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The discourse in the legitimization of the Anti-Hero in contemporary TV series.

Master's Thesis

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I have written the Master's Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

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INTRODUCTION

As a consequence of both the development of the industry and media technologies, television has had a gradual change in the means of production and consumption, thus achieving a new cultural and social status thanks to cable television and streaming platforms that have had a significant impact globally. These changes embraced a new character to protagonize their dramatic narratives, under the series format and the emergence of the *auteur*, which had already excelled and succeeded in both American literature and cinema: the anti-hero. This thesis establishes the anti-hero as the hero of the foundational myth of the “New Golden Age” of contemporary television (Newman and Levine 2012) that represents the individuality and hopelessness of the subject towards institutionality and the values and beliefs reproduced by the hegemonic discourse, such as the American Dream.

The role of the anti-hero and its protagonism in television series in recent years has been previously studied and analyzed mainly in the field of psychology (Affective Disposition Theory, Abnormal psychology, and Moral Disengagement Theory) and moral reasoning (Story Schema Theory and the book *The Antihero in American Television* by Margrethe Bruun Vaage in 2015) that have centered on the relationship between the audiovisual product and the audience. Nevertheless, in this work, that will not be the case since this thesis aims to characterize the properties of the anti-hero in the framework of contemporary television series, taking as its axis the analysis of their discourse from the perspective of legitimization of their social practices within their narratives. The dialogues then have the function of being the departure point that relates the representational resources and what the subjects do with them, defined as semiotic resources (Bezemer and Jewitt 2009: 4), whose signifying potential is in the function of the use that the anti-hero chooses from the language as an available system, thus achieving the common understanding to shape their discourse subjected to a particular social context (van Leeuwen 2005: 285) within the framework of the legitimization processes with their significant others and society.

The novelty of this semiotic analysis from the archetype of the hero and anti-heroes as characters in the field of audiovisual entertainment is possible because, like literary characters such as Hamlet, Ana Karenina or James Bond, these “crystallized fictions which function as

semiotic anchors in the fluid construction - by the readers [spectator] - of their understandings of the world” (Valsiner 2009: 99) which end up establishing themselves in the mythology of society projecting certain order and social practices with generalized values carrying meaning (*Ibid*, 99–100), in this case in a much faster and broader way due to the form of production, distribution, and consumption that streaming platforms have been offering¹. Nevertheless, how could such “crystallization” of fiction into reality be explained? The answer to this question, suggested by the American-Estonian scholar Jaan Valsiner in his article *Between Fiction and Reality: Transforming the Semiotic Object* (2009), is the intentionality between semiotic object and semiotic subject.

The perception of fictional characters as already given entities does not assume that these non-existing objects are themselves the result of semiosis (Valsiner 2009: 103). Or in other words, that they “emerge in the meaning-making processes of their inventor [or *auteur*] created by active agents, persons or social institutions, in their quest for some stability [therefore] they become real as they are made up as fictions” (*Ibid*, 103). The reason why the meaning is - somehow- “get loose” from the perceived object, thus constructing the semiotic objects “by the meaning-maker who both expresses and interprets the meanings one lives with” (*Ibid*, 105) that are interpreted by the unconditionality of the semiotic subject due to its intentionality as an active person who reconstructs the messages and “makes use” of the fictional characters from the dynamism of the subject experiences and not from the supposed immutability of the characters in the work of fiction (*Ibid*, 106-109). These characters are then fixed within the mythology of society (in this case at a global level due to the reach of the cultural industry) as symbolic tools used within social practices and "fictional support" for the creation of new meanings that become organized and reflected in reality, “creating fictions-in-the-real” (*Ibid*, 107-111), within the culture as in the case proposed in this research with the character of the anti-hero.

Firstly, the processes of legitimization that television has experienced in recent decades (with cable television and streaming platforms in terms of the format of series) and the gradual change

¹ At the same time, another understanding of this phenomenon allows to reflect on the overwhelming overproduction of series during the last decade, which as collateral damage has diminished their cultural impact and individual value by failing to be transcendent in time, making them almost disposable.

in the cultural status of this medium are presented to expose the validity of the analysis of this means of communication and entertainment. Then proceed to define and characterize the anti-hero as the protagonist of these cultural products of global consumption, from the comparative mythological treatment of the archetype of the hero by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, thus rescuing the valuable notions proposed by these two authors based on the need for a broad framework where the aspects of meaning, society, and culture can be understood, not as a problem in the cross-cultural context where clearly in different societies different conditions and characteristics prevail (Kress, 2012, pp. 374–376), but rather from an approach focused on the idea of the role of the individual within the narratives whose purpose is communication.

The above is then the departure point for the definition of the anti-hero that is proposed in this work from the archetype of the hero, along with a concise historical overview that evidences the how and when of the arrival of the anti-hero on television in the American context. The conceptualization of the anti-hero is not exactly precise, as it often generates confusion. It would not be correct to say that the anti-hero is simply the opposite of the hero or a “bad” hero (White 2013:3), that depending on the context and the sympathy of the audience, it could be perceived as a villain (Drappa 2016: 5). The anti-hero in the first instance could be considered to be as the subversive character against the ideological status quo that through his sympathetic but complex figure reflects an alternative or marginal lifestyle of the “common man or woman” with their moral code that resists the established values due to the pursuit of freedom and individuality.

In terms of the theoretical framework, the concept of narrative is clarified as the foundation of the semiotic representation that allows the telling to the other and its reception within the social activity of communicating (Ribó: 2019) in order to proceed with the perception of myth as a “collective representation” proposed by Ronald Barthes. The social and cultural function of the myth provides a “natural justification” as a mode of signification that societies adopt, thus appropriating their historical context (Barthes: 1972 [1957]). Moreover, the concept of legitimization is approached from the theoretical bases proposed by Berger and Luckmann due to the importance that these sociologists give to language in the construction of reality to evidence its role and categorize its levels that aim at the preservation and reproduction of the status quo and the universe-maintenance with the myth (Berger and Luckmann: 1967).

Regarding legitimization strategies, the five strategies (legitimization through emotions, legitimization through a hypothetical future, legitimization through rationality, voice of expertise and altruism) proposed by the sociolinguist Antonio Reyes in his article *Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions* (2011) are extrapolated so that, together with the interdisciplinary and multimodal approach, offered by Critical Discourse Analysis where the means of representation and interests of the subjects, as creators of signs, motivate the relationship between signifier and signified in the shaping of the discourse and subsequently in the social practices of power that are ideologically permeated (Kress *et al.*: 1997), obtaining with this method the systematization of the selected discourses of the anti-hero protagonists of the chosen series based on its first chapters or pilot chapters with the purpose of the analysis and interpretation.

The criteria used for the selection of the series in this research include five English-language dramas, four of them American and one British, distributed internationally by different streaming services, of which one was produced by cable television (*Better Call Saul*, 2015) and one by public television (*Peaky Blinders*, 2013). The last three were produced by the streaming platforms themselves (Netflix, Disney+, and Apple TV+) as their first original audiovisual products (*House of Cards*, 2013. *The Mandalorian*, 2019. *The Morning Show*, 2019) with the purpose of reaching as many consumers as possible., i.e., these three were never broadcasted by any television network. These series have protagonists who, in this research, are defined as anti-heroes due to their agency that challenges the existing status quo through their actions and attitudes, often acting as a means of undermining and critiquing social systems and their structures, from their complex nature and disregard for accepted ideals. Characters' narratives are characterized by a quest for individuation and self-awareness, reflecting current themes of alienation and disillusionment with the institutionalism that leads them to construct a set of beliefs, values, and social practices that, unlike the traditional hero, need to be legitimized.

It is important to mention that in this research, there is a distinction between “discourse” with little “d” and “Discourse” with “big D” based on the proposal of the American linguist James Paul Gee (Gee 2005: 22) in order to highlight the *who* as a *socially situated identity* or “the kind of person” that is represented (in this case for the way the anti-heroes are characterised) and the *what* as the activity that constitutes the “speaking subject” from, e.g. the actual lines in the

script. Therefore, discourse² will refer here to the dialogues in general of the protagonists of the selected series since they are a creative extension of language-in-use. On the other hand, Discourse capture what is beyond the language, in other words, the enactment and recognition of these characters as a particular type of identities within various social institutions that, through their actions, interactions, beliefs, and values relate to other sets of Discourses that already exist within the society (Gee 2005: 22–33). Discourse, therefore, is employed in this research within the domain of the anti-heroes in order to analyze and interpret their social practices within their narratives and contexts.

The degree of generalizability is determined by the wide coverage of television as a mass media and the archetype of the hero, which is present in all types of narratives; from the analysis and method, the theoretical bases and examples laid to frame the legitimization processes that build the Discourse of the anti-hero to explain and justify a determined set of beliefs and values in the social interactions. Last but not least, this research intends to be an invitation and motivation for the study of television, which has been trivialized despite its importance as a means of mass communication. The author's interest is not only to circulate this semiotic and discursive analysis in the academy but also to make this knowledge available to any spectator who wants to understand more about how and why his or her favorite television series works within a certain context.

² It is opportune to note that discourse, with little “d”, is also found in this thesis in the context that the different authors within the theoretical framework assign to the word “discourse”.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do contemporary television series construct the character of the anti-hero from the archetype of the hero in these global fictional entertainment narratives in light of Critical Discourse Analysis?
- What features of the anti-hero are manifested in opposition to the traditional hero? And how these attributes achieved to replace the hero thanks the appeal of the anti-hero and the possibility of fitting their discourse in the current context of the society?
- In what ways are the actions, beliefs and values of the anti-heroes legitimized through Discourse?
- What patterns are found among the units of analysis suggesting to a standardization of anti-heroes as a formula for global commercial and cultural success thanks to the massive presence of streaming platforms globally?

1. THE ANTI-HERO IN THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN TV SERIES

With the emergence of streaming platforms, it is a fact that the way we consume television and cinema has changed forever. It changed the industry, the audience, supply, and demand. It changed our perception of space and time, or as the creator of the *Heroes* series (2006-2010) Tim Kring explained it best in 2008: "Now you can watch [TV] when you want, where you want, how you want to watch it, and almost all of those ways are superior to watching it on air. So [watching it] on air is related to the saps and the dipshits who can't figure out how to watch it in a superior way" (Newman and Levine 2012: 1). Just as it has also changed the perception of the hero that stars in these cultural products, and that employing these global narratives, ends up grouping us as individuals in everyday and "innocuous" entertainment. Since the launch of the successful political drama *House of Cards* in 2013 as Netflix's first original series, a fixation on a specific type of protagonist can be evidenced: the anti-hero.

It is clear that the character of the anti-hero has been and is present in literature, in noir and gangster cinema, and television, having great notoriety in the latter since the beginning of this millennium thanks to series like *The Soprano* (1999) and *The Wire* (2002). Nowadays, in this "New Golden Age" of television, the rise of this type of character that has managed to establish itself in pop culture without any obstacle is undeniable. If during the 1950s and 1960s, the protagonists represented certain values that brought together the best qualities of the American dream, capitalism, and Christianity/Protestantism, now we can see the turn towards "compromised protagonists and charismatic anti-heroes, undergirding the inherent complexities of the human condition and the often-impossible demands of a society whose own stance on morality has become fundamentally unstable" (Lyons 2021: 226). Thus postulating the anti-hero as a circumstantial result of society.

Television is undoubtedly one of the most important inventions in the history of mankind, but at the same time that it was developing throughout the 20th century, it was the subject of great discussion due to its role in society because of its content, which depending on the lenses through which it was appreciated, could be vacuous, informative, educational, consumerist, propagandistic or artistic. Although its role in society as a mass medium of information is indisputable and its impact as an omnipresent household appliance in every home, in every

family was immense due to the possibility of turning individuals into spectators of their surroundings, no longer locally but globally, among many other things, television was always renegeed by the critical and academic sphere, with some exceptions. The “mediocrity” of television led it to be called in various derogatory terms, for example, one of the most popularized: the "idiot box" which merely came from a certain "intellectual elite" that did not consider worthy of appreciation and debate the pop culture that predominated in this medium (Newman and Levine 2012: 14). Despite the above, as time passed, television was gradually changing in the Western world as a 'consequence of both the development of industries and media technologies' that brought about a gradual shift in the cultural status of this medium (Newman and Levine 2012: 4) although this correlated fact was not enough to be appreciated and culturally legitimized without a connotation of "low reputation" by critics, journalists, and academics.

Finally, it was in the 1990s when television ascended in the cultural sphere to be considered as a medium of value and great significance, or as best expressed by the critic and historian Jaime Weinman: "[W]e are in 'A Golden Age of Taking TV Seriously'" (2010). It was in this decade that television began two great phenomena that would change the perception of this medium forever: reality shows as a trend and the incorporation of television series as *auteur* works with the mythical *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991) created, produced, written and directed by acclaimed film director David Lynch and novelist Mark Frost (Newman and Levine 2012: 26). The discourse of authorship in television broke with the authoritarian and hierarchical production that predominated television as mass media until then due to the artistic vision that the showrunner as *auteur* embodies in his or her works, elevating these to culturally legitimate status, since as in cinema, the works of art (in this case, the cable television series) began to be identified with the artists who create them (*Ibid*, 38). This change instituted by *Twin Peaks* crystallized with the unanimous positive response from critics and the general public, which has a great community of fans worldwide until today. At the same time, producers and television networks realized this new successful phenomenon; proof of this was the promotion of this series by the American cable television network Bravo (1993) when they declared *Twin Peaks* as: “TV too good for TV.” Which HBO later modified in favor of its famous slogan, “It's not TV. It's HBO” (*Ibid*, 30).

This type of television, or “quality television”, that the public had to pay for because it was cable television that, in some way or another, guaranteed that the work of art, the series, had certain production and narrative characteristics that elevated its cultural status in comparison with traditional television. They also marked a change in the influence and power that the writer and *auteur* had in the industry given that their creative freedom established new subversive discourses where criticism of the consumerist society that television itself had helped to create for decades was evident. At this time, topics that had not been commercially demanded in free-to-air public television, such as sex, violence, deviance, addictions, and class, began to be stressed with 'morally comprised', melancholic and unhappy male protagonists who struggle from their virility with conflicts rooted in the human condition in the contemporary world. (Martin 2013: 4-7). Here, they are identified as anti-heroes.

In conclusion, the cultural legitimization of the American TV series format with all its changes during the last decades has achieved that its sociocultural discourse and artistic value is considered a phenomenon worthy of appreciation and analysis, in a way perhaps only comparable to what happened with Jazz music and photography (Newman and Levine 2012: 8). For this reason both cable and streaming series are considered valid units of analysis as cultural products based on the premise that dates back mainly to the Frankfurt School, where academics such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin, stated to the possibility of turning popular culture into a viable and serious topic to contribute to academic and social research (Lyons, 2021: 227). The selected series starring anti-heroes will be conceptualized as cultural products following the line of thought in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), which establishes that the omnipresence of entertainment culture is ideologically permeated by the logic of capitalization where culture is nothing more than a commodity that recycles formulas to produce cultural products under the same parameters, thus achieving a universal and effective control (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002 [1944]). Or expressed in a more concise way: “as nonmaterial goods directed at a public of consumers, for whom they generally serve an aesthetic or expressive, rather than a clear utilitarian function” (Cacia and Aiello 2014: 7) that even if they only have the innocuous purpose of entertaining, these products are shaped by representations of the discourses from reality that are projected in fiction.

1.1 The hero archetype

First of all, the conceptualization of the anti-hero is not exactly precise, as it often generates confusion. Even when Aristotle already identified the essential characteristics of the hero in his work *Poetics* (IV century B.C.), where he characterizes and describes mainly Greek tragedy by mentioning that the hero must be good, have an appropriate character in terms of what he is supposed to represent, standing out from the rest, be ideal and be consistent in his actions and morality (Williams 2012 31–33). It would not be correct to say that the anti-hero is simply the opposite of the hero or a “bad” hero (White 2013:3), that depending on the context and the sympathy of the audience, it could be perceived as a villain (Drappa 2016: 5). For this reason, it is necessary to briefly review what has been said about this concept within the world of entertainment, especially in television. But to clearly and concisely present the traits and characteristics of the anti-hero, it is mandatory to first introduce what is understood by the hero as an archetype.

This section starts mainly from the work of the Swiss psychologist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung and the American writer Joseph John Campbell. These well-know authors have dealt with the concepts of archetype and hero, respectively, and have inspired several scholars interested, for example, in the analysis of mythology. The concept of archetype could be understood as that which 'describes the function or role a character plays in a story' (Voytilla and Vogler 1999). In any story or narrative, there are patterns that have lasted over time regardless of their cultural and geographical origin because they are already present in the psyche of individuals, which in one way or another, guide their internal psychological functioning (Villate 2012:1). For Jung the archetypes are “the precursor to conscious thought” (Taheri and Jalaly 2013: 182) that allow humans to express themselves from the unconscious to the world that they share because “Jung believed individual and social behavior and thought have their roots in a common palette of characters and situations the mind retains from early human consciousness development” (Taheri and Jalaly 2013: 182). Now, from the above, it is understood that these common roots have allowed, if not at least facilitated, the process of identification of any individual with a story is possible because humankind effectively feels related to the narratives since the characters that develop concrete actions because -in a broad sense- are already in their unconscious by the coincidence of patterns. All instincts and activities end up being archetypal

because these are “unconscious images of the instincts themselves, in other words, that they are *patterns of instinctual behavior*” (Jung *et al.*, 1980 [1959]: 44) that culminate in guiding all fantastic activity with mythological parallels (Jung *et al.*, 1980 [1959]: 66).

Furthermore, Joseph Campbell would continue to widen the panorama regarding the conception of the archetype and its role in societies, but focusing more precisely on the character present in universal mythology: the hero. The conceptualization of the traditional hero is complemented and extended by the classic dualistic plot present in mythology, highlighted by Ronald Barthes, where two forces are in eternal opposition in any narrative, such as light/darkness, good/evil, hero-society/villains, strong/weak, and civilization/savage (Turner 2006: 102). In his world-renowned works, such as *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) or *The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on His Life & Work* (1990), Campbell investigates the myths of diverse cultures and then, through comparison, synthesizes them into what he called The Hero's Journey, as a universal metaphor for the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual journey that transforms the hero into different stages or the “standard path of the hero's mythological adventure [which] is an extension of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation-initiation-return*: which might be called the nuclear unit of the monomyth” (Campbell 2004 [1949]: 28). In this journey, the central character responds to the call to adventure that will challenge him in favor of his personal growth, which implies sacrifice and service for others, generally for his community. The hero is motivated to act in the face of his internal and external problems by impulses anyone can identify with, such as love, justice, or redemption.

