Big Little Lies: a contemporary TV series about the representation of feminine subjectivity and violence against women

Big Little Lies: una serie contemporánea sobre la representación de la subjetividad femenina y la violencia hacia la mujer

Irene Cambra-Badii
Universidad de Vic - Universidad Central de Cataluña, Barcelona, España.
irenecambrabadii@gmail.com

Paula Mastandrea
Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
mastandreapaula@gmail.com

María Paula Paragis
Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
paula.paragis@gmail.com

Delfina Martínez
Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
dmartinez.ubapsi@gmail.com

Abstract

TV series can be studied as producing meaning in both moral and aesthetic exploration of the narrative, especially in relation to contemporary issues. In this article, through a qualitative methodology, we address what happens to the female protagonists of the series *Big Little Lies*, released in 2017, which takes pride in telling *stories about contemporary women*. Based on the theory of social representations and a gender perspective, we put forward an analysis on how this TV series intends to convey a discourse of rupture in the traditional role assigned to women in society but, nevertheless, it reproduces certain beauty stereotypes and traditional ways of female subjectivation, which shows a contradiction between its discourse and the final production. On the other hand, the series shows situations of violence against women and addresses the issue considering the complexity it implies.

Keywords: TV series, social representations, gender, female subjectivation, violence.

Resumen

Las series pueden estudiarse como productoras y reproductoras de representaciones sociales, especialmente en relación con las problemáticas contemporáneas. En este trabajo, a través de una metodología cualitativa, se aborda lo que sucede con las protagonistas femeninas de la serie *Big Little Lies*, estrenada en 2017, que lleva el estandarte de contar *historias sobre mujeres actuales*. A partir de la teoría de las representaciones sociales y desde una perspectiva de género, se analiza de qué manera la serie pretende asumir un discurso de ruptura al rol tradicional asignado a las mujeres en la sociedad y, sin embargo, reproduce ciertos estereotipos de belleza y de los modos tradicionales de subjetivación femenina, lo cual permite vislumbrar una contradicción entre el discurso y la producción final. Por otro lado, en la serie se evidencian situaciones de violencia hacia la mujer, lo cual se aborda contemplando la complejidad que le es inherente.

Palabras clave: series, representaciones sociales, género, subjetivación femenina, violencia.

1. Introduction

In the last decade, multiple political and social movements taking on feminist issues are brought back and new ones are proposed, questioning and highlighting subjects such as violence against women and inequality in terms of access to health, education and equal pay for equal work. The "new feminist wave" lies in the popularizing of this political movement and the focus put on the fight against gender inequality in its various forms (Campagnoli, 2018).

In this context, both film and series, both being audiovisual devices of the era, portray the different manifestations that feature women as the stars. In the current audiovisual panorama, the series constitute a substitute of cinema for the masses, especially from the creation and the surge in dissemination of North American platforms like Netflix and HBO. The mode of series consumption surpasses the need to watch television at a certain time and space during which the program is broadcast, and the concept of *seriality* prevails (de la Torre, 2016; Innocenti and Pescatore, 2011).

Just as Rincón (2011) states, the series can be studied as producers of meaning in moral, aesthetic, and narrative exploration. Out of this comes the possibility to analyze the series not only as a phenomenon of consumption, but also in its semiotic dimension (Lotman, 2000), which allows us to use them as a source of information in a qualitative analysis of their content. This will not be possible without the conscious acknowledgement of an affiliation in regards to cinema, and of the work on some of the specific mechanisms of televised fiction: the serial character, the time differential, the suspension of the resolution, the effects of the character transformation throughout the seasons, among other aspects (Benavente, 2007).

The series *Big Little Lies* (HBO, 2017) claims to tell stories *about real women* and defines itself as the story of *"apparently perfect lives that end in murder"* (HBO Spain, 2019). After the success of the first season, whose season finale had an audience of 1.8 million in the United States (Mendo, 2017), it won 4 Golden Globe Awards and 8 Emmys in 2018. Its massive popularity corresponds to that indicated regarding the new possibilities of consumption via streaming and, specifically, the international

expansion of HBO: In 2018, subscription services were available in 67 countries -17 in Europe-, plus Asia, while its programs were aired in 150 countries worldwide (Gómez Mora, 2018). This platform is known for its commercial strategy based on original productions featuring taboo topics such as sex and violence. Different from general chains, HBO does not include commercials in its series and therefore is not subject to moderations on behalf of advertisers regarding risqué content (Cascajosa Virino, 2006).

