

Few female knowers were found in this study and, when they appear, are frequently linked to gender stereotypes or are being punished in a way, like Cassandra's Greek myth (Franks, 2019). First, Beth Harmon (Taylor-Joy), from "The Queen's Gambit" (2020), represents the Sage archetype. She is an orphan chess prodigy and a glass ceiling breaker during the Cold War, who "dismantles sexism with battles on a board of 64 squares" (Menon, 2020). However, stereotypes about intelligent women, based on loneliness, sex-affective problems and mental issues like addiction are prevalent in this serial (Szymanowicz & Furnham, 2011).

Second, "Mrs. America" (2020) depicts exceptionally numerous brilliant women (e.g. Schlafly, Steinem, Chisholm) who seek to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s. Despite their different backgrounds, all of them must continually prove their intelligence.

In the case of Creators, two examples were detected related to #MeToo, in line with Scheherazade from the "One Thousand and One Nights" who developed her creativity to save herself from male violence (Franks, 2019). On one side, "Dear White People" (2017-2021) presents Sam White (Browning), a media student and leading activist who denounces racism and social injustice at Winchester's campus, until a beloved Black professor is accused of sexually harassing a white student. This show offers two narratives within #MeToo: victim blaming and holding the usual suspect responsible, focusing on the influence of the racial component—which complicates the positioning. On the other side, "She's Gotta Have It" (2017-2019) focuses on how Nola Darling (Wise) used art as a strategy to deal with her trauma derived from her sexual assault. Art is presented as a powerful tool for activism when Nola wallpapered Brooklyn with slogans worthy of #MeToo. Nonetheless, both serials fall in the popular media trope of "angry Black woman", reinforcing the Sapphire stereotype (West, 1995).

Finally, female Magicians have traditionally developed their powers to defend themselves from male abuse, like the mythical Circe, predecessor of all those wise and herbalist women who were hanged for centuries for being witches. The media usually employ the witches' myths, dragging a dark and evil shadow but also representing a patriarchal challenge and liberation (Henesy, 2020). The upgraded Sabrina (Shipka), from Netflix's "The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina" (2018-2020), brings more feminist currents than ever by dismantling conventional patriarchal structures, battling toxic masculinity and overcoming binarism (Henesy, 2020).

3.2. The Carers

This cluster is strongly linked to popular and obsolete feminine representations which were still in force nowadays (Enns, 1994), as Caregivers (from Demeter to Virgin Mary), Innocents (princesses who need rescue in most fairytales) or Lovers (from Aphrodite or Medea to "Lolitas" and "femmes fatales"). In compensation, this paper reflects some good practices to overcome them.

Regarding Caregiver, Red (Mulgrew, "Orange is the New Black", "OITNB", 2013-2019) is the head chef in a prison –providing food, a deeply maternal task –and the leader of some interns who call her "mom". Despite her cold Russian figure, Red is an affectionate and loyal caregiver. This serial deals with multiple problems related to being a woman –inside and outside prison– such as sexism, sexual abuse, motherhood, glass ceilings, etc., and its intersection with many other elements (i.e. ethnicity, social class, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental health). "OITNB" broke the stereotypical image of female imprisonment and gave visibility to multiple femininity models from an intercultural perspective (Enck & Morrissey, 2015). Similarly, Blanca (Rodríguez, "POSE", 2018), in the New York drag ball scene, represents an excluded Latin-Black trans woman, former sex worker and HIV positive as a loving, protective and understanding mother. With effort and love, she builds an inclusive home for homeless LGBT youths. Like Red, Blanca puts her children's needs ahead of her own, perpetuating the typecast sacrificial mother. Nevertheless, both portrayals are ground-breaking regarding their socio-demographic profiles, which have never been depicted as caregivers but rather as troublemakers. Not casually, "OITNB" (with an all-female cast) and "POSE" (with the record for the highest number of transgender actors/actress in regular series roles) became good #TimesUp examples, setting an inclusive TV landscape. Both shows have been highly acclaimed for the representation of the trans community, whose image has been damaged by the media since its inception (Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018).

