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Review of Trans Representation in Spanish TV Fiction. Analysis of All about Dafne (HBO Max, 2021)

Revisión de la representación trans en la ficción televisiva española. Análisis de la serie de televisión Todo lo otro (HBO Max, 2021)

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Abstract

This article seeks to determine the evolution of trans representation in Spanish television fiction and, specifically, in the TV series All about Dafne (HBO Max, 2021) created by Abril Zamora. To this end, a qualitative methodology was used to conduct a bibliographic review, and the textual analysis of the main character – Dafne – as person, role and actant; together with other categories related to the gender identity. In addition, the audio-visual features of the presentation and sex scenes are examined. The findings show a progressive increase in the quality and inclusion of trans characters in the Spanish audio-visual sector. The narrative in All about Dafne (HBO Max, 2021) is not exclusively characterised by Dafne's trans status, which is included in the plots in an organic and complementary way with other characteristics that define the protagonist. This TV series is configured as a reference in the representation of the trans collective in fiction, and it contributes to the political and social attention, and the fight against transphobia. Accordingly, this research represents an original contribution from the Television Studies and Queer Theory approach, which prompts future investigation regarding other TV series.

Keywords

Spain; television fiction; characters; TV series; television; Trans

Resumen

Este artículo tiene el objetivo de determinar la evolución de la representación trans en la ficción televisiva española y, concretamente, en la serie Todo lo otro (HBO Max, 2021) creada por Abril Zamora. Desde una metodología cualitativa se realiza la revisión de la bibliografía relacionada, y el análisis textual del personaje de Dafne, protagonista de la citada ficción, como persona, rol y actante, junto con otras categorías relacionadas con la identidad de género. Además, se examinan los parámetros audiovisuales de las escenas de presentación y sexo. Los resultados muestran un incremento progresivo en la calidad e inclusión de personajes trans en el audiovisual español. En Todo lo otro (HBO Max, 2021) la narrativa no se caracteriza exclusivamente por la realidad trans de Dafne, que se incluye en las tramas de forma orgánica y complementaria a otras características que definen a la protagonista. Dicha serie de televisión se configura como un referente en la representación del colectivo trans en la ficción, contribuyendo a su atención política y social, y a la lucha contra la transfobia. Por ello, su estudio supone una aportación original desde los estudios televisivos y la teoría queer, motivando futuras investigaciones dirigidas a otras ficciones televisivas.

Palabras clave

España; ficción televisiva; personajes; serie de televisión; televisión; Trans

1. Introduction

Nowadays, television media is so relevant within the industry, society and academia that quality content is demanded from an aesthetic, thematic, and narrative perspective. OTT platforms favour this new landscape, which have modified the dynamics of TV series' creation, distribution, and consumption. The current technological setup is directly connected with novelties in the social representation of TV series (Goddard & Hogg, 2019). The LGBTQIA+ community's presence in TV series is increasing in these operators' productions, which promote queer representation and aesthetics in the media (Goddard & Hogg, 2018; Macintosh, 2022; Ruiz del Olmo & Bustos Díaz, 2020). Therefore, scholars are interested in analysing projects on VoD platforms because of their popularity and social influence (Marcos-Ramos & González-de-Garay, 2021).

Streaming services target a niche audience, do not financially depend on advertisers, and give showrunners more creative freedom (Higueras-Ruiz, Gómez-Pérez, & Alberich-Pascual, 2021). These factors favour the development of risky and innovative thematics and a wider variety of characters in this fiction; examples of this in the American market include: *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix, 2013-2019), *Transparent* (Prime Video, 2014-2019) or *Euphoria* (HBO, 2019-). In this industry, 26 of 42 trans characters were featured in platform TV series in 2021 (GLAAD, 2022).

A suitable LGBTQIA+ representation in media positively impacts society: (1) it influences views and opinions about this community, and (2) it positively influences individuals, especially teenagers, by providing them with role models and a sense of belonging (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). Television narratives have the power to construct and modify social definitions of gender, and contribute to the acceptance or transphobia (Gillig et al., 2018; Miller, 2014). Therefore, media representation is "a form of social action involving the production of meanings that ultimately have real effects" (Kylo-Patrick, 2000: 61).

Previously published studies have found an increase in LGBTQIA+ characters in American television, where traditional stereotypes have gradually changed (Cook, 2018). Nevertheless, these conclusions are only applied to homosexuality because bisexuality is virtually nonexistent on television, and trans issues are not analysed due to the absence of significant data.

In the Spanish context, Marcos-Ramos and González-de-Garay (2021) conclude their research on gender representation in TV series for VoD platforms by identifying a trend toward equality and a greater queer representation, albeit insufficient and stereotyped. In a similar vein, Hidalgo-Marí, Segarra-Saavedra, and Palomares-Sánchez (2022) add:

Regarding the treatment and representation of real problems, the Spanish fiction produced for VOD remains shy in the face of new social reflections, such as gender violence, feminism, class differences, or the treatment of the LGTBI collective. These problems assume a fleeting presence within the stories and are not usually the main narrative thread of fictions (2022: 128).