The archetype of the hero is, by definition, a character who is good in every aspect, who acts in the right way to save people and protect them from the defiance or threat that brings together the elemental paradigms found in the mythology of the world, from a mainly European perspective³ dating back to ancient Greece and polytheistic religions. This archetype congregates the hero's characteristics as someone physically and morally strong with specific intellectual abilities that allow them to use and use their skills at the service of others within

³ This use of myth as “a tool of European Self-discovery” is problematized in Eric Csapo's *Theories of Mythology* (2005) by the purely comparative interest during imperialism based on the values of the European observer confused by the differences found in America (Csapo 2005:10–11).

certain conventions (Taheri and Jalaly, 2013, p. 185). The heroes are active characters who faces the events that surround them in search of triumph, a search that they not perform alone because, in the journey, they meet several archetypes that accompany them, each one with a specific role.

At this point, it is worth noting three essential ones: the mentor who motivates and guides the hero from his experience, which can be a physical character or an inner mentor as a code of values, the trickster who usually accompanies the hero who is characterized as a pleasure lover and excess who as a buffoon uses comedy, mischief, and spontaneity to ridicule, point out and sometimes disrupt the world, in favor or against the hero's motivations (Halwani 2021: 721–726). And the shadow as the destructive darkness of negative and rejected qualities represented by the antagonist who opposes the hero and the cause, the latter becoming the light of truth who serves and sacrifices (Vogler, 1998: 8-9). The shadow would ultimately be represented by the villain who symbolizes, for the most part, negative qualities embodied in this character whose purpose is to destroy the hero and his cause (Voytilla and Vogler 1999). The hero must face the forces against him and defeat the shadow to achieve the triumph that determines the archetype of the hero for Campbell, as in the case of Odysseus, since it is the protagonist who “ventures out in search of knowledge and glory, returning home victorious, master of two worlds [Ordinary World and Special World], wiser and uplifting to those he encounters” (Borges 2018: 38). Broadly stated, this is the dominant structure of the heroic narratives existing until the present day.

This “nuclear unity”, together with Jung's archetype, carries the problem of equivalence of concepts between cultures due to their comparativism because of their bias towards differences and the banalization of cultures as producers of myths. And the contradiction of its absolutist and universal premise, since if there were only one culture, there would be nothing to compare, as the researcher and author Eric Csapo states in his book *Theories of Mythology* (Csapo 2005: 9–13). This has led to the criticism of the theories of the monomyth and the archetype for their “unmeasured illusion” of universality from literature, anthropology, and psychology. On the other hand, Csapo introduces a more lucid path by considering psychoanalysis as indispensable in the study of myth because, since the discovery of the unconscious and the analysis of dreams by Sigmund Freud, it is possible to approach universal symbolism and myth (as a collective

vision and source of information) in search of analogies between the development of the individual and societies (Csapo 2005: 92–93). A path that this thesis does not propose to cross.

The archetype then serves to deal with certain recurring characters, themes, symbols, and situations found in various stories that "aspire" to indicate the need for a constant in the human experience and psyche without a basis in the physical world but that are expressed in the world through art, literature, and religion (Taheri and Jalaly 2013: 184). For this reason, it is indispensable to state that the hero archetype as a theory here seeks to be the conceptual and historical foundation for the categorization of the figure of the anti-hero within the narratives analyzed and interpreted here. The archetype, undoubtedly, allows to settle both the research and the reader in a relevant frame of reference that allows mutual understanding in the exposition and development of this work because of the functionality of the archetype of the hero and the myth (even if its purpose is to find and match general patterns) is not to compare and hierarchize the anti-heroes within a universality by the mere fact of the similarities, but on the contrary, highlight the differences in their Discourses.

1.2 Hero and anti-hero

Although neither Jung nor Campbell postulated concretely what could be an archetype of the anti-hero, in the last decades, due to its prevalence in American literature, cinema, and television, several critics and academics have deciphered some of its characteristics to understand its role as a protagonist character of an endless number of narratives that endure in time due to its artistic importance and popularity. Therefore, it is necessary to enunciate some of the anti-hero's most basic and essential features and then complement them with a historical review that will allow at the end of this section to achieve a systematic comparison and differentiation between what is understood by the archetype of the hero and the anti-hero as a character, taking into account that in many occasions this line that differentiates them can be blurred.

The anti-hero has traditionally been associated with "bad" and/or "amoral" concepts mainly because of their general disinterest in the ordinary world and society due mainly to the preset norms and status quo. They "are often above the fray because they simply do not care or have

absolved themselves from taking a stand or having any goals which would require engagement with an opposing force" (White 2013: 4–5). However this does not detach the anti-hero from a certain inherent rebelliousness that makes him a critic and opponent of the behaviors of modern society (Li 2023: 280), since the anti-hero is unable to find anything really civilized in the system, so in principle, within these narratives where the anti-hero is the protagonist, there is no triumph to be achieved, but rather personal gains. This character, as a rebel who challenges the established hegemony, is situated at the limits of society (by choice or by birth) where, with the passage of time and his life experience, he has forged physical, emotional, and spiritual detachment from the system and the social structure, even though their actions and Discourse can be heroic and benefit someone other than him or her (White 2013: 14). The anti-hero, in effect, lacks many of the attributes of the conventional hero while borrowing qualities of the villain, such as apathy and dishonesty, mainly depending on circumstances, without ever assuming the role of antagonist (Simmons 2008: 106) but rather that of a non-conformist with some degree of superior abilities that make him stand out.

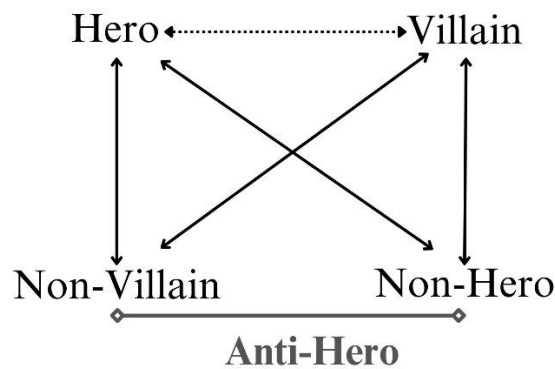


Figure 1.

Based on the mythological imperative dichotomy (good/evil or light/dark) and archetypal dichotomy (hero/shadow) that have always been seen as opposing forces the diagram in Figure 1 is intended to demonstrate how despite the hero and the villain are opposites (from their core), one archetype defines the other given that the hero by its own truth is defining the villain as its falsity. In the same way, the villain or shadow by defining itself as truth is already defining the hero as its falsity. Now, in this square in which the non-hero, as the negation of the hero, is defined precisely by these two contrarities just as the non-villain is the negation of the villain

that is defining itself again by these contrarities, for this analysis, it does not mean that these two (non-hero and non-villain) are then a falsity but rather another truth that this time is not contrary but complementary that constitutes the anti-hero.

The above does not imply that this research considers that every character that is not archetypically located as a non-hero and non-villain is by definition only an anti-hero, but that the characteristics of this character are found within the contrariness of the most essential characters in a story: the hero and the villain. Another reading, for example, could suggest the archetype of the trickster (secondary character) due to specific characteristics that can be seen reflected in what is categorized here as an anti-hero, such as the challenge to authority, trickery, and moral ambiguity. However, the anti-heroes are the central characters of the stories who deal directly with the action and the circumstances in an unconventional manner while facing their shadow for particular motivations, which in form and execution have nothing to do with the trickster, the mentor, the guardian, the herald or the shape-shifter⁴.

Therefore, the interest in the description and analysis of the legitimization of the anti-hero through Discourse, considering that the legitimization does not condition the hero and its heroic acts because the hero is acting according to its archetypal truth, as well as the villain and its antagonistic acts, by opposition, do not need to be legitimized because they are acting according to their archetype of shadow. While the anti-heroes, legitimize their values, beliefs, and actions towards themselves, their significant others, and society is essential, which is why, from a narrative and plot perspective, it makes their anti-hero's journey much more enriching for research.

It is evident that the conceptualization of the anti-hero is based on the archetype of the hero provided mainly by the study of universal mythology. However, instead of conditioning or limiting what is and what is not the anti-hero, it expands the possibilities of a more enriched categorization of this character from its theoretical delimitation during the last century to its

⁴ It is also important to highlight that archetypes for Joseph Campbell are masks that allow individuals to mark both their actions and decisions and the path they explore and understand the world. They can be used, removed, and interchanged within a narrative. An example of this is Obi-Wan Kenobi in the Star Wars saga, which develops the role of hero, mentor, and even villain, according to the events of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) for a lot of fans.

establishment as a trend in American literature, cinema, and television, which is one of the objectives of this thesis. However, more than introducing each of the concepts already presented here is required, so it is necessary to establish specific preliminary differences and similarities.

- Society recognizes the feats of the hero and the anti-hero by distinguishing them as characters out of the ordinary. However, in the latter's case, his acts are interpreted as purely individualistic, and his individuality is condemned (Buck 1986: 250), while the hero is celebrated.
- The anti-hero shares with the hero a preference to live outside society due to individuality. Although the hero does not explicitly break away from the system as an act of criticism or disapproval of society (Turner 2006: 104), the anti-hero does break away and/or pretend to subvert the society from within because of his repudiation of established values. As well as that, the hero and the anti-hero, unlike the villain, are not amoral because they are "loyal toward his [their] own and can thus be seen as following a moral code" (Vaage 2015: 39).
- The limits within the traditional narrative of the character as good or bad according to his actions and values do not apply in the case of the anti-hero because his behaviors can be considered "deviant" and complex. (Michaels 2018: 7).
- Both the hero and the anti-hero defy, to a lesser or greater extent, specific codes of society and face adversity because they have the courage and the ability to do so, even though the anti-hero "is not expected to be purely virtuous, only more virtuous in his actions than his adversaries" (Williams 2012: 7).
- The "anti-hero narratives push back against a traditional morality" (Michaels 2018: 10) while the heroes' narratives originate, preserve or promote hegemonic values. The core of the anti-hero resides in the fact that they "follow their own agenda without much regard to moral and societal codes" (Halwani 202: 720).

- Based on Jung's (1959) maxim that "the archetypal hero represents the psyche's quest for individuation, the process that makes each person unique" (Taheri and Jalaly 2013: 182), it could be concluded that the anti-hero has a direct relationship with the archetype of the hero since the development of individuality is a cornerstone of the narratives in which the anti-hero is the protagonist. This process of individuation here is valued to a greater extent for the reason that the hero develops, to a greater or lesser measure, within the parameters of the established, while the anti-hero is postulated as an individual outside the normative that from its journey, criticizes and subverts the status quo through its discourse and actions, which the traditional hero would refuse to assume or proclaim. For this same reason, there is an interest in analyzing and interpreting its use of language in its legitimization.

1.3 Historical overview of the anti-hero

The evolution of the anti-hero as a protagonist has been documented and analyzed mainly since the second half of the last century due to its presence and success in literature, film, and television, so here is a historical review along with some theoretical conclusions that have been established related to the role of the contemporary anti-hero mainly in the world of American art and entertainment in order to provide a general description of how this concept has been and still is used.

According to French theater critic and author Rosette C. Lamont (1976), it must be traced back to ancient Greece because Odysseus is the first true anti-hero due to factors such as his operating outside the established norm. For example, he faced war with ingenuity. After all, his most significant concern is to continue living and not to die with heroism - the Trojan horse was his idea, and he survived - in view of the fact that despite not being a purely virtuous being, his actions against the adversary are. His actions end up being morally correct and saving the community (Williams 2012: 6–7). Odysseus “embodies many of the values of the anti-hero in his use of guile and subterfuge rather than strength to defeat his foes” (White 2013: 8) because in addition to the Trojan horse, this epic character flees from the Cyclops without actually using physical strength directly but using his intellect to defeat him after leaving him blind while he sleeps (White 2013). This could be criticized for not being considered proper of a traditional

hero with honor, even though the contests between men, demi-gods, gods, and mythological monsters may establish other parameters for interpreting this contest.

On the other hand, we have the loyal Theseus, who to the writer Anne Ward in her book *The Quest for Theseus* (1970) is “the most famous and revered of all the heroes of ancient Athens”(Ward 1970: 7). Theseus can be recognized by “his many feats of strength, such as defeating the Minotaur and the Bull of Marathon. According to Robert Graves (1955), Theseus is also credited by several ancient sources with accomplishing other epic feats, including founding the first democracy, minting the first coins, creating the first commonwealth, and establishing the first Olympic Games”(Williams 2012: 22). At the same time, he is famous , like many other mythological characters, for the use of violence and his furious spirit, for murdering bandits and raping his daughters, for his jealousy and anger, and above all, for his lust that caused not only significant problems for him but also to his family and all of Greece as in the case of kidnapping Helen of Troy and Persephone, Queen of the Underworld and wife of Hades. (Williams 2012: 26) The list and analysis of the great characters of ancient Greece under this direction could continue e.g. with Oedipus by virtue that for “The ancient Greeks did not require perfection from their heroes, only greatness” (Rosenberg 2010: 23).

In the case of plays, one can find debates about Shakespeare’s Richard III in the eponymous play (1592) on whether or not he can be considered an anti-hero of the Renaissance due to his malicious and Machiavellian monologues (Michaels 2018: 8). In literature, *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes (1605) has been mentioned as an authentic anti-hero due to his vulgar mockery of the chivalric knights for his duels against windmills (White 2013: 8). Also, the claim of the Austrian writer Lillian Furst makes it clear that the predecessor of the modern anti-hero is the Romantic Hero; “as an ironically detached and self-absorbed character that is unconcerned with serving any cause greater than himself” (White 2013: 10). In the same way, in the book *Rogues in Print: Crime and Culture in Early Modern London* (2019), The researcher Lena Liapi explained how, in the pamphlets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during the urbanization process of London, some “criminal” characters were introduced in these short fictions to maintain the hegemonic position and state order. This, over time, gave the beginnings of a type of anti-hero because they became a character “emblematic of urban life where the lack of morals, deceit, and trickery are the means of coping with

changing social and economic realities” (Halwani 2021: 720). Therefore, the perception of the anti-hero as a character somehow related to the conception of the urban and the supposed idea of economic and social progress that will continue to rumble until today is already identified.

The anti-hero was present in the literature of the last century with characters such as Humbert in *Lolita* (1955), Alexander DeLarge in *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Tom Ripley in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), with male protagonists whose deviant morals and actions create confusion and discomfort for the readers (Varotsi 2019: 133). But over all of these characters from the last century, it is worth mentioning those in the work of the Algerian-French philosopher and writer Albert Camus. As heroes are entirely products of society, under the devastating and depressing yoke of the Second World War and the post-war period, the anti-hero becomes the main protagonist of the novels, characterized by his particular social behavior that rebels against the norms of an inhumane modern world:

The anti-hero was born in the post-modernist literature of the twentieth century and is not as great as the hero. On the contrary, most of them are just ordinary people who do not want to follow the laws of society and are hardly disturbed by the outside world, preferring to listen to their own inner thoughts and pursue their own freedom. They are independent and sober in a world of disturbances, and from another point of view, they are also lonely and lost. But when faced with hardship or a great setback, they will not choose to give up, but try to persevere to reach their goals, even though sometimes their goals are difficult to achieve. (Li, 2023: 280)

In the particular case of Mersault in *The Outsider* (1942), *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), and Dr. Bernard Rieux in *The Plague* (1947), the protagonists reject heroism because, in simple words, they do not find the meaning of it or they don't care. Not even death is a real inconvenience since his destiny is the search for his freedom - instead of meaning - through the possibility of resistance that, for example, project the pursuit of "Sisyphus's happiness as an anti-hero" (Li 2023: 282). It should be noted that these works are the basis of the philosophy of the absurd for which Camus is recognized. One of the causes for the appearance of these new protagonists was the revolutionary optimism that emerged after the Second World War and during the Vietnam War, with the “repeated representation of human characters whose 'anti-heroic' nature reaffirms a belief in the individual” (Simmons 2008: 152) leaving aside institutionalism, society, religion, and nationalist ideologies as shapers of the modern subject.

One of the reasons why the anti-hero was the favorite protagonist of these and many other works in Western and primarily American literature was because of the perception that the traditional hero could no longer exist, or at least fit; an example of this was the postmodern novelist John Barth who in his book *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) understood that modern protagonists should be paranoid, disillusioned and confused characters in the presence of the chaos of reality. Thus, since the 1960s, the approach of “the resurgence of the anti-heroic quest is a psychological and literary motif in contemporary postmodern fiction used as a tool applied to refract the contemporary issues” (Borges 2018: 14-15). Understanding here within this context that “motifs are nothing more than conscious representations” (Zhu and Han 2013: 324).

In cinema, we can distinguish the first glimpses of the term anti-hero in the tormented urban heroes and “*femme fatale*” of film noir, although it is in the Western genre with the *Dollar Trilogy* (1964-1965) by filmmaker Sergio Leone with Clint Eastwood as the protagonist that the term anti-hero begins to be popularly used (Drappa 2016: 6). It is in these spaghetti westerns that the “Man with No Name” breaks with the relation of terms in a notion of opposition that was symbolically manifested and used until then where there was only place for the mythical dualities of good/evil, hero-society/villains, strong/weak, and civilization/ wilderness. This was the starting point for perceiving the hero without a predominant connotation of good or bad values (Danesi 2010: 142). It is no longer black and white but gray.

Undoubtedly, cinema has created some of the most iconic anti-heroes that can be catalogued as universal references. Three essential examples are: Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* (1972-1990), Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* (1976) and Han Solo in *Star Wars* (1977). These films and their characters have two characteristics worth mentioning; all three films are from the 1970s, so their premiere was during or shortly after the Vietnam War, and these characters are war veterans. First of all, these were very successful films that appeared during the war and at the same time during the hippie movement, which represented an “ideological shifts in popular culture” (Turner, 2006: 106) and secondly it is quite suggestive that war and tragedy are the origin and background of Michael as a veteran of World War II, Travis as a veteran of the Vietnam War and Han as an outsider and rebel against the Galactic Empire.