Big Little Lies is based on the Australian novel written by Liane Moriarty (2014). Although it began as a 7-episode miniseries, the release of its second season is planned for 2019. The plot centers around a small upper-middle class population in the city of Monterrey, California (USA), particularly a group of 5 women between 25 and 50 years old. The scenery seems perfect, they seem perfect, their families seem perfect. However, nothing is perfect below the surface: in fact, the tagline of *Big Little Lies* is *"A perfect life is a perfect lie"*.

The proposal of *Big Little Lies* lies within the social realism typical of neo-television (García de Castro, 2008) and in the flipside of the *American way of life* (Gómez Ponce, 2017). This implies that from the beginning a certain rupture with the traditional tendency of representing families is accepted, understanding that we will see models distanced from the everyday, morally correct patterns that defined a fiction television family in previous decades, due to social and cultural changes, especially those related with women joining the workforce and consequent independence (Lacalle e Hidalgo-Marí, 2016), transforming "the traditional representational functions of TV fiction texts into constructive functions, aimed at establishing better and more efficient communicative relationships with the audience" (García de Castro, 2008, p. 5). However: Does this process really occur in *Big Little Lies*? To be questioned here are the social representations of feminine subjectivity that underlie these "big little lies" of the series name, that are linked to a certain way of understanding women, associating this representation with maternity and family, the postponement of personal projects, subordination to men (which even goes so far as to erupt in physical violence) and determined aesthetic rules in regards to the body and personal image.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 An introduction to social representations

The theory of social representations studies the social origin of knowledge and is based on four general premises: that knowledge relies on symbolic thinking, in other words, the ability to represent one thing using another thing, or the ability of one thing representing something more than itself; that the genesis of knowledge is the result of a communication process; the creation of concepts, in which a concept is a regrouping of a certain kind of objects, events or particularities, using an element or property they have in common; and finally, that these concepts symbolize social relationships (Pérez, 2004).

Moscovici (1961) states that a social representation is an organization of images and language because it emphasizes and symbolizes events and situations that are or become common. From the work of Moscovici and Hewstone (1986), the theory of social representations studies non-normalized knowledge, that is, that of common sense, which is "a body of knowledge based on shared traditions and enriched by thousands of "observations", "experiences", approved by practice" (Moscovici and Hewstone, 1986, p. 682).

This meaning of common sense corresponds to "everything the world knows", the daily stereotypes that operate like generalizations that a group constructs on another group or people, and that always work in favor of the established order (Becker, 2009). These generalized images maintain over time, and can acquire the category of unquestionable truth (Galán, 2007).

Moscovici (1961) proposes that these social representations have three dimensions: attitude, information and the field of representation or image. The information -dimension or concept- is related to the organization of knowledge that a group has in regards to a social object; the field of representation complies with the idea of image, of social model, to the concrete or limited content of the propositions that refer to a precise aspect of the object of the representation. Finally, the attitude has to do with discovering the overall impression in relation to the object of social representation.

According to that proposed by the author, these three dimensions of social representation provide an idea of the content of the sense of the representational object.

2.2 The myths associated with the feminine gender

The structure of the patriarchal society is based on the dichotomies of a binary point of view that establishes different essential aspects between men and women. Such binary is masked as something natural and, therefore, not subject to change, and lays the foundation for the sexual division and subordination of women (De Grado González, 2011).
 In return, gender studies propose opening a new field of knowledge production to address femininity based on considering the subjectivity of the woman in her relation to gender effects, articulating psychic conceptualizations with a comprehension of the social and historic contexts (Meler y Tajer, 2000).

