

(UN)LOVEABLE MONSTERS:

Representations of Bisexual Women as Monstruous in Audiovisual Fiction

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Content warning: violence, rape, death, discrimination.

Abstract: Otherness is an essential element in identity politics. Hegemonic discourses created under the heteropatriarchy situate bisexual women as the Other in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation. This study focuses on unveiling the relations between biphobic and sexist stereotypes, and the representation of bisexual women as monstrous on audiovisual fictions. By taking categories of gender and sexuality, as well as theories from film studies, the depiction of emotions and the body are studied in regards to representation. The concept of hunger is used to control the dissident body, and the depiction of violence and anger criminalize (what are considered to be) improper emotions for women. Moreover, mental instability is related to bisexuality because of the implications it has for the mono and heterosexual system. The monstrous depiction of this identity is fetichized and the bisexual woman is turned into an object that cannot be loved, only desired.

Keywords: bisexuality; women; queerness; media studies; representation; stereotypes; body; emotions; monstrousness.

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INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
QUEERING GENDER. BEYOND DUALISM	6
<i>The Rainbow Spectre</i>	6
<i>B is for Bisexuality</i>	8
<i>The Body as an Ideological and Cultural Battlefield</i>	10
UNDERSTANDING THE CINEMATIC APPARATUS	11
<i>Representation and Stereotypes</i>	11
<i>Film and Bodies</i>	12
<i>Female Anger, Monstrous Rage and Violence</i>	14
<i>The House of Horror: Women and Queers</i>	17
<i>Queer Readings and Invisibilization</i>	18
3. LOOKING FOR THE BISEXUAL <i>MONSTRESS</i>	20
HUNGER AND APPETITE	21
VIOLENCE, ANGER AND MENTAL INSTABILITY	23
MORALLY DUBIOUS: THE DOUBLE AND THE MIRROR	25
NON-HUMAN MONSTERS AND FETICHISM	26
4. CONCLUSIONS. (UN)LOVEABLE MONSTERS	28
REFERENCES	31

1. INTRODUCTION

The film industry and the overall media landscape have been continuously creating and transforming stereotypes about different collectives, impregnating the social discourse about them. The reinforcement of gender roles and the social (in)validation of dissident identities from audiovisual products constitutes the focus of this dissertation. In particular, the axis of this study will be the junction between womanhood and bisexuality. In order to understand the construction and, thus, perception of (fictional) bisexual women, the perspective assumed will be LGBTQIA+ studies, and its ethical approach will be feminist and intersectional. LGBTQIA+ media studies investigate queer media representations “by employing critical and theoretical methods from gender, psychoanalytic, semiotic, and film theories to interpret meaning in these representations” (Chi-Kwan Lee 2014, 2). The involvement of queer theory in media studies can represent taking a political and critical stance to contribute to the LGBTQIA+ liberation movement which is what this study wishes to do, or at least, to help understand the foundation of current queer representations (Chi-Kwan Lee 2014, 2).

By drawing from crucial texts from Butler (1988; 2004), Preciado (2018), as well as other authors, this study will understand both gender and sexual orientation as categories socially constructed but that have tangible consequences and implications which manifest in how we understand identity, different axes of oppression and social interrelations because of its cultural and historical baggage. Against some trends against using labels to define themselves, this study reclaims their use in a society where collectives can take power using a label since it can help name oppressions (Coll Blanco 2021, 51). That is why, a label that gives name to a marginalized group is loaded with “memoria histórica, una memoria que será borrada si no la mantenemos viva junto y en el caso de la bisexualidad (...) nuestra memoria es tan ignorada como un poco documentada” (Coll Blanco 2021, 51). Using a label such as bisexual contributes to the normalization of the identities and makes visible the violence that cuts across them. Furthermore, the word *queer* will be used as an umbrella term to gather all non-cisheterosexual identities during this academic dissertation.

This study aims to approach the literature about bisexuality in order to grasp the relations between the representation of bisexual women and monstrosity concerning the body and emotions. Emotions, as argued by Ahmed (2004), have cultural connotations and political meanings and consequences. On the other hand, bodies have been established as the center of

women's lives (Bordo 1993, 17). The corporeal and emotional realm are inscribed within identity politics and gender norms, and can be instrumentalized to exclude dissident and queer identities and bodies by making them monstrous or frightening. In this sense, this study argues that media can reinforce nocive discourses surrounding bisexuality by making bisexuals violent assassins and monsters. With those images, biphobic and sexist stereotypes permeate into the mediatic and cultural treatment of bisexual women. Consequently, the driving force of this dissertation will be the following question: how and why is the bisexual identity of women constructed as monstrous in audiovisual fiction?

As a theoretical dissertation, this study discusses concepts and theories produced by the academic fields of gender, queer and media studies. By creating this framework in the upcoming literature review, the concepts of gender and sexual orientation are problematized, bisexuality is approached and attempted to be defined, and there is a discussion surrounding the body and its gendered implications. In the second section of the chapter, the main topics are the (female) body viewed by the male gaze and the filmic treatment of bodies in relation to dissident identities. Along with that, the relations between anger and violence seen as improper for women, and as a frightening excuse to subdue and control queerness and women. Furthermore, how the horror film genre exploits queer images is explained. Lastly, bisexual erasure and alternative readings and its implications are discussed in terms of the lack of (and lacking) bisexual representation. In the third chapter, the concepts discussed previously serve as the ground to deconstruct bisexual women monsters. The key concepts and categories examined are hunger, anger and violence, mental and moral instability, and dehumanization led by fetishism. In the conclusions chapter, three typologies of monsters are defined from these characteristics and the implications of these monstrous depictions are discussed.

Being aware of how problematic binary conceptions of gender and sexuality can be, during this study they will be used in order to understand the functioning of the hegemonic system that impregnates how societies understand reality. In that sense, the terms women and men will be used when discussing individuals that identify with those labels as well as those whose gender expression can be read in that way from within the binary system. Understandably, those categories produce particular meanings and actions that can be oppressive and exclusive, and do not reflect the entirety of social identities nor take into account non-binary identities. Moreover, in the (bisexual) spirit of moving between the lines, this theoretical

dissertation also will move through the lines, between two languages, trying not to obscure direct quotes from Spanish-speakers authors. Additionally, with the aim of further situating this *knowledge* inspired by Donna Haraway's theories, I believe that it is important to position myself before the theories and concepts to come. I am a white, working-class, bisexual cisgender woman, which means I have experienced some of the oppressions this dissertation discusses. However, I do not intend to assume how other oppressions are experienced, I am aware of my privileged position in the society I live in, and I am sure that one of them is to be writing this project.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. QUEERING GENDER. BEYOND DUALISM

2.1.1. *The Rainbow Spectre*

The notion of gender has long changed since Simone de Beauvoir wrote that the “division of the sexes is a biological given” (2011 [1949], 28). Since then, the line that differences the categories of sex and gender has been problematized. Judith Butler is undoubtedly one of the most influential authors that have written about this topic. They¹ have argued that binary gendered categories give the idea of the sexed body as pre-discursive, but giving the impression of merely reading what was naturally there: the body (Butler 1999, 55-56). Then, if the categories created to define sex, what it is supposed to be naturally given, “it would appear that from within the terms of culture it is not possible to know sex as distinct from gender” (Butler 1988, 524). Thus, the concept of sex is no longer linked to a naturally given category but, like gender, is understood as a social construct as well.