In the seventies, it was precisely when the anti-hero established himself as the protagonist of entertainment in cinemas. During this decade, the solution to conflicts through particular senses of justice began to stand out, where the protagonist made amoral decisions to end or punish enemies in a violent manner and with the aim of non-repetition and/or retribution to the law and authority, many times not precisely the institutional, legal and legitimate one. Although, in this case, the methods adopted were more typical of the villain stereotype and not the anti-hero, an example could be *Dirty Harry* (1971), Clint Eastwood franchise (White 2013: 6), which was already closer to the idea of a fascist vigilante and paramilitary agent. And this was how the consumers “were now in an odd position of sympathizing with morally dubious characters” (Lyons 2021: 226).

Likewise, the anti-hero boomed on American television (more precisely on cable TV) at the beginning of this century with Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos* and with the protagonists of the crime drama *The Wire*, both series produced by HBO. These two productions have their origin and ideological basis in the contexts of criminality, social injustice and economic crisis in which later with “[t]he rise of the anti-hero [in television] appears to coincide with the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001; the impact of the attacks and America’s subsequent involvement in the Iraq War led to greater moral ambiguity in the United States” (Lyons 2021: 226). The anti-heroes in these series do not specifically have a past or trauma with a foreign war, but rather they were born into a community where they “follow narrative arcs that lead to their downfall and moral degradation” (Gutiérrez Delgado *et al.* 2022: 949). In Tony's case, he was born into the nucleus of a family of Italian origin, leaders of the mafia in New Jersey. His criminal life starts at a very young age due to his context and father. Tony himself expresses it several times in reflections such as: “My father was in it. My uncle was in it. Maybe I was too lazy to think for myself.” He also explains that “[t]here was a time when the Italian people didn’t have a lot of options” and that his choice “put food on the table” (Lyons 2021:240). Whereas in *The Wire*, the protagonists, mostly African-American, are confronted with crime, violence, and corruption due to the context of street life in Baltimore.

Clearly the shift in the anti-hero concept that these series brought to television set a new trend in the main character that continues today. HBO imposed a strongly masculine hero type, “a likeable figure that refuses to fit into the confines of mainstream society, [with] an endorsement

of an alternative lifestyle and marginal peoples" (Simmons 2008: 157) among which we can mention the following: Dexter Morgan in *Dexter* (2006-2013) Dr. Gregory House in *House* (2004-2012), Jimmy McGill/Saul Goodman in *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) and *Better Call Saul* (2015-2022), Frank Underwood in *House of Cards* (2013-2018), Jax Teller in *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-2014), Matt Murdock in *Daredevil* (2015-2018), Tommy Shelby in *Peaky Blinders* (2013-2022), The Mandalorian in *The Mandalorian* (2019-), and as examples of anti-heroine women we find: Nancy Botwin in *Weeds* (2005-2012), Daenerys Targaryen in *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) and Powder/Jinx in *Arcane* (2021-), where they "confronts the traditional notion that women are meant to be likable, charming, sympathetic, and desirable" (Michaels 2018: 43) An aspect that could be analyzed from a feminist perspective and the conjuncture of phenomena like the MeToo movement.

The series that have been analyzed the most over the years are *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Better Call Saul* because their characters can coincide or differ in several aspects, such as:

While Tony Soprano and Walter White are shown to eschew any loyalty to the capitalistic system of gainful employment as they descend further into the criminal world, Jimmy's particular journey from James McGill to Saul Goodman is a more despairing portrait of America's paradoxical rhetoric on the American dream, promising success and advancement but only for those willing to forfeit their individuality. (Lyons 2021: 244)

At this point, the question arises as to why these types of characters are so appealing in most American drama series that have had such an impact on both the cable television industry and streaming platforms, as well as on popular culture. Why was the distinctly conservative heroic character who within his narrative arc promoted a range of Christian and pro-capitalist values and beliefs relegated? Where is the cowboy hero, policeman, businessman, or superhero with strict morals and faith in the institutionality, the system, and the country? One of its causes, if not the main one, is precisely the "ideological shift" mentioned above. Because as it happened in literature, the entertainment industries understood that:

While the hero figure serves to strengthen the ideological status quo, by encouraging our support for an ideal, the antihero induces the reader [spectator] to question the ideology behind the heroic model by virtue of its radical stance toward the 'normal' order of things. By undermining the heroic superiority of the cowboy with the anti-heroic form, writers of the 1960s now [producers] present the figure as being no different from the "ordinary man on the street". (Simmons 2008: 89)

The identification process is different because, due to the societal context, the spectator experiences a type of catharsis. When the anti-hero breaks or ignores what is considered morally correct on the screen, the individual supports the development of the character's narrative, even though it is clear that his actions would not be acceptable in real life, i.e. “the antihero series has established a set of narrative conventions” (Vaage 2015: 106-182). In this era in which the duality by opposition does not predominate – “good cop and bad criminal” - the analysis of this phenomenon becomes even more interesting but at the same time broader because of its complexity.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that the anti-hero has been studied and analyzed based mainly on case studies (*Breaking Bad, Dexter, The Sopranos*) where the most significant interest has been morality - a famous example of this approach is the book called *The Antihero in the American Television* (2015) written by Dr. Margrethe Bruun Vaage – or under the psychological theory and practice. However, for this thesis, they will only be briefly outlined because the psychological emphasis on the spectator is not entirely in the focus of this research.

1.4 Psychology and audience reception overview

The following are some of these approaches from psychology and audience research.

- **Affective Disposition Theory:** This theory indicates that the cornerstone of viewer enjoyment is evaluating and engaging with the morally ambiguous narratives that guide the protagonist's behaviors and motivations (Shafer and Raney 2012: 2). This enjoyment occurs when its function manages to form an entire interaction with the narrative or plot, causing empathy, pleasure, indifference, or displeasure with the subject's perceptions (Raney *et al.* 2009: 4). Attractive because of the " game " relationship that retains the spectator for the engagement of their judgment.
- **Abnormal psychology:** This leans more towards the anti-hero's behavior to normatively evaluate it within what is considered moral and human. The average viewer does not share the same judgment of a character with a “mental disorder” that makes him or her, for example, a psychopath (Michaels 2018: 47). That consequently could lead to

awareness and reevaluation of the possibility of these fictitious perspectives or desensitization on the part of the spectator.

- **Moral Disengagement Theory:** This concept of social psychology is based on the fact that both ethics and morality apply differently depending on the context (which is crucial in the study of the anti-hero.), thus managing to separate the subject's judgment and reactions from what they see. Generally around violence and sex. “These cues are instances in a narrative when the immoral act gets some sort of justification, be it due to casualty, circumstance, or character buildup” (Halwani 2021: 726).
- **Story Schema Theory:** this theory is intended to explain how the preconceived moral evaluations of the anti-hero are the starting point that forms our affective disposition, as mentioned by the American professor and researcher Arthur A. Raney in his article. “Moral Judgment as a Predictor of Enjoyment of Crime Drama” (2009) (McCormack 2017: 147). Because the “antihero story schema can establish and trigger a context in which quick moral judgments can be made in line with the justification offered through the moral disengagement cues, despite the moral complexity of the acts in question” (Janicke and Raney 2014: 7–8). Theory in which the legitimization processes undoubtedly play a major role.

2. NARRATIVE AND MYTH

Throughout this thesis, the concept of narrative is referred to since “is the fundamental way in which we humans make sense of our existence” (Ribó 2019: 3). This term, which comes from the Latin *narro* ('to tell'), essentially defines its function within any language, be it oral, written or film. The narrative is omnipresent in myths, novels, kinesthetic, comedies, dramas, paintings, and TV series scripts and must be understood “as the semiotic representation of a sequence of events, meaningfully connected by time and cause” (*Ibid*, 2). These semiotic representations, which connect a series of events based on time and cause, are signs for both senders and receivers, thus creating a network of meanings that allow us as human beings to relate to each other and our environment (*Ibid*, 3). Taking a step further in terms of narratology as the study of the structure of narrative, the Catalan writer and philosopher Ignasi Ribó considers it indispensable to link this discipline with semiotics considering that both have in common the interest in:

[T]he study of meaning-making processes, and in particular the use of signs and signifying systems to communicate meanings. In this sense, it is important to realise that narratological models are not so much concerned with explaining individual narratives, but rather they attempt to identify the underlying semiotic system that makes narrative production and reception possible. (Ribó 2019: 9)

For the German literature theorist Werner Wolf, narrative functions as a frame of particular stories through specific media and various forms of transmission employed as a means of communication from experience, memory, or imagination to enable “the identification and interpretation of certain phenomena” (Wolf 2003: 182–185). Wolf defines the three essential cultural functions of the narrative as follows: first, the 'experiential function' that “enables a conscious perception of time and thus contributes to creating and stabilizing a central epistemological category as a basis of human experience” (*Ibid*, 184). Secondly, there is the 'philosophical [semiotic] function' which gives meaning to the experience, and lastly, there is the 'communicative function' which is “re-presenting and storing memorable sequences of experience” (*Ibid*, 184). This emphasis on narrative and its functions carries the potential perception and the meaning-making of any story, on the basis that “story” will be understood here as “the content of [the] narrative [because the] story is not told directly by the implied author to the implied reader. It is the narrator (a figure of discourse) who tells the story to a

narratee [or recipient] (another figure of discourse)” (Ribó 2019: 10). Such a story is developed within the framework of time and space using characters that represent a particular experience of any phenomenon for both the narrator and the addressee (ideally), which is achieved through the incorporation of discourse or, in simpler words, as defined by the Irish philosopher Richard Kearney: “All narrative discourse involves someone narrating something to someone about something” (Kearney, 1997, p. 183). This can only be achieved, from a post-structuralist point of view, from the characters' Discourse.

Discourse in verbal language, which is the focus of interest in this case, is the primary source of characterizing the characters within a story; what they say and how they say it is the cornerstone of the narrative arc of, for example, the protagonist. This semiotic system shapes the characters themselves and the others about the real or fictional world in which they live since it communicates beliefs, purposes, values, ideologies, and meanings via interaction with others (Ribó 2019: 58). After all, narrative “is also a social activity involving different participant roles” (Ochs 1997: 199). On the other hand, as a consequence of the use of Discourse in the interactions within the narratives, the dialogue appears as a fundamental resource that “contributes both to the development of plot and to the characterisation of characters” (Ribó, 2019: 60). The discourses and characterizing protagonists are the focus of analysis in the study of the protagonism of the anti-hero in the television series chosen for this research due to the interest in identifying the processes of these characters with their significant others through this spoken interaction⁵. This exploration is based on the premise that “narrative theory assumes that the unit of analysis is ultimately an entire narrative, understood as a concrete story of some aspect of the world, complete with characters, settings, outcomes or projected outcomes and plot” (Baker 2010: 349). To be found below in the material for research, discussion, and analysis.

The myth, in broad terms, could be defined “as a narrative which is considered socially important, and is told in such a way to allow the entire social collective to share a sense of this importance” (Csapo 2005: 9). Narrative, which function activates needs, desires, and ideas in each individual within a social group reflected in these stories, is a form of social

⁵ Otherwise, it would be the monologues that would predominate.

communication “dialogue” in the creation of meaning from the combination of the natural and its transformation into language. For Claude Lévi-Strauss, the function of myth is to provide a solution -not entirely logical- to cultural contradictions by mediating them to reveal their -same- deep structure (Csapo 2005: 219-227) for their interpretation as supporters of institutional values.

These stories came to negotiate the contradictions between the natural world and human beings, two different narratives, resolving in a symbolic form mainly through oppositions such as life and death, light and dark, and good and evil (Turner 2006:83). Being part of any culture since they give origin or reflect what is essential for the society in which they are transmitted, at the same time that society, when describing itself, informs others about its existence and particularities at the moment of representing and interpreting reality. Myths unite culturally and are the first level that makes sense of the combination between the literality and the perception of diverse social relations and practices (Williams 2012: 47–48).

The myth as a “universal narrative” is of crucial relevance because the study of it helps to understand the transformation of signs and how symbols operate; at the same time, as a “collective representation”, it has a social and cultural function, which, like legitimization, is the justification of reality. Ronald Barthes, who was strongly influenced by the linguistic turn and the ideas of Ferdinand Saussure, in his book *Mythologies* (1957), stresses the value of semiology because it “has taught us that myth has the task of giving a historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (Barthes 1972 [1957]: 142). For Barthes, the myth is a language in itself, *a type of speech*, a system of communication, but ultimately, it is a mode of signification characterized by its form, which societies adopt in the course of history, given that the myth survives thanks to the fact that it is transmitted through discourse, whether oral, written or by images. From the signifying consciousness, that is, the capacity to be aware of the physical form of the linguistic sign that contrasts with the associated meaning, the “mythical discourse” functions because it is based on this *already* worked and existing material that enables communication to take place from the understanding of signifier “as the final term of the linguistic system, or as the first term of the mythical system” (*Ibid*, 115). Likewise, it is essential to point out that in the same way societies appropriate myth from their particular historical context to convert certain reality into discourse, within the myth, the

history and origin of things become untraceable, so the memory is eventually lost. For this reason, myth is usually the instrument that is most used and ideologically permeated in society because it fulfills “a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us” (*Ibid*, 107-115). Therefore, Barthes' theory of myth offers a framework for discussing the processes of legitimization.

Now, within the framework of Western societies, the American novelist John G. Cawelti refers to the hero as a foundational myth⁶ both in fiction and in reality since the hero is perceived as an integral and innocent character who, despite his controversial acts, given that he or she represents the hegemonic discourse, are explained and justified in a narrative that does not question his or her morality. An example of this would be classic North American Western films where the violence against the “savage” native by the white man was a source of both entertainment and “mythical discourse” regarding the conquest of the West in North American foundational mythology for mass culture (Paul 2014: 342). In addition, there is the American Dream as a foundational myth of North America that individuals can interpret to justify both their actions and their expectations of themselves and society, as this myth ultimately guides, promotes, and protects specific values and norms whose maxim is the expectation of progress (Huntington 2016: 84–85). This myth or “public dreams” function because they give meaning to the perception of individual freedom, which is embedded in the foundational discourse of a country and, at the same time, contributes to the maintenance of the social order that characterizes this culture (Fisher 1973: 160–167). This concept is often specifically related to a particular economic security and domestic welfare propagandist of capitalism, for decades, the American Dream has permeated every aspect of reality and everyday life as an ideological system that carries a sense of identity and as the “most powerful sacred secular narrative in American society” (Rowland and Jones 2011: 127). The sense above of identity is crystallized both in heroic individualism and in the figure of the self-made man whose function is to personify the hegemonic discourse and thus be established as an ideal role - albeit a biased one

⁶ Foundational myth is understood here as the repertoire of a "usable past" that fixes the invention of genealogical tradition, in this case, establishing the heroes (and villains) of the past and present in order to construct and affirm an "imagined community" as America. These narratives, which spread locally and globally due to their mercantilization and cultural exportation (e.g. cinema), set in circulation particular hegemonic struggles that appear and reappear in memory through different media and scenarios (Paul 2014: 12–30). This concept is entirely related to the work on myth by Ronald Barthes and the theories of collective memory and cultural memory by Aleida Assman and Jan Assman.

- to be followed for the sake of capitalist benefit (Paul 2014: 368–369), thus reinforcing a whole framework of values and beliefs that are taken for granted but are intended to continue to be reproduced by any ordinary citizen.

3. DISCOURSE OF LEGITIMIZATION

3.1 Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis

In their book, Berger and Luckmann devote some pages to discussing the importance of language and its role in the social construction of reality because, without language and the symbolism that guides human society, it would not be possible to transmit and preserve anything over time. They state that language as a system of signs is the cornerstone of any society because language ultimately embodies both experiences and meanings due to its capacity to crystallize subjectivity and to communicate to the other, thus providing “logic on the objectivated social world” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 36–82). Therefore, it is necessary, due to the interest of this thesis, to understand the Discourse and its intrinsic relationship with the use of language by the “speaking subject” or the “subject in process” to comprehend how Critical Discourse Analysis “need no imply any lack of interest in linguistic form, but it does suggest that attention will be given to other questions, such as who is using language and what purposes it is serving for its users in a particular context” (Cameron and Panovic 2014: 6). This interest in the language *above* the sentence “looks for patterns (structure, organization) in units which are larger, more extended, than sentence” (Cameron 2001: 11) that are fixed in the beliefs and interactions of the subjects in the communicative act, which in this case will be achieved through the discourses.

Discourse should, therefore, be understood mainly from the symbolic interaction of the very act of communication - verbal or not - produced, understood, and interpreted among humans based on a shared knowledge or specific context (such as the institutional one) between the “speaking subject” and the listener or receiver (Bloor and Bloor 2007: 6-7). From discourse, the text emerges as a meaningful record to interpret and explain the connections in the communicative acts that provide coherence and intentionality that make its analysis possible.

At the beginning of the article called *A dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis in social research*, the English sociolinguist Norman Fairclough offers certain notions of how discourse is usually understood and used, which, at this point, it is relevant to mention: “(a) meaning-making as an element of the social process, (b) the language associated with a

particular social field or practice (eg ‘political discourse’), [and] (c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (eg a ‘neo-liberal discourse of globalization’)” (Fairclough 2016: 86). Although in this paper Fairclough chooses to use the term semiosis because of its generality, in another of his works titled *Critical Discourse Analysis*, Fairclough, along with the Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak, describes discourse strictly ‘as a social practice that maintains and reproduces the status quo because every discursive event is conditioned, framed, and shaped by social institutions and structures. However, as they stress, this dialectical relationship is mutual, so such practices also contribute to transforming them’ (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258).

The analysis of discourses is not limited here to analyzing certain text types to find their specific meaning. Rather, the purpose is the study of the utilization of these semiotic resources as elements that frame meaning during social interaction (Kress 2010: 10) in context through time and their signifying potential (van Leeuwen, 2005: 5) that shape knowledge by containing certain “statements”, in Foucault's terms, about aspects of the world and physical, social and mental reality that have been constructed by different agents, each with their perspectives and interpretations (Fairclough 2016: 88). The very bonding of discourse with semiotics or “social semiotics” by Critical Discourse Analysis⁷ scholars is established by the need for a rigorous and interdisciplinary multimodal approach that goes beyond the traditional analysis of the linguistic text, that is, in an interest in addressing language as a medium of representation and communication of its material realizations (Kress *et al.*, 1997: 258). The interest here lies in understanding and assessing the particularities of semiotic forms in cultures, mainly in Western culture, starting from a critical stance (Frankfurt School) on:

[T]he social origins and production of text as much as on the reading of text [...] to draw attention to all forms of meaning-making as a social activity [...] We [CDA] assume that the interests of the maker of a sign lead to a *motivated relation between signifier and signified*, and therefore to motivated signs. The maker of the sign seeks to produce the most apt representation of her or his meaning. The sign-maker's *interest* is therefore coded directly in the formal means of representation and communication. [where] Ideology is thus a factor of all the modes involved. (Kress *et al.*, 1997: 258–259)

⁷ In the future, this text will refer to Critical Discourse Analysis by its acronym CDA.