In this sense, Fernández (1993) poses the question *What is being a woman?*, and responds that it is "a social invention shared and recreated by men and women" (p. 22). It is an illusory imagen produced by the interlocking of various myths that are sustained in the social imaginary, from which practices and discourses are given meaning. Said illusion is so powerful that it also has an effect on material processes of society, producing social discourses and myths that organize, legitimize, discipline and define the places of the participants of the inequalities, which have been generated on a social and subjective level using acts of force -whether physical or symbolic- that imply violence -whether visible or invisible- (Fernández, 1993; De Grado González, 2011). There are three such myths in relation to femininity: "Woman=Mother"; "romantic love"; and "passive feminine sexuality" (Fernández, 1993).

The "Woman=Mother" implies that motherhood is the function of the woman, who reaches maturity and personal realization through it, and therefore the *essence* of the woman is being a mother. Motherhood is the most glorifying aspect of the feminine condition, reaffirming the conditioning of women according to biology (Despentes, 2018).

This myth organizes a combination of orders and statues on the actions of conceiving, giving birth and raising descendants, while limiting possible life projects. The ˝romantic love˝ myth sets a dichotomic organization between the public world (home to men, work, politics) and a private world (reserved for the woman, in charge of the home and domestic work and raising children) (Fernández, 1993; De Grado González, 2011). Finally, the ˝the passive feminine sexuality˝ contributes to marginalizing all sexuality outside the married married-reproductive family (Fernández, 1993).

Although feminism has contributed to recognizing and guaranteeing women's rights, significant inequalities regarding multiple aspects still exist today. In the job market, women are paid much less than men, and at the same time, women are more likely to be unemployed than men; women spend more time than men performing domestic chores; and violence against women is in 5th place on the list of causes of women's deaths worldwide (Belloso Martín and Gorczevski, 2018). This is legitimized by cultural patterns and representations coming from a patriarchal system, stemming from the abusive use of power on behalf of men over women, in which ˝violence results from the differences between the non-satisfied expectations that one gender has placed on another. It is also referred to as gender violence˝ (López Mondejar, 2001, p. 821).

3. Methodological Framework

The overall objective of this work is to analyze the social representations regarding the feminine gender, fundamentally its subjectivity, topic which is explicitly proposed by the contemporary fiction series *Big Little Lies*. Among the specific objectives, one is to examine the main characters and their stories as representative cases, from which it is possible to extract indications in regards to stereotypes of beauty (aesthetic value or ideals that are represented in the series via casting, social class depicted, lifestyle, etc.), and violence against women (how this linking mode is configured, how it operates, the underlying myths and subjective effects it implies).

The methodology of analysis starts with a qualitative approach, which includes in its epistemological comprehension a perspective focused on the sense, in the comprehension and on the meaning (Taylor & Bogdan, 2013), sustained by methods of analysis that address comprehension of the complexity, detail, context, and that includes its singularity (Mason, 1996). On the horizon of our analysis of narration is the valor of the *singularity in situation* (Cambra Badii, 2016; Michel Fariña & Solbakk, 2012; Michel Fariña & Tomas Maier, 2016). In other words, in addition to the analysis of social representations of given time and place, the series become a way of access to ˝special situations˝, cases that can be similar to the social representations or rather, show points of differentiation.

The analysis process consisted in capturing the meaning of the text via a personal reconstruction or first interpretation, based on the experience and personal references of each spectator (Casetti & Di Chio, 1991). Significant elements are searched regarding the social representations on feminine subjectivity that can be found in the series' plot, making a notes page of each one of the stories of the plot, and then reinterpreting this material based on the composition of the theoretical framework, particularly for the two topics of focus: feminine myths and violence against women.

According to Bal (1990), who states that a narration contains an analogy with the ˝logic of the events˝ of real life, that the reader experiences in concordance with the world. The components of the narration are addressed, which in this case becomes more and more complex due to its audiovisual aspect, focusing on the analysis of the characters, in their construction and psychology (Raya Bravo, Sánchez-Labella & Durán, 2018). For this development, aspects of the seriality are considered: the suspense of the plot in relation to the resolution of the police case and deterioration suffered by the protagonists that are transformed throughout the season. In the annex, there is a character analysis notes page, in relation to various axes: aspect, attitude, occupation, goals, conflicts and desires.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 What does it mean to be a woman today? The answers by *Big Little Lies*

The first episode of *Big Little Lies* portrays the dramatic bases that are developed in the following episodes based on *flashbacks*: on one hand, on the first day of school, one of the girls accuses a boy (new to town and the school) of hurting her. The respective mothers seem to enter in conflict and immediately allies appear on each side, dividing the "group of mothers". On the other hand, in terms of suspense, it shows police interrogation for a homicide case whose murderer won't be revealed until the first season's last episode.