In that sense, and contesting de Beauvoir's well-known quote “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman” (2011 [1949], 330), Butler introduces the concept of gender as performative. Gender, as Butler understands it, is not “a stable identity” but rather “an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1988, 519). This idea of gender only exists to the extent that it is performed through “bodily gestures, movements, and enactments” (Butler 1988, 519). This idea of gender and its performativity has been further *queered* and confronted by writer and philosopher Paul B.

¹ Judith Butler's identifies as non-binary, so the pronouns used will be singular they/them.

Preciado. In *Contrasexual Manifesto* (2018), Preciado questions the debate between nature and culture and instead formulates gender as “prosthetic” (27). The author understands the technologies of sex and gender as producers of what is perceived as nature, and that fixates the difference organically, in the body, beyond Butlerian performativity (Preciado 2018, 27). Thus, for Preciado, gender is not only a performance but a modification of the bodily materiality that is rather both “constructed” and “organic” (Preciado 2018, 28). Furthermore, Monique Wittig claims that there is a relationship between gender and sexual orientation by which lesbians are *not* women by definition because they do not conform to the heterosexual norm by being the binary opposite to the male, their complementary (1992, 32).

Although the main focus of this study are bisexual woman, it is essential to understand the bigger picture. As Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell explain, “theories of bisexuality and queer theory will mutually inflect one another, ultimately forcing a reconceptualization of categories of sexual difference that extend far beyond our current notions of them” (2009, 313). With this, the intention is not to develop a static definition of queerness but rather to infiltrate the complex debate and to grasp some knowledge regarding identities that differ from the cisheteropatriarchal norm. In order to understand what *queer* means in a broader sense, it feels necessary to remember where this concept comes from. Firstly used to define something/someone as “strange”, “unusual” or “eccentric” during the sixteenth century, it transformed into having sexual, as well as negative connotations two centuries ago (hoogland 2009, 101). The current use of the word *queer* in the social context comes from a reappropriation of this term from a political fight to reclaim recognition for these dissident identities (hoogland 2009, 101). That is why this study will reclaim the use of the term *queer*.

As Butler understands it in *Undoing Gender* (2004), *queer* connotes mutability, a state of transition, a process that destabilizes the idea of gender/sexual orientation as stable (42). Furthermore, it has been argued from queer theory authors that both sex and gender are “historical categories”, which means that, as such, they change and evolve (Preciado 2018, 12). These manufactured categories exist with the intent to “hierarchize” our desire (Preciado 2018, 12) but also, in particular sexual orientation, originated to designate and point out the different, deviant, non-heterosexual Other (Ahmed 2006, 69). Thus, the ideology that supports the gender binary system and the concept of sexual orientation seems to be biased against queer people. Nevertheless, these concepts and terms will be used during this text with the intent not meant to reinforce those categories and the oppressive ideology that lies behind

them, but rather to deconstruct its organic facade and to give some insight into how society understands them.

2.1.2. *B is for Bisexuality*

Theories from gender studies, queer and LGBTQIA+ studies break with the binary norm and present gender and sexual orientation as something beyond the binary categories of woman/men or homosexual/heterosexual. Rather than a straight line whose opposites are the dualistic and complementary identities, sexuality and gender are presented as a spectrum where the borders are flexible and created by both the body's materiality and gendered performance. Undoubtedly, this can be applied to bisexuality since it breaks with the polar opposites of sexual orientation and creates a fracture on that very studied dualism and is situated socially both in the middle and out of the gender/sexual orientation system. The “heterosexual logic” of love, as Ahmed presents it, differentiates between two kinds which are based on the dichotomy of being/having related to the identification of the Other as sameness or difference, respectively (2004, 127). Leading to the assumption that “heterosexuality involves love for difference and homosexuality is love for sameness” (ibid). Then, bisexuality presents a paradox. Does it stand in between the concepts of identification and desire at the same time? Taking this *heterosexual logic*, if one is defined by timely desire, can a subject ever be bisexual? Bisexuality seems to challenge the idea that orientation needs to be defined by linear desire regarding *someone* else.

Indeed bisexuality as a term that refers to sexual orientation is relatively new. It was first used towards the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries from the pharmomedical sphere to describe sexual deviation as a pathology (Coll Blanco 2021, 51). This term has yet again been re-appropriated, but there are still remnants of misunderstanding and prejudice about it. Mainstream definitions of bisexuality and quite common ideas behind it are liking “both men and women” or “going both ways”, which could be understood because of the prefix *bi-*. Nevertheless, those definitions reinforce dualistic categories of gender and exclude other non-binary identities.² Such accusations of binarism were already contested by the bisexual collective in the 90's with *The Bisexual Manifesto*: “Do not assume that bisexuality is binary

² Within this dissertation's framework, the concept of non-binary identities will refer to those who do not identify themselves within the binary categories of gender (man/woman).

or duogamous in nature: that we have «two» sides or that we must be involved simultaneously with both genders to be fulfilled human beings. In fact, don't assume that there are only two genders" (1990).

Moving forward to broaden the definition of bisexuality, writer and bisexual activist Robyn Ochs explains it as "the potential to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree" (n.d). This interpretation not only reflects the intricate complexity of desire but is inclusive of non-binary identities. In *Resistencia bisexual*, writer Elisa Coll contests this explanation of bisexuality by arguing that "la construcción de la identidad en términos de disidencia sexual va más allá: cómo permea este deseo nuestra vida, qué relación tenemos con sus distintas partes, de qué manera incorporamos el género y otras expresiones que nos atraviesan y sobre todo —y esto es lo que me parece más definitorio— qué vivencias y violencias concretas derivan de todo esto". In sum, bisexuality does not need to be exclusively defined by others (the ones the attraction, love or affection felt towards) but rather how it is lived and experienced is the key for constructing these identities.

Heteronormativity, the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm, is "regulative" and affects the life experience of non-heterosexual individuals in one degree or another (Ahmed 2004, 149). In that sense, bisexuality is argued to be destabilizing of the normative heterosexual order because it challenges in concept monosexism, hetero and homonormativity and even monogamy (San Filippo 2013, 12). Within non-heterosexual identities, some of them are seen as less valid than others and, thus, less privileged, and monosexism takes a part in that. Monosexism could be defined as the belief that the sexual orientations "in which a person is attracted to a single gender—are more legitimate than plurisexual identities" and that leads to "a dynamic of acceptable and unacceptable sexualities" (Flanders, Dobinson, and Logie 2015 in Corey 2017, 2). Monosexism then would privilege heterosexuality and homosexuality over bisexuality, by being "socially recognized" and "personally sustainable" (San Filippo 2013, 12). Nevertheless, heterosexuality would be better rewarded socially because of heteronormativity.