As a premise, CDA develops an ideological work that evidences the power relations of the discourse that constitutes society and culture from a historical perspective (in most cases) to interpret and explain the relationship between text and society that is mediated in this form of social action (O'Halloran 2003: 12). Although CDA is not a singular method because, to mention some of the most recognized, there is the transdisciplinary emphasis of the Dialectical-Relation Approach developed by Norman Fairclough, the tracing of diachronic changes in discourse by Ruth Wodak with the Discourse-Historical Approach, or the discourse structures from the Sociocognitive Approach of Teun van Dijk. These different CDA approaches aim at analyzing social problems, such as injustice, racism, misogyny, xenophobia, abuse of power, etc., that are crystallized and create meaning in a determined context by means of the use of language in different "genres" or semiotic ways like newspapers, advertising, political speeches, novels, history books, television or the Internet.

This ideological emphasis, which is based on the theoretical tradition (e.g., Antonio Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, and Louis Althusser) of CDA scholars, assumes that beliefs, attitudes, and thought patterns are constructed mainly from ideology, which contributes to the maintenance of the interaction of individuals in society, even though in many cases certain ideological positions may not be evident at first glance. At the same time, there is the conception of social practices that involve conventions or established rules that permeate individuals as actors within their cultural environment that provide a representation of aspects of the world and the constitution of identities (Bloor and Bloor 2007: 8-13). For this reason, critical analysis is necessary to make them visible.

3.2 Legitimization

The process of legitimization through the discourse of the protagonists of contemporary TV series whose characters have been defined as anti-heroes is the main interest of this research, so at this point, it is necessary to explain what will be understood by legitimization and its characteristics, in order to be able to extrapolate this theoretical framework to the units of analysis. To begin with this conceptualization, it is imperative to explore the work of the Austrian-American sociologists Peter Ludwig Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their famous book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), the strategies of legitimization from the

sociolinguist Antonio Reyes, and the communicative strategies in the Discourse through language of the Dutch linguist Theo van Leeuwen.

Berger and Luckmann's first statement imposing the importance of legitimacy is found in their book when they mention that “the institutional world requires legit, that is, ways by which it can be 'explained' and justified” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 79), since both in everyday life and with significant others the individuals are constantly communicating meanings at the social level that sustain and build the institutionalism that in itself varies in its methods as a historical process in search of objectification. Through the production of new meanings, legitimation integrates the already associated institutional meanings because “as a 'second-order' objectivation of meaning [...] make objectively available and subjectively plausible the 'first-order' objectivations that have been institutionalized” (*Ibid*, 110). Institutionalization is understood as the roots that ground social reality as a construction (repeated actions, which become a pattern) to successfully perceive structures, norms, practices, and beliefs as already taken for granted or “natural” aspects of the world and human experience and activity, so that consequently the processes of legitimation “not only tells the individual why he *should* perform one action and not another; it also tells him why things *are* what they are. In other words, 'knowledge' precedes 'values' in the legitimation of institutions” (*Ibid*, 111). The four different levels of legitimation that the authors propose are: the first level of traditional statements such as “This is how things are done”, the second with propositions such as sayings and stories, the third based on specialized theories of knowledge, on this occasion it is the fourth level constituted by the symbolic universes on which this study will focus.

The symbolic universe has encompassed the objectivized meanings in the course of the events of the history of society and the individual since it is here that the accumulated events and knowledge that allow us to understand the production of meanings that ultimately legitimize the institutional order are crystallized. The symbolic universe legitimizes and 'puts everything in its right place' as a totality to individuals in their social roles, from the most trivial aspects of everyday life to their identity and dreams through the integration of the -correct- social reality. (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 113–118). However, this process of explanation and justification that legitimization grants become more complex due to the severe problem of death since it must be guaranteed that the symbolic universe as a totality links the individual with his

predecessors and successors to maintain the institutional order (status quo) that can be interrupted or altered by multiple historical and ideological factors (*Ibid*, 120–145). This is why myth manifests itself for these sociologists here as universe-maintenance in the ultimate instance.

Considering the above conceptualization, it is relevant to state the strategies individuals use to justify their actions are discursive. Thus the relevance Critical Discourse Analysis that is interested “in the way in which language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and in the part this use plays in social maintenance and change” (Bloor and Bloor 2007: 2). Now, it must be assumed that every process of legitimization has an aim which is the approval of the other about something, this approval is achieved through an assertion, shaped by language, which explains the reason why certain behaviors, motivations, ideological positions or decisions are the correct ones. Nevertheless, this explanation or justification is structured from certain sociocultural bases and experiences that have generally been naturalized in the individual and in his/her relationship with the social sphere. Even so, in fields such as politics, for example, the context and institutional authority play an essential role in achieving its objective, considering that, depending on the case, the validity and credibility of the justification or explanation lies in who controls the action (Reyes 2011: 782-784). It is not the same the justification for exterminating an enemy in a video game, television series, or war somewhere in the world, in the same way, that it was not the same to convince the colonizer to approve the Manifest Destiny doctrine of the nineteenth century with an argument coming from a military authority (as a symbolic power), than to convince the colonized Native Americans.

In addition, Antonio Reyes⁸ (2011:785–804) proposes five categories of legitimization, each with its own particular type of strategy, which will be defined in a synthesized manner below.

- Legitimization through emotions: this alludes to the tension between two sides of the same story through emotions such as fear, anger, or sympathy to represent the actions and behavior of “the other”, exploiting the emotional potential that can be used to distort reality.

⁸ This author considers and develops here the four categories previously proposed by Theo van Leeuwen (authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization and mythopoesis).

- Legitimization through a hypothetical future: the future is approached as something tied to the actions of the other, linguistically using the conditional (if) to represent hypotheses about the present or future or deductions from the past. In this case, collective memory and a common belief generally appeal to action on a problem yet to come. However, in reality - like the future itself - it is usually unknown.
- Legitimization through rationality: rationalization as a *modus operandi* determines what 'makes sense' to make a well-thought-out decision that is legitimized as logical and correct to succeed within a specific culture.
- Voice of expertise: this is achieved through the 'authorization' of 'knowledge statements' by experts, or sources considered the official and institutional discourse.
- Altruism: in this category, legitimization is achieved based on the idea of the 'common good' and the benefit of the other, hierarchizing specific moral values that tend to point out villains, victims, and heroes to justify the actions taken as being for the good of the “unprotected”.

It should be noted that for Theo van Leeuwen and Critical Discourse Analysis scholars, the mass media has a fundamental role in these legitimization strategies because they justify and institute diverse social practices. Thus, the analysis of the linguistic and historical discourse is crucial (van Leeuwen, 2007:106). In the mythopoesis category, this author stresses the importance of stories as symbolic actions that determine what is legitimate and rewarded and what is illegitimate and punished due to their capacity to represent an already institutionalized social practice. At the same time, that the characters in the stories can be represented as “role models” because of their participation in maintaining or restoring the legitimate order and the “discourses of value” (van Leeuwen, 2007:106-109). Stories that here are attended as the referenced television series and “role models” that are the protagonists of these.

Despite the multiple approaches to the problem of whether legitimization should be thought of in a universal or particular way depending on the characteristics of historical societies and their

context, it is valuable to consider the framework provided by belief systems and the idea of power, given that the former contributes to legitimize the latter, expressed by the consent that can be reflected in reality in a symbolic and normative way, as usually happens in the political sphere with, for example, plebiscites. Except in the case of the use of violence or coercive means, both power and institutionality ultimately require the consent of the other and their “naturalized” belief system in order to be justified within certain limits, or in other words: “A given power relationship is not legitimate because people believe in its legitimacy, but because it can *be justified in terms of* their beliefs” (Beetham 2013: 11). Beliefs that are already ingrained there.

Finally, returning to Berger and Luckmann's proposal regarding myth as the last instance of legitimization, as “the most archaic form of universe-maintenance” (Berger and Luckmann: 1967: 128), it is in the interest of this thesis to delve into the mythological forms in human thought to be able to extrapolate it to the discursive analysis of the anti-hero as the protagonist that originates the contemporary American television series.

4. RESEARCH OBJECT AND METHOD

4.1 Research object

This research considers as units of analysis the dialogues (discourses) of the first episodes (also called pilots) of the five selected series and the plot arc of their characters since it is assumed that it is here where the Discourse as a shaper of the subject's identity exerts its function. The study works with television series classified as “dramas” produced and/or distributed by cable television companies and streaming platforms that have been a referent in this “New Golden Age” of contemporary American television. Age that established a new type of stories and non-traditional structures which, as writer and journalist Brett Martin explains in his book *Difficult Men: Behind the Scenes of a Creative Revolution: from The Sopranos and The Wire to Mad Men and Breaking Bad* (2013), highlights the reduction in the number of episodes⁹ and the coherent interrelation and continuity between each of the seasons due to the meticulousness and limitless creativity of the screenwriters who focused on the consolidation of a solid and intriguing narrative (Martin 2013: 5–6). Therefore, from this novel way of understanding and watching television, within the framework of its artistic and technological revolution, the research and analysis of the series as works of art of mass consumption is developed here.

At the beginning of the chapter entitled *Should We Do This? Can We Do This?* Brett Martin states that “Every great TV show tells its whole story in its pilot. Often in just one line” (Martin 2013: 51), given that it is this first episode (or episode zero) that must “build the universe” of the story to narrate in a way that is both entertaining and convincing for the network that will finance or not the project and its seasons and for the spectator who has to be hooked by what they watch and motivated by what they could see in the future only if they “enter” in the universe and the story proposed in the pilot (Martin 2013: 51–52). The essence, the atmosphere, the tempo, the style, the conflict, the premise, and above all the most characteristic and memorable traits of the characters are presented in this episode of no more than an hour long with the purpose of, in simple words, selling itself as a product. Simultaneously, it is here where,

⁹ This represented a reduced economic risk for the production companies.

through the exposition and dialogue between the characters, it is possible to identify the type of hero who is the protagonist of the narrative, which in this case is the anti-hero and its Discourse.

This analysis, as mentioned above, concentrates mainly on the discourses between the anti-hero protagonist and their significant others and the other characters that surround them in order to distinguish within the use of their Discourse the processes of legitimization that they practice from their beliefs and values to justify and explain their actions. The discourses, by excerpts, are transcriptions made by the author from original language (English) and using the subtitles the platforms offer as a reference to point. This is because access to the original scripts is quite limited on the Internet due to, among other things, copyright. However, sometimes it is possible to access them in their entirety or at least fragments of them; these sources are to be used for backup purposes only.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that discourse is the core of this analysis due to its contribution to the plot and the arc of the characters as a consequence of the use of speech that makes possible the interactions within the narrative (Ribó 2019: 60), this research is not able to address the other components of these audiovisual products also important for the analysis of the selected pilot chapters. The visual language, such as the framing, color palette, montage, wardrobe, etc., actor delivery or performance, and the music rarely be referenced in this analysis. The focus of this thesis is the “hard text” from the discourses because of the need to set specific parameters to delimit this analysis based on the theoretical framework proposed here and the author's interest in stressing the fundamental role of Discourse that constitutes the relationships and meaning of the world (Locke 2004: 6) both in reality and fiction.

4.2 Method

The first step of analysis will be to make a synopsis of the plot of the series and mention certain particularities of them. Secondly, it will be justified why the protagonist of this audiovisual product is considered an anti-hero based on the conceptualization of this character and in the historical overview of the previous chapter, and finally, the systematization of the research material will be carried out in a table sustained by the discussion of Theo van Leeuwen in his

book *Discourse and Practice: new tools for critical discourse analysis* (2008) which will be divided as follows:

- Actor(s): Here is the anti-hero protagonist as an individual whose agency contributes to the construction of identity, relationships, ideologies, and social meanings through its Discourse, in this case, using discourses as a linguistic resource in its purpose of legitimization (van Leeuwen 2008: 23–55). The main characters as a “speaking subject” and the receiver will be found by proper name, understood as symbolic tools used in social practices and “fictional support” for the comprehension of the world and the creation of new meanings (Valsiner 2009: 107-111).
- Context: Based on the premise of the linguist and semiotician Gunther Kress that “a single text can invoke many different, sometimes even contradictory, discourses” (van Leeuwen 2008: 121), because the same action can be interpreted or oriented in different ways, in this column there will be contextual factors of the narrative in which both the action and the discourses take place with the purpose of situating the reader in the plot.
- Excerpts: The excerpts from the dialogues are the departure point that relates the representational resources and what the subjects do with them, defined as semiotic resources (Bezemer and Jewitt 2009: 4), whose signifying potential is in the function of the use that the anti-hero chooses from the language as an available system, thus achieving the common understanding to shape their Discourse subjected to a particular social context (van Leeuwen 2005: 285) within the framework of the legitimization processes with their significant others and society. These texts are understood as a social action that can be interpreted in a material way referring to “doing” or in a semiotic way indicating “meaning” (van Leeuwen 2008: 59). This analysis focuses on these interpretations to identify the legitimization through the Discourse articulated here in the discourses.
- Purpose of legitimation: It is the discursive construction that explains and justifies the reason for social practices and their forms where the purposes - of the anti-hero – to serve as legitimations must (van Leeuwen quoting Jürgen Habermas) have the feature

to instrumentalize moral values “to achieve a 'strategic-utilitarian morality” (van Leeuwen, 2008: 125). Where, based on the already institutionalized meanings of “first order”, it aims to achieve the objectivation of new meanings of “second order” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 110), thus legitimizing “another” morality.

- Strategy: In this column, each of the excerpts will be identified with a legitimization strategy proposed by Antonio Reyes in his article *Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions* (2011), to extrapolate his categories (legitimization through emotions, legitimization through a hypothetical future, legitimization through rationality, voice of expertise and altruism) to the case studies described and analyzed here.

Based on the systematization of the tables 1,2,3,4 and 5, which the reader can find in the appendix 1, the results are discussed and interpreted in chapter 5.

4.2.1 Legitimization of anti-heroes

For the selection of the excerpts analyzed and interpreted in the tables, the starting point is a specific cultural and social framework in which the actors present themselves as agents of rationality (Reyes 2011: 798) facing the collapse of legitimacy on the part of authority, which leads to other forms of legitimization of practices, this time not in favor of social action and institutional orders but from the individual where as a result the anti-hero evokes a particular new type of role model to be followed. The discourses as the projection of the “speaking subject” highlight then the motives and considerations of personal character that culminate in granting the moral, normative, and symbolic aspect of the power relations (Beetham 2013: 11–92) of the anti-heroes with those who surround them from the justification of their beliefs.

The criteria for selecting the excerpts is the exposition of the beliefs and values held by the protagonists of the selected series regarding the justification of their behavior and their ideal of “ought to be” in the face of institutionalism and ethical norms, from their perceptions and experiences of reality to legitimize cultural generalizations that are shared through their narrative arcs in a creative form by the use of language. The excerpts transcribed in the five

different tables illustrate different acts of legitimization and justification that seek the support or approval of the other (based on shared beliefs or not) motivated by power, money, the search for a certain social status, freedom, redemption or the benefit of the community (Reyes 2011: 782–783). The information compiled in these tables (that can be found in the Appendix 1) and their distribution in the different columns presented in this thesis is intended to help systematize the text in a comprehensive method for the diagnosis of the purposes and strategies of legitimization, focusing clearly on the source, and the formulation of the actor and the context as a contribution of the CDA.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 House of Cards (2013)

This series, based on the BBC miniseries (1990) of the same name, revolves around Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey), who, as Democratic majority leader in the House of Representatives, decides to retaliate against his political party due to the false promise and betrayal by not having been appointed Secretary of State. Frank, his wife Claire Underwood (Robin Wright), and his right-hand man Doug Stamper (Michael Kelly) will implement a plan involving other characters willing to do anything to achieve their goals.

Produced by Media Rights Capital, sold by Sony Pictures Television, and purchased and distributed by the streaming platform Netflix, House of Cards was presented to the public as “a Netflix original series” with the direction and executive participation of acclaimed American film director David Fincher. This series served as an introduction to the new kind of television products that would take over the streaming platforms, which would be dramas with plots and more interesting characters (compared to the movies of the moment, as Kevin Spacey himself claimed) and with novelties such as the fact that the seasons would be launched in their entirety on the same date (Roxborough 2012).

5.1.1 Frank Underwood as an anti-hero

Frank Underwood takes a position before the world and within the institutionality and the status quo (democracy) as a politician who, disappointed by the system, undertakes not only a vengeful but also subversive plan where he prioritizes his ascent in the political pyramid, taking advantage, through trickery, of the structural flaws of society and its individuals. Frank does not define his actions as good, bad, or amoral, but only as necessary, that beyond having the purpose of personal benefit and pleasure, they have repercussions for good or bad for his significant others as well as for his community, in this case for an entire country. Throughout his narrative, Frank appeals to the sympathy of others despite his ambivalent behavior, which defies traditional political ethics because he always aims to highlight his individuality in order to achieve his agenda. However, Frank is committed to people such as his wife and to

transcendental initiatives such as the education bill, which in principle is for the common good. Moreover, he acts as a mediator between Republicans and Democrats to make the education reform possible and fair, which in some way makes his environment celebrate his actions and decisions as a hero, even though these may go along with other much less virtuous ones that were necessary to achieve this triumph.

As an anti-hero, Frank makes those around him and the spectator question the hero's perception due to the exposure of the means he employs both inside and outside the law to portray his "heroism". This politician born and raised in poverty and witnessing social injustice, follows his narrative arc that leads to moral degradation. For instance, he goes to mass as a Christian even though he believes in nothing but himself. He is married despite his bisexuality and adultery. He defends the capitalist system not for the ideal of progress and welfare proper to the American Dream but for power.