The three protagonists, Jane Chapman (Shailene Woodley), Madeline Martha Mackenzie (Reese Witherspoon) and Celeste Wright (Nicole Kidman), are introduced portraying each of their problems, both within their respective homes and also outside of them. Jane is a single mother, Madeline is a member of a blended family going through different vicissitudes, and Celeste leaves her profession behind to dedicate herself to meeting the needs of her children and husband, Perry, the latter being a violent relationship. The three main women characters are mainly dedicated to raising their children. Only one has a job. All of them work on building a façade to show publicly which does not match with what is going on in their daily life. The series tries to remind us that below the surface each one has family secrets that confront them with their own miseries: domestic violence, marriage problems, affairs and resentment, difficulty raising small children and adolescents, the aftermath of abuse.

Casting is not random: the actresses are tall, thin, and blonde. All the main characters are white, except one who is Afro-American. The supporting cast, that serve as witnesses in the story (telling the police about the facts of the murder that will occur in the season's last episode) are radically different: obese, various Afro-Americans, unexperienced. The implicit repetition of these beauty and intelligence stereotypes allows us to see the first contradiction between the discourse and the narration of the series.

The stories of the women go around their mother-

hood and families. The "Woman=Mother" myth (Fernández, 1993) and the mode of subjectivation linked to maternity (Tajer, 2009; Despentes, 2018) is repeated in all the feminine characters. The discursive markers focus on emphasizing their roles as mothers over the role of the working woman. There is even a character who does not fit within this mold (Renata Klein, played by actress Laura Dern), but it is seen as a negative trait. Renata is a successful businesswoman, and on various occasions the mothers of her daughter's classmates talk negatively about her alluding to her as a *"working mom"* and spending little time at home, or doesn't spend enough time with her daughter (Season 1, Episode 1). Meanwhile, the young single mother (Jane Chapman) speaks about the "lack of a father" for her young son, the "self-sacrificing wife" (Madeline Martha Mackenzie) repeats that she prefers to take care of her children before returning to work, and the successful lawyer (Celeste Wright) has left her job to dedicate herself fully to her family.

4.2 An interpretation on the singular: a desiring woman?

One of the couples of the series is comprised of Madeline and Ed (Adam Scott), who have a relationship which seems to work well. Ed is portrayed as a good father, who is involved in life at home, in contact with his feelings, concerned with the problems of each member of the blended family, given that Madeline has a daughter from a previous marriage. This initial impression of a family in harmony is quickly infiltrated by a "big little lie". A tension begins in Madeline with her role as a mother and as a wife and she admits, in a conversation with one of her friends, that being mother is not enough for her (Season 1, Episode 4), although all her actions indicate the opposite: up until that moment she had said more than once that she couldn't understand how some mothers choose to work and spend time away from their kids.

Madeline begins to voluntarily organize a theater production at her daughter's school, which generates a lot of controversy in the school community, given that it addresses topics such as racism, homosexuality, politics and pornography. The protagonist argues fiercely on the need to talk about

these issues and not consider them taboo (Season 1, Episode 4), while at the same time insisting on the courage and identity that this coordination and production space gives her on a personal level. Is it a route of escape from the woman=mother logic, and the beginning of a new potentiality?

Her unconformity is shown in other aspects of her life: she begins to have a series of arguments with her ex-husband, accusing him of not being involved enough in the raising of their daughter (Season 1, Episodes 2, 4 and 7). In addition, the disagreements with her adolescent daughter are frequent, repeatedly arguing on daily issues, her sexual activity and future in school (Season 1, Episodes 1, 2 and 6). Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, there are also quarrels with her current husband.

At first, according to the "passive feminine sexuality" myth (Fernández, 1993), we see how her marriage is defined based on the solidarity of pleasure, of a purpose and an apparently stable scene in which she receives recognition as both mother and wife.