In *The B Word*, Maria San Filippo expands on monosexism by discussing *compulsory monosexuality*, an adaptation from Adrienne Rich's definition of *compulsory heterosexuality* as the imposition of heterosexuality (1980, 653). It has been also argued that it "shapes

bodies” in relation of which ones can be approached “as would-be lovers” (Ahmed 2004, 145). Furthermore, when this concept is applied to monosexuality, it refers to the social compliance (that transforms into obligation) of monosexuality (San Filippo 2013, 10). One of the reasons behind compulsory monosexuality could be monogamy, since the existence of bisexuality creates fear of destabilizing it “as the prevailing norm” (Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell 2009, 301). San Filippo argues that bisexuality defies the notion of optimal coupling as a monogamous (ideally heterosexual) marriage and, therefore, challenges the foundations of monosexuality “on which the political rights and social recognition awarded gays and lesbians are founded” (2013, 28). This could partly explain the “suspicion” bisexuality is viewed with from within the lesbian and gay collective, as well as heterosexuals (San Filippo 2013, 28).

2.1.3. *The Body as an Ideological and Cultural Battlefield*

The body is a political battleground for the cisheteropatriarchal ideology since it helps create and hierarchically order both gender and sexual orientation. Butler argues in regards to performativity that “the body is not passively scripted with cultural codes” but rather that “the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives.” (1988, 526). The body is then both related to women and allows “womanhood” to be performed from it. Furthermore, Ahmed considers that compulsory heterosexuality has an effect on bodies since it “shapes what it is possible for bodies to do” by the repetition of this narrative “over time and with force” (Ahmed 2014, 145). Taking from Ahmed’s approach to sexual orientation as a way to otherize non-heterosexuals, it could be argued that gendered bodies exist to otherize as well, but in this case, *women*. In this sense, women are perceived as the ones having gender and having a body, the “negative” that differs from the neutral organic *man* (Bordo 1993, 59).

In order to maintain power structures, the political body is “domesticated” by naturalizing cultural values, such as gender roles, in the body (Segarra 2014, 27). An element of this domestication is sexuality, in particular women and queer sexualities. Psychoanalytic theories have analyzed gender from a phallogentric point of view, where the central point is the penis or lack of it. As such, Segarra argues that the “female sexed body” (as it is understood from a binary trans-exclusive normative way) is understood as a *cuerpo agujereado*, a *pierced body*

(Segarra 2014, 66). In this sense, the holes of both the mouth and the vagina are symbolically related since both of them blur the bounds of the interior/exterior dichotomy of the body (Segarra 2014, 66).

Since the body is seen as part of the more “primal” world, this association further reinforces the idea of women’s appetite as sexual hunger (Bordo 1993, 3). This equivalence between mouth and vagina will be exploded later by cultural products as will be discussed in later sections. Related to these images, there is the myth of the devouring woman which seems to be connected with its historical context with times of women reclaiming their rights (Bordo 1993, 161). In this metaphor, “the sexual act, when initiated and desired by a woman, is imagined as itself an act of eating, of incorporation and destruction of the object of desire” (Bordo 1993, 117). In this sense, the fantasy of being eaten by the Other, of being endangered and threatened by the body of the Other is essential in the politics of fear because it contributes to rationalize violence against the Other in order to protect themselves (Ahmed 2004, 64). Consequently, the act of eating (the Other) refers to power (bell hooks 1992, 36).

2.2. UNDERSTANDING THE CINEMATIC APPARATUS

2.2.1. *Representation and Stereotypes*

Representation can be understood as the “materialización de imágenes, ideas o situaciones mentales imaginadas, sin correspondencia de referentes efectivos” (Sánchez 2017, 59). In the case of audiovisual representation, it involves a textual representation in the sense of both audio and image information, that creates meaning in the minds of those who consume that product. Those images create meaning and, furthermore, they help construct social identities. By all means, these constructions are not exclusively created by “a specific apparatus of representation but several” (De Lauretis 1984, 32). In that sense, De Lauretis suggest that “the social being is constructed day by day as the point of articulation of ideological formations, an always provisional encounter of subject and codes at the historical (therefore changing) intersection of social formations and her or his personal history” (De Lauretis 1984, 14).

Both representation and language are fundamental for cultural content production, and inexorably tied with sociopolitical and ethical values. Film and television series are a

reflection of its context and the people involved in its creation and, for sure, this content can affect and influence society back. To have coherent and ethical representation of marginalized collectives might help destigmatize those groups. In the case of the LGBTQIA+ collective, the portrayal of dissident identities from the cisheterosexual norm has been steadily growing over the last couple of decades. Although nowadays there is more representation of queer characters, there is still place for improvement, particularly when it comes to diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community. The bisexual identity is “more than doubly marginalized” (Chi-Kwan Lee 2014, 6) since it carries both the stigma from the society overall and inside of the LGBTQIA+ community. Thus, it is necessary to critically examine the portrayal of bisexuality in the media in order to deconstruct the stereotypes that surround it.

A specific representation of bisexuality, as well as of other marginalized identities, is needed, due to its particularities or desires “cannot be fully recognized in the gay and lesbian images offered by mainstream media” (Chi-Kwan Lee 2014, 6). Besides the underrepresentation or studying the quantity of bisexual characters, this research will take into account the nature of these portrayals. Ethical representation of oppressed collectives are crucial to destigmatize and humanize said groups (Ramírez Alvarado and Cobo Durán 2013, 230). The Observatorio de la Diversidad en los Medios Audiovisuales, states that, although women are usually underrepresented with regards to the LGBTQIA+ collective, it seems that, in Spain, bisexual women appear more often than bisexual men in cultural products. This invisibilization of bisexual male characters (and, even more, non-binary characters) is attributed to the phenomenon of bisexual women's hypersexualization (Observatorio de la Diversidad en los Medios Audiovisuales 2020, 10; Bryant 2000, 215). In general terms, bisexual representation is linked with identifiable stereotypes have to do with unreliability, indecisiveness, obsessiveness, promiscuity, and dangerous, monstrous or autodestructive bisexual characters (Bryant 2000, 215; Observatorio de la Diversidad en los Medios Audiovisuales 2020, 10; Liddell 2017, 7-15; Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell 2009, 298).

2.2.2. *Film and Bodies*

One of the most relevant concepts in feminist film theory is the *male gaze*. This term was coined by feminist theorist Laura Mulvey in her canonic text, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). Mulvey bases her theories largely on psychoanalytic theories from Freud. In

particular, the idea of castration undergoes the concept of the male gaze, in which men (understanding by that, cisheterosexual men), by looking at the female body (understanding by that, cisgender woman) and her lack of penis, fear castration (Mulvey 1975, 13). Mulvey then applies this concept to film since it has the act of looking as central, and two positions: the active (the one who looks) and the passive (the one that is looked at) (1975, 11). As it has been explained before, the position of activeness is traditionally given to the male, and the passive role to the female. That is why, Mulvey argues that women have the characteristic of *to-be-looked-at-ness*, a passive object (1975, 11). In order to deactivate this displeasure created by the female (cisgender) body, and being able to get pleasure out of the viewing of film, Mulvey theorizes there are two mechanisms for men to achieve that: sadistic voyeurism (in which the male character punishes the woman) or fetichistic scopophilia (in which the woman is turned into a spectacle, most of the times, sexualized) (1975, 14). Both of those mechanisms have as its target the image of women.