The recent and minority inclusion of trans content in TV series explains the lack of academic texts about this topic (Poole, 2017). However, the increased visibility of diverse fictional characters in recent years has led to points of convergence between television studies and trans studies, together with the increase in related research (Miller, 2014). Therefore, it is essential to apply a qualitative method to examining trans representation and its consequences from a critical perspective, and not limit the work to data quantification (Billard, 2016; Levitt & Ippolito, 2014). In so doing, researchers can alert us to any commercial interests behind sensationalist illustrations that do not reflect reality or target a specific audience according to the audiovisual market demands (Kruger-Robbins, 2022).

In the current social context, queer thought, the fourth wave of feminism, and cyberactivism have contributed to the presence of the trans reality in political debates and the struggle for the recognition of trans rights and the claim against transphobia. This landscape encourages unsterotypical trans representation, which advocates the freedom of identity and respect and acceptance of this reality (Cobo-Durán & Otero-Escudero, 2021; Copier & Steinbock, 2017). This approach represents the link between television studies, which aim to show the dominant ideology reflected in the media, and queer studies, which takes on an activist position (Goddard & Hogg, 2019; Joyrich, 2014). Communication scholars who work from the queer theory perspective set out three academic challenges: (1) the presence of the trans community in relation to the audiovisual business' commercial dynamics, (2) the influence of media on children's and teenagers' queer experience (3) reviewing concepts concerning the subjective conception of trans people (Gross, 2005: 522-524).

In Spanish TV series research, most papers study the content of fiction projects. Mateos-Pérez stated (2021: 176), "In recent years, some innovative studies have been produced that described the representation of other gender identities." Nevertheless, texts about the trans community are still significantly limited.

For this reason, this research is pertinent and justified as it presents the outlook of trans representation in the Spanish television market and analyses the character Dafne in the TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021). We propose contributing to the limited but growing academic investigation of trans reality in Spanish television fiction.

1.1. Trans issues and Spanish television fiction

It is necessary to review related concepts and meanings to study trans characters in television fiction. We adopt a queer theory approach (Fellner, 2017) and highlight that terms are fluid and varied depending on personal factors. Following recommendations published by GLAAD website—*Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation*—(s.f.), we defend respect when using these concepts and the freedom for people to choose the ones with which they feel most comfortable.

We began with the conceptual difference between "sex" and "gender". The first term refers to biological characteristics—man or woman—according to genitalia, among other parameters. The "gender"—male, female, or non-binary—concerns socially accepted ideals about being a man or woman. Besides, in a trans study, it is essential to understand the difference between these terms and sexual orientation or attraction (Levitt & Ippolito, 2014).

In the American context, "transgender" or "trans" is an umbrella term for people who do not feel psychologically represented by their socially associated biological sex and gender characteristics. It is medically known as gender identity disorder (Spencer & Capuzza, 2016). Transgender people may or may not have undergone hormone treatment or surgery to change their sex, i.e. to transition. Therefore, there is a greater diversity of corporealities (Cobo-Durán & Otero-Escudero, 2021). The term "transexual" is traditionally used to define people who transition, and the concept "non-binary," "fluid gender," or "queer" refers to people who do not identify with male or female genders (Joyrich, 2014). Although there are several sub-collectives within the concept of "trans," audiovisual representations usually only include transexual people and do not consider trans people who have not been operated on or gender-fluid people (Wellborn, 2015). Moreover, scholars and activists are also beginning to use "queer" as an umbrella term to refer to the wide range of gender identities and sexual orientations as a synonym for LGBTQIA+ (Baker, 2016; Gross, 2005).

On the other hand, it is relevant to consider the geographical context to understand the terminology. In this case, Cobo-Durán and Otero-Escudero (2021) indicate that in Spain, the concept trans or trans* is used; and they add: "with these broader terms, anyone whose identity transgresses binary heteronormativity is included, moving away from biological connotations that the word transgender and transexual carry" (Cobo-Durán & Otero-Escudero, 2021: 81). In this article we use the term trans to refer to the collective in a general way, and we add some specific considerations about transition or non-binarity if needed.

We apply the four stages of media representation for minority groups proposed by Clark (1969) to determine the evolution of trans characters in Spanish television: (1) the first period is non-representation when the group is ignored, (2) the second stage is ridicule, which provokes outcry and the third phase, (3) regulation, which involves a forced representation, and finally, (4) respect, when the characters break free from stereotypes, and their representation goes beyond gender identity and seeks to be natural.

