Universidad Zaragoza
1542

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Deconstruction of Stereotypes to Construct the Main Character's Identity in *The Queen's Gambit*

Autor

Macarena Gómez Guerrero

Director

Luis Miguel García Mainar

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

Resumen

El presente trabajo de investigación está destinado a hacer una inmersión en el estudio de la serie de Netflix: *Gambito de Dama*. Para ello, se conocerán primero aquellos aspectos contextuales de dicha ficción. Después el estudio pasará a desarrollarse haciendo un análisis que explicará la deconstrucción de los estereotipos que la serie realiza para construir la identidad del personaje principal. La serie hace hincapié en la construcción de la identidad para provocar cambios en la consideración social de la misma, no como un conjunto de características rígidas o estereotipos, sino como una construcción social que muestra la necesidad de escapar de las nociones constrictivas de identidad y sustituirlas por nociones de identidad que rompan con las fórmulas tradicionales para abarcar características más humanas y generales. Para lograr esto se analizarán los aspectos formales del lenguaje audiovisual que soportan esta teoría.

Abstract

This research work is intended to dive into the study of the Netflix series: Lady's Gambit. To do so, we will first get to know the contextual aspects of this fiction. Afterwards, the study will be developed through an analysis that will explain the deconstruction of stereotypes that the series carries out to construct the identity of the main character. The series emphasises the construction of identity in order to provoke changes in the social consideration of identity, not as a set of rigid characteristics or stereotypes, but as a social construction that shows the need to escape from constrictive notions of identity and replace them with notions of identity that break with traditional formulas to encompass more human and general characteristics. To achieve this, the formal aspects of audio-visual language that support this theory will be analysed.

Contents

1.   Introduction

The Queen's Gambit is a television drama and science fiction miniseries based on a literary work of the same name written by Walter Tevis (1983), created, and produced by Scott Frank. It was distributed by the Netflix platform and released on the 23rd of October 2020. *The Queen's Gambit* is divided into one season of seven episodes about one-hour long each. It is set on the 50s-60s. The series introduces Beth Harmon (Anya Taylor-Joy), a young girl with a difficult and traumatic story. *The Queen's Gambit* has been met with positive reviews from critics. Anya Taylor-Joy's performance must be highlighted, she won the Golden Globes award for Best Actress in a Leading Role. The series has been little studied yet due to its very recent production.

According to Cousins (2005). the remote origins of television coincide in time with the invention of cinema since both emerged at the end of the 19th century. However, they took completely different paths. Cinema began to develop rapidly, with the Lumière family's invention of the cinematograph in 1895, creating a concept of cinema that developed into what we know as cinema today. Nowadays, audiences go to cinemas much less often because of the high prices of films and the easy downloadability of the product via Internet. It is hurting the film industry even more. It is at this point that TV series start to become more relevant. Since the 1960s, American TV series have set the pace, inspiring the receiving countries to produce, or even plagiarise, their works. Making this type of fiction product saved the production companies a lot of money in its creation. They made money from the advertising that interrupted the episodes and were quick and easy to dispose of. The themes of the series were varied: there were youth, drama, action and even science fiction. From the sixties to the eighties there have been successful series with high quality, although they were not as frequent as they are today. In the 1990s something began to change when it came to making fiction for television. Series became more realistic, with less stereotypical and more imaginative subject matter, this is the era of cult series. The cult series of the

nineties have given way to new cult series that gather thousands of fans at the events that take place. Thus, the series even have previews, as if it were a cinema. (García, 2016). As we move into the 21st century, the development of the Internet and the emergence of new generations with a different style of consuming audio-visual products have changed entertainment even more radically. It is at this time that the figure of "serialaddicts" emerged, diehard fans of the series they adore and mostly consumers of the product via the Internet.