Exploring the Innocent archetype on TV, rape and sexual assault are frequently deployed on female characters' storylines, rarely becoming the center plot and almost never addressed with the required complexity (Benson-Allott, 2020). Since #MeToo, serials that either narrate rape stories or include main characters who suffered sexual assault have been produced, such as "Unbelievable" (2019), "I May Destroy You" (2020), "13 reasons why" (2017-2019), "Big Little Lies" (2017-2019), "The Handmaids Tale" (2017-) and "OITNB" (2013-2019). All of these offered a victims' viewpoint, breaking down the traditional passivity linked to the Innocent archetype. Along these lines, we highlight Arabella (Coel) from "I May Destroy You" (2020), a dark-skinned Black woman who after being raped, reclaims the #MeToo movement by achieving high popularity on social media. Furthermore, she also writes a book, joins a support group and raises awareness among her acquaintances about rape culture. Thereupon, she represents a role model for setting online activism in motion in grassroots communities. This British serial is not only a narrative about rape in the 21st Century, but also about empowerment fighting against intersectional oppressions suffered by Black women. This serial "has answered

a need for more artistically ambitious television about Black life and for feminist-of-color critiques of rape culture on television" (Benson-Allott, 2020: 100).

Regarding the Lover archetype, portrayals far-off from the typical standards (young, stunning and submissive woman vs. seductive "femme fatale") were found. Namely, the profile of middle-aged women who live their sexual freedom without a guilt is highlighted. Dr. Milburn (Anderson), the mother of the main character in "Sex Education" (2019), a sex therapist who enjoys her sexuality naturally, offers a positive role depicting divorced middle-aged women. Likewise, "Why Women Kill" (2019) relaunches the battle of the sexes through three diverse women (Beth, Simone and Taylor) from different generations. Simone (Liu) is an Asian-American middle-aged woman who, after discovering her third husband's homosexuality, begins an affair with a younger man in 1984. Taylor (Howell-Baptiste), an independent Afro-American woman, proposes an open marriage in 2019, defying social norms when she begins a three-way relationship. In the same vein, an additional character who practices polyamory is Nola Darling ("She's Gotta Have It", 2017-2019), another attractive Afro-American woman. These images sustain the Jezebel stereotype, created to justify the rape of Black women during slavery, which is currently perpetuated by TV content depicting flirtatious and hypersexual Black women (West, 1995).

3.3. The Strivers

The Hero archetype has traditionally been represented by courageous male warriors and superheroes. Therefore, the slim chances to see a woman representing this archetype have diminished social images of heroes/women. Since the 1990s, female heroes' appearances on the media, including "Xena" (1995-2001) or "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1997-2003), have provided powerful feminine models, however sexualized (Bercuci, 2016). In the #MeToo era, superheroines emerged, fighting not only against villains, but also against patriarchy (Bercuci, 2016). For instance, "Jessica Jones" (2015-2019) describes victims of gender-based violence as strong and resilient women, far from commonly stigmatized portrayals. Jessica (Ritter), a former superheroine who was abused, starts rescuing other victims out of solidarity, despite struggling with post-traumatic stress. It's no coincidence that, the second season, premiered on March 8, was written and directed exclusively by women. Furthermore, two HBO shows must be named in this category: "Supergirl" (2015) and "Batwoman" (2020). The first one, starring Benoist (a crucial figure in #MeToo since she publicly revealed that she is a domestic abuse survivor), shows an empowered, altruistic and compassionate superheroine. The second one has been praised due to its diversity though backlashed of toxic fan culture. Batwoman (Rose), Batman's cousin, is feminist and openly lesbian, with quotes such as "I'm not about to let a man take credit for a woman's work". Not in vain, Batwoman was portrayed by Rose (a gender-fluid lesbian) in the first season and by Leslie (an Afro-American bisexual woman) in the second season, a quantum leap in the superhero genre.