In the case of Madeline, the lack of sexual desire towards her husband is emphasized, with whom she tries to break up the routine with and have sex, which often culminates in total failure and gives Madeline a feeling of apathy and annoyance (Season 1, Episodes 2 and 5). She feels intense desires for a workmate, whom she flirts with and looks for ways to be with him outside office hours, finally leading to an affair (Season 1, Episode 4), episode that does not appear in the original literary work. Therefore, the audience can see how the erotic passiveness of the woman is split in the context of marriage, with sexual satisfaction being linked to the extramarital sphere and marked by the guilt that the protagonist feels[1].

Madeline keeps her affair a secret for a long time, which causes her to experience profound regret. When Abigail (her and ex-husband Ethan's daughter) does a school project in which she posts on internet that she is selling her virginity in protest of sexual slavery, Madeline sees no better way to impede it than confessing her affair to her current husband (Season 1, Episode 6). This gesture of honesty is well received by her daughter, who effectively desists. It could be thought that when Madeline confesses her infidelity she corrupts the

previous stability and interrupts an illogic in that daily life that was sustained in inhabiting a world with aspects which were recognized. For this reason, she goes from constantly complaining about others, to adopting a new way of mute ailing that is brought about by the anguish for that which she desires beyond her marriage and her motherhood. But, is it really about breaking the established order? If we look a little further into the situation, we note that Madeline "makes a self-confession" in the presence of her daughter to make her change her mind about the proposal to "sell her virginity on the internet to raise funds". This movement (which could be considered manipulative) bears its fruit, given that the daughter gives up the project, and Madeline does not alter the family order -cancelling her daughter's wild proposal and also the possible revelation of this issue to the husband.

4.3 Violence against women as a linking mode

The story of the other couples in the series especially calls our attention. Celeste and Perry (Alexander Skarsgård) seem to live successfully, trying to demonstrate to the community in which they live the love that they supposedly have. In this sense, they seem to have a relationship framed by the known myth of romantic love (Fernández, 1993). The private sphere seems to be reserved only for Celeste, who shows devotion towards her husband and gives up her career as a lawyer. Since the birth of their children, she has stopped working in order to dedicate herself to taking care of them at home (Season 1, Episode 3). Perry is an attractive man, hardworking and romantic, who has little time to spend with his children and a violent relationship with his wife.

Soon, the spectator is introduced into an atmosphere of tension that is repeated throughout the episodes, growing worse and worse, and creating the very anxiety of the current *seriality*. In the scenes in which they argue or fight, the harshness of the image is doubly shocking: not only are the words and actions horrifying but also the ominous aesthetic portrayed that translates into the capture of Celeste's rigid gestures -alienated and absolutely devastated by the beatings that she receives from her husband- and the close up shots

of Perry's hostile expressions, who shows his rage against his wife with his looks, reinforces the very binary of a political logic that underlies the marital relationship: the exercise of power implies the dominance of one over the other (Season 1, Episodes 2, 4, 5, 6, 7). This power distribution that stems from the time previous to the physical exercise of violence defines Perry as the hegemonic male. Any indication of independence on behalf of Celeste is punished brutally by Perry. The audience witnesses how the initial tension overflows certain banks and Perry begins to abuse Celeste, to later culminate in physical violence with a phase of regret satisfied by gifts and romantic gestures from both; a cycle that, as usual, begins again immediately (Sarmiento *et al.*, 2005).

When Celeste is interested again in returning to work, starting with her friend Madeline asking her to represent her legally in confronting the city mayor, who wants to prohibit the presentation of the theater work she is producing (Season 1, Episode 4), she begins to stray from the most conservative parameters that home life sentences her to and goes on to configure her subjectivity in a transitional key. At the beginning, she is indecisive upon hearing her friend's proposal, she dismisses it saying that she has too much work to do with the kids and she must dedicate herself to them. However, the idea attracts her and she proposes it to her husband, who reminds her that she left her job and is an excellent mother. She finally decides, despite the contradictory feelings that it causes to her, to return to the public world (Season 1, Episode 4). However, she keeps the traditional, interiorized gender rules of the Woman=Mother model and remains a believer in masculine domination (Tajer, 2009). This is portrayed through the doubts that Celeste has about resuming her job, in that she fears the response of her husband could make in terms of her decision -who has already threatened to hit her if she does -.