Although Clark (1969) proposed this schema to analyse the representation of racial minorities, scholars have applied this to other oppressed groups, such as the LGBTQIA+ community. This text adopts the four stages to determine trans representation in fiction TV series. Thus, if we observe the Spanish television history, we can identify the four periods and their trans characters. However, the boundaries are blurred in these phases, and we find different representations in the same period depending on the production, channels or platform in charge of the distribution (Cook, 2018).

In the Spanish context, there was no trans representation during RTVE's monopoly (1956-1991). The first trans character was included in the first season of *Farmacia de Guardia* (Antena 3, 1991-1996): the family's transexual aunt, Clara Eugenia (Fernando Telletxea). In this second phase, trans representation is characterised by negative archetypes that seek to ridicule and reject the collective.

Serano (2016) notes two ways of representing trans women: the deceptive and the pathetic transexual. The former is usually a sexual predator who keeps this condition hidden until the end of the plot when her femaleness is a lie. Representing trans women as pathetic is the basis for ridicule and comedy. This case highlights the contradiction between gender identity and physical appearance, and the discourse of a woman trapped in a male body. Sexualisation and sensationalism also characterise trans reality in the media (Namaste, 2005; Shelley, 2008). Thus, this inclusion period is associated with negative stereotypes (McInroy & Craig, 2015). These characters have been subjected to harassment and ridicule; they generate fear and terror and are often discredited through the following practices (Billard, 2016):

- *Deadnaming*: using the name or pronoun of the person before their transition.
- *Misgendering*: using the wrong gender to refer to the person.
- *Pathologisation*: thinking about the trans reality as a pathology, not as gender diversity.
- Confusing trans with homosexuality or travestism.
- The sexualisation of trans people.

There are numerous examples of trans characters suffering from some of these practices. In the Spanish television industry, we highlight the inclusion of a trans woman, Raquel (Elena Lombao), in *Aquí no hay quien viva* (Antena 3, 2003-2006). Her brother-in-law calls her Raúl, she is shown shaving, and questions her boyfriend's masculinity. We can find a similar representation in *Bienvenidos al Lolita* (Antena 3: 2014), where Roxy (Sara Vega) is disrespected because of her gender identity. In *Anclados* (Telecinco, 2015), a trans woman attends a Gay Pride party and is mocked by homophobic attacks as the men call her Pepe and make sexist jokes about her genitals.

Against this backdrop, the *Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Trans y Bisexuales*—FELGTB—publishes the *Guía de Buenas Prácticas para el Tratamiento de la Diversidad Sexual y de Género en Los Medios de Comunicación*:

It is necessary to address the reality of trans identities, showing both structural discriminations in our system and progress and positive aspects. Positive references to trans people in their family, work, and social life must be reflected in a normalised way (FELGTB, 2019: 18).

The third phase of representation is viewed as a time of change. Trans characters move away from the aforementioned stereotypes but are not naturally represented beyond their gender identity. This is the case of Alba Recio (Víctor Palmero) in *La que se acerca* (Telecinco, 2007-), whose transition process is exaggerated and unrealistic. She is taunted and harassed, even by her father. Nevertheless, this character also has powerful conceptual references, such as the difference between transexual and travesty. We highlight another noteworthy example in the 19th season of *Cuéntame* (RTVE, 2001-) when the hairdresser Angie (Julia Piera) opens up to her boyfriend. Despite expressing her ideas about the wrong body and being "almost woman," this scene has to be understood within its historical context: Spanish society in the 80s when the trans issue was virtually unknown. Both characters speak of the wrong body, and their narratives focus on the transition. In these examples, hormones or surgery are the way to being socially and personally accepted by fully converting to belong to the gender which represents them (Siebler, 2012).

In the fourth phase, discourses about genitalia, wrong body and transitioning have been relegated to other narratives around queer diversity and subjectivity. Ridiculous or violent stereotypes and representations are limited, so the previous discourse "seems to have ebbed in favour of more diverse and refined stories about transgender identity and subjectivity" (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017: 214). The broader concept of trans has contributed to this stage because it includes not only transsexuality but also transgender and fluid gender. Therefore, the term "transition" is used to indicate the moment when a trans person makes their gender identity public to society without the need to change their physical appearance (Cobo-Durán & Otero-Escudero, 2021). Following this idea, Booth (2015) emphasises the diversity in trans subjectivities beyond the discourse of transition, and Masanet, Ventura and Ballesté (2022) indicate new narratives that transcend characters' trans identity.

In the Spanish industry, characters such as Gloria, Ángela and Luna are representative of the fourth phase. Gloria is the owner of a bar in *El síndrome de Ulises* (Antena 3, 2007-2008), played by Carla Antonelli. Ángela is a police inspector in *Servir y proteger* (RTVE, 2017-), played by Lara Martorell. Luna, who Abril Zamora plays, features in the third season of *Vis, a Vis* (Antena 3, 2015-2016, Fox, 2018-2019). Although the actress' physical appearance and some comments about it make her trans identity evident, her condition is not expressed explicitly. Zamora is also part of the cast in *El desorden que dejas* (Netflix, 2020), where she plays the role of the main character's friend, but it is not relevant that she is a trans woman.