Beyond superheroines, we also identified interesting examples of Everywomen who, from misfortunate circumstances, evolve into revolutionary roles, like June/Offred (Moss) from "The Handmaids Tale" (2017-), which is based on the 1985 novel of the same name by Atwood. This serial shares resemblance with Philomena –the classical myth in Ovid's Metamorphoses of disobedient women and sisterhood– being "a depiction of a dystopian society, characterized by an absence of rights and freedoms [and] manifest the importance of storytelling in the creation of modern myths" (Martínez-García, 2020: 43). It incites conversation on important matters such as sexual slavery, abortion, and inflaming nationalism based on gender inequality, all narrated by the feminine voice. Starring Moss– a well-known feminist and producer of the show –this series offers an example of resilience and empowerment. June initiates the eternal struggle against the patriarchy, making her body the territory of revolution, thus empowering other women driven by solidarity and social justice. In addition to its artistic value, "The Handmaids Tale" (2017) has gone beyond the screen and has become a trademark for feminist resistance in the 21st century. For example, one of its most representative phrases, #nolitetebastardescarborundorum, jumped from TV to online activism (Bayne, 2018).

Regarding the Ruler archetype, there are not many examples of women who exercise power and whenever they appear, their performance is considered to be masculine, downsizing feminine attributes such as softness and sensitivity, which are perceived as weaknesses –and opposite to leadership (Özkan & Hardt, 2020). Nevertheless, Annalise Keating (Davis, "How to Get Away with Murder", "HTGAWM", 2014-2020) gives a magnificent portrayal. Acknowledged in highly patriarchal environments, like legal defense and higher education systems, Keating is also defined by an intersectional identity as a middle-aged Black queer woman. During its six seasons, she embarks on complex interracial relationships that allow her to be in positions of great power and leadership (e.g., with her students and employees) or to be her true self, an emotional and

vulnerable human being (e.g., with her family). Leaving behind the manipulative and authoritarian leader figure, Keating is warmhearted, with flaws and fears –predominantly coming from her intrafamily sexual abuse as a child. Following this character, the audience can identify the multiple oppressions that a middle-aged Black woman living her sexuality openly must face in her life: sexism, racism, heterosexism, etc. These oppressions are also denounced by Davis and Rhimes (showrunner of "HTGAWM"), who as main public role models brought diverse depictions on the media and public responses to Black women (Sobande, 2019), within and beyond #TimesUp.

3.4. The Conflictors

The Netflix dark comedy "The End of the F***ing World" (2017-2019) became the voice of #MeToo and brought with it Outlaw and Shadow archetypes. Its first season presents the adventures of a teenage couple tormented by a traumatic childhood, who kill a serial-rapist in self-defense. Nevertheless, its second season introduces a new narrative: a past lover (a victim, in fact) of this rapist determine to seek revenge and presents a storyline that goes deeper into the three protagonists' experiences and interpretations. Like "I May Destroy You" (2020), this serial is raising critical awareness for the reevaluation of some "sexual experiences" as abuses. Similarly, "Big Little Lies" (2017-2019) effectively handles intricate issues such as domestic violence or rape, as well as the trauma and guilt they leave in the victims, along with a story about female friendship. This series, based on the 2014 novel of the same name by Moriarty, tell us the story of five American mothers (Witherspoon, Kidman, Woodley, Kravitz, and Dern), who are connected to the killing of the rapist/abuser of some of them. Moreover, in the second season, the mother (Streep) of the murdered man appears and blames the victims entirely. This storyline reminds us the myth of Medusa, a remarkably beautiful maiden who, when Poseidon raped her, was punished and transformed into a monster. Notwithstanding, the female on-screen/off-screen presence in this series will go down in history as one of the greatest contributions of #TimesUp.
Additionally, an accurate feminist show from a #TimesUp viewpoint is "Good Girls" (2018), which shows three suburban Michigan friends who suffer labor inequities and engage in criminal acts in order to get money and support their families. In addition to its inclusion of ethnical and sexual diversity, "Good Girls" is looking to rewrite this history by mainstreaming female anger in a way that is not aimed at targeting men, but at empowering women" (Carling, 2018).
Finally, these archetypes also surface when women fight against the patriarchal culture/religion, as seen on "Unorthodox" (2020). This series narrated the story of Esty (Haas), a young woman who escaped from the ultra-orthodox Jewish religious community in New York and began a new life in Berlin, leaving behind imposed gender norms.