5.1.2 Legitimization in *House of Cards*. Season 1. Episode 1. (2013)

In Frank Underwood's discourse, which is immersed within the institutional framework, certain chains of equivalence can be evidenced at first, where Frank uses metaphor as a mechanism to transmit his specific abstract reasoning to construct his argument in a more striking way and with greater reach to the spectator and others, appealing to a relationship of similarity (Lakoff 1993: 1–43) within the context and motivations of his Discourse. This is reflected in the case of mentioning the dogs in excerpts 1A and 1E, where in the first example, he decides the fate of the dog hit by a car under the legitimization of what is a "good pain" and a "bad pain" and in the second example when he wants to illustrate what will happen to Michel Kerne due to the circumstances in which Frank is both the executioner and the bearer of the truth. On the other hand, Frank compares his relationship with power with that of two popular professions with domestic purposes, such as the plumber in 1B and the real state agent in 1N, which have nothing to do with politics but make Frank feel closer to the ordinary citizen (and the spectator since in these he breaks the fourth wall). In the same way, the comparison Frank makes between the political arena that forces him to fight with and against others as if it were a battlefield is found in 1F in the moment in which he perceives himself as a German prostitute in the post-war period who can be "bought with anything" and in 1I when he refers again to the war, placing himself

this time as a soldier on the battlefield which only goes forward. Moreover, finally, in this exercise of abstract reasoning that appeals to resemblance, there is the most artistic example, which is 1K, when Frank dispels Zoe's grayish moral dilemma with the colorful painting of *The Biglin Brothers Racing* (1872) to make clear the terms of their new relationship.

Another aspect found in Frank's as an anti-hero is the perception that this politician has towards others as mere means to achieve his purposes, apparently leaving out the ideological background or the collective welfare, as in the case of 1B and 1C in which he mentions his support to President-Elect Garrett Walker, in 1D and 1M with the predetermined manipulation of the “buffer or errand boy” Peter Russo, with the trap towards Donald Blythe in 1H presenting himself as a collaborator, taking advantage of Blythe's reputation and the draft of the education bill for the benefit of Frank's plan or in the case of Catherine Durrant, whose empathy and help he gets in targeting Walker as a common adversary prejudicial to the party and the country in 1J, also appealing to both their personal experience as self-made politicians and to their Southern background in the United States in 1O which Durrant and Frank share.

In the pilot episode of *House of Cards*, from which 17 excerpts were chosen for this research using the five strategies proposed by Antonio Reyes, it was possible to identify that Frank Underwood's character used legitimization through emotions five times, legitimization through rationality four times, legitimization through altruism four times and legitimization through the voice of expertise three times. However, in the case of the 1D excerpt, due to the complexity of this interaction and what it presupposes for the anti-hero arc, it was categorized as legitimization through emotions and legitimization through a hypothetical future. Being legitimization through emotions the most recurrent in Frank Underwood to legitimize his perception of reality through his experience and the meanings that he builds to differentiate himself from others due to the circumstances, causing a favorable response from his interlocutors (in this case, also from the spectator) who are prepared to receive and accept his actions and beliefs due to the instability of the emotional and the creation of the other (Reyes 2011:785–792) on based of the anti-hero Discourse.

The parts of excerpts 1A and 1D below emphasizes in Frank Underwood's Discourse as an anti-hero to stress a set of ideas interpreted from what has been proposed in this thesis.

- 1A: “Moments like this require someone like me. Someone who will act. Who will do what no one else has the courage to do. The unpleasant thing. The necessary thing” (Fincher 2013).

From the beginning of this statement, the narrator, Frank, addresses the external narratee or recipient as the figure of discourse to whom the narrator tells the story. The particularity of the breaking of the fourth wall that this series offers turns the spectator into a kind of accomplice outside the story's world. Frank, then, begins by placing himself and the spectator in a circumstantial moment that leads him to respond to the call of the hero, without a first refusal, but without following the pattern of doing and representing the good as someone, exceptionally skilled or extraordinary, but as a conscious “anyone” who is capable of doing something terrible, being this is the differential factor that justifies it. His Discourse establishes independent moral codes that are not very concrete given the referential amplitude of what can be interpreted as an “unpleasant thing” and “necessary thing”, which, again, from the circumstantial, pretends to legitimize a way of doing things. In this case, the traditional hero would do the impossible to save the dog's life, motivated by doing the right thing, and would find the culprit who hit the dog, while the anti-hero decides to kill the dog to end its suffering because it is necessary and at the same time find the culprit who caused the dog's death.

- 1D: “We are no longer bound by allegiances. We serve no one” (Fincher 2013).

This could be interpreted as the starting point, the canonical event, that forges Frank Underwood to finally disassociate himself entirely from institutionality and the reproduction of the status quo, which, in effect, by betraying him, unties him from “others” who do not represent him. Not serving anyone implicitly implies not serving anyone but oneself, in contradiction with the archetype of the hero whose purpose is to serve and help others. Although it is worth noting that in the interaction that takes place here, Frank is sharing his purpose with his right-hand man, Doug, since the anti-hero, like the hero, is loyal to his significant others and to his community. Here it is manifested how the context and institutional authority no longer play a major role in conditioning Frank's objectives, but rather the validity and credibility of the legitimacy of his purposes rest solely on him since Frank is now the one who controls the action within the narrative.

5.2 Peaky Blinders (2013)

Peaky Blinders is a British series broadcast on public television channel BBC Two and BBC One¹⁰ created by writer, producer, and director Steven Knight, which was acquired for distribution in the United States and later globally by Netflix in 2014, produced by Caryn Mandabach Productions, Tiger Aspect Productions, and BBC. This period crime drama, inspired by an urban youth gang of the same name that actually existed, centers on Thomas Shelby (Cillian Murphy) and his family in Birmingham, England, after World War I. Peaky Blinders operate as a criminal organization that racketeer, robs, extorts, runs illegal bookmaking rackets and bribes police, thus becoming the dominant law in this place, reasons that will lead them to confront various enemies in search of money and power.

5.2.1 Thomas Shelby as an anti-hero

Thomas Shelby was an sergeant of the British army who served his country during the First World War in France. He suffers from nightmares and post-traumatic effects of the war that he manages to control to a certain extent through opium, violence, and alcohol on the one hand and the other hand due to his intelligence and the purpose of achieving a high status for himself and his family by using criminality, money and power to obtain complete freedom and autonomy. This character, honored with two medals for gallantry from the King, which he threw into the river on his return to England, is a clear example of the cinematic anti-hero, like Michael Corleone and Travis Bickle, who, on returning from a war in a foreign country, find an equally harsh one in their new everyday life when they return to their homes in the post-war urban area. They continue to follow, to some degree, a code of conduct and values, in this case, the military one. However, as veterans disillusioned with institutionalism, they extrapolate this code to their realities that conflict with their morality, their significant others, and the society they must adapt to. Thomas does not return home enlightened and triumphant as the hero archetype would presume.

¹⁰ This series is integrated into the analysis of the anti-hero in contemporary television dramas due to its significant cultural impact in music, fashion, aesthetics, and historical interest that it developed in the audience, even though it does not fulfill two criteria proposed in this thesis: This series is not American, and it was originally transmitted in free-to-air public broadcast television.

This anti-hero is situated outside the limits of the proper society since his birth because of the gypsy roots that stereotype him and his family as the undesired otherness by the hegemony of the British Empire and by his own gypsy peers who despise him for not fully representing what they “should” be because Thomas Shelby through his actions rejects the ideology that has surrounded him for being an external threat to his individuality that does not fit with his experiences, knowledge, or social circumstances. Even so, this patriarch converges with traditional values such as family, respect, or honor, which leads him to be concerned about the legitimacy of his actions with society and his family, with the heroic purpose of benefiting the victims of the corrupt system such as orphans, prostitutes, widows and war veterans like him.

5.2.2 Legitimization in *Peaky Blinders*. Season 1. Episode 1. (2013)

Thomas Shelby is between institutionalism and criminality, between reason and magic, between his past in the war in France and his present in the city of Birmingham, from where his Discourse is shaped. In the pilot chapter, it was possible to identify the justification of his actions and foundations in the welfare of other people as can be reflected in excerpts 2A, 2B, and 2D in which at first sight the need to give a reason, and hope to the poor people who are part of his community is prioritized. At the same time, he establishes himself as the mastermind of both the organization and the family because of his ingenuity and eventually explains his role as a leader even though he is not the older brother; Thomas manifests and proves it to Arthur in excerpts 2C and 2G by assigning to himself the agency of thinking.

Besides the above is the establishment of the Peaky Blinders as law and legitimate order that, although by illegal means, are those who dictate the reason why one action or another should be performed through the integration of already associated institutional meanings that results in the naturalization and obedience of their practices and beliefs, as it is crystallized in their saying “By order of the Peaky Blinders”. Thomas Shelby and his family then are an authority and a voice of valid experience within their environment with a somewhat paternalistic function as in the case of excerpt 2E, in which Thomas' values are exposed as a veteran soldier who, even after the war, still takes care of his comrades and in excerpt 2F when Thomas justifies his actions due to the circumstances of the world and the questionable actions of “them”, the government, that he concludes by ending with the value of the saying to Charlie.

In this episode, seven excerpts were selected, two of which used the strategy of legitimization through altruism, two legitimization through rationality, one legitimization through emotion, one legitimization through the voice of expertise, and finally, as a particular example, excerpts 3F was determined as a strategy for legitimization through emotions and the voice of expertise. In this case, no strategy is predominated by a vast difference, although it can be determined that using the voice of expertise turns more toward legitimization through authority.

The excerpts 2D and 2F below emphasizes in Thomas Shelby's Discourse as an anti-hero to stress a set of ideas interpreted from what has been proposed in this thesis.

- 2D: “Perhaps it’s a list of men who give false hope to the poor. [...] The only difference between me and you Freddie is that sometimes my horses stand a chance of winning” (Knight 2013).

Thomas Shelby's Discourse is based on the differentiation from any categorization that society may impose on him; therefore, at least in the first instance at the beginning of his arc, he seeks not to be labeled as a gangster, criminal, revolutionary, or entrepreneur, but as an individual in search of subsistence at any cost because he knows what the loss of his autonomy means due to his experience in the war. Yet Thomas and his family become the kind of providers and sustainers of the reality that establish power relationships that can be justified in terms of the values and beliefs within the micro-universe that is Birmingham in the post-war circumstances, where something like hope and the traditional hero is hard to find.

In this sense, Thomas refracts like few others the contemporary problems of his context as a character who, despite his paranoia, disillusionment, and confusion, chooses his path and builds his world within legality and illegality, between good and bad, even offering to others the expectation of “winning”, establishing his heroic individualism as a self-made figure who in this case does not personify the hegemonic discourse but a role model to follow.

- 2F: “If they want them back this bad, they’ll have to pay. That’s the way of the world. Fortune drops something valuable in your lap, you don’t just dump it on the bank of the cut. [...] The tobacco wharf. By order of the Peaky Blinders” (Knight 2013).

The statement that ends this excerpt appeals to the standardization by authority of Thomas Shelby's reasoning towards Charlie since ending the order with that command leaves no room for any refutation. This is how the Peaky Blinders, both as a collective and as an individual represented by Thomas, are elevated above any other type of legitimization. This ultimatum exerts power over what should be done and why it should be done, forging a specific set of convictions for those under the yoke of this statement. Legality and institutionality have nothing to do here since Thomas's legitimization through reason appropriates his context to provide a “natural justification” as a mode of signification that this society adopts either consensually or violently. Thomas does not legitimize himself as an individual; instead, he uses group values and beliefs as a symbol by referencing the Peaky Blinders above any other entity.

5.3 Better Call Saul (2015)

This series is a prequel to the series *Breaking Bad* (2008), also created by Vince Gilligan in which Jimmy McGill (Robert Odenkirk), who in the future will be known as Saul Goodman, is presented as a low-level criminal lawyer. Between trials and tribulations he uses his skill as a trickster to serve as a public defender, while trying to succeed as a lawyer and defend the legacy (and money) of his prestigious older brother Chuck McGill (Michael McKean) who suffers from an “electromagnetic sensitivity” that keeps him at home. This spin-off, produced by Sony Pictures Television and broadcast on the cable television channel AMC, was acquired for global distribution by Netflix, which, together with Vince Gilligan's authorship and the presence of the original cast, consolidated its position as one of the best and most popular American drama series of the past decade.

5.3.1 Jimmy McGill as an anti-hero

Jimmy McGill is an ordinary person who carries out an essential role as a lawyer prioritizes his pursuit of freedom and convenience, leaving in second place the fair procedure and execution

of the law as an institution and authority, even though in many cases the consequences may directly or indirectly benefit both the part of society whose demands seem legitimate, but not legal by the established system, as well as the hegemonic ideals that his character does not pretend to incarnate. What is right and wrong in the legal field concerns Jimmy on the margin of the correct praxis of his profession but not in the purpose of justice as a maxim. This is due to the fact that from his subjectivity and knowledge of the law, he comprehends the deficiencies and irregularities of the legal system to legitimize the acts of his clients and his own in the eyes of society, which in this narration are personified in the jury and the judge whom he tries to convince by using his verbiage that ultimately trivializes reality.

Jimmy can be considered an anti-hero due to his heroic actions and aptitudes granted to him, both as a lawyer and as an individual. Although his peers (among them his brother) do not recognize him as an equal due to his past as a hustler (“Slippin' Jimmy”), for having obtained his degree online from a non-prestigious university or for his “little respect for the profession”. For not considering the law as something sacred that entails a great responsibility, Jimmy is not interested in finding his place in the world or status in his work sphere because for him these are a farce that ultimately suppresses who he really is and his continuous struggle to survive. This protagonist does not abide by the pre-established codes that would define whether or not he is a good lawyer, but as a victim of the power structures, he makes an apology for the downtrodden, outlawed and socially deviant, offering a legal but not legitimate alternative for those who are the possessors of the Discourse.

5.3.2 Legitimization in *Better Call Saul*. Season 1. Episode 1. *Uno*. (2015)

Jimmy McGill's discourses is explicitly immersed within institutionalism due to his role as a lawyer; it precedes the freedom and right to legitimate defense of any citizen, which society provides, but from the premise of the injustice and inequality that society as the executor of the law grants in a system which Jimmy distrusts and takes advantage of according to the circumstances. In excerpts 3A, 3B, and 3C, Jimmy (Saul Goodman) places the legal forces as the adversaries of the individual who finds themselves defenseless against the abuse of power and the bad intentions of the system where there are no accused but only guilty from the first instance. Jimmy creates the need for him and his services more as a salesman than as a

representative of justice and legality like it is exemplified in the 3A, 3G and 3H excerpts, where he prioritizes winning over “the bad guys” at any cost, equating himself as a fighter who does not let himself be intimidated and as an indispensable health insurance for anyone.

On the other hand, there is the charisma of this character who, together with his extravagant rhetoric, seeks to appeal to the feelings of others while trying to find any trick or legal gap for his purposes both as a lawyer, evidenced in excerpts 3D and 3E, and also economically, excerpts 3F, 3K, and 3O, to just survive, while being careful never to exceed the framework of legality. There is also the humor factor, references (common places), and sayings which Jimmy uses to soften what he says or what he wants to say to make his argument more solid in front of a situation with transcendental repercussions, that ultimately indicate his purposes, justifying for himself and others like in the case of excerpts 3I, 3J, 3K and 3M. Finally, one of the most remarkable aspects is Jimmy's use of his narrative as Slippin' Jimmy, 3L, to turn his reality into a Discourse that fits precisely to his context and his purpose with the twins Cal and Lars.

From the pilot episode of *Better Call Saul* called *Uno*, 15 excerpts were chosen in which Jimmy McGill enunciated or defended his perception of the world and legitimized his actions as a lawyer with its pros and cons that highlighted the particularity of his individuality and his purpose to achieve the morally questionable always based on the due process of law that gave him his knowledge and experience as a lawyer. In these excerpts, the legitimization through rationality was identified six times, the legitimization through emotions two times, and the legitimization through the voice of expertise two times. However, in several excerpts, it was considered that it was not possible to categorize them in only one of the strategies proposed by Antonio Reyes, which is why the excerpt were identified 3A as legitimization through emotions and altruism, 3B as legitimization through the voice of expertise and altruism, 3E as legitimization through emotions and rationality and 3H as legitimization through hypothetical future and the voice of expertise, the most frequent strategy being the legitimization through rationality. A legitimization strategy that presupposes a deep analysis and reflection, which makes sense, within the social knowledge of a “naturalized” truth, where, in this case, Jimmy justifies his actions.

The excerpts 3C and 3H below emphasizes in Jimmy McGill's Discourse as an anti-hero to stress a set of ideas interpreted from what has been proposed in this thesis.

- 3C: “Do you feel doomed? Have opponents of freedom wrongly intimidated you? Maybe they told you that you’re in serious trouble and there’s nothing you can do about it. I’m Saul Goodman, and I’m here to tell you that they’re wrong! It’s never too late for justice” (Gilligan 2015).

Jimmy's Discourse is constructed by presenting himself as a redeemer of true justice, another justice that is not in the hands of those who apply it but those who need it. It establishes roles between victims and victimizers depending on the use of the values of truth and freedom, which, from the power and institutionality, pretend to appeal to the consent of the other based on the belief system imposed, already “naturalized”. The law, as the first level that gives sense to the ideal of justice transmitted and communicated in a certain way, should be reflected in the diverse relationships and social practices in which Jimmy's agency develops in its environment. The reason why it could be deduced that Jimmy, as a hero, does have the intentionality of serving to help others, despite the fact that his purposes are deviated by the banality of money and personal success. “It’s never too late for justice” since Jimmy brings it back to mortals as a sign of triumph in his narrative function of representing and giving meaning to the experience for those who feel “doomed”.

- 3H: “Actually, it’s getting arrested that makes people look guilty, even the innocent ones. And innocent people get arrested everyday. And they find themselves in a little room with a detective who acts like he’s their best friend.” (Gilligan 2015).

The reiterative duality between innocent and guilty is nothing more than a method of using contradictions to sustain institutional values, which for Jimmy have no meaning in his moral convictions but that he uses to resolve in his favor the conflicts he faces, for example in this case when Jimmy is trying to justify the offer of his services as a lawyer because it is his interpretation of reality thanks to his experience (and charisma) that projects a hypothetical future (with scenario and actors) not at all favorable for the potential culprits.