Netflix has managed to position itself as the most recognised online TV brand in every household. This is because Netflix has managed to establish a relationship with the user beyond the screen. It was created in California (USA) on 29th August 1997 by Reed Hastings and Marc Adolph. The most widely accepted and widespread theory of its origin is as follows: Hastings rented the film *Apollo 13* from the Blockbuster video store chain, and because he did not return the film until several days later, he had to pay a $40 penalty for the delay. As a result, Hastings considered a new system for renting films, via e-commerce, that would not generate fines. However, this theory is not entirely true, according to co-founder Marc Randolph in the book *Netflixed: the Epic Battle for America's Eyeballs* (2012), which tells the story of the origin of his company.

The company's origins are simpler than that, as it all started with the desire to create an e-commerce business (and eventually they would choose the DVD business). In the beginning, the idea of his service was that users could order the film from home, through the video store's virtual catalogue, and it would then be shipped to them by then when they returned it, as they had no commitment, they could order a second film, and so on. The initial name of the company would be "kibble.com" (Netflix', 2021; Vita, 2018).

This company started around 2002 as an online DVD rental service. And around 2007 it experienced its first major transformation: the introduction of streaming in its services, allowing the reproduction of its films and series at any time, through the Internet. Over time, this service would gain popularity (due to its unlimited, personalised,

advertising-free access, and the possibility of creating different profiles on the same account). Later, in 2011, it began producing its own content, which would lead to the launch of series such as *The Queen's Gambit* in 2020 ('Netflix', 2021). The television industry has become increasingly popular to the point where it is no match for the film industry. Production companies are investing heavily in the production of blockbusters in the field of television fiction. Little by little the audience is beginning to find higher quality in American television series.

Representation in the media is the process of displaying, describing, and symbolizing someone or something. Stuart Hall (1997) defines representation as the "production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language which enables us to refer to either the 'real' world of objects, people, or events, or even to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people, and events." (p.15). Hall's research suggests that there are two systems of representation, the first one is based on direct connections between events, people, and objects with certain cognitive models and concepts that people hold in their thoughts. As a result, meaning is based on these relationships. Language is Hall's second system. The notions must be translated into ordinary language to convey meaning. Hall claims that language includes "anything from written words, spoken sounds, and visual images, to music, fashion, and even facial expressions." (p.18). A stereotype is a type of representation, although it is frequently erroneous, incomplete, negative, and limiting.

Stuart examines stereotypes and how they are used to construct negative representations of people and groups in an excerpt from the book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997). Stereotypes simplify and exaggerate a person's characteristics, denying the possibility of change, and insisting on the fact that these characteristics are natural. Any complexity is ignored or denied, and all that is necessary to know about the person is implied by referring to stereotypical traits. Stereotyping also uses a splitting strategy, in which those who do not conform to society's norms are excluded, and

their exclusion is established by connecting them to a set of stereotypes considered inappropriate – the 'Other.' This eliminates the possibility of reasonable discussion about or with them, guaranteeing their marginalization. This works best when there are significant power disparities that allow the dominant group to use the strategy without being challenged. According to Stuart Hall (1997) there are three definitions of stereotypes: first, stereotypes take in the characteristics of a particular group reinforcing and reducing them; The second states that stereotypes separate the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable. The third definition of stereotypes is that they appear where there is major power inequality. Power is wielded mainly against minorities and marginalized groups. Stereotypes have a hidden content, not directly perceptible at first sight, and it has to do with psychological or social prejudices. (pp. 234-237).

In this essay I am going to discuss how the series deconstructs stereotypes to construct the main character's identity. Audio-visual language also has a hidden content and is used to reinforce meanings not perceptible at first sight. In the series many stereotypes are deconstructed at the same time as the main character tries to construct her own identity. Mise-en-scène is especially important to convey the main point in this dissertation: for the whole series audio-visual language, deconstruction of stereotypes and the construction of the main character's identity go hand in hand. The fact that the series and consequently the main character deconstruct many stereotypes such as gender, genre, socio-political and racial stereotypes, helps the protagonist achieve the construction of her own identity. What the series wants to say to the viewer is that by deconstructing the established stereotypes, and making the protagonist not only stop being guided by these stereotypes, but ignore or even reject them, it makes her capable of going and seeing beyond those people who, on the contrary, are guided by stereotypes. Deconstructing stereotypes helps Beth to build her own identity because this makes her not to be prejudiced against anything or anyone, which helps her to face any situation and to be able to overcome everything. If she were guided by

established stereotypes, she would not probably have been able to become who the person she has become.