Mulvey's theories have been criticized because of the binarism implicit in the Freudian concepts she uses. There seems to be no point in trying to deny the importance of these theories in film studies and the impact they had, but it feels necessary to reread and reinterpret those texts in order to adapt them to the current context, keeping in mind the misogynistic worldview and LGBTQIA+phobia that Freud's theories could have. Preciado deconstructs the ideology behind the Freudian definition of castration arguing that is based "on a heteronormative and colonial epistemology of the body" that implies the existence of only "two mutually exclusive possibilities" (2018, 5). This binarism in Freud's theories ultimately creates the notion of "pathology and disability" outside those categories (Preciado 2018, 5). Even if Mulvey is critical of the biases on which Freud's concepts are based, there still seems to be a lack of inclusion over trans*³ and intersex bodies in the reflection as well as situating the place of women in film as exclusively passive.

Gill argues that postfeminist sensibilities have enabled a change in women's representation from passiveness to being an allegedly active "desiring sexual objects" (2007, 151). In contrast with the use of postfeminism, Gill employs the concept of postfeminist sensibilities to describe an ideological position that associates feminism with neoliberalist ideals (2007, 163). At the same time, the postfeminist sensibilities continuously entangle "both feminist and

³ With the term *trans** I refer to those identities who do not conform to the assignment of the gender imposed within the binary cisnorm.

anti-feminist themes within them” (Gill 2007, 149). In regards to self-hypersexualization in order to *empower* oneself would have to do with the internalization of the objectifying male gaze from which now are the subjects themselves the ones that objectify their bodies (Gill 2007, 152).

2.2.3. *Female Anger, Monstrous Rage and Violence*

Emotions serve to conform the cultural and political space. For instance, Ahmed argues that fear and disgust are fundamental in the politics of hate, by creating boundaries over identities and the normalization of exerting violence towards Others (2004, 64-96). Additionally, emotions seem to be involved in gender stereotypes. It is not only the physical body that conforms to gender norms, but, as Butler argued, a cluster of behaviours and ways of being, defined as gender performativity. This performance is not exclusive of, but it certainly includes, emotions. Emotions, just like bodies, are considered to belong to “femininity and racial others” (Ahmed 2004, 170). This relation of emotions and the *feminine* is partly due to the idea that women are “closer’ to nature, ruled by appetite” as argued before (Ahmed 2004, 3). Of course, this division is hierarchical and (in the contemporary context) situates moral superiority on reason over emotion (Kogan 2010, 34). Nevertheless, ways of feeling and expressing emotion also differ socially. Whereas emotions related to sadness, pain or love are related to women, anger as an emotion and its violent consequences belongs to men (Clover 1987, 212). Those emotions related to femininity are associated with passivity while anger in particular is understood as being active as it is an operative response, “a call for action” (Clover 1987, 174).

The dichotomy of gendered emotions presents angry women in the social and historical imaginary as “hysterical” or in the popular image of female monstrousness. When women are represented as active or “angry transgressors”, they are either punished and/or forced to become an erotic spectacle to deactivate what is perceived as masculinity (Purse 2011, 186). In this sense, female rage is correlated to beauty or a lack of it. If the image of the raging woman is not sexualized, she is depicted as monstrous. But those images can conform to the notion of “beautiful monster”, a strategy that sterilizes female anger into something that eventually does not change the system. Nonetheless, alternative depictions of the angry female monster are argued to be able to disrupt “a contemporary landscape of sanitized

images of active women” (Purse 2011, 193). The “naturalistic portrayal of female physical exertion” that goes from the audio design to the images depicted could be some of the mechanisms that break with other eroticized active characters (Purse 2011, 193).

Oppressions work from different axes, and with biphobia it works no different, some of them reinforcing each other. Racism/sexism is the most common intersection brought up by authors discussing female anger. This is related with the stereotype of the “angry black woman”, which is the one of most prominent racist portrayals regarding racialized women (Abdurraqib 2017, 229; Gill and Orgad 2019, 1). Abdurraqib argues that this archetypal category delegitimizes “black women’s voices and silence[s] their legitimate anger” (Abdurraqib 2017, 236). In contrast with their white counterparts, society places black women as “always angry” as a “way of pathologizing black women” (Gill and Orgad 2019, 1). Whilst the portrayal of anger in white women has the potential to fracture the system, black women’s rage “is never considered valid—it’s simply an accessory of black womanhood. This anger isn’t empowering, and is never presented as flattering” (Abdurraqib 2017, 237). In fact, the narrative of the angry black woman situates them in the de-humanized position of a monster (Abdurraqib 2017, 229). Even when characters of black women are able to break out of the stereotype by regaining “humanity” (Abdurraqib 2017, 248), this process often comes with their depiction as a mother and a sufferer, which can be argued that reinforces society’s expectation of what it means to be a *woman*.

Other variables that have an impact on the portrayal of female anger are class and sexual orientation. Classism connotes the depiction of character’s anger (Purse 2011; Gill and Orgad 2019). Gill and Orgad recognize that, historically, poor women have suffered violent punishments as a consequence when expressing their anger, as a way to societal control of women’s emotions (2019, 1). Additionally, Purse argues that the lower-class status of characters can operate “as a distancing factor” (2011, 193). Other differences in the representation of rage can depend on the sexual orientation of the subject. Quintero Johnson and Miller argue that, generally, men are the ones portrayed as psychopaths (2016, 214). But there’s an exception: “[t]he trope of the “lesbian psychotic” is distinct from heteronormative depictions because of cultural perceptions of homosexuality as sexual deviance and, by extension, sexual deviance as psychopathy” (Quintero Johnson and Miller 2016, 214).

In audiovisual works, female rage seems to be associated with violent acts. Women as killers seem to be highly studied and a popular trope. But this narrative is not new, “[f]emale soap characters have exhibited a range of mental illnesses” in a way that “manifests through acts of violence, terror, betrayal, rage, or other erratic behaviors” (Quintero Johnson and Miller 2016, 221). Indeed, female rage is commonly portrayed as a pathology or as a consequence of trauma. In reference to mental health issues, it is estimated that “37% of mentally ill media characters in prime-time television programming were violent criminals” (Diefenbach and West 2007 in Quintero Johnson and Miller 2016, 213). Mediated by gender stereotypes, men are understood as active whereas women are perceived as passive, which is part of the configuration of the ideology “of heterosexuality that identifies sadism with men and masochism with women” (Rowe 1995, 14 in White 2013, 422). Accordingly, what makes them get angry or become violent are “situational circumstances [that] are linked to mood disorders, intense anxiety and frustration, or trauma” (Quintero Johnson and Miller 2016, 212). This fact promotes both the stigmatization of people with mental illnesses and further pathologizes anger in women.

A recurrent traumatic trope in the literature that unleashes female anger is rape (Purse 2011; Abdurraqib 2017; Chappell and Young 2017; Gill and Orgad 2019). Medusa is considered to be one of the symbols of female rage that still has an impact on contemporary culture (Chappell and Young 2017, 184). This mythological character is raped and, then, turned into a monster. However, most of her mainstream portrayals, exclude this part of the narrative which then leaves out the explanation for her rage while “reinforcing misogynistic myths about rape and encouraging female rivalry” (Chappell and Young 2017, 203). When rape is eliminated from the original narrative, the audience cannot fully understand the character and identify with her rage, further negating it as a valid emotion (Abdurraqib 2017, 229). The rape-revenge narrative is a horror film subgenre that focalizes on the feelings of anger and disgust that this violent act of aggression can provoke. For Purse, the aptness of this narrative resides in “a representation of female violence that ‘interrupts’ a contemporary landscape of sanitized images of active women” (Purse 2011, 193). Therefore, portrayals of stories that acknowledge rape as an aggression have the potential to be subversive although they can be problematic by exclusively relating trauma with anger, as a way for women to become active.