5.4. The Mandalorian (2019)

This is the first original series of the streaming platform Disney+ produced by Fairview Entertainment, Golem Creations, and Lucas Film based on the Star Wars universe after the purchase of the franchise in 2012, created and written by director and actor Jon Favreau. It was a global success becoming one of the most watched series in recent years, accomplishing its purpose of introducing this new platform to the market. This space western, that takes place a few years after the fall of the Empire in *Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* (1983) and 25 years before the rise of the First Order that already rules the galaxy in *Episode VII: The Force Awakens* (2015), introduces to Din Djarin (Pedro Pascal), who is a bounty hunter from the planet Mandalor who despite not being of this race, as a foundling follows the creed religiously and radically. The way of this Mandalorian takes a twist when he accepts a mission in which he has to capture and deliver an “asset”, who would turn out to be the co-protagonist of this series: Grogu. Together these two characters will embark on an adventure that will expand the Star Wars universe on television.¹¹

5.4.1 The Mandalorian as an anti-hero

The Mandalorian is the lone gunman who follows the archetype of “The Man with No Name” from the Dollar Trilogy since his first appearance on the screen, even though he represents the individual ruled by his honor, tribe, and religion who knows how to recognize what is right and what is wrong – “This Is the Way” - he is also set as an anti-hero due to his origin in the context of the war that makes him a victim as an orphan who is forged as a bounty hunter with no purpose beyond that of money. Din Djarin, in the beginning, fights neither for the ideal of rebellion nor for the order of the empire but for his own freedom and autonomy as an adventurer and mercenary who abstains from establishing bonds with society since, for him, both sides of the war are dishonest. The heroic actions of the Mandalorian only begin to be recognized by society once he begins his hero's journey with Grogu, as a father figure who serves as a humanizing agent and major cause for this armored individual who is slowly setting aside his agenda that disregards moral and social codes.

¹¹ In “live action” TV series.

5.4.2 Legitimization in *The Mandalorian*. Season 1. Episode 1. *The Mandalorian*. (2019)

In this episode, only one excerpt was selected because one of the main characteristics of this character is that the communication with his environment and himself is minimal, following very well with the figure of the lone gunman inspired by American Western cinema. Even so, the 4A excerpt was identified as legitimization through rationality due to the modus operandi that is defined and shaped by and from the bounty hunter society to which he belongs, in which the right thing to do is to capture the fugitive and claim the reward. The decision between life and death lies on the other because this affects neither the function, purpose, nor the effect that Din Djarin fulfills.

The excerpt 4A below emphasizes in the Mandalorian's Discourse as an anti-hero to stress a set of ideas interpreted from what has been proposed in this thesis.

- 4A: “I can bring you in warm ... Or I can bring you in cold” (Favreau 2019).

In the case of Din Djarin, his Discourse is clearly functional under his condition as a bounty hunter since the legitimization of his actions, at least in this episode, are defined by the rules of his role. The legitimization of his decisions is already supported by the status quo that reinforces his dominance and authority in this situation, even when he presents as a non-arbitrary agent in terms of the use of violence, given that he assigns the development of the circumstances to the fugitive. However, this same lack of legitimization is revealing because the Mandalorian explicitly breaks with the system and his ought to be once he meets Grogu, who makes him subvert the environment and reevaluate his moral code due to the relationship that emerges. Forging new values and purposes in Din Djarin's arc makes this character take an active role that will confront him with perfectly defined antagonists to save Grogu, turning him more like a traditional hero.

5.5 The Morning Show (2019)

The Morning Show is an American drama series inspired by journalist Brian Steller's book, *Top of the Morning: Inside the Cutthroat World of Morning TV* (2013), created and produced by

writer Jay Carson and Media Res Studio, which was the first original series distributed by the Apple TV+ streaming platform that has had significant impact due to the quality of its production, cast and treatment of current events such as the MeToo movement, the Covid-19 pandemic, Donald Trump and the war in Ukraine. This series examines the characters and culture behind America's most-watched morning news show after Mitch Kessler (Steve Carell) is publicly accused of sexual misconduct in the workplace. Alex Levy (Jennifer Aniston) will have to deal with the pressure of having lost her work partner due to the scandal, trying to keep her job and the network's reputation, while the impetuous and passionate reporter Bradley Jackson (Reese Witherspoon) arrives on the show to compensate the show's dynamics.

5.5.1. Alex Levy and Bradley Jackson as anti-heroes

In the case of Alex Levy, she represents the power of the mass media, whose purpose rather than informing is to entertain and project a hyper-generalized image of everyday life in America and its values; she defends the status quo as long as it is beneficial to her interest, which is why the problem is not Mitch's behavior, but his “work betrayal” that ultimately affects her. Alex is an agent of the hegemony in decline who will take advantage of the circumstances, her merits, and the people around her to avoid being replaced. On the other hand, this series also presents Bradley as an anti-heroic figure who, as a “die-hard reporter”, prioritizes the veracity of information under the ideal of raising awareness and encouraging citizens to take action against problems despite their disappointment with the media and the political system. Bradley does not pretend to represent her particular interests, nor those of the television network she works for, but rather ascribes herself as a spokesperson for the population in general, where good and bad are diffuse due to social and economic complexity, as in the case of coal mine openings from the perspectives of workers and environmentalists. Both Alex and Bradley establish values and beliefs based primarily on the dysfunctionality of their personal lives and their path to professional success as women in a male-dominated environment.

5.5.2 Legitimization in *The Morning Show*. Season 1. Episode 1. *In the Dark Night of the Soul It's Always 3:30 in the Morning*. (2019)

In the case of this episode, the discourses of the two protagonists of this series are analyzed because Bradley Jackson and Alex Levy are found within the framework of the mass media, where Bradley represents a “more real” and critical informative perspective of the reality of the world as a reporter in opposition to the institutional monopolistic power that Alex represents as a host in her program (The Morning Show) with emphasis more on entertainment and the “dulling” of the masses due to the delivery of the news in a slanted and “light” form.

In the first place, we find Bradley's discourses that, from the emotional perspective of the character, point to the various injustices suffered by ordinary people due to the political or economic interests of a dominant class, as evidenced in excerpt 5D when she mentions the useless disputes between Conservatives and Liberals, in 5F by revealing herself to the slanted and insensitive stance of the media she works for, and in 5H, 5I and 5J in which thanks to her profession as a reporter she can see the actual ways in which the real world works which by experience and knowledge situates her as an educating agent in front of the ignorant and manipulated masses. She ultimately gathers the social adversaries of reality into a single vacuous category for which she fights, “the human side”.

Secondly, Alex's discourses are governed by the plot of the sexual harassment scandal by her co-worker, where she projects herself as a stabilizing agent and filter between the news (reality) and fiction (The Morning Show) due to her work as the messenger of truth for her spectators in the whole country. Now then, such work in this situation that affects her directly leads her to the infantilization of the entire country since Alex assigns herself as the mother of the American family who comforts and guides her children by appealing to emotionality (forced to show support for the victims due to the MeToo conjuncture), not to inform transparently or empowering the citizenry but with the purpose of retaining her audience for the benefit of her and the company, as can be connoted in excerpts 5B, 5C and 5E.

Finally, from this pilot episode, a total of ten excerpts of Bradley Jackson and Alex Levy were analyzed, of which three are excerpts between the two characters, including two legitimization through emotion, two legitimization through rationality, one by legitimization through the voice of expertise and one by legitimization through altruism. However, due to the complexity and the length of some excerpts, two were identified as legitimization through emotion and altruism,

one as legitimization through rationality and voice of expertise, and one as legitimization through emotion and voice of expertise. Thus, legitimization through emotion, altruism, and voice of expertise were the most identified.

The parts of excerpts 5I and 5J below emphasize Bradley Jackson and Alex Levy's Discourses as anti-heroes to stress a set of ideas interpreted from what has been proposed in this thesis.

- 5I: “But in leadership decisions have to be made. You can’t just have empathy for everybody and do nothing” (Ehrin and Carson 2019).

Alex's Discourse calls for action within the circumstances and does not remain only in the critical and reflective approach whose purpose is to point out sociocultural problems. She sees usefulness in preserving and promoting hegemonic values due to their stability as a first order, considering that they can be debated but never subverted. Antagonistic agony in society is necessary since it establishes agendas in which struggles eventually determine decision-making beyond what are good or bad or useless and banal values but what is necessary. Because for her, ignoring these tensions creates ambiguities, like Bradley's, that do not allow the development of arguments and a real solution. In some way or another, she prefers to stay and replicate the Ordinary World before going to the Special World and getting a bigger picture of reality.

- 5J: “The news is changing because the people who deliver the news, who showed themselves as honest and decent and trustworthy, have in quite a few cases now proved themselves to be untruthful. And as a result, I think people are wanting more transparency in journalism. I think they want to know the person behind the facade” (Ehrin and Carson 2019).

In this discussion that the protagonists have, Bradley Jackson exposes her Discourse departing from the fallacies of the traditional media represented by Alex Levy, which, by not being trustworthy due to its particular interests, degrades the process of circulation of the “true” information to the American people. Bradley then demands to develop a critical reflection towards those who are in charge of informing because they are the ones who act as filters of

reality for the consumption of the masses. In this way, she problematizes the way journalism creates meaning as a social activity. From CDA this is an example of motivated signs where the interests of the maker, in this case a hegemonic media, seeks to produce the most adequate representation of meaning from its context, which is ideologically permeated (Kress *et al.*, 1997: 258–259). Bradley then makes visible the perpetuation of certain social practices and established rules (for example, the tensions between Liberals and Conservatives) that eventually affect the representation of the world and the construction of spectators' identities.

This character demands to do the right thing, based on legitimate values such as transparency, free speech and the right to truth, which are already present in society but are imposed by means of a manipulated discourse that explains and justifies certain socio-cultural experiences naturalized from the institutional authority of the mass media. Bradley, beyond demanding who is the person who informs, she suggests challenging the supposed virtuousness of the heroes (Alex and Mitch) in terms of considering that, irremediably, the private always extrapolates to the public sphere.

CONCLUSIONS

In this research, it was found that the purposes of the anti-hero are more challenging to define due to the blurred line between good and evil in which these characters move without any moral complex in most cases since, for example, their legitimization by altruism differs at some point with the common good and the ideal of progress. On the other hand, their beliefs and values are in most cases not in tune with the system, not because the anti-hero wants to subvert it and “change the world”, but because of the argumentative benefits that the lack of legitimacy towards the institutions confers on their own legitimization processes. In a certain way, this makes its job “easier” and more attractive. Crises, calamities, changes, or the appearance of a new antagonist are not an inconvenience but an opportunity to prioritize their personal interests and project themselves in the public sphere as a model to follow from their ideology.

The connection of the discourse of the anti-hero as a “subject in process” and its use of language was presented as a representation and form of communication to comprehend and value the particularities of each of the characters in the systematization, analysis, and interpretation to find their motivations and the purpose of their legitimization, where it was identified a reaffirmation and vindication as anti-heroes by means of: their alternative and often dysfunctional lifestyle, the prioritization of them as individuals although the community may eventually benefit, the criticism and distancing from any symbol or power structure, the use of their past as a kind of mentor and moral code, their reasoning as a beacon of knowledge and superiority over others, and the appeal to the emotional as a foundation against the system.

The relevance of this thesis was to approach legitimization as a fundamental process in the construction and perception of the reality of these fictional characters due to their cultural impact. Establishing themselves as semiotic objects in the mythology of society as bearers of new meanings and generalized counter-hegemonic values that “crystallize” in the social practices of consumers who, as semiotic subjects, use them for their active social use, making them symbolic tools for understanding and representing the world and current affairs (Valsiner 2009: 99-111).

This thesis concludes that the serialization of contemporary television displaced the narrative of the traditional hero archetype to fix that of the anti-hero, which plays the role of sharing and activating a set of values and desires that are reflected through the creation of new meanings that are legitimized through the use of discourse as a dialectical practice. This work establishes a model based on the interdisciplinary nature of Critical Discourse Analysis to address the legitimization processes that are manifested in the dialogues of the anti-heroes as "symbolic tools" during the justification of their purposes in the constitution of reality.

These anti-heroes manifest themselves as “semiotic anchors” when they are extrapolated to reality in cases such as the comparison of the rhetorical discourse of President Joe Biden, as a senator from Delaware in the 1970s, with Jimmy McGill. The representation of the sexual harassment scandal by executive Roger Ailes, which Fox News covered up, and the MeToo movement with the plot between Alex Levy and Mitch Kessler. The equating of former U.S. presidents like Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon with Frank Underwood. Or with the constant allusion to the aesthetics and history of criminality in Birmingham during the 1920s, thanks to the symbolic role of Thomas Shelby. This is a consequence of the countless interpretations that can be given to these characters, given that just as Hamlet is found as a referent of universal literature present from the “basic” educational system to be used as a common point in the reconceptualization that the semiotic subjects want to give them (Valsiner2009: 108-111). The narratives of the anti-heroes will be more widely available in time and space due to the universality of streaming platforms.

From the results of the thesis presented here, the author raises the possibility of developing specific ideas to encourage and enrich the academic discussion, such as: the concept of self-communication by Yu. Lotman and B. Uspensky, where an individual represents the functions of a community in certain time and space (Lotman *et al.*, 1978: 211) . The concept of ideology mainly within the CDA method proposed by Teun A. van Dijk in his book *Ideology - A Multidisciplinary Approach* (1998), the intrinsic relationship between the anti-hero and the urban development in the post-war context during the last century. The extrapolation of the anti-hero in political phenomena such as populism and far-right movements. And lastly, the implementation of the method used here in series starring women that can be considered anti-

heroes and that are based on real events in the context of MeToo movement, such as *Inventing Anna* (2022) and *The Dropout* (2022), is considered an exciting next step.

In the theoretical framework of this interdisciplinary thesis, several concepts and theories were worked under the method of Critical Discourse Analysis in order to broaden the approach in which television and the anti-hero have been worked in the past by the academy. The analysis and interpretation of discourse in the legitimization of individuals is indispensable in the identification of the new meanings that emerge between what is considered fiction and reality. Finally, the replication of research such as this is suggested to continue studying audiovisual cultural products in this “New Golden Age” of television that we are fortunate to be living.

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RESÜMEE EESTI KEELES

Legitimiseerimine antikangelase diskursuses kaasaegsetes teleseriaalides

Nii tööstuse kui ka meediatehnoloogiate arengu tulemusena on televisioonis järk-järgult muutunud tootmis- ja tarbimisviisid, saavutades seega uue kultuurilise ja sotsiaalse staatuse tänu kaabeltelevisioonile ja voogedastusplatvormidele, mis on avaldanud märkimisväärset mõju kogu maailmas. Need muutused hõlmasid uue tegelaskuju, mis on nende dramaatiliste narratiivide peategelaseks sarjaformaadis, ja autori esilekerkimist, mis oli juba varem nii Ameerika kirjanduses kui ka kinos silma paistnud ja edu saavutanud: antikangelane. Käesoleva doktoritöö eesmärk on iseloomustada antikangelase omadusi kaasaegsete telesarjade raames, võttes teljeks nende diskursuse analüüsi nende sotsiaalsete praktikate legitimeerimisel oma narratiivides. Dialoogidel on siis funktsiooniks olla lähtepunkt, mis seob representatsioonilisi ressursse ja seda, mida subjektid nendega teevad, määratletud semiootiliste ressursidena, mille tähenduslik potentsiaal on selle kasutamise funktsioonis, mille antikangelane valib keelest kui olemasolevast süsteemist, saavutades seega ühise arusaama, et kujundada oma diskursust, mis on allutatud konkreetsele sotsiaalsele kontekstile nende oluliste teiste ja ühiskonnaga toimuvate legitimeerimisprotsesside raames.

Kangelase ja antikangelase kui audiovisuaalse meelelahutuse valdkonna tegelaste arhetüübi semiootilise analüüsi uudsus on võimalik, sest "semiootiliste ankurdatena" on nad kehtestanud end ühiskonna mütoloogias, mis projitseerib konkreetse korra ja sotsiaalsed tavad üldistatud väärtustega, mis kannavad tähendust, antud juhul palju kiiremini ja laiemalt tänu tootmis-, levitamise- ja tarbimisvormile, mida voogedastusplatvormid on pakkunud.

Esiteks paljastatakse siinses töös legitimeerimisprotsessid, mida televisioon on viimastel aastakümnetel kogunud, ning esitatakse selle meediumi kultuurilise staatuse järkjärguline muutumine, et paljastada selle kommunikatsiooni- ja meelelahutusvahendi analüüsi põhjendatus. Seejärel jätkatakse antikangelase kui nende globaalse tarbimise kultuuritoodete peategelase määratlemist ja iseloomustamist, alates Carl Jungi ja Joseph Campbelli poolt eelmisel sajandil kehtestatud mütoloogilisest võrdlevast käsitlusest kangelase arhetüübi suunas, päästes seega nende kahe autori pakutud väärtuslikud mõisted, mis põhinevad vajadusel laia

raamistiku järele, kus tähenduse aspektid, ühiskonda ja kultuuri saab mõista, mitte kultuuridevahelises kontekstis, kus erinevates ühiskondades valitsevad ilmselgelt erinevad tingimused ja omadused, vaid pigem lähenemisviisist, mis keskendub üksikisiku rolli ideele narratiivides, mille eesmärk on kommunikatsioon.

Eespool öeldu on siis lähtepunktiks käesolevas töös pakutud antikangelase määratlusele kangelase arhetüübist koos lühikese ajaloolise ülevaatega, mis tõendab, kuidas ja millal antikangelane Ameerika kontekstis televisiooni jõudis. Kus antikangelast võib pidada eelkõige ideoloogilise status quo vastu suunatud subverstiivseks tegelaseks, kes oma sümpaatse, kuid keerulise figuuri kaudu peegeldab "tavalise mehe või naise" alternatiivset või marginaalset elustiili koos oma moraalikoodeksiga, mis on vabaduse ja individuaalsuse taotlemise tõttu vastu kehtestatud väärtustele.