2.   Historical Background

The Queen's Gambit tells a story based on the 50s and 60s. "The 1950s were a decade marked by the post-World War II boom, the dawn of the Cold War and the Civil Rights movement in the United States." (History.com Editors, 2010). In research from History.com Editors (2020), many American women were especially limited during the 1950s boom. Women were encouraged to leave the workplace and accept their positions as wives and mothers in some advice books and magazine posts. The notion that a woman's most important role was to bear and rise children was not new, but it was still prevalent. As a result of this discontent, the feminist movement re-emerged in the 1960s. The Cold War, or the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, was a dominant feature. Following World War II, western leaders started to be concerned that the USSR had "expansive tendencies," and that the proliferation of communism everywhere posed a threat to democracy and capitalism worldwide. (History.com Editors, 2010)

The series shows certain touches that refer to the above-mentioned events. On the one hand, there is clear evidence of the confrontation between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, as the spectator can clearly see in the chess games between our main character Elizabeth Harmon (Anya Taylor-Joy), an American citizen, and Vasily Borgov (Marcin Dorocinski) a Soviet. He was the actual chess World Champion and Beth's main adversary. But the series does not base its plot on this, as the viewer might at first think, instead it only shows it with a few brushstrokes and deconstructs the stereotypes created about the Americans, the Soviets, and their supposed confrontation. On the other hand, the spectator can also think that the series deals with the story of a woman in the 50s who tries to get into a men's world and fight against what she was supposed to be, a woman destined

to look after the house and their children, but on the contrary, at no time does the series establish as a possible plot the fact that the protagonist manages to succeed in a man's world; Therefore, this is a series whose main objective is not to show a feminist vision, but rather to give importance to the development and search for the character's identity breaking with all these gender stereotypes.

3.   Analysis. Deconstruction of Stereotypes

According to the Cambridge University Press (n.d.) a *stereotype* is ''a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong''. Stereotypes are all around us, they cover a variety of topics, including, among others, ethnic groups, political groups, gender, demographic groups, social hierarchy and class inequality, the traditional family, and the patriarchal ideology or situations.

Stuart Hall (1997) established three points regarding stereotypes. The first point claims that *stereotypes reduce, essentialize, naturalize and fix differences*. The second point stablished that *stereotyping deploys a strategy of "splitting"*. It differentiates between what is normal and acceptable and what is odd and inappropriate. Then it eliminates anything that does not fit or is different. "Stereotyping, in other words, is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them. It facilitates the 'binding' or bonding together all of *Us* who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends into symbolic exile all of *Them* - 'the Others' - who are in some way different. The third point is that *stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power*. Power is usually directed against the subordinate or excluded group." (Hall, 1997, p. 258). The ambivalence of stereotypes points to a particular type of description

but in the background hides another one that is the most important in the context in which it arises. This is what the series perfectly does, it considers the context and some established stereotypes such as gender, genre, social, political, and historical stereotypes and deconstructs them. Initially, the viewer may think that the series will focus on exploiting these stereotypes, but in fact it subtly shows these stereotypes and ends up contradicting them. The real plot of the series is the search for the identity of the main character, which she manages to achieve by avoiding falling into such stereotypes. Deconstructing stereotypes benefits Beth in creating her own identity since it prevents her from being prejudiced against anything or anyone, allowing her to face and overcome any situation. She would not have been able to become the person she has become if she had been influenced by pre-existing preconceptions. Since stereotypes make people behave in a certain way according to what is expected of them (Miguélez, 2018), therefore, in a way, stereotypes limit the development of one's identity.