2.2.4. *The House of Horror: Women and Queers*

Author Carol J. Clover compares the film genres of horror and pornography because both of them are “specifically devoted to the arousal of bodily sensation” (Clover 1987, 189). In that sense, both the subject and the object of the genres are the body and, in horror in particular, “the body in threat” (Clover 1987, 189). As pointed out before, emotions are gendered, and the emotions of which the film subject is victim of in horror (such as fear manifested in crying or trembling) are considered feminine, which makes horror coded as a “womanly” genre (Clover 1987, 212). Beyond this concept of horror as gendered, Cuéllar Alejandro presents the idea of *queer horror* which he defines as:

“un género artístico [...] que se atreve a subvertir el concepto de género (entendido ahora como identidad basada en un constructo mental dual que distingue ingenuamente entre lo masculino y femenino) y que plantea alternativas sexuales que sugieren la posibilidad de transgredir y superar el concepto tradicional de identidad sexual (la que distingue, desde una perspectiva reduccionista, entre hombres y mujeres), de modo que puede servir de modelo metafórico para la construcción y establecimiento de un nuevo tipo de sociedad” (Cuéllar Alejandro 2020, 19)

In sum, horror seems to be identified as a film genre where gender and sexuality can be coded in alternative ways that differ from and question hegemonic conceptions of them such as gender transgressions and ambiguity, and non-heterosexual or monosexual relationships (Cuéllar Alejandro 2020, 18; 92).

Dichotomies and stereotypes sometimes work in absolutes. In the case of queer people, they have been historically coded as villains, particularly in the Occidental part of the film industry and, in particular, Hollywood. During the 30’s, the so-called Hays Code (actually called Motion Picture Production Code) was imposed: a set of rules that eventually censored films that featured “immoral” values, such as “sexual perversion”, with that meaning *queerness* (Kim, 158). The importance of the film industry in Hollywood cannot be denied in the global context, and the Hays Code was an indicator of similar contexts happening in the rest of the world. Indeed, in Spain, during Franco’s dictatorship, *queers* were criminalized and homosexuality and transsexuality were sentenced with jail (Melero 2010, 20). This situation

had repercussions in the film industry, where a strict code was imposed as well, where it prohibited, among other things, images of queer people (Melero 2010, 57). Nevertheless, these rules were sometimes evaded by filmmakers, sometimes in order to break the rules and produce queer content within the subtext, but other times using *queerness* was not a synonym for normalizing, but rather to point the finger at the Other (Mira 2008, 364).

Indeed, film as any other cultural product, is both a reflection of a society and its ideology, and functions as a mechanism to educate social conduct, roles and morality. Queerness as villainy works as an instrument to warn about the dangers of *queerness* and the threatening *queers*. For a long time, the only image of trans* people available in the audiovisual imagery has been related to villainy, murderers and disturbed mentally ill individuals. Because of the relation made with immorality and homosexuality, films used narratives where queer people were portrayed as predatory (Melero 2010, 28). In Spain, recurrent tropes for queer women in horror films were the predatory villain or the sadistic lesbian (Melero Salvador 2010, 62). But these tropes are not exclusive, as bisexual women are still portrayed as “immoral, predatory” which makes them “either villainous, sexualized, conditional, temporary, or all four traits at once” (Liddell 2017, 3-15). This conditionality and temporality have to do with bisexuality being considered as a phase, a merely transitional state between monosexualities (Liddell 2017, 9). The fact that nowadays female bisexuality is represented within those codes is both an indicator and a consequence of the tradition of queering villains and the still ongoing marginalization of this identity.

2.2.5. *Queer Readings and Invisibilization*

The reading of some characters as *queer* might not be explicitly in the canon text, but rather this fact can be an appropriation or an alternative reading by the audience. In fact, assuming that a character is heterosexual, signifies a position society takes upon sexual orientation of heteronormativity. By assuming that, by defect, everyone is “straight until proven otherwise” one falls into a heterosexist fallacy (San Filippo 2013, 33). Besides that, monosexuality can play its part in assuming someone’s sexual orientation on the basis of someone’s partner’s gender, conforming to the idea that individuals can only be either heterosexual or homosexual and, thus, invisibilizing and rejecting the idea of bisexuality (San Filippo 2013, 10). Because of the complex implications of this topic, San Filippo recommends reading their sexual

orientations “based upon the desires or relationships at the end of a text—rather than looking at the fluctuations and variations of desire throughout the novel (or film)” (San Filippo 2013, 32). For Cuéllar Alejandro, however, in order to identify *queerness* in a text where it would be present, but not in a manifest way, *queerness* must be beforehand in the subject (2020, 82). This statement would mean that people that conform to the cisheterosexual norm are *unable* to read queerness. However, in order to question this theory, one could easily argue that queerness has been exploited for decades in the film industry and has instructed the public to identify such *queerness* with codes, in a non-explicit way.

The academic literature seems to consistently refer those to alternative or *queer readings* that allow self-recognition for queer spectators (Ramírez Alvarado and Cobo Durán 2013; Bryant 2000). Although the media industry is monetizing queer readings of their products, it can still work as form of resistant reading that eventually can help validate one’s own identity when there is no place else but the margins of the discourse. The fact that “bisexuality is euphemistically or ‘subtextually’ concealed” or “obscured – hidden in plain sight” (San Filippo 2013, 17), bisexual readings are used as tool to unravel the underlying values attached to bisexuality. San Filippo states that “the act of reading bisexually is often prompted by the undecidability of an image or instance in question— that is, textual resistance to pinning characters or narrative elements down as either straight or gay/lesbian in persuasion or perspective” (San Filippo 2013, 31). Thus, this way of interpreting texts is additionally a way of resistance over the “monosexist assumptions of dominant cultural discourses” (San Filippo 2013, 35).

Nevertheless, although alternative queer readings, sometimes encouraged by queer coding, can be fruitful and helpful with self-recognition for the audience, they can have the risk of maintaining bisexuality in the “realm of connotation—the textual closet, so to speak” and thus conform to the text’s hegemonic and possibly queerphobic and biphobic connotations (San Filippo 2013, 34). Other relevant matters to understand the functionality of queer characters for the audiovisual industry are the previously mentioned *queer coding* and *queerbaiting*. *Queer coding* refers to “fictional characters who are not clearly labelled or only convey their sexuality implicitly” (Liddell 2017, 2), whereas *queerbaiting* commodifies queer identities to profit from spectators from LGBTQIA+ collective that struggle to find a normalized depiction of their identities (Guerrero-Pico, Establés, and Ventura 2017, 42; San Filippo 2013, 21-22). Both terms are strategies to win “progressive” value but without threatening the

heterosexual audience (San Filippo 2013, 41). Such systems that incentivize alternative readings are used to gain an audience from the LGBTQIA+ collective without disturbing the cisheterosexual structures.