Teoreetilises raamistikus selgitatakse narratiivi mõistet kui semiootilise representatsiooni alust, mis võimaldab teisele jutustamist ja selle vastuvõtmist sotsiaalse suhtlemistevõime raames, et lähtuda müüdi kui universaalse narratiivi ja Ronald Barthes'i pakutud "kollektiivse representatsiooni" tajumisest. Müüdi sotsiaalne ja kultuuriline funktsioon pakub "loomulikku õigustust" kui tähistamisviisi, mille ühiskonnad võtavad omaks, omastades seega oma ajaloolise konteksti. Lisaks lähenetakse legitimeerimise mõistele Bergeri ja Luckmanni pakutud teoreetilistest alustest lähtuvalt, kuna need sotsioloogid omistavad keelele reaalsuse konstrueerimisel tähtsust, et tõestada selle rolli ja kategoriseerida selle tasandeid, mille eesmärk on status quo säilitamine ja taastootmine ning universumi säilitamine koos müüdiga. Seoses legitimeerimisstrateegiatega on viis strateegiat (legitimeerimine emotsioonide kaudu, legitimeerimine hüpoteetilise tuleviku kaudu, legitimeerimine ratsionaalsuse kaudu, ekspertide hääl ja altruism), mille on välja pakkunud sotsioloogist Antonio Reyes oma artiklis "Legitimeerimise strateegiad poliitilises diskursuses" (Strategies of legitimization in political discourse): From words to actions (2011) ekstrapoleeritakse nii, et koos interdistsiplinaarse ja multimodaalse lähenemisega, mida pakub kriitiline diskursusanalüüs, kus subjektide kui märkide loojate representatsioonivahendid ja huvid motiveerivad tähistajate ja tähistatavate suhet diskursuse kujundamisel ja seejärel ideoloogiliselt läbipõimunud sotsiaalsetes võimupraktikates, saavutatakse selle meetodiga valitud sarja antikangelaste peategelaste valitud

diskursuste süstematiseerimine selle esimeste peatükkide või katsepeatükkide põhjal analüüsi ja tõlgendamise eesmärgil.

Käesolevas uurimuses kasutatud kriteeriumid, mille alusel valiti välja viis ingliskeelset draamat, millest neli on Ameerika ja üks Briti, mida levitavad rahvusvaheliselt erinevad voogedastusteenused, millest üks on toodetud kaabeltelevisiooni (Better Call Saul, 2015) ja üks avalik-õigusliku televisiooni poolt (Peaky Blinders, 2013). Viimased kolm toodeti voogedastusplatvormide endi (Netflix, Disney+ ja Apple TV+) poolt nende esimeste originaalsete audiovisuaalsete toodetena (House of Cards, 2013. The Mandalorian, 2019. The Morning Show, 2019), et jõuda võimalikult paljude tarbijateni, st neid kolme ei ole kunagi edastanud ükski telekanal. Nende sarjade peategelased on käesolevas uurimuses määratletud antikangelastena, sest nende narratiivide kujunemise asjaolude tõttu kujuneb diskursus (neile omistatud ütlused ja dialoogid), mis ehitab üles uskumuste, väärtuste ja sotsiaalsete tavade kogumi, mida on vaja traditsioonilise kangelase vastandina legitimeerida.

Käesolevas väitekirjas jõutakse järeldusele, et tänapäeva televisiooni seriaalsus nihutas traditsioonilise kangelase arhetüübi narratiivi, et kinnistada antikangelase narratiivi, mille roll on jagada ja aktiveerida väärtuste ja soovide kogum, mis kajastub uute tähenduste loomise kaudu, mida legitimeeritakse diskursuse kui dialektilise praktika kasutamise kaudu. Käesolevas töös luuakse kriitilise diskursusanalüüsi interdistsiplinaarsusel põhinev mudel, et käsitleda legitimeerimisprotsesse, mis avalduvad antikangelaste dialoogides kui "sümboolsetes tööriistades" nende eesmärkide õigustamisel reaalsuse konstitueerimisel.

APPENDIX 1

This final section contains the tables that systematize the selected excerpts of the episodes for the analysis and interpretation according to the methodology proposed in chapter four in the following order:

Table 1: House of Cards. Season 1. Episode 1. (2013).

Table 2: Peaky Blinders. Season 1. Episode 1. (2013).

Table 3: Better Call Saul. Season 1. Episode 1. *Uno*. (2015).

Table 4: The Mandalorian. Season 1. Episode 1. *The Mandalorian*. (2019).

Table 5: The Morning Show. Season 1. Episode 1. *In the Dark Night of the Soul It's Always 3:30 in the Morning*. (2019).

House of Cards. Season 1. Episode 1. (2013)

Code and Time code	Actor(s)	Context	Excerpts	Purpose of legitimation	Strategy
1A 0:54-1:24	Frank Underwood to the spectator.	A dog was hit in front of his house and is in agony.	There are two kinds of pain. Good pain - the sort of pain that motivates, that makes you strong. Then there's bad pain – useless pain, the sort of pain that's only suffering. I welcome the former. I have no patience for the latter. [...] Moments like this require someone like me. Someone who will act. Who will do what no one else has the courage to do. The unpleasant thing. The necessary thing [He kills the dog] There. No more pain.	Frank differentiates what is necessary to do and endure from what is not to achieve his purpose, and he perceives himself as having the capacity (due to courage) for certain actions. All this from the circumstantial.	Legitimization through rationality
1B 2:12-2:20	Frank Underwood to the spectator.	Introduces the president-elect who must give him his designation as Secretary of State.	President-Elect Garrett Walker. Do I like him? No. Do I believe in him? That's beside the point.	It does not matter what his personal beliefs are (if he has any) it only matters what the new president can give him for his personal benefit.	Legitimization through rationality
1C 3:11-3:24	Frank Underwood to the spectator.	He introduces himself to the spectator	As for me - I'm just a lowly House Majority Whip. I keep things moving in a congress chocked by pettiness and lassitude. My job is to clear the pipes and keep the sludge moving. But I won't have to be a plumber much longer. I've done my time. I backed the right man.	He determines himself as the "whip" because of his power to reprimand, modify, guide, and coerce the members of his House. Although that is the official name of those who gather votes from their respective parties on important issues.	Voice of expertise

				He speaks of its indispensability in legislative execution, although he immediately compares it to the work of a plumber who installs and repairs so that everything is kept in order and clean due to the danger that they themselves represent. Who now awaits his reward.	
1D 18:27-19:15	Frank Underwood to Doug Stamper.	He communicates his plan to Doug.	<p>They've done us a great favor, Doug. We are no longer bound by allegiances. We serve no one. We live by one rule and one rule only: never again will we allow ourselves to be put in such a position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walker and Vasquez <p>All of them. I hold them all accountable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Want retribution? <p>No, no. It's more than that. Take a step back. Look at the bigger picture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I guess what you are getting at. Ken first? <p>That's how you devour a whale, Doug, one bite at a time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who do you want for secretary of state? - 	<p>The distinction between "them" and "us" allows a dissociation from those who are "the others", "the traitors", "those who controlled them". And it establishes "us" as an independent entity for the future.</p> <p>He shares with his significant other what he is about to do, not for the purpose of revenge but for radical change to destabilize (in his favor) the system from within.</p> <p>Frank allows himself to prioritize his beliefs and purposes when he needs</p>	<p>Legitimization through emotions and Legitimization through a hypothetical future</p>

			<p>Give me a list of choices, and however we do this, we'll also need a buffer.</p> <p>- You mean an errand boy.</p> <p>Yes someone we control completely</p> <p>- I will keep my ear to the ground.</p>	<p>someone to scapegoat, thus continuing the food chain in which he was in a way the "errand boy" of the now president.</p>	
1E 19:40-19:53	Frank Underwood to the spectator.	He sees who was chosen as Secretary of State, Michael Kern, pass by.	He didn't choose to be put on my platter. When I carve him up and toss him to the dogs, only then will he confront that brutal, inescapable truth. "My God! All I ever amounted to was chitlins."	He predicts Michael Kern's future, justifying that he will be a victim of circumstances, at the same time projecting his new intentions, taking up the slogan "Look at the bigger picture".	Legitimization through emotions
1F 28:43-28:58	Frank Underwood to the spectator.	Lisa asks him to present an education reform in 100 days together with the controversial Donald Blythe (a useful leftist due to his recognition in this field).	Did you smell that? The smugness, the false difference. She thinks I can be bought with a pair of tickets. What am I, a whore in post-war Berlin salivating over free stocking and chocolate? What she is asking will cost far more than that.	Frank invites the spectator to place Lisa as an enemy because of her smell and what it connotes to Frank. He compares Lisa's attempt at consolation, the inauguration tickets and the Jefferson Ball, to a real post-war situation where the victorious side takes advantage of the defeated side.	Legitimization through emotions

1G 32:51-32:58	Frank Underwood to Zoe Barnes.	Zoe Barnes, a journalist seeking recognition, shows up at Frank's house to seduce him and convince him to ally with her for their mutual benefit.	I've led a very long, very successful career avoiding this sort of intrigue with press. I can't see any advantage in starting now.	Frank presumes that he does not have to be irregularly linked to another institution or mass media to be successful. He conditions his answer by stating that he finds no personal advantage.	Voice of expertise
1H 39:23-39:38	Frank Underwood to Donald Blythe.	Donald complains that his ideas should be taken into account for education bill.	They want your name because it carries weight [...] Maybe not everything you would've hoped, but help me help you.	Frank makes it clear that the reason they are counting on Donald is for the strategic use they could make of him and nothing more. Nevertheless, he still offers to mediate so that the bill is at least accepted up to a certain point.	Altruism
1I 40:10-40:15	Frank Underwood to the spectator	After the meeting with Donald, Frank realizes what a job he has ahead of him to lead alone.	Forward! That is the battle cry. Leave ideology in the armchair generals. It does me no good.	He refers again to the war, placing himself this time as a soldier on the battlefield which only goes forward but without any transcendental purpose as it could be the ideological one, which would be the case if he was interested in a good new education bill.	Altruism

1J 40:42-40:50	Frank Underwood to Catherine Durant	Frank tries to convince Catherine (with whom he shares being from the south of the country and having emerged at the same time in the political sphere) to run for Secretary of State with his help.	The foreign affairs committee needs a secretary we can work with, someone who isn't afraid to stand up to Walker when he is wrong. We need you.	Frank highlights the need that only she could stop Walker if it is necessary. Walker and his government are "they," and "we," in this case, would refer to the party and the two of them (Catherine). However, in fact, there is only one "I," which is Frank and his plan	Altruism
1K 43:06-43:24	Frank Underwood to Zoe Barnes	Frank accepts the alliance with the journalist and gives her the draft of the education bill by Donald Blythe, which he rejects and pretends to destroy so that Zoe can make it public in the	- We are in a very gray area, ethically, legally, which I okay with ... I just love this painting. Don't you? We are in the same boat now, Zoe. Take care not to tip it over. I can only save one of us from drowning.	Frank ignores Zoe's statements and concerns about the legality of this act and their relationship, as she mentions the color gray as an uncertain point of legitimacy. Frank uses the painting as an analogy for her current situation and the consequences for her if something goes wrong during her "race."	Legitimization through rationality.

		<p>newspaper where she works. All this while appreciating the painting The Biglin Brothers Racing (1872) by Thomas Eakins.</p>			
<p>1L 44:01-44:06</p>	<p>Frank Underwood to Linda.</p>	<p>Linda complains to Frank about starting the education bill from zero since the proposed deadline is only 100 days, and this is the basis of the new government that "they" represent.</p>	<p>You put in my lap and asked me to work a miracle, and I will, now have a little faith Linda.</p>	<p>Frank positions himself as someone capable of achieving the impossible in a totally relaxed manner, asking Linda not only to trust him but to have faith. At the same time he evades responsibility when he declares that Donald Blythe was not his choice and compares him to a child whom Frank, as a parent, has to shelter on his lap. Frank takes the opportunity to ask for two more tickets to the Jefferson Ball, as a favor asked of him by Claire.</p>	<p>Altruism</p>

<p>1M 46:21-46:26</p>	<p>Frank Underwood to Peter Russo</p>	<p>Frank blackmails the congressman of his own party with a traffic incident involving drug use and prostitution from which Frank himself freed him. Russo, who has a problem with alcohol, thanks him and mentions that he is willing to do anything to keep everything discreet and to avoid repercussions .</p>	<p>Your absolute, unquestioning loyalty [...] Do not misunderstand what I mean by loyalty.</p>	<p>Doug has found the perfect “errand boy” for Frank. More than loyalty Peter Russo understands that from now on he is subservient only and only to Frank. Not to his voters, not to his donors, not to his ideals and not to his party. Frank here plays the role of the whip.</p>	<p>Voice of expertise</p>
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1N 48:31-48:40	Frank Underwood to the spectator	At the inauguration ceremony for now new president Garrett Walker, thanks to the seats Linda gave as a consolation prize to Frank, he and Claire are only two rows away from the president.	Power is a lot like real estate. It's all about location, location, location, location. The closer you are to the source, the higher your property value.	Frank, this time, compares his political rise to commercial real estate success, which for him is due to the location and proximity of the politician or property to the source of power or value. This comparison conflicts because the purpose of the former should not be solely economic, and the purpose of the latter should not be political.	Legitimization through rationality
1O 51:10-51:14	Frank Underwood to Catherine Durant	At the Jefferson Ball, Frank leaves Donald Blythe aside and asks Catherine to dance.	We southern boys are slow with words, but we are fast on our feet	Frank again emotionally bonds Catherine to the origins from which they both come with a saying that highlights both her saying and her physical ability.	Legitimization through emotions
IP 52:05-52:09	Frank Underwood to the spectator	Frank mentions that his only "guilty pleasure" is	Where I come from in South Carolina people did not have two pennies to rub together.	Here Frank again appeals to a popular saying to exemplify the extremity of the poverty he comes from.	Legitimization through emotions

		some pork ribs that he can only have now, since his South Carolina background was one of poverty.			
1Q 53:23-53:26	Frank Underwood to the spectator	Frank accepts another plate of ribs after reading the newspaper with Zoe Barnes' article.	I'm feeling hungry today.	Frank's appetite is insatiable because his plan has begun to be executed. Donald and Linda are shocked by the leak of the education bill, the newspaper where Zoe works is successful with the news, Catherine Durant interprets the news as something in her favor and the police catch the driver who killed the dog at the beginning of the chapter thanks to the characteristics of the car that Frank's bodyguard was able to report.	Legitimization through emotions

Table 1

Peaky Blinders. Season 1. Episode 1. (2013)					
Code and Time code	Actor(s)	Context	Excerpts	Purpose of legitimation	Strategy
2A 2:12-2:20	Thomas to the people in the slum street.	Tommy takes Monaghan Boy to Chinatown to get a magic spell in front of everyone in Garrison Lane in order for the horse to get lucky and win the race.	The horse's name is Monaghan Boy. Kempton 3 o'clock Monday. You ladies have a bet yourselves but don't tell anybody else.	Gambling and magic, which are unpredictable and false, are presented as a means that Tommy shares for personal gain and to encourage (help) slum inhabitants to gamble and win.	Altruism.
2B 5:54-5:58	Thomas to Arthur	Arthur claims his brother Thomas for messing with the Chinese and for seeking money in horse betting, which they are not allowed to do.	Times are hard. People need a reason to lay a bet.	Because of the circumstances of poverty and lack of opportunity, Thomas believes that his action was for the community's material (money) and spiritual (hope) benefit.	Altruism.
2C 6:38-6:44	Thomas to Arthur	Arthur, as the older brother, reproaches Thomas for overstepping his role in the family	I think, Arthur. That's what I do. I think. [...] So that you don't have to.	Thomas exhorts his brother from intellectual activity, because for Thomas that is his main purpose as opposed to Arthur's, which is brute violence.	Legitimization through rationality.

		and the organization.			
2D 11:59-12:20	Thomas to Freddie	Due to the supposed loss of the government's war arsenal, which Thomas found and plans to profit from, his former comrade tells him about a secret report.	- Now what kind of list would have the name of a Communist and the name of a bookmaker side-by-side? Perhaps it's a list of men who give false hope to the poor. [...] The only difference between me and you Freddie is that sometimes my horses stand a chance of winning.	It treats equally an ideology and political system with an illegal activity with the purpose of ridiculing Freddie's ideals by arguing that although both prey on the poor, criminality can succeed and "help".	Legitimization through emotions
2E 14:28-14:33	Thomas to Harry	Danny, who went to war and suffers from shellshock, bursts into the bar in a fit of persecution and wreaks havoc on the establishment until Thomas and Freddie manage to calm him down.	Bring the bill to the Peaky Blinders. We'll take care of it.	The Peaky Blinders are established as the authority that shelters and takes responsibility for their comrades and victims of the war. Thomas justifies Danny's actions by having been a soldier and solves with the money not from him as an individual but as "we": Thomas, Danny, the Peaky Blinders.	Voice of expertise
2F 46:04-46:48	Thomas to Charlie	In Charlie's backyard, Thomas	If they want them back this bad, they'll have to pay. That's the way of the world. Fortune drops	Thomas differentiates himself and prioritizes	Legitimization through

		tells him what to do with the government's war arsenal (which they found by accident) that compromises its legitimacy by supporting foreign wars. Charlie advises him not to do so and to get rid of the arsenal for fear of the consequences.	something valuable in your lap, you don't just dump it on the bank of the cut. [...] The tobacco wharf. By order of the Peaky Blinders.	personal gain over the needs of the government, justifying himself on the circumstantial of his "good fortune" and not on "ought to be." Thomas legitimizes his order by referencing the Peaky Blinders as something above them, as some kind of irrefutable law.	emotions and voice of expertise.
2G 53:22-53.58	Thomas to Arthur	Arthur complains to Thomas because the racehorse that everyone bet on as a result of his visit to Chinatown, won. Reason why it had no profit for them as illegal bookmakers.	- Monaghan Boy bloody won! Yeah. It won. And word will spread. So next time we do the powder trick it won't just be the Garrison that'll bet on the horse, it'll be the whole of Small Heath. And you know what? The horse will win again. And the third time we do it we'll have the whole of Birmingham betting on it. A thousand quid bet on the magic horse. And that time, when we are ready, the horse will lose. Think about it.	Thomas gives properties it does not have to the "powder trick", he use the ingenuity of people hoping to win by gambling in order to in the long-term hustle the whole town and thus make more money. Because of his plot Thomas ultimately legitimizes his role within the family and the organization as the character who thinks and therefore makes decisions.	Legitimization through rationality.