The Queen's Gambit tells the story of Beth Harmon, a young orphan who becomes one of the world's top chess players. Spread over seven episodes, the plot chronologically chronicles the defining moments of Beth's life from childhood to adulthood. In retrospect, the narrative takes her point of view to portray her inner world and, above all, how she perceives and interacts with it. The series breaks with many stereotypes and creates a story that focuses on the inner of the character and not so much on the context that surrounds her; although, of course, the latest is important. Therefore, the construction of her own identity and the deconstruction of stereotypes are the central axis of the series. In the following, this paper will deal with the analysis of how *The Queen's Gambit* uses the deconstruction of stereotypes and constructs the identity of Beth, the main character.

Gender is the main stereotype that the series deconstructs. The 1950s were dominated by mainly gender stereotypes. Women are portrayed in many audio-visuals as submissive and obedient. Their main function is to take care of the house and the family.

Despite having aspirations, these are sometimes reduced to the love of a man. The figure of the man is focused on embodying the masculine hero, whose fundamental task is the resolution of conflicts through force and violence.

In general, all the men who appear in the series deconstruct this stereotype of the "macho". On the one hand, the biological father and the adoptive father of the protagonist appear as secondary characters, both abandon their wives and their daughter, they do not solve problems, their roles are so insignificant that their appearance in the series is practically null. This is done to break another possible stereotype, the possible trauma of the protagonist caused by the two abandonments of the father figures. Instead, what the viewer finds is a girl who has no after-effects of these abandonments. One possible reading of this could be that she does not need a male figure by her side to build her future and her identity, thus deconstructing the 1950s stereotype of the woman who must be tied to a man. On the other hand, we find the orphanage caretaker and the rest of the male figures Beth encounters in the world of chess. Neither are they presented as the stereotypical heroic men, nor as men who resolve conflicts through force or violence, but on the contrary, they are pleasant, kind people who help Beth to continue advancing both personally and professionally and help Beth to find the right way to follow to find her own identity more easily.

The Queen's Gambit breaks with the stereotype of the typical feminist series where the female protagonist must fight against the obstacles that a patriarchal society puts in her way, and even more considering that chess is a sport almost exclusively for men. What the viewer finds is not a feminist series. The fact that Beth does not focus on being a woman in a men's world, helps her to focus on the important issue, the search of her own identity. In episode 3 "*Doubled Pawns*", Beth is very offended that the newspaper only highlights the fact that a woman has won, and it is remarkable just because she is a woman who has achieved this goal in a men's world. Beth says that it should not matter if you are a woman or a man, it is what you do what should matter. The series does not present her as a heroine

for the fact that she is a woman, it presents her as a heroine for what she does, for being able to construct her own identity in a world governed by stereotypes. Beth only focuses on her identity search, and she will achieve it by not failing into any stereotypes.

The Queen's Gambit cleverly uses the sports drama formula to redirect it and focus on the evolutionary arc of the protagonist. In Beth's case, chess is not just a way of self-improvement and proving one's intellectual worth (as part of the clichés of the genre),but a way of life. Chess is that obsession - sometimes cathartic, sometimes unhealthy - that can lead her to success or self-destruction. A cerebral and analytical way of seeing the world that the series reflects through Anya Taylor-Joy's always observant and cautious gaze. Thus, Beth Harmon is a character far removed from all the conventions of the sports genre whose questionable behaviour and moral values are essential parts of her search for her identity, both as a person and as a player.

Another success of the series is that it has managed to make a story set in chess appealing to everyone and accessible to all audiences, whether they understand chess or not. Chess is the excuse to talk about other themes, self-improvement, there is always something internal that prevents you from being or reaching what you would like to reach,there is something about herself that the protagonist must overcome.

Like any film based on a sport, there are two narrative lines. On the one hand, that of the sport or game, in this case chess, and on the other hand, that of the protagonist's personal growth. But here the script perfectly interweaves both plots and they are united by the protagonist's addiction to drugs. There is some ambivalence because taking drugs can commonly be seen as something that destructs you, but the series deconstructs this meaning and uses her addiction to connect the game and her personal life. The viewer does not see her addiction as something as negative, as it actually is, but as something that helps her to achieve her goals. This addiction allows the protagonist to visualise and analyse the games imaginatively, but at the same time, and that is why it is ambivalent, this addiction is causing