3.5. The Everywomen

Even in the archetype of Everywoman –including Explorer and Jester– we find female characters that allow the audience to step out of the standardized white heterosexual housewife perpetuating by the "Desperate Housewives" (2004-2012), or further privileged single women like "Girls" (2012-2017) or "Sex and The City" (1998-2004). Although these productions were a remarkable milestone for their feminist gaze, female representation and their female staff (Ford, 2016), they also limited the depiction of feminist women. Currently, more complex archetypes are available so that the audience can identify themselves in a multi-diverse way. Hence, a tendency of addressing motherhood and life and work-life balance was detected. For instance, the Netflix sitcom "Workin' Moms" (2017) narrates the interconnected lives of women who have just become mothers and do not want to give up their professional status. These diverse women (among them an interracial lesbian couple and an Asian-American who economically supports her husband), dismantle the idyllic idea of motherhood stressing the insecurities and obstacles that are implied for a working mother. Another less privileged reality is presented in "One Day at a Time" (2017), through a Cuban-American single parent family. Penelope (Machado), a post-traumatic stress veteran and newly separated mother struggles to raise her teenage children with the help of her mother, Lydia (Moreno). This series challenges the stereotypes associated with Hispanic families humorously, addressing issues such as mental health, sexual orientation and feminism through three different generations.
Furthermore, Everywoman archetype was also found in "Grace and Frankie" (2015-), claiming that women over 65 only get better with age. This comedy narrates a female friendship between two women (Fonda and Tomlin, both longtime supporters of feminist causes) whose respective husbands left them to marry each other. "Grace and Frankie" centers on the importance of redefining identity –regarding gender, age, sexual orientation

etc– to be happy, no matter how old you are. Covering older people's main characters like any others, this series opens a door on prime-time television, where elderly women are underrepresented (Vernon et al., 1991), and address little-explored topics as sexuality in old age.

Finally, we point out "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" (2015-2020), which combines the Jester and Explorer archetypes to offer an ironic feminist vision. After spending 15 years kidnapped in a bunker, Kimmy (Kemper) goes back out into the world where she faces multiple changes (technological, social, and political) and tries to overcome her trauma. According to Carlsten (2020), Kimmy breaks the ideal of womanhood as passive and victimized challenging ideas about empowering female anger. Moreover, its four-season focused on feminist issues such as workplace harassment and sexism demonstrates the power of comedies to promote critical thinking and challenge power structures.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This study reveals a feminist trend in the serials broadcast on Peak TV, in terms of female presence (on-screen/off-screen) and representation. Analyzing serials produced since 2017, when #MeToo and #TimesUp sparkled, we found numerous storylines associated with feminist issues and teams made up at least 50% of women –most of them associated with these feminist movements.