After the first meeting that Celeste and Madeline attend in order to reach an agreement with the mayor, the events change. Celeste arrives thinking that she will simply offer some advisement or guidance in regards to her friend's legal situation, considering that it would require minimum, only one-time participation. In this scene, Madeline finds in Celeste great lucidity when arguing and immediately proposes that her friend return to legal practice (Season 1, Episode 4). This discourse

directly questions Celeste. It is an intervention that allows her to reconsider the last 6 years which she had dedicated exclusively to being mother. At that moment, Celeste can come to terms with the genuine desire to return to the working world.

At the same point when Celeste begins to leave the conservative place of the good wife and mother role, Perry vehemently resists and there is an increase in physical and symbolic violence.

In this context, they decide to go to couple therapy (Season 1, Episode 3), and in the first session the therapist asks them about the reason they want therapy and says that *"many couples come because they feel they have lost passion"*, to which Celeste responds that the passion is definitely not a problem between them, *"if there is, it is because there is too much"*. She expresses that they love each other very much but on occasions things get out of control, that they fight a lot and yell at each other. Perry says that after these fights they usually have sex. Celeste also defines the sex they have as violent –*"we have this dark secret"*-, and then they make up, assuming that this is the way that couple plays out its sexuality. All these arguments and hits end in violent sex that does nothing more than perpetuate the hostility, which frames this sexual type of violence within the broadest category of gender violence.

Although such generalities are taken as a starting point, it is crucial to highlight the specificity of this case, by proposing a situational interpretation that points to the singularity. In this sense, the division between the erotic and the tender concerns Celeste who, apparently passively and under the empire of Perry's will, results in attracting the desire of her husband and provoking from sexuality or violence itself -that the violent scenes have the representation of a woman as instigator is also key for this analysis.

Throughout the series the audience sees the visualizing process of the violence that Perry commits and the consequent actions that Celeste carries out. Although at the beginning she denies her condition as victim, it is through therapy that she begins to really question the façade that she sustains, which allows her to see the risk that she is in and think of a way out of that alienation (Season 1, Episodes 5 y 7).

5. Conclusions

The present study has analyzed the representations on feminine subjectivity in the series *Big Little Lies.* Based on this objective, we observe that although the discursive change in the contemporary era is unavoidable, it has its nuances and thus translates in to the current series. In this case, certain gender stereotypes are sustained -for example the fact that all the main characters are in heterosexual relationships, the men are dominant over the women, the women are confined in the family home. Beyond the initial intentions, beauty ideals are repeated as well as the traditional roles of women, and the inequalities that, definitely, imply symbolic violence. This phenomenon translates into the tension on a communicational level between what the series intends to show and what finally happens: we find discursive differences in regards to what is proposed and what effectively occurs in terms of the story, given that although the same has been hailed as "the feminist series of the year" (Bremermann, 2018; Cavanagh, 2017; Solà Gimferrer, 2017) you can find aspects that are not considered that still follow the order of a patriarchal system.

It is necessary to return to the three dimensions of the social representations proposed by Moscovici (1961) in order to analyze how the series handles the issue of femininity. The attitude, in terms of overall perspective in regards to the representational object, through the discourse denotes a certain positive tendency towards femininity and its revindication in the public sphere. Nevertheless, the information used and spread through the series follows the most traditional stereotypes in regards to the role of women in society. Finally, regarding the field of representation we observe the casting of aesthetically hegemonic feminine characters. Although the nucleus of the representations examined here would seem to still sustain values and stereotypes of the patriarchal model, you can see on the horizon a modification of certain attitudes towards them, where the subject and the group are agents of meaning construction, being recreated and modified in sociocultural contexts.

From gender studies (Fernández, 1993), the series legitimizes three myths related to femininity, that define the role of women in society. In terms of the "myth of romantic love", it is evident that there is still a dichotomy between public and private worlds. Madeline and Celeste are dedicated to their homes and raising children while their husbands work. However, Jane's character constitutes a figure that strays from such binary, since she is dedicated to her work and is the person who provides for her family. On the other hand, the "myth Woman=Mother" has a large presence in this series given that its narrative insists on an essentialist logic. The maternal role of each one of the main characters is emphasized as well as being what the women have in common. However, regarding the "passive feminine sexuality", a certain rupture is outlined considering the portrayal of the main characters giving rise to the desire of these women beyond conjugal limits; although, it's worth clarifying, it is performed with guilt and mental anguish on behalf of the protagonists.