her to isolate herself from her surroundings, from her friends, family, from the search for her identity. Beth thinks she has everything under control if she takes her pills, but finally when she faces the champion, despite taking her pills, she loses the game, in the end she has lost her friends, she has isolated herself, she is depressed. And she finally realises that she does not need either alcohol or pills to be the best chess player. The moment she takes apart drugs and alcohol she wins the last game, and this resembles that she has found her own identity. In this section we find a certain ambivalence between the struggle against the opponent (within the sports drama genre) and the struggle against oneself, two struggles that are perfectly fused. The fact of having an addiction, both to chess and to pills and alcohol, gives the viewer the perception, created by social stereotypes, that these addictions can lead the protagonist to failure, but once again the series breaks with all this.

The chess scenes were a big challenge as they had to be shot so that the viewer would understand everything, whether they know how to play chess or not. The scenes of the chess games are not based on the game itself, but focus on the players, their looks, gestures and how they move the pieces. What the director does to lighten this, as it would be too long and tiresome for the viewer to show all this in detail due to the large number of games played throughout the series, is to make use of a wide range of cinematographic and editing tools such as split screen, time lapses, quick editing, long shots, etc. Each of the chess games reflects what Beth is going through. Some reflect an internal spiritual battle, others the protagonist's learning curve and others a resurgence. All these shots are straight-on angle close-ups. Harmon is the focalized and it is made for the spectator to identify with the main protagonist of the story, the audience must focus on her, the only important thing in the story is her inner thoughts, her story, and the way she evolves to construct her identity. The series deconstructs the stereotype of the typical sports series where the important thing is the game played, it does it using close-ups, because they are used to connect the audience with the emotions and feelings of the character being closed-up. In this way the spectator

understands that he or she does not have to focus on the game, but that the game is only a means to an end, chess is a means that reflects the life of the protagonist, but the end is not the game itself but the search for the identity of the main character.

Figure 1: Episode 1 "Openings"

Figure 2: Episode 3 "Doubled Pawns"

Figure 3: Episode 5 "Fork"

Figure 4: Episode 7 "End Game"

The idea that identity exists beyond representation, that there are our selves and then the language in which we define ourselves, is unsustainable. Identity exists in speech and in representation. It is formed in part via representation. Identity is a self-narrative; it is the tale we tell ourselves to understand who we are. We place structure on it. The major effect of this conceptualisation of identity is the covered return of difference. Identity is a game that should be played against difference (Hall & Gay, 1996, p.4). The series exemplifies that in the confrontation chess game between Beth and Borgov (Marcin Grzegorz Dorocinski), the Soviet player. Beth allegedly must play against the difference, and this is related to the deconstruction of the socio-political stereotype between American and Russian's rivalry. The series is not focusing on the rivalry between Americans and Russians, stablished by the context of the Cold War.

The Cold War background also affects the development of the political context of the time, it acts as a backdrop to Beth's story, almost without delving into the diplomatic consequences of the war for intellectual supremacy between the Soviet Union and the United States. While this is important to the plot, it reflects Frank's intention to take us into the inner world of the protagonist. Everything happens around Beth, but she is oblivious to it - or at least, she is not interested in it. By breaking the stereotype of the confrontation between Americans and Soviets, Beth does not play against the "Other", there is no stereotypes for her, there is no "Other" she just plays against her own fears, she wants to win, she wants to find her identity, and once again she succeeds by not falling into stereotypes. The following frame, taken from the last episode, shows a perfect symmetry, which can mean that there is no difference between them, both are on the same shot, totally symmetrical. Any difference, any stereotype, any inequality is destroyed. This is the last game, and this is the way the series tells the viewer that the main character has achieved her goal by not falling into stereotypes.