Two decades after the first feminist serials (Lotz, 2006) "Xena: Warrior Princess" (1995-2001), "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1997-2003), "Ally McBeal" (1997-2002) and "Sex and the City" (1998-2004), the analyzed series introduce more complex and diverse female characters than their predecessors. Women who defy gender stereotypes, thus, allowing us to amplify typical archetypes (i.e., Knower, Carer, Striver, Conflictor, Everywomen) from an intersectional perspective. Through these shows, Peak TV achieves more responsive and inclusive forms of activism in the spirit of #MeToo and #TimesUp (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). To name a few, "I May Destroy You" (2020) draws boundaries regarding who stands for a victim-survivor and what counts as sexual assault. "Big Little Lies" (2017-2019) or "The Handmaid's Tale" (2017) broaden the scope by labeling their oppressing experiences as sexual abuse. Additionally, "She's Gotta Have It" (2017-2019) or Why Women Kill" (2019) reconsider the depictions of female sexual pleasure and desire. Finally, "OITNB" (2013-2019), "Working Moms" (2017), "POSE (2018) and "Mrs. America" (2020) challenge gender norms and relationships, reflecting upon how power and oppression rule.

These serials also explicitly express how gender intersects with other identity components such as ethnicity, sexual diversity, age, religion, or ideology. The presented characters highlight female heterogeneity, which is an important step in TV representation of women, which frequently stereotype minority groups, as Black women (West, 1995). This stresses the importance of strengthening the convergence between feminism and other social movements like #BlackLivesMatter. Therefore, they present a noteworthy leap overcoming predominant patriarchal and ethnocentric values that have lasted for centuries (Enns, 1994; Franks, 2019).

Following Lotz (2001), the presented series can be classified as feminist because of: (a) exploring diverse relationships that empower women, outlining them as a heterogeneous group; (b) depicting miscellaneous feminist solutions for oppressive situations, even manifold feminist outlooks upon cultural issues; (c) offering a wide-open concept of gender and sexuality, thus breaking their illusory binarism; and (d) displaying struggles faced by women and feminists highlightinh their resilience. Thereon, storylines that show the complexity of the oppressions that women face, regarding their intersectional identities, are disclosed, making Peak TV a catalyst that questions the definition and goals of feminism in our hyperconnected era.

Moreover, these serials have upended the public conversation about issues such as sexual abuse or gender inequalities in the workplace, finding encouraging ties with social and virtual activist movements (i.e., #MeToo, #TimesUp). In this direction, we consider that the series/characters presented in this study can be very useful for coeducation, especially for young ages (Belmonte-Arocha & Gillamón-Carrasco, 2008; García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011). Beyond the inexorable influence of these serials in the audience, we propose their use in formal education. Feminist series can offer stories from which to critically reflect on gender inequity, sexual abuse or female empowerment in high schools and universities. Moreover, these can be specially interesting tools to address gender issues with boys, who may have a negative reaction, by addressing them in more direct ways (PettyJhon et al., 2019).

Finally, some limitations should be noted in this study. First, we only analyzed serials broadcasted in Netflix and HBO between 2017-2020 and produced in USA and the UK. Therefore, notably feminist series that have been broadcasted in other channels or in other countries have not been included, e.g., "Good Girls Revolt" (2015-2016), "The morning show" (2019), "Vis a Vis" (2015-2019), "Las chicas del cable" (2017-2020). Second, the serials and characters' selection was intentional. Therefore, an in-depth systematic analysis should be

reinforced, highlighting the need of media research to adapt evaluation instruments that include a feminist perspective (Zaptsi & Garrido, 2021). Future research should explore the impact of this feminist content on audience values and behaviors. It could be specially interesting in countries such as Spain, where feminist movements had little impact on the media and where these movements present many discrepancies, for example, regarding the inclusion/exclusion of transgender women. Then, it might be interesting to explore the impact of series such as "Veneno" (2020).

In short, despite the fact that the mainstream media are still managed by men and yet are based on stereotypes that exclude women and social minorities (Filebon & Loney-Howes, 2019), this paper concludes with a favorable evolution on Peak TV, declaring it a new space that ventures for women's inclusion. A space that could strengthen and make more visible the feminist activisms. Citing Oprah Winfrey's speech at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards referring #MeToo and #TimesUp: "a new day is on the horizon" for a more egalitarian and inclusive television landscape.

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