In relation to the exposition of violence against women in the series, there is a higher degree of agreement between what is intended to be communicated and what is effectively portrayed. Not only is it valuable that the series addresses this issue and gives it considerable importance in the plot, but it also shows its complexity: the ambivalence of the protagonist in terms of the love-aggression link and the opposition. The outcome of this trap that the plot proposes has to do with the murder of the male figure, Perry, thus making a solution to overcome this situation impossible from the woman's standpoint. In other words, she could not do anything about the situation with her own means. However, said murder occurs as the result of a physical confrontation where Bonnie, Madeline, Renata and Jane try to save Celeste from the brutal attack she is suffering. Later a pact of silence is made between the main characters about what happened and the creation of a sisterhood that unites them despite their differences and hostilities.

Although the series' explicit intention is to question feminine subjectivity representation, the result could be questioned. According to Berman (2017), *Big Little Lies* could be interpreted as "*white people problems*". Similarly, Hale states (2017): "the true problem with *Big Little Lies* is that the stories about women, beyond being well performed and quite artistically filmed, are only a series of clichés about the anguish of the upper-middle class" (Hale, 2017). Based on an interrogation of the narrative proposed in the series, following what happens to the people inside the story, the study has analyzed

what *Big Little Lies* manifests as social representations that range between more traditional stereotypes of women and transitional and current modes of subjectivation. The tension between conventional paradigms that point to a treatment of femininity in concordance with maternity and paradigms of transition that introduce a certain autonomy in each one of the characters results in an intrinsic contradiction between the discourse of the series- that which is intended to be shown- and that which effectively occurs at the narrative level.

In the series, there are elements that represent the subjectivity of a time. We can observe that the tension present at this moment regarding social change and movements is portrayed by the series script. Certainly, socio-political changes do not occur from one day to the next and neither do all their dimensions change all at once. Nevertheless, we can state that the technical-stylistic strategies and most explicit narratives are not enough to portray this change in the representation of the women since, in the discourse that underlies the story, the patriarchal model remains due to its power. Just as Despentes states (2018), the intention of current feminism must not be a reorganization of marketing slogans.

Endnotes

1   Podría pensarse que los ideales que otrora viéramos en las clásicas series y filmes románticos aún operan en narrativas aparentemente más progresistas como ésta, dado que vemos una especie de "castigo moral" de las mujeres por disfrutar de su sexualidad. En el caso de Jane, por otra parte, ha sufrido un abuso por parte de un partenaire sexual ocasional y a medida que la trama avanza se observa que el hecho de que se tratara de un completo desconocido, con quien coquetea y acepta quedarse a solas, pareciera atormentarla y deslizar que fue por su falta de cuidado que abusaron de ella (Temporada 1, Episodio 3).

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• About the authors:

Irene Cambra Badii has a Doctorate in Psychology, is a professor and researcher at Universitat de Vic - Universitat Central de Catalunya, and researcher in the Research Group on Education in Health Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. She has been professor and researcher for over 10 years at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Areas of research: ethics, bioethics, audiovisual media, educational innovation.

María Paula Paragis has a degree in Psychology from Universidad de Buenos Aires, maestranda in Psycho-analysis at Universidad de Buenos Aires, research fellow at the Secretary of Science and Technical Studies at Universidad de Buenos Aires and adjunct professor of Psychology, Ethics and Human Rights at the School of Psychology at Universidad de Buenos Aires.

Paula Mastandrea has a degree in Psychology from the Universidad de Buenos Aires, maestranda in Educational Psychology, research fellow of the Secretary of Science and Technical Studies at Universidad de Buenos Aires and professor of Cinema and Subjectivity Research at the School of Psychology at Universidad de Buenos Aires.

Delfina Martínez is studying Psychology at Universidad de Buenos Aires and has been research fellow estímulo at the National Interuniversity Council.

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