Figure 5: Episode 7 "End Game"

Colours are commonly associated to emotions or symbols. The same colour can have quite different associations within the same culture at any given time. Diversity in colour symbolism occurs because colour meanings and symbolism occur on an individual, cultural and universal basis. Colour symbolism is also context-dependent and influenced by changes over time. The text uses colour to invests it with meanings, connotations, and emotions, but some of these stereotypes regarding colours are also broken. In this series, some meanings are elaborated, for example, blue commonly symbolises serenity, stability, or inspiration. It symbolises rest, as it is associated with the sky and water. It is the colour of calm. But in the series blue is presented in the scenes where Beth is under the effects of drugs. It is important to remember that the moment when Beth enters the orphanage is when she loses her identity, so this deconstruction of the stereotype of the common meaning of the connotation of the colour blue occurs because the series indicates that Beth has lost her identity.

Figure 6: Episode 1 "Openings"

Figure 7: Episode 2 "Exchanges"

Figure 8: Episode 3 "Doubled Pawns"

Figure 9: Episode 5 "Fork"

The same applies with red colour. Red is a colour that is often associated with love, passion, and lust. But in the scenes in where she appears consuming alcohol, there are reddish lighting. What this colour suggest is that she has lost control on herself.

Figure 10: Episode 4 "Middle Game"

Figure 11: Episode 5 "Fork"

Figure 12: Episode 6 "Adjournment"

Figure 13: Episode 6 "Adjournment"

Another broken stereotype is the one of the female chess player image, the role Beth plays as a brilliant girl and obsessed with chess. Female chess players are not thought to prioritise her femininity, they are closer to the archetype of a dowdy intelligent woman who do not care about her outward appearance. Harmon is aware of her position as a young female chess genius. However, she prioritises the beauty and art of chess above all stereotypes and expectations of her character. Beth costumes and make up are intimately linked to our protagonist's state of mind. There is another example that relates the deconstruction of colour stereotypes, this time related to clothing, and the construction of the identity of the main character. In episode one, "Openings", Beth is wearing a grey dress that her mother made for her, embroidered with her name. Grey is generally associated to certain connotations such as sadness or mediocrity, but in the series, it represents the meaning of the word 'home', the meaning of her identity. The reason she wears the same colour dress in her final tournament in Moscow, the dress she wears when she is winning the game, is not casual at all. This colour is used to show that she has, at last, come to terms

with her inner identity, that she has won the fight against her fears and difficulties. This colour is a symbol of her strength: it is a symbolic homecoming'.

Figure 14: Episode 1 "Openings"   Figure 15: Episode 7 "End Game"

The art direction is in favour of the narrative and only helps to communicate and reinforce the message to the audience. As soon as she arrives at the orphanage, they take away the dress she was wearing, they take away the only memory she had of her mother, they take away her identity, and they give her a uniform that she has to wear during her stay at the orphanage, but even when she leaves the orphanage she will continue to dress very austerely, she dresses imposed by her mother, she does not have her own identity, and it is not until she begins to gain confidence in herself that she changes her style outwardly as well.

Throughout the show, Harmon is referred to as a political icon, with those around her enforcing a gap between men and women, young and old, Americans and Soviets, and so on. Harmon has shown carelessness in making these decisions herself, preferring to

concentrate exclusively on her achievements, despite her awareness of her existence outside the standard and the extent of her success.

Deconstruction of cultural or social stereotypes are also found in the series. In the beginning of the series Allston Wheatley (Patrick Kennedy) and Mrs. Alma Wheatley (Marielle Heller), Beth's adoptive parents, are presented as the typical marriage of that age, he is a hard-working father, he brings the money to the family, and Alma is a housewife. They are supposed to be the perfect family but then the audience realises that the father does not take care of his wife nor her daughter, and Alma is a depressive and repressed woman, addicted to pills and alcohol. So, the stereotype of the perfect family is also deconstructed. When Allston abandons the family, Alma starts travelling with Beth to her chess tournaments with the money Beth earns, the spectator can think that Alma is taking advantage of it, but then, the viewer understands that they need and help one another because they are all they have in the world.

When Alma dies in Beth's tournament in Mexico, Beth calls Allston to help her repatriating the body but the father says no, he even wants to take the house from her, and finally she ends up buying the house from her father even more expensive than it is worth.The father could be the only antagonist in the series, but neither do the creators give him so much prominence, nor demonise his figure, since, as has been previously said, the aim of the series is to focus on Beth's evolution.