In *Veneno* (ATRESPlayer Premium, 2020), the character Valeria (Lola Rodríguez), who also participates in the TV series *Bienvenidos al Edén* (Netflix, 2022), together with the actresses who play Cristina Ortiz "La Veneno" in her three stages of life—Daniela Santiago, Jedet Sánchez and Isabel Torres—, star in a new landscape of trans representation in contemporary Spanish fiction led by trans actresses. In relation to this TV series, in the *Análisis sobre la representación de la diversidad en la ficción española del 2020 en cine y televisión* the following is expressed:

We hope that *Veneno* will plant the seed for other trans histories. Fiction has the power to be a vector of social change. Consequently, it is a good opportunity to think about more critical audiovisual narratives, which not only show situations challenging a social behaviour but also investigate institutions' *modus operandi*. There is so much to do, and this is the ideal time to start (Informe ODA, 2021: 37).

Despite the cited exceptions, the representation of trans women by cisgender actors and actresses is common practice in the current television scene. It is heavily criticised because it encourages fake corporealities and damages this community's visibility, inclusion, and improvement of working conditions (Cobo-Durán & Otero-Escudero, 2021: 83). In the Spanish context, a paradigmatic example is a cisgender actress Belén Cuesta, who performs the trans woman: Manila in the third season of *La Casa de Papel* (Antena 3, 2017, Netflix, 2019-2021). The case of the cisgender actor Paco León, who played the trans woman María José in the Mexican TV series *La Casa de las Flores* (Netflix: 2018-2020), was also criticised by the television media and audience. ODA—*Observatorio de la Diversidad en Los Medios Audiovisuales*—reports this because “although it seems to be the best option, this proposal feeds general public imaginary where trans persons do not exist,” and adds that “having trans people in front and behind cameras will help the visibility of deeper and three-dimensional stories” (Informe ODA, 2021: 36).

Hiring cisgender men and women to perform trans women on screen reinforces the idea that they are not women and reduces work options for trans actresses (Reitz, 2017). This situation is explicitly criticised in the TV series *Paquita Salas* (Flooxer, 2016; Netflix, 2018-2019). In *Edwin*'s episode, the cisgender actress Lidia San Jose is dressed to play a trans man. This is denounced by the trans actress Laura Corbacho in the fiction:

You have no idea what being trans is. Do you know how many years I studied acting? Ten years. Do you know how many castings I have done? One. A casting to perform a whore, trans, and bystander. So until I have access to the roles played by Lidia, I will keep fighting for my mates or me to be called instead of calling Lidia and giving her a false moustache. I am so sorry for fighting for my rights. This is what I will do (#03x02: Calvo and Ambrossi, Netflix, 2019, 00:00:24-00:00:25).

On the other hand, scholars and activists also highlight the limited inclusion of trans men and non-binary people in the media (Wellborn, 2015). As exceptions, we must note the character Óscar Ruiz in *Las Chicas del Cable* (Netflix, 2017-2020), played by Ana Polvorosa. He reveals his trans identity and stops identifying as Sara Millán with the discourse of a man trapped in a female body. In *Madres, Amor y Vida* (Prime Video, 2020-), the character Lucas is also a trans man, performed by Adrián Viador. And in the reencounter in *Los Hombres de Paco* (ATRESplayer Premium, 2021-), Rober (Juan Grandinetti) is the main character in a plot focused on his problems and conflicts with his partner due to his trans identity. Additionally, after reviewing Spanish television fiction, we notice the lack of non-binary characters until 2021, when the *Informe ODA* (2022) highlights three bisexual and fluid gender persons, such as Dan in *HIT* (RTVE, 2020-) or Carla in *El Pueblo* (Prime Video, 2019-).

Regarding the development of Spanish TV series, we observe a commitment to narratives characterised by the struggle for trans community rights, complaints of harassment, and the search for identification. Moreover, these narratives take a stand by showing trans people's life experiences, who are not solely defined by this condition. Defending this idea, Reitz (2017) states that “trans is only an adjective that describes one aspect of transgender people... Their stories need to revolve around the plot and not the fact that they are trans” (6). Trans issues will influence stories about trans characters at some point, but we notice a positive representation which seeks to defend and normalise the inclusion of the collective.

Finally, we observe more trans people in productions for OTT platforms (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). Queer sexualities are presented in TV series thanks to the creative freedom of VoD services and the presence of trans men and women who create, direct and produce these projects. They propose a renewal of sexuality and move towards a trans view in the media representation of this collective (Goddard & Hogg, 2018, 2019). Following this idea, Carrillo-Bernal and Cascajosa-Virino (2021) express in the report *Diversidad cultural en la creación audiovisual en España. Diversidad de Autores y de historias (2015-2019)* that “the inclusion of debut authors is a positive factor for the industry because of its benefits for creative regeneration and the circulation of more current social imaginaries” (30). The TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) and its creator Abril Zamora are paradigmatic examples of this situation. For this reason, it is a relevant case study in this research.