Other of the concepts that surrounds bisexual existence in audiovisual fiction is bisexual erasure. This might be defined as those cases where bisexuality is never considered as an option because potentially bisexual characters “come back to heterosexuality” after a non-heterosexual experience which is never again mentioned, reducing bisexuality as a phase, one of the most common stereotypes surrounding this identity (Guerrero-Pico, Establés, and Ventura 2017, 41). Furthermore, the issue behind bisexual representability can be associated in part with compulsory monosexuality because of the “ambiguous and liminal spaces” that bisexuality locates itself in (San Filippo 2013, 18-19). It could be argued then that monosexuality enables and promotes both the stigmatization and the erasure of bisexuality. The complexities behind the lack of portrayal of bisexuality in the media rests then in its implication of sexual fluidity, becoming “unthinkable and/or unnameable” and thus being “too disruptive” (Raymond 2003, 216). If bisexuality is something that is not allowed to be properly named then it cannot exist in the public space.

3. LOOKING FOR THE BISEXUAL *MONSTRESS*

As it has been argued, both gender and sexuality work in binary terms under the cisheteropatriarchal structures. But binarism and dualism are used to order reality by simplifying its complexity. Both concepts are used in society and its narratives. John Fiske explains in *Television Culture* (1989) a structuralist approach to narrative. In particular how Levi-Strauss understands myths, and how it has to do with narratives and dualism. In order for them to be (most) effective, abstract generalizations serve to identify the characters within the context of the narrative, that is, identifying who is evil and, therefore quite possibly, an obstacle to the “hero” of the narrative (Fiske 1989, 131). In that sense, bisexuality, as a dissident identity, problematizes binarism and the dualism of gender and sexual orientation (man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual). When bisexuality is understood as a valid category, it puts on question the division of gender which is the foundation of the cisheteropatriarchal structures.

In this chapter, the concepts discussed previously will merge with some of the characteristics of bisexual women representation as monstrous. The following sections will be divided into characteristics that the depiction of monstrous bisexual women have in common. Hunger will be related to the urgency to restrict women and queer bodies. This will lead to other depictions of uncontrollability related to mental health and violence, and the pathologization of anger and desire. Afterwards, the instability produced by bisexuality takes a dual form in characters and tropes. Lastly, the effects of these representations will be discussed in relation to fear and fetishization. These characteristics will be exemplified with films and television series such as *Killing Eve* (2018-); *Jennifer's Body* (2009); *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003); *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) and *Basic Instinct* (1992).

3.1. HUNGER AND APPETITE

The idea of women as passive but, at the same time, closer to nature and primitive and thus, active, creates a dichotomy in the concept of what is supposed to be a woman. This could be related to the madonna/whore complex, for which women are depicted either as pure (that would be, passive) or impure (as active), in relation to their bodies and their sexuality. In this sense, the perception of women as bodies and the representation of bisexuality as out of the norm, projects an intersection that seems to be closer with the idea of sexual activeness, related with biphobic stereotypes of sexual promiscuity. This would lead to controllable and uncontrollable bodies. In that sense, queer bodies would be perceived as uncontrollable because of their non-conforming identities to the cisheterosexual norm. But also, the (bisexual) women body that should belong to the realm of passiveness is perceived as uncontrollable. In an attempt to achieve control over and domesticate bodies and desires, hunger and appetite (sexual and related with alimentation) are disciplined to maintain social order (Segarra 2014, 27).

In the case of the character of Jennifer from *Jennifer's Body* (2009), she does not explicitly label herself as bisexual, nevertheless she is coded bisexually since she explicitly desire both for male counterparts and for her friend Needy. Jennifer's appetite is both for her need to *feed* and to satisfy her sexual desire. She lures boys with the promise of having sexual relations with them, only to prey on them. The sexual context of the narrative when she feeds off her male victims makes a seemingly clear relation between the mouth and sex organs, which

could be understood to be a vagina. Segarra's theory of the *pierced body* relates both of these holes and their sexual charge and the image of the *vagina dentata*. The image of the *vagina dentata* reflects back to the myth of the devouring woman, a conception "of dangerous female desire (particularly in contemporary culture) as the sexual temptress" (Bordo 1993, 14).

Furthermore, a recurrent image of women feeding off people with sexual connotations is the vampire, again connecting with the idea of the mouth/vagina (Segarra 2014, 76; Liddell 2017, 8). Vampires have been traditionally related in media studies with a demonic image of lesbians (Melero Salvador 2010, 62). Nevertheless, bisexuality, by not having been taken into account in the analysis of these films, may have been overlooked and then, creating bisexual erasure in the academic research about it. One thing that seems clear is that vampirism has been coded as *queerness* to a large extent. In the case of Willow from the television show *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), she appears in two forms: a human character and a vampire from another dimension. Of course, the vampire, the monster, is the one related with bisexuality. She feels predatory in both senses, by expressing her appetite because of her need to nourish from humans' blood and her sexual desire. The vampire Willow is portrayed as predatory even to herself as human during an encounter during the both of them and her possible bisexuality is suggested. The vampire's desire destabilizes the assumed heterosexuality (at this point) of Willow.

If controlling the Other's bodily appetite is an act of constraining someone's power, that means the act of eating itself has power. Author bell hooks presented the idea that "[i]t is by eating the Other (...) that one asserts power and privilege" (bell hooks 1992, 36). Eating the Other means having access and privilege to Others' bodies. When in fiction, a female monster devours someone, she is exerting power over them (physical, emotional, sexual). From a point of view of power relations, the character of Jennifer uses her "sexual power" to trick the boys into thinking they have certain power over the situation. Nevertheless, as she *eats* the Other, the power relationship is established and the boys become her victims. In relation with this metaphor of the devouring woman, eating men does not necessarily mean having sex with them but rather, their destruction (Bordo 1993, 117). This insatiability is threatening for men, since it endangers their lives, and it is a suitable excuse to control women's bodies, hunger and sexuality. At the same time, her appetite is not as threatening to her friend Needy because, although it is depicted as threatening, Jennifer's intention is not to *eat* her, but to get pleasure from her. Consequently, Jennifer's (and, by extent, bisexual women's) hunger is depicted as

solely dangerous for men. In sum, bisexuality is understood as uncontrollable because of the potential attraction for more than one gender, which destabilizes monosexuality and the heterosexual order. In this way, bisexual women's desire is manifested as excessive and, thus, monstrous.

3.2. VIOLENCE, ANGER AND MENTAL INSTABILITY

Emotions are important because they give us information about the world. At the same time, bodies also are linked with emotion: disgust, arousal, hate, love, etc. Nevertheless, female anger and rage seem to need explanation in the media since it is not supposed to be a feminine emotion. As previously presented, trauma and mental illness are a common explanation for women exerting violence. As a matter of fact, contemporary depictions of female violence are related with "gendered" issues (such as maternity, rape, sexist abuse) in order to make sense of it (Quintero Johnson and Miller 2016, 212). Moreover, mental instability is (or, at least, has been for long) a recurrent trope in queer representation. LGBTQIA+ individuals have been historically pathologized because of their dissident identities which were labeled as mental illness. In the case of bisexual women, the non-conformity to the binary heterosexual system makes this implication of being between genders even more notable.