The characters who are outside the world of chess are depicted as selfish, imperfect friendships or forms of love that are motivated either by selfishness or by pleasure which, in a way, is also selfish. On the one hand her adoptive mother who uses her to escape from her sad reality, on the other hand her adoptive father who is not at all interested in her until he needs her money. The chess-related characters surprise with their generosity even when they are defeated. This dichotomy between selfishness and generosity could suggest that in the series there is a double discourse against capitalist individualism, the first speech is really

explicit and is based on the fact that the Americans feel weak against the Russiansis that the Russians form teams both for training and for support, while the American players always act individually, it is very important that the final triumph, the great triumph is achieved thanks to the support of friends. People must accept that they are not alone, and that the presence of others is not problematic but rather something significant and necessary for the full development of the person.

Race and social stereotypes also contradict expectations. Her friend Jolene (Moses Ingram) who was another orphan who serves as the orphanage's hostess, was a woman and black (another added problem for her, oppression socially speaking), is an ordinary girl, not like the protagonist who is a genius. In episode one, Jolene is presented as a rebel child and she is also the one who introduces Beth into her addiction to pills, so the viewer could think that Jolene is a bad influence. She is not adopted so maybe her life is doomed to failure. There is a scene that clearly represents that in episode two "Exchanges", this is themoment when Beth is adopted. There is a long shot of the beds, showing all the beds empty except Jolene and Beth's to reinforce the idea of loneliness and to emphasise that everyone has been adopted except them, society does not want them because they are different.

Hall (1997) explains that "questions of 'difference' have come to the fore in cultural studies in recent decades and been addressed in different ways by different disciplines" and also explains that "'difference' is both necessary and dangerous." 'Difference' matters because it is essential to meaning; without it, meaning could not exist. In the example of white/black, Saussure argued that we know what black means not because there is some essence of 'blackness' but because we can contrast it with its opposite, white. He argued that meaning is relational. It is the 'difference' between white and black which signifies, which carries meaning. Du Gay, Hall, et al. (1997) argue that culture is dependent on providing meaning to things by assigning them to distinct positions within a classificatory framework. Thus, the labelling of 'difference' is the core of the symbolic order that we call culture.

According to Mary Douglas, social groups impose meaning on their environments by ordering and structuring things into classificatory systems (Douglas, 1966). Binary oppositions are essential for all classification since establishing a clear distinction between items is required in order to classify them. The concept of 'difference' is essential to cultural meaning. However, it can also evoke unpleasant emotions and behaviours. According to Mary Douglas (1966), what really disrupts cultural order is when items appear in the wrong category or fail to fit into any category. Things must stay in their proper place for a culture to be stable. Symbolic borders preserve the 'pure' of the categories, giving civilizations their distinct meaning and character. Culture is unsettled by 'matter out of place,' or the violation of our unwritten rules and regulations.
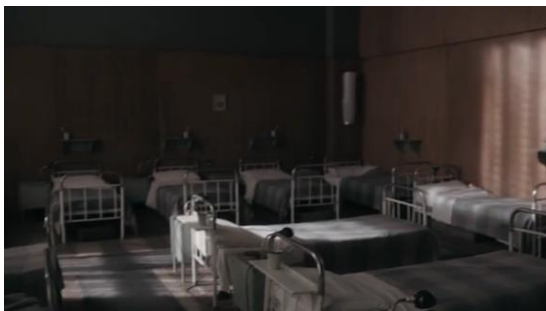

Figure 16: Episode 2 "Exchanges"

Figure 17: Episode 2 "Exchanges"