2. Methodology

The main objective of this research is to determine the presence of trans and their representation in Spanish television fiction and the TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) created by Abril Zamora.

The related literature is reviewed using a qualitative methodology to establish concepts, characteristics, and the evolution of the representation of trans in Spanish television media. To do so, we examine definitions proposed on the GLAAD (s.f.) website, the *Guía de Buenas prácticas de la FELGTB* (2019) and the *Informe ODA* (2021, 2022), together with the relevant academic contributions (Gross, 2005; Levitt & Ippolito, 2014; Spencer & Capuzza, 2016). Besides, we have studied the research conducted by Serano (2016) regarding stereotypes connected with trans people and the texts written by Billard (2016), Capuzza and Spencer (2017), and Cobo-Durán and Otero-Escudero (2021), which centre on trans representation in national and international TV series. Moreover, we have applied the four representation stages for minority groups in television proposed by Clark (1969) and studied works that examine the social consequences of television content published by Kylo-Patrick (2000) and Miller (2014). Data has been applied to the review of trans characters in Spanish television fiction.

The limited number of trans characters in the audiovisual media prompts a qualitative methodology for this research to examine a representative TV series of the subject of study (Mateos-Pérez, 2021). Specifically, we look at the main character, Dafne, and the characteristics of her representation. We have applied the test proposed by Vito Russo, a cinematic historian and co-founder of GLAAD, to set out three criteria for creating LGBTQIA+ characters in the media: (1) the inclusion of one person from the collective, in our case, one trans person; (2) this character must not only be defined by their gender identity; and (3) their presence must not be complementary so that their absence would have an impact on the plot (GLAAD, 2013: 8). The character Dafne meets these requirements. Moreover, the contemporary recognition of this TV series, its production and distribution on the HBO Max platform, and the creation of the project led by a trans showrunner contribute to justifying this choice as a subject of study.

We have watched the TV series twice and analysed the character using a model proposed by Pérez-Rufí (2016). The author uses the textual analysis published by Casetti and Di Chio (1998, 1999) and Chatman (1990) to identify the construction and working of a television discourse. Although this methodological approach derives from literary theory and narratology, in relation to this research, we note that "cinematographic feminist theory and queer theory have to be added because they highlighted the need for a critique of dramatic construction from new approaches, which challenge underlying ideologies in the discourse regarding characters' description and function" (Pérez-Rufí, 2016: 536).

Characters are elements of the narrative structure called existing—somebody who is—who have individual entities. From this approach, Casetti and Di Chio (1999: 267-270) set out three perspectives for their analysis: (1) from a phenomenological point of view—the character as a person with intellect and feelings demonstrated through their behaviours, reactions, and gestures—, (2) a formal point of view—the character as a codified role within the narrative—, and (3) an abstract point of view—the character as actant within a logical structure associated with the action—.

The first level is the most relevant one for analysing the character in this research. Still, we do not overlook the data related to the other two approaches, which could complement the results. As stated above, we examine the character Dafne with applied categories set out by Pérez-Rufí (2016): (1) a simple or complex character, (2) physical appearance: physiognomy, clothing, gesture, (3) verbal expression, (4) personality: decisions, actions, reactions, idea of oneself, (5) backstory: inner life and background, (6) exterior life: professional, personal, and private life, (7) goal and motivation, (8) discursive elements, (9) extra-discursive elements, (10) character as a role, and (11) character as an actant (540-550).

Analysing trans characters requires focusing on some categories concerning specific issues connected with gender identity and its representation. For this reason, we apply five codes to explore trans characters proposed by Capuzza and Spencer (2017: 219): casting, visibility, identity, body, and social interaction. Besides, we also examine items used by Cobo-Durán and Otero-Escudero (2021: 86) in their study on the TV series *Veneno* (ATRESPlayer Premium, 2020): attraction to other characters, victims or perpetrators of violence, and family, friends, and love relationships.

The trans-character study will be complemented with an audiovisual analysis of two types of key scenes: the introduction scene and the sex scene. It will allow us to identify the storytelling focalisation. Cobo-Durán and Otero-Escudero (2021) defend this approach by stating that "an audiovisual language based on a cisgender perspective provides the audience with images of trans characters looking at themselves instead of looking with them, which causes trans representation to be built around cisgender imaginaries" (87). For this reason, examining these scenes from an audiovisual filmmaking approach allows us to determine whether trans representation takes a "trans perspective" which contributes naturally and positively to the representation of this collective.

This research uses a queer theory approach to determine trans representation in Spanish television fiction and analyse the character Dafne and the TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021). Despite

adopting this perspective in the theoretical review and methodological application, it is necessary to note possible implicit limitations in this discourse due to cis and heterosexual authorship.