Girl, Interrupted (1999) reflects on the association between sexuality and psychology. In the film, bisexuality is presented as unstable, related to Susanna's borderline personality disorder. Queerness seems to not be recognized as a proper sexual orientation but rather as instability of the mind and, thus, assuming a direct relation between dissident sexual and gender identities and mental illness. Again, they intend to fit bisexuality into a regime ordered by compulsory heterosexuality and monosexuality, create distance of municipality or recklessness because of the implications of other stereotypes surrounding bisexuality. Bisexuality is not only seen as pathologically unstable from the professionals in the health department but from Susanna (aware or unaware) of her bisexuality, who also understands herself as unstable.

Delving into the trauma as the origin of violent woman, the rape-revenge trope should be mentioned. Rape is a violent act of exerting power over a body. This act gives the fantasy of

controlling and owning, in many cases, the female body. Understandably, rape is a traumatic event that can unfold into anger and fury. Still, revenge against the rapist is portrayed as empowering for the female. But trauma is likewise depicted as unstable. In the case of Jennifer in *Jennifer's body*, her monstrous transformation takes place after the violation of her body by several men. Although the film does not clearly state the event as a rape, it does have those connotations since violence can substitute the image of rape in slasher films (Clover 1987, 196). This rape is symbolic because of the sexual connotations that it had, in the sense that Jennifer is chosen by the group of men precisely for being a “virgin”. Jennifer’s body is violated and put under violence and coercion. In fact, this connects with social perception of virginity as purity, and the loss of it is portrayed as something dirty and dangerous. The symbolic rape and the loss of virginity triggers the transformation of Jennifer into a (maneater) monster. Furthermore, the relation of her mouth and her vagina have been previously discussed but play a role into another type of violation of the men's bodies. By eating them and *piercing* their male bodies, they are symbolically castrated and relegated to a lower bodily status (Segarra 2014, 83). Thus, by eating the boys, Jennifer states power over them, just like rape is a matter of imposing power rather than sex.

Over the last few years there has been some examples of fictional female killers or women exerting violence such as the television series *Killing Eve* (2018-) or *Why Women Kill* (2019-), both notably featuring bisexual women. There seems to be a tendency of relating bisexual women as violent murderers with female empowerment. This is the case of *Killing Eve* where the main characters are both bisexual women and find themselves in a chase to capture or kill each other. In particular, Villanelle is a professional assassin and it is her trauma that ultimately leads to violent tendencies. Nevertheless, she has the power to accomplish what she wants and she has the proper abilities to do it. Her image as a sort of *empowered girl-boss* is connected with her beauty based on her whiteness, her youth and thinness, as well as her economic level. Within the narrative, being financially independent from her lower class family creates a symbolic upgrade from her trauma and poverty, to the exertion of violence and being wealthy. In that way, Villanelle embodies the contemporary mainstream heroine constructed not only by “fantasies of physical empowerment, but also fantasies of economic empowerment” (Purse 2011, 188-189). This beautified and *empowered* image of the bisexual monster as appeals both to the male gaze as well as women and non-binary audiences in the sense that Villanelle can be desired or it can be desired to *be* like her due to the interiorization of the pleasure provided by the gaze (Gill 2007, 151-152). Although sometimes understood as

revolutionary, these images can comply with the neoliberal postfeminist ideal of (self)surveillance and control (Gill 2007, 149). After all, the stereotypes and canon images subjected for women to adapt to, are mechanisms of control for women.

3.3. MORALLY DUBIOUS: THE DOUBLE AND THE MIRROR

Bisexuality as ambiguity reflects upon the monstrousness and humanity of bisexual women since they are neither depicted fully as one or the other. This is metaphorized by the doubling of the character into two personas by the dual self trope or by the iconography of the mirror and the reflection. For instance Willow from *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, is presented as a duality: the same character is unfolded into different versions of herself in two divergent universes. Whereas Willow-the human is perceived as sensitive and possesses other values related to femininity, Willow-the vampire fits the other side of the madonna/whore complex. They synthesize the dichotomy of heterosexual compliance to the feminine norms and heteronormativity, and the Other who doesn't fit the societal norms and therefore does not adhere to the feminine or heterosexual norm. What is interesting about this case is that eventually Willow defines herself as a lesbian disregarding completely her previous relationship with a male character. This bisexual reading of Willow does not intend to underestimate the importance of the character for lesbian representation, or the fact that this kind of experiences can happen to both lesbians and gays. But the elimination of the possibility of bisexuality by not allowing the character to even reflect upon her previous relationship contributes to bisexual erasure.

This idea of the dual self also appears in *Killing Eve*, only this time the duality happens with the juxtaposition of two different bisexual women. Eve and Villanelle are each other's complementary and, at the same time, they are quite similar. Whereas Eve is the heroine related to the law enforcement environment, Villanelle, as the antagonist, is the murderer and criminal. In this sense, Eve's bisexuality and her fascination and attraction towards Villanelle, is portrayed as a danger to herself and to the ones she cares about. Nevertheless, Villanelle's bisexuality likewise destabilizes her position and her status as a murderer. Ultimately, their desires mean an attraction to evilness or a dangerous lifestyle that puts queer desire over their (moral) responsibilities. Performing a bisexual reading out of this duality, it can be argued that

it connotes a blurring of “the sexually normative individual and the queer Other, ultimately suggesting the presence of both” (San Filippo 2013, 112).

Furthermore, representations of women that exert violence border the differences between the villain/victim paradigm. By being victims themselves, that is, oppressed or violated, these women are the ones that will make victims out of their oppressors (as it happens with Jennifer). They have power, but have dominance over others with violence (Bordo 1993, 26). The moral behind their actions is put in question, however, there is a certain level of ambivalence, since it is not presented as completely good nor evil. The moral ambiguity that surrounds these bisexual women might be influenced by postmodernist paradigms where concepts that work as polar opposites are problematized. Nevertheless, this allows narratives to portray a representation of bisexuality that aligns moral indecisiveness with the stereotype of bisexuality as “a phase to be outgrown” (San Filippo 2003, 37).

Previous definitions of bisexuality as hermaphroditism/intersexuality have still implications in current representations of bisexual people. Bisexuality can both be interpreted as being in between genders and sexual orientation. Taking Monique Wittig’s claim that lesbians are not women (by definition, a woman should adhere to the heteropatriarchal rules of desire), then bisexual women would exist in the middle space that it is nowhere and, at the same time, somewhere between men and women (1992, 32). That is why many of the female bisexual characters could be defined as androgynous by manifesting what are considered to be both masculine and feminine characteristics, blurring gender division. Therefore, this representation allows transgressing certain rules and gender roles. This uncertainty underlines the difficulty to categorize and create an stereotypical aesthetic to be easily identifiable by the audience such as the flamboyant gay or the tomboy lesbian which, on the other hand, are extremely reductive of these identities.