Table 2

Better Call Saul. Season 1. Episode 1. *Uno*. (2015)

Code and Time code	Actor(s)	Context	Excerpts	Purpose of legitimization	Strategy
3A 5:25-5:37	Saul Goodman (Jimmy McGill) from the past to Saul Goodman (Jimmy McGill) of the present.	After the events in which Breaking Bad concludes, Jimmy adopts a false identity to evade justice. Here he is watching with melancholy at his famous commercials as Saul Goodman in which he offered his services.	Don't let false accusations bully you into an unfair fight! I'm Saul Goodman and I'll do the fighting for you! No charge is too big for me. When legal forces have you cornered, better call Saul!	Justice will take advantage of the public if they fight alone. Saul is the hero, the champion, who will fight for the public no matter what crime he is accused of. "The legal forces" are the adversary who will take advantage of the public if they do not choose to call Saul.	Legitimization through emotions and Altruism
3B 5:39-5:53	Saul Goodman (Jimmy McGill)	After the events in which Breaking Bad	I'll get your case dismissed! I'll give you the defense you deserve! Why? Because I'm Saul Goodman, attorney at law. I investigate, advocate, persuade, and most importantly, win! Better call Saul!	Here the distinction is made between the defense that the public has (by right, free) and the one they deserve	Voice of expertise and Altruism

	from the past to Saul Goodman (Jimmy McGill) of the present.	concludes, Jimmy adopts a false identity to evade justice. Here he is watching with melancholy at his famous commercials as Saul Goodman in which he offered his services.		(paying). So it is connoted that Saul's defense is the real and necessary one. He presents himself as an agent with the characteristics of every lawyer, but ensures victory for the client and not for the ideal of justice.	
3C 5:55-6:07	Saul Goodman (Jimmy McGill) from the past to Saul Goodman (Jimmy McGill) of the present.	After the events in which Breaking Bad concludes, Jimmy adopts a false identity to evade justice. Here he is watching with melancholy at his famous	Do you feel doomed? Have opponents of freedom wrongly intimidated you? Maybe they told you that you're in serious trouble and there's nothing you can do about it. I'm Saul Goodman, and I'm here to tell you that they're wrong! It's never too late for justice. Better call...	He victimizes the public, setting the agents of justice as "opponents" who lie and frighten because of their position of power. Saul presupposes that the verdict of justice is wrong so he offers true justice.	Legitimization through emotions

		<p>commercials as Saul Goodman in which he offered his services.</p>			
<p>3D 7:44-8:14</p>	<p>Jimmy McGill to himself</p>	<p>Jimmy is in the court restroom preparing every argument, every joke, and every pause for the defense of his defendants</p>	<p>Think about it. Their brain...it's not all there yet. Now if we were all held responsible for what we did when we were 19. I remember what it was like being a kid. Think back. It's all ... Judge, what would you say? These boys, 19, I can't ... I don't. These three young men, just like you. Just like ...</p>	<p>Youth and inexperience legitimize the actions of his defendants and free them from guilt because biologically their "brains have not finished developing", and Jimmy alludes to the judge's youthful past.</p>	<p>Legitimization through rationality.</p>
<p>3E 8:29-10:29</p>	<p>Jimmy McGill to the jury and the judge</p>	<p>Jimmy is defending the three young men accused of trespassing a morgue, decapitating a corpse, and having sex with it while being videotaped.</p>	<p>Oh to be 19 again! You with me ladies and gentleman, do you remember 19? Let me tell you, the juices are flowing, the red corpuscles are corpuscle-ing, the grass is green and soft, and summer's gonna last forever. Now do you remember? Yeah you do.</p> <p>But if you're being honest, I mean, really honest, you'll recall that you also had an underdeveloped 19 year old brain. Me personally, if I were held accountable for some of the stupid decisions I made when I was 19, oh boy, wow. And I bet if I were in church right now I'd get a big "amen"!</p>	<p>Jimmy alludes to the memory and past of those present and his own to justify the crime of the three defendants based on the biological changes and the lack of self-control of youth where these "knuckleheads" cannot be treated as criminals because of the technicalities of which Saul resorts such as: "you can not</p>	<p>Legitimization through emotions and rationality.</p>

		<p>Jimmy speaks here to the judge, jury, and audience at the trial.</p>	<p>Which brings us to these three. Now these three knuckleheads, and I'm sorry boys but that's what you are, they did a dumb thing. I'm not denying that. However I would like you to remember two salient facts. Fact 1: nobody got hurt! Not a soul! Very important to keep that in mind. Fact 2: now the prosecution keeps dangling this term "criminal trespass". Mr. Spinazo property owner, admitted to us that he keeps most portions of his business open to the public - both day and night. So trespassing? Bit of a reach, don't you think Dave?</p> <p>Here's what I know. These three young men, near honor students, were feeling their oats one Saturday night and they just went a little bananas. I don't know, call me crazy, but I don't think they deserve to have their bright futures ruined by a momentary, minute never to be repeated, lapse of judgement. Ladies and gentleman ... you're bigger than that.</p>	<p>hurt something that is already dead" and "it can not be a "criminal trespass" if the door is not locked." Jimmy challenges the self-perception of the judge and jury by indirectly blaming them for being able to ruin the future of the defendants and by questioning their virtuousness and ability to forgive.</p>	
<p>3F 12:26-12:42</p>	<p>Jimmy McGill to the woman in court charge of paying his fees.</p>	<p>After the trial of the three young men in which they are found guilty due to irrefutable evidence (the video), Jimmy does not receive</p>	<p>What the hell kind of math is that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$700 per defense. <p>No no no. Defen—dant. Dant. 3 defendants, \$2,100. Which, by the way, a bargain for what I did for them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They going to jail, ain't they? <p>So, since when does that matter? They had sex with a head!</p>	<p>The purpose in itself is not the just defense (of the indefensible), nor the ideal of justice, but the money for having performed his role. Here it is the system that takes advantage of a technicality to not pay Jimmy what he considered fair.</p>	<p>Legitimization through rationality.</p>

		"fair" payment for his services.			
3G 15:56-16:28	Jimmy McGill to Craig and Betsy.	Jimmy meets this married couple who are in trouble over missing county money or "accounting discrepancy".	I do not go looking for guilty people to represent, I mean who needs that aggravation, right? [...] It's a discrepancy, absolutely. But typically when that happens the police look at the treasures, And since the person is ... [Craig] I just think a little proactivity may be in order.	Craig is predetermined as a potential victim of both justice and the police, which is why Jimmy's services are necessary. Both characters mention sayings that delegitimize the role of lawyers, which Jimmy categorizes as traps of others (society, the police) to take advantage of the innocent who eventually get arrested.	Legitimization through emotions.
3H 16:29-17:10			<p>- I just think I'd look guilty if I hired a lawyer.</p> <p>Actually, it's getting arrested that makes people look guilty, even the innocent ones. And innocent people get arrested everyday. And they find themselves in a little room with a detective who acts like he's their best friend. "Talk to me" he says. "Help me clear this up". "You don't need a lawyer, only guilty people need lawyers", and BOOM! That's when it all goes south. That's when you want someone in your corner, someone who will fight tooth and nail. Lawyers. We're like health insurance. You hope you never need it, but man, oh, man, not having it? No!</p>	<p>Jimmy equates their work to that of health insurance, to portray the need this couple have for it in this financial misunderstanding, because Craig as county treasurer represents both the worker and the state.</p> <p>Jimmy is here the champion who will fight for them in exchange for a commission.</p>	Legitimization through hypothetical future and voice of expertise.

3I 20:55-21:06	Jimmy McGill to Cal and Lars.	These twin brothers run scams by pretending to be hit by cars while skateboarding to get money from their victims. Jimmy realizes the scam as soon as the brothers threaten to call the police if he doesn't give them money.	Furthermore [points at his car] does this steaming pile of crap scream payday to you, huh? The only way that entire car is worth \$500 is if there's a \$300 hooker sitting in it! Now let's talk about what you owe me for the windshield.	The reference is made to Jimmy's experience in scamming people when he mentions the deplorable condition of his car that makes the twins' intent to scam him meaningless, equating the price of his car to that of a prostitute.	Legitimization through rationality.
3J 34:24-34:30	Chuck to Jimmy McGill	Chuck, mentions this saying "Ergo, a falsis principiis proficisci" to calm Jimmy down.	- You proceed from false principles. Your argument is built on quicksand, therefore it collapses.	The use of sayings as a legitimizer of a rationing process	Legitimization through rationality.
3K 35:15-35:54	Jimmy McGill to Chuck	Jimmy complains about the pay he gets as a	Look Chuck, I'm going under, okay? For the third time with these bull-crap contract counsel - Bull crap?	While Chuck as Jimmy's authority figure and role model states that service to the underprivileged and hard	Jimmy: Legitimization through rationality.

		<p>contract consultant, where no matter how meritorious the process, the money is not enough to survive on.</p>	<p>Bull-crap, pissant P.D. cases at 700 bucks a shot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public-defender work is some of the best experience there is. <p>I just had a case, Chuck, with three clients. Uh, arraignments, voir dire, jury trial, the whole nine yards. You know what I took home? 700 bucks. Yeah, I might as well head down to Skid Row and sell plasma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You're representing people who have nowhere else to turn. The money is beside the point. <p>Money is not beside the point. Money is the point!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I keep telling, have patience. There are no shortcuts. Do good work and the clients will come. 	<p>work are important, and not money, Jimmy makes it clear that money is the reason and purpose of his work, which is not well rewarded.</p>	<p>Chuck: Altruism</p>
<p>3L 41:27-42:22</p>	<p>Jimmy McGill to Cal and Lars.</p>	<p>Jimmy tells his story as a hustler (Slippin' Jimmy) where he took advantage of people and the laws to make a profit.</p>	<p>You guys growing up out here in the golden west. You don't know, okay? I'm talking cold that'll freeze the snot right in your nose. I'm talking wind that'll cut through your jacket and carve you up like a Ginsu knife. In fact, most folks in Cicero were scared of winter, but not Jimmy. Jimmy waited around all summer, and when September finally rolled around and he'd feel that first cold wind come sweeping off Lake Michigan, he knew it was coming. Was it Christmas? Was it Kwanzaa? Better. It was slip'n fall</p>	<p>Through this story that forges the character and arc of Jimmy McGill, he creates a very specific and metaphor-filled narrative, which makes it possible for the brothers to identify with and conceive the potential of Jimmy's plan.</p>	<p>Voice of expertise. (Mythopesis)</p>

		This with the purpose of convincing the twins to run a scam on Betsy.	season. Soon as it was cold enough, he'd find a nice, smooth patch of ice. State Street was good. Michigan Avenue was better. He'd pick his spot, wait for it to get busy, then he'd walk out on the ice, and boom! He would biff it so hard, people would come running from five blocks away.		
3M 43:25-43:29	Jimmy McGill to Cal and Lars	They are following up on Betsy in order to plan the fake accident. In front of her house they realize they have a boat.	Like a stripper pole in a mosque.	It refers to the clear perception that something does not fit and is out of place, attracting attention. Pointing out the high possibility that the couple is indeed guilty of the theft of which they are accused.	Legitimization through rationality.
3N 44:29-44:34	Jimmy McGill to Cal and Lars	They find the perfect place to simulate the accident.	- It's kinda busy here, don't you think? Well, witnesses are good. Witnesses are pressure, all right?	The role of the witnesses and their usefulness in fulfilling their plan is highlighted.	Legitimization through rationality.
3O 49:03-49:11	Jimmy McGill to Lars.	The scam is initially unsuccessful because the driver of the car escapes from the scene of the	You fell into the honeypot, kid. You get it? Hit-and-run is a felony. -So what? "So what?" So more money!	Knowledge of the law is used to take advantage of the situation, even though the plan didn't work, in order to get more money than they think is Betsy.	Voice of expertise.

		accident and the twins proceed to follow her and inform Jimmy.			
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Table 3

The Mandalorian. Season 1. Episode 1. <i>The Mandalorian</i>. (2019)					
Code and time code	Actor(s)	Context	Excerpts	Purpose of legitimation	Strategy
4A 3:13-3:17	Din Djarin (The Mandalorian) to the fugitive he sought.	The fugitive offers “credits” to the Mandalorian for not capturing him.	I can bring you in warm ... Or I can bring you in cold.	The bounty hunter's code prevails both in the face of an attempted bribe and towards Din's purpose and role, which benefits him regardless of the fugitive's life.	Legitimization through rationality.

Table 4

The Morning Show. Season 1. Episode 1. *In the Dark Night of the Soul It's Always 3:30 in the Morning.* (2019)

Code and time code	Actor(s)	Context	Excerpts	Purpose of legitimation	Strategy
5A 6:26-6:28	Bradley Jackson to Joe	Bradley and his team hear about Mitch Kessle's dismissal.	One less idiot to peddle soft news to the masses.	Mitch is seen as a hegemonic agent who merely reproduces an innocuous Discourse.	Voice of expertise.
5B 8:04-8:14	Alex Levy to Charlie Black ("Chip")	Chip tells Alex about Mitch's situation and how he doesn't want to worry her because the country needs her.	Oh, fuck you Chip! Fuck you! Don't drag America to this. They've got enough shit to deal with. This affects me, okay? My on-air partner, my TV husband ...	The welfare of the country is instrumentalized for the purpose of the argument that focuses on the personal.	Legitimization through emotions.
5C 10:17-11:16	Alex Levy to Cory Ellison and Fred Micklen	Alex proposes her plan to the president and CEO of the channel.	So listen. My gut instinct is to bring the news to America myself honestly. Addressing the truth is the only way to protect our integrity. So, We will talk to them as members of our family. We will grieve with them. We will go through this together [...] And if we use this right, this is our chance to get our audience back. [...] But I am addressing America up top on my own. I don't want anyone sitting in Mitch's chair. Not during this. That's mine.	It alludes to the audience's emotions and perception of family, where Alex, as a mother, shares the news of his father's (Mitch) death and accompanies them in their grief, taking advantage of the truth to present herself as an honest agent while Alex reaffirms her position within the media.	Legitimization through rationality and voice of expertise.

<p>5D 15:30-15:53</p>	<p>Bradley Jackson to the reporter.</p>	<p>A reporter stumbles Bradley's colleague and she confronts him with the motives and facts of the protest, while being filmed and exposed on social media.</p>	<p>Thousands! Thousands! Of fucking families knocked on their asses. And it's just a big wheel that goes around. Liberals add sanctions. Conservatives remove those sanctions. And they just keep fighting cause all they wanna do is hear themselves talk. And they all want to be right. And they all wanna win. And that's all they fucking care about. And there's a human cost! And it's exhausting! I'm exhausted!</p>	<p>The incompetence of the political system in addressing and solving society's problems is pointed out.</p>	<p>Legitimization through emotions.</p>
<p>5E 17:56-19:53</p>	<p>Alex Levy to America</p>	<p>Alex shares the news of Mitch's firing live to the audience.</p>	<p>Good morning. I'm bringing you some sad and upsetting news. Mitch Kessler, my cohost and partner of 15 years was fired today for sexual misconduct.</p> <p>First and foremost, I want to offer our sympathy and support to the women. We are devastated that this happened on our watch and our hearts are with you. And to you at home, I understand how you must be feeling because I and the whole team here at The Morning Show are feeling the same way. Shock, disappointment, disbelief. And while I don't know the details of the allegations. I understand that they were serious and that keeping Mitch on was not an option [...] We know he was part of our family, of your families. We will all miss that person. But there are</p>	<p>Because of the situation, Mitch's dismissal is granted as a benefit given thanks to the virtues and justice of the television network and the country.</p> <p>The situation is used to build a kind of loyalty between Alex and the audience, where Alex is presented as a victim and a filter of truth for future information.</p>	<p>Legitimization through emotions and voice of expertise.</p>

			consequences in life. As a woman, I can say there often aren't enough of them. And while I will miss the Mitch I thought I knew with all my heart ... I am proud to work on a network and live in a country that upholds consequences. So, please have patience with us as we find our footing in the next few days. [...] We will bring you the news, as always. [...] We will share any information we have with you. You are part of this family. And we will get through this together. We'll be right back.		
5F 21:45-22:03	Bradley Jackson to Jones.	Bradley's boss complains about her behavior and coverage of the protest, after the video of her losing control goes viral.	You know what? Find some other puppet. Find some other person that you can put slanted copy in front of them. That'll go to the coal mine protests, your school shooting. The pregnant lady that got hit by a truck. Find somebody else to be invisible for you. To deal with the world's heartaches and have any fucking feelings about it!	The independent moral and professional commitment that does not reproduce the interests of the media is exalted.	Legitimization through rationality.
5G 29:28-29:48	Alex Levy to her team.	Alex makes an assessment of the situation and her discourse.	All I said was that I will miss the person that I sat side by side with. That's just the truth. I expressed sympathy for the women. Abhorrence for the predatory behavior. I am a journalist. You don't have to spoon-feed me this shit. - This isn't just about protection. It's about opportunity. You know that.	It is determined that they proceeded according to the situation and personal benefit appealing to the "should be", at the same time, they plan to take advantage of it.	Legitimization through rationality.

			Yes, I know that		
5H 49:35-49:49	Bradley Jackson to Alex Levy	Bradley is invited to the show because of her impact on social media, where Alex problematizes her position on the news and her role as a reporter.	We reporters, we see the way the world works, and sometimes you just want to get in there and educate people and stop them from constantly going in circles with their ideas. I mean, it's just so frustrating. It's sad.	The reporter is positioned as a provider of the fundamental truth, invalidating the ideas of the public, in a case of moral superiority.	Altruism.
5I 50:41-51:22	Bradley Jackson to Alex Levy	Bradley is invited to the show because of her impact on social media, where Alex problematizes her position on the news and her role as a reporter.	<p>You know, I think America is tired of Twitter fighting. It's ignorant, and it's contributing to the dumbing down of our country. Parties have created a good side and a bad side for their own purposes and once you villainize someone, there is nothing left but go to war with them. [...]</p> <p>- What side of that argument do you personally fall on?</p> <p>Um. The human side.</p> <p>- What does that mean?</p> <p>It means I see both sides.</p>	Bradley points to the shortcomings of the political system and public opinion, which hinders and divides the country. But she shields herself in the vacuous impartiality that pretends to embrace everyone.	Legitimization through emotions and altruism

			- But in leadership decisions have to be made. You can't just have empathy for everybody and do nothing		
5J 52:30-53:13	Bradley Jackson to Alex Levy	Bradley is invited to the show because of her impact on social media, where Alex problematizes her position on the news and her role as a reporter.	Well there are some non-cynical people which I believe is most people, that believe the news is changing, and the news is changing because the people who deliver the news, who showed themselves as honest and decent and trustworthy, have in quite a few cases now proved themselves to be untruthful. And as a result, I think people are wanting more transparency in journalism. I think they want to know the person behind the facade. I think they want to trust that the person telling them the truth about the world is an honest person ... Like you.	Bradley conceives of herself as the one who only delivers the news whose maxim should be a set of virtues that attributes to her the power to speak to others and speak for others.	Legitimization through emotions and altruism

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