3. Results: *Dafne* and *All about Dafne* (HBO Max: 2021)

The TV series *Dafne and the Rest* (2021) is the first original Spanish fiction for HBO Max. Abril Zamora created this project, the first trans showrunner in Spain, who was previously co-creator of *Señoras del (h) AMPA* (Prime Video, 2019-) and writer in *Élite* (Netflix, 2018-). Zamora also directs and writes the TV series, and she plays the main character: Dafne. This allows the narrative to have autobiographical overtones and, according to the *Informe ODA*, "it is the main reason why the way trans identity is presented is genuinely profound and three-dimensional" (2022: 54). Thanks to the production of *Dafne and the Rest* (HBO Max, 2021) Zamora has received the *Reconocimiento Arcoíris 2022* for her job in trans visibility in the television media (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2022).

This TV series is produced by Producciones Mandarin and distributed by HBO Max. *Dafne and the Rest* (HBO Max, 2021) consists of 8 30-minute episodes. At the project presentation during the San Sebastián Film Festival, Miguel Salvat, head of HBO Spanish original production, states that the trans issue is not the theme of this fiction. Instead, it focuses on friends' experiences (Salvat in Lang, 2021). In the same vein, Zamora declares to *Vanity Fair* magazine (2021) that *Dafne and the Rest* (HBO Max, 2021) is:

A personal project which tells the story of a group of thirty-something-year-old friends. They blind step, drink every week and live between frustration and late adolescence. They have sex with the wrong people or work jobs that do not make them happy (Zamora, in *Vanity Fair*, 2021).

The story tells the life of Dafne from a gender dramedy perspective; it combines dramatic elements with comedic overtones to present the "misfortunes" of a 36 year-old-woman. She shares a flat, does not like her job, her boyfriend has just broken up with her, and, in her own words, "all the rest" (#01x01: Zamora, HBO Max, 2021, 00:13:00-00:15:34). In this way the character indicates the TV series title to the audience to refer to her identity. Dafne does not hide that she is a trans woman but does not focus on her gender identity. She highlights other physical and psychological characteristics: "my life, objectively speaking, is shit. And I don't say that as the sex change, which went fucking great, and I have done very well, but I refer to the other things" (#01x07: Zamora, HBO Max, 2021, 00:10:00-00:19:13).

Dafne is a complex character with varied qualities. She has a personality that is both dramatic and insecure. Dafne is a deep and passionate woman who sometimes acts childish; she is very feminine and loving. She is tall and slim and has red hair and fair skin. Dafne is sexy and attractive, although she considers herself "a weird thing," which shows her low self-esteem and how she boycotts herself. On several occasions, we can observe her partially naked body and uncovered breasts as a symbol of femininity. We highlight the image of Dafne in the bathtub, which transmits intimacy, peace, and freedom together with sex scenes, which will be examined in depth later.

Other characters' opinions about Dafne's body are also considered in several scenes. In these cases, people say that she looks older, which could be applied to any middle-aged female character, and make indirect comments about her trans identity. For example, we can note a conversation between Dafne and Iñaki's mother, a man whom Dafne starts to date:

Iñaki's mother: You are so tall!

Dafne: It's true... I am... a bit giant. It is a drag!

Iñaki's mother: You have a back, like... Do you swim? Are you a swimmer?

Dafne: No, I don't do any sport. I am lazy.

Voice-over: And transexual... she is also transexual.

(#01x05: Zamora, HBO Max, 2021, 00:04:55-00:05:13).

Dafne is a dynamic and active character who evolves in her work, social and family environment throughout the season. She is the main character of the TV series; as such, she is present in all contexts. She interacts with all the characters: (1) she is not happy in her job in a women's fashion shop; however, she fulfils her duties and gets on well with her workmates, and her boss—with whom she makes up after a minor conflict, which is depicted through scenes of sisterhood—; (2) Dafne has two best friends who are part of a strong support network although they sometimes argue—in this context her best friend César appears, with whom Dafne lives and is in love with, and her ex-boyfriend, a homosexual man who breaks up with her three years after the gender reassignment surgery; and (3) in terms of her family,

Dafne's mother does not empathise with her, and she creates awkward situations, but never in relation to her daughter's gender identity; and her father feels strange about his daughter's trans reality, but from a concerned and non-intrusive perspective.

The project's narrative does not include physical violence motivated by the main character's gender identity. However, we can point out some comments which refer to the trans issue in an inappropriate tone. We highlight Juancho's nature, a friend of César, who is insensitive and inconsiderate: he asks Dafne how she feels without a penis. Juancho depicts a macho personality beyond the trans reality.