When Jolene has grown up, she has become a lawyer, she has also achieved success. The series raises a possibility, not simply because you are a woman you will end up as a sexual object. She is married to a white man who is an activist fighting for the rights of black people, she poses a range with respect to the female characters, who can be who they are. In the last episode "End Game" Jolene reappears reactivating hope and confidence in Beth in a journey to her origins, a psychological and spiritual introspection into the character as if she were studying the game or the development that has been taking place throughout this story in order to make the best decisions in the end. So, once again, the series introduces us to another character who breaks with stereotypes. The figure of Jolene, being a black

woman, does not end up being who could have been thought, but she is a key character for Beth's development and for her to rediscover her past, understand her history and recover her identity and complete her process of evolution. So Beth does not fall into the stereotype of seeing Jolene as the "Other" as a "difference" she does not label Jolene with any racial stereotype and this makes Jolene reappear at the worst moment of Beth's life, she makes her remember her origins, and see that, although in the eyes of those people who fall into stereotypes you are 'different', you really are not and you can achieve whatever you set your mind to, just as Jolene did. She is the one who gives her the strength she needs and who connects her to her identity. The fact that for them there are no differences, no stereotypes, makes them both achieve their goals successfully.

4. Conclusion

Being an adaptation of Walter Tevis' novel of the same name, *The Queen's Gambit* tells the story of Beth Harmon, a young orphan who becomes one of the world's top chess players. Spread over seven episodes, the plot chronologically chronicles the defining moments of Beth's life from childhood to adulthood. In retrospection, the narrative takes her point of view to portray her inner world and, above all, how she perceives and interacts with it.

The Queen's Gambit is not a story about chess nor feminism nor the influence of the Cold War. It is a story about a woman behind a chess board, about her view of the world. The result of the analysis shows that the director wants to show how the main character evolves by breaking all stereotypes.

Thus, *The Queen's Gambit* cleverly uses the deconstruction of stereotypes formula to redirect the plot and focus on the evolutionary arc of the protagonist. In Beth's case, chess is not just a way of self-improvement and proving one's intellectual worth (as part of the clichés of the genre), but a way of life. Beth Harmon is a character far removed from all the conventions, whose questionable behaviour and moral values are essential parts of her search for her identity, both as a person and as a player. The construction of her identity is the central axis of the series, and it is achieved thanks to her way of facing the world without falling into any kind of stereotype, without making distinctions or classifications, without labelling anyone or anything, she manages to find her own identity breaking the barriers of her own fears and problems and reaching her goal of finding her identity. Identity is one of the main concerns of most narratives, and this one would not be an exception. The series emphasises the construction of identity in order to bring changes in the social consideration of identity, not as a set of rigid characteristics (which could even be solidified as stereotypes) but as a social construction that shows the need to escape from constricting notions of identity and replace them with notions of identity that break away from the traditional formulas (gender, class, race) to cover more general and human characteristics.

5. Bibliography

- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Stereotype. In *Cambridge Dictionary* (Fourth Edition). Cambridge. Retrieved March 27, 2021, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stereotype

- Cousins, M. (2005). *Historia del cine*. Barcelona: Blume.

- Douglas, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- Frank, S. (Director). (2020). *The Queen's Gambit* [TV series]. Retrieved from https://www.netflix.com/title/80234304

- García, D. (2016). *Breve análisis de las series modernas para Televisión*. Retrieved February 15, 2021, from https://www.actuallynotes.com/Las-series-modernas-para-Television.html/

- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.

- Hall, S., & Gay, P. (1996). *Questions of Cultural Identity* (Reprint ed.). Sage Publications. Retrieved April 18, 2021, from https://blogs.unpad.ac.id/teddykw/files/2012/07/Stuart-Hall-Cultural-Identity.pdf

- History.com Editors. (2010, June 17). *The 1950s*. HISTORY. Retrieved April 18, 2021, from 2021https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/1950s

- Keating, G. (2012). *Netflixed: The Epic Battle for America's Eyeballs*. Portfolio.

- Miguélez Cañal, C. (2018). *La Coeducación y la Educación Secundaria: una Propuesta Didáctica para Prevenir la Violencia de Género desde la Transversalidad*. Retrieved June 16, 2021 from https://uvadoc.uva.es/bitstream/handle/10324/33513/TFM_F_2018_120.pdf?sequence=1

- Netflix. (2021, April 7). In *Wikipedia, la enciclopedia libre*. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from https://es.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Netflix&oldid=134582042