It is also interesting to note the irony with which the voice-over—by comedian Alberto Casado—complements the narrative with several comments throughout the story. Zamora uses a satirical tone in these dialogues to humorously present dramatic circumstances. In this way, laughter encourages comedy, but it is a far cry from mockery, stereotypes, and disrespectfulness. The inclusion of a cisgender's male voice has been a controversial issue. However, other opinions consider it "an interesting opportunity to reflect on the misogyny internalised within some trans women precisely due to toxic masculinity" (Informe ODA, 2022: 56).

Regarding the transition discourse, we can observe several references to Dafne's operation and hormonal process. She is happy and proud of her gender reassignment, but she never refers to her previous condition with the idea of the wrong body or a woman trapped in a male body. We only see Dafne pre-surgery in one scene: a flashback of when she and César kiss. In this case, we do not see Dafne's face in detail, so the spectator can only see two male bodies. Another example of Dafne before the transition is when she slept in her parent's house and had to wear men's clothes the next day. On the other hand, Dafne's last name is not mentioned, and nobody refers to her using male pronouns.

Concerning the audiovisual analysis, the character is introduced in the first scene. In this case, we can see Dafne sitting in a nightclub bathroom after a close-up zoom through a door. A fade-in montage lets us know what is behind the door without needing to open it. In this way, spectators can enter into the character's psyche. In this scene, Dafne silently stares into the distance and looks concerned. The dim light illuminates the figure, directing the viewer's gaze toward Dafne. The dark shades, such as brown and black in the background, highlight the red in her dress, lips and hair; Dafne is in the middle of the frame. First, there is a medium shot, and after the zoom, there is a close-up.

The soundtrack is composed of music and voice-over. The introduction scene features diegetic off-music, which forms a part of the narrative, but the source of the music is not present because it comes from the dance floor. This song, *Tan lejos de tí* (2006) by the Spanish group Dorian, informs us about the contemporary alternative tone in the TV series. The voice-over introduces Dafne with the following statement, together with a white label stating her name and pointing to her:

She is Dafne. She chose her name from one of the girls in *Scooby-Doo*. Instead of choosing Velma, the intelligent, self-sufficient and resolute girl with glasses, she chose the other's name, the beautiful girl who is always kidnapped. Anyway, she always wanted to be a damsel in distress. We can see her there after peeing, but she didn't always do it sitting; she didn't (#01x01: Zamora, HBO Max, 2021, 00:00:12-00:00:30).

This monologue introduces the character taking note of her trans condition implicitly but not exclusively or predominantly. In this case, other characteristics which define Dafne, such as femininity, victimhood, or drama, are emphasised more.

Concerning sex, we observe three scenes where the character has sporadic sex with heterosexual male characters. In the first case, Dafne is with a man she met on the Internet. They have sex in a missionary position, and we can see her breasts. The scene is brief: after a tracking movement of the clothes strewn on the floor, there is a fixed shot of two characters in a medium shot. The scene occurs in Dafne's room, decorated in warm subdued colours. The light is soft and illuminates her partner. The soundtrack includes the characters' gasps, who ask each other if they are comfortable. The voice-over describes the scene briefly. After the sexual act Dafne is affectionate, but the man leaves her using her transsexuality as an excuse.

The second sex scene starts with a chat written over the dark background of a room, thanks to montage techniques. A zoom-out opens the frame to show two characters: Dafne is performing oral sex on Iñaki, who she also met on the Internet. The movement changes before showing the entire scene, and there is a medium shot in which we can see Dafne behind Iñaki after the sexual act. Characters are dressed casually, and the dialogues explain that Dafne has gone to Iñaki's house in the morning. Light comes through the window and illuminates the scene softly. The bedroom is decorated with posters and pop culture objects, such as a lava lamp which, together with the untidiness, define Iñaki's personality.

Lastly, the sex scene between Dafne and her best friend, César, is contextualised in a sequence in the man's room. They have to sleep in this room together because Cesar's family spends the night in their flat. This episode is almost entirely set in this room. The bottle episode lets writers focus on the characters' personalities by putting them in intimate and complex situations.

In this scene, the friends are upset because Dafne had declared her love to César the night before. Nevertheless, after he reacts angrily, they have a fun night watching films, ordering junk food, singing, dancing, and taking drugs. César asks Dafne about the gender reassignment surgery, and she proposes to show him her vagina. César agrees after saying no several times. A fixed shot shows him looking at Dafne's genitalia as she keeps her legs open. César feels seduced and expresses curiosity. Then there is a scene with a fixed shot showing genital penetration. Dafne is under César in medium shot. The light is dim, which allows shadows to form on the figures. The colours—brown and ochre—also make the atmosphere intimate. Both characters pant while saying that the situation is weird. Suddenly César pulls away and apologises. The frame opens, and there is a general shot: she is lying in bed without any trousers on, and he sits in the bedroom corner with his hands on his head. After this moment of confusion, they continue smoking and playing video games.

We note that none of the three sex scenes corresponds to an expression of romantic love. They are short and composed of a fixed shot or two/three long shots. Transsexuality is not the protagonist in the sexual act in any case, although in the first scene, it is the boy's excuse for not seeing Dafne again, and in the last scene, it is the reason for initiating sex with her.

4. Discussion

The TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) represents the maximum approach to the fourth stage (Clark, 1969) of trans representation in Spanish television fiction when LGBTQIA+ characters are included within the narration regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation. Therefore, being gay, lesbian or trans does not define characters exclusively. The project *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) is LGBTQIA+ fiction, but the story is not limited to plots about this collective. Instead, it allows a general audience to relate to it: work problems, conflicts with partners, infidelities, and arguments with friends. In the case of Dafne, she is a woman going through an apparent mid-life crisis who feels unfortunate because she dislikes her job, has no children, house or car, etc., and her boyfriend has broken up with her. Therefore, any woman at a similar age and in similar circumstances could identify with her, regardless of whether she is cisgender or transgender.

It is an inclusive fiction which moves away from traditional negative stereotypes—villains, prostitutes, buffoons—and discourses associated with the wrong body and the man trapped in a female body. Although several references to the surgical procedure and hormone treatment are made, and non-binariety is not considered, they do not refer to a need for the main character to feel complete. The trans reality is presented naturally, and trans persons are at the centre of their narrative.

Both TV series *Veneno* (ATRESPlayer Premium, 2020) and *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) contribute to changing trans representation in the Spanish television industry. The first one includes negative tropes, such as micro-aggressions and violence, the employment context of sex work, a traumatic family environment or the connection between the body and the spectacle and fetishism. However, the plot justifies these factors, presented from a "transgender perspective," which seeks to denounce them (Cobo-Durán & Otero-Escudero, 2021). On the other hand, *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) is a dramedy that introduces to the audience a woman's life struggles as she does not achieve social milestones traditionally assigned to her age, and she is transexual.

The introduction scene of the character is relevant for her construction and the audience's understanding, as it enables us to see the focalisation of the narrative (Cobo-Durán & Otero-Escudero, 2021). In this case, Dafne appears in the centre of the frame; her figure is highlighted against the background thanks to the red tone. The voice-over indirectly indicates that she is a trans woman, but this factor is not the only thing that describes her. Regarding sex scenes, audiovisual elements are similar in the three cases: composition, type of shot, and soundtrack. Nevertheless, we can observe a difference in the last scene, where the lighting helps to create a more intimate, personal, and safe environment. This technique reminds us of the complicity and trust between the characters. Voice-over is only used in the first sex scene, adding to this encounter's impersonal and fleeting nature.

Therefore, we determine that there is zero focalisation to present plots in the TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021). There is an omniscient narrator who knows the character's psyche and adds opinions about their thoughts and decisions. Although this voice corresponds to a cisgender man, who speaks about trans reality satirically and lightheartedly to create humour, this fiction adopts a "trans perspective." There are several reasons for this: plots revolve around Dafne's life and her environment, motivations, feelings, and life goals. We can hear Casado's voice becoming her voice in the scene

where Dafne explains what she likes about César. Moreover, the narrative is created by a trans woman who wrote the script and directed the audiovisual production from her perspective. It allows her to tell a story from a trans perspective and is autobiographical.

5. Conclusions

The bibliographic review of trans representation in Spanish TV series, together with the analysis of the character Dafne and the project *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021), allow us to reach the following meaningful conclusions.

The application of Clark's (1969) four stages in trans representation in Spanish audiovisuals gives us insight into the collective's evolution within television fiction. After the absence or limited inclusion of trans characters, we can observe episodic incorporations characterised by negative stereotypes or plots revolving exclusively around gender identity. This review also reveals the problematic casting of cisgender actors and actresses to perform trans characters, the limited number of trans male characters, and the almost complete absence of non-binary characters.

As OTT platforms are established in the Spanish television industry, we have observed an increase in the number and, especially, the credibility and quality of trans characters in fiction, which are in the fourth phase of representation. We can find a paradigmatic example of the current landscape in the TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) and through its creator Abril Zamora. For this reason, this project deserves academic attention in this research. The analysis of Dafne is based on the parameters of trans issues previously reviewed. We highlight diverse and natural plots, looking to realistically represent the collective so that it is not exclusively determined by gender identity. Moreover, we point out a trans perspective which moves away from traditional negative stereotypes.

The TV series *All about Dafne* (HBO Max, 2021) references trans visibility. It makes it possible to include new options for the representation of the LGBTQIA+ collective in the audiovisual media. Likewise, fiction encourages a positive conception of trans reality in society. The project enables the collective to be included on the political agenda and allows us to advance in the fight against homophobia and transphobia. Characters in film and television help overcome barriers to acceptance and contribute to cultural policy. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct research on novelties in the audiovisual area to understand changes in the sector and value their influence on the current society.

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