3.4. NON-HUMAN MONSTERS AND FETICHISM

The tradition of portraying vampires as queer continues in contemporary mediascape with examples such as *True Blood* (2008-2014) *Carmilla* (2014-2016) or *What We Do in the Shadows* (2019-). Vampires could arguably be genderless because they are monsters and, thus, not subjected to society’s norms. Nevertheless, these seem to appear gender coded, which

means that they are impregnated by the same stigmas, stereotypes, tropes and characteristics as the gender they are representing or performing. Despite the fact that the trope of the lesbian vampire has been the most visible in film studies, vampirism and monstrosity are commonly represented with bisexual connotations (Liddell 2017, 7; Cuéllar Alejandro 2020, 142). Furthermore, the woman vampire conventionally uses her seduction to get revenge in order to eventually regain power taken from men (Cuéllar Alejandro 2020, 110). In this sense, the mouth/vagina parallelism reaches its pinnacle in this figure because of the fangs used to eat/pierce bodies. The image of the *vagina dentata* would possibly be related to this. In fact, the bodily transformation of Jennifer (from *Jennifer's Body*) into her “monstrous” persona, rests in her mouth, that appears bigger and with pointy teeth, recalling once again that narrative and reinforcing its erotic and monstrous nature.

The physicality of the monster might create a certain amount of distance between the spectator and the image since it is complex to fully identify with an “undesirable” body. What is more, taking into account the strict norms of gender and sex, abnormal bodies might create disgust or fear of the Other. These emotions that are perceived as sensory are at the same time bodily and a cultural construction (Kogan 2010, 34). The fear created by certain bodies reflects on identity politics, in which the Other is read as a potential danger to one’s identity. In that sense, fear is used to warn of a border transgression in order to create insecurity of oneself and urges to fasten its security as a static category, which is often defined as “border anxiety” (Ahmed 2004, 76). In fiction and myths, this fear of the Other is resolved in the deactivation and domestication of the monster (the woman and/or her sexuality) and the restoration of the status quo (Segarra 2014, 67-68). By locating anxiety on Other’s bodies, the anxiety over the instability of one’s identity and mortality are relocated, causing those bodies to “take on fetish qualities as objects of fear” (Ahmed 2004, 78-79).

The active female body is hypersexualized so that the male gaze desire is achieved. The desires of the female bisexual character directed to another woman is often hypersexualized and its purpose is to serve for a (cisheterosexual) male pleasure. For instance, in *Basic Instinct* (1992) the image of the femme fatale/castrating woman/monster/murderer serves the purpose of fulfilling a male fantasy (both from the male character and the audience by extension). These “encounters with the Other” are viewed as dangerous, creating a thrilling and threatening combination of danger and pleasure (bell hooks 1992, 26). The sexual nature with which female monsters, vampires and other creatures are represented is connected to a

fetichization of the fear. In that sense, the trope of bisexual women as monsters could fit Mulvey's theory by which they are sexualized when they take the form of monsters in order to deactivate the fear that it procures. The monster would be the embodiment of the fear of the Other, the castration complex, and the destabilization of the heterosexual and monosexual order. The fact that female attraction might not be directed towards men, but the possibility of it exists, makes certain stereotypes go back and forth and contradict each other. Subjecting the bodies of bisexual women to a merely sexual object relates to a desire to connect with the Other, while maintaining identity boundaries (bell hooks 1992, 29). This (im)possibility of further openness or vulnerability crystallizes in the fetichization of bisexual women's sexual desire that is portrayed as excessive, as monstrous.

During this study, it has been argued that abnormality is understood as monstrous. Monstrousness can be read at a physical level, where a transformation (or queerness) inscribed on the body situates it out of the norm. Nevertheless, monstrosity can be located in a threatening individual who breaks established (moral) rules and may apply violence. Furthermore, as stated before, appropriate ways of femininity reside only on the (cis)female body. Transforming women's physicality to an out-of-the-norm body might question its womanliness (Gill 2007, 150). In this sense, society's relegates queer bodies and, thus, queerness to the realm of abnormality and monstrousness. The continuous social exclusion and rejection of trans* bodies reflect the restrictions that gender and body are subjected to, as well as the high scrutiny over them to fit the norm. In addition, compulsory heterosexuality generates conceptions on how bodies should be shaped and what bodies can be approached. By constructing bisexual women's bodies in ways that resemble and incarnate difference, ugliness and otherness, there seems to be an intrinsic rejection of it. Images of the bisexual female body are stripped off its humanity, but maintaining its femininity with the aim to be fetichized and consumed, both by the male gaze as well as alternative gazes with the intent to either appropriating monstrosity or accepting the hypersexualized image as empowering.

4. CONCLUSIONS. (UN)LOVEABLE MONSTERS

As it has been argued, the body is inexorably tied to the representation of women. Drawing from Preciado's ideas, gender is organic, and the body is the place where the effects of the construction take effect (Preciado 2018, 28). The body is an object of cult, and the recipient in

which sexism and other oppressions take effect in different ways. In the case of bisexual women, their bodies are a place where society tries to inscribe (at least) heterosexual and monosexual norms, which problematizes even further their status as women. This is one of the core elements in the construction of women's bisexuality as violent and monstrous in audiovisual fiction. Along with the body, the mind and emotions construct monstrosity by displacing the directionality of desire. Due to the identification of bisexuality as a (sexual) *deviation* of the norm, it is defined as monstrous. In that sense, crucial points of their representation imply an intersection in between the construction of both women *and* queer people as monstrous. Altogether, the trope of threatening queer women corresponds to the idea of the deviation from the norm, as well as their portrayal of masculinity as a lack of adherence of their desire to the heterosexual system and monosexuality.

But, are monsters loveable? Is bisexuality loveable or is it only fetichised by the male gaze in the cultural production? Considering the stereotypes over bisexual people, bisexuality would mean promiscuity, infidelity. The characters that appear on mainstream media products may seem untrustworthy for the audience due to their ambiguity, their unclear sexual tendencies and morality. Thus, are these media products arguing that bisexuals cannot be loved? Due to the little presence of openly bisexual characters, it might seem that they do not even exist. When bisexual women do appear, their depiction depends on narratives in which their presence is thrilling to male fantasies where they are able to “convert” a woman into heterosexuality and other sexual/power fantasies reinforced by porn culture. Bisexual woman are depicted as neither soft nor passive, but active and aggressive. They are a dangerous but *sexy* threat (to cisheterosexual men) because of the still open possibility that they could be a sexual prey. However, they are rejected as anything else, because of the idea of infidelity that surrounds the stereotype of the promiscuous bisexual. If it is read that way, bisexual women are portrayed as a sexual object, but nothing else to men.

Nevertheless, it would be naive to analyze this depiction only taking into account the male audience's perspective. Indeed, one of the limitations of this study is not including a perspective that takes into account other possible “gazes” from alternative audiences, but rather the hegemonic conventions. As any cultural product, films and television series are subjected to queer and alternative readings. Queer audiences have been for long reclaiming and reinterpreting characters in order to have a reflection to look at and identify with. In fact, the queer community has been (indirectly) taught to identify with villains, since those have

been for many decades (and still are) characters that live alternative lifestyles, characters that do not fit into the norm, flamboyant gender-breaking characters who mimicked the real queer community, for very long, as a way to criminalize and stigmatize them. But queer characters need to be openly coded, otherwise, as San Filippo argues, relegates queerness to the textual closet (2013, 34). There is certainly potential for these representations to become more inclusive in terms of gendered masculinity or femininity for women. Of course, there are many other intersections and implications that intervene in such portrayal that refer to the socio-political and historical context of production that have been discussed, such as classism or racism, and others like ableism. The intersections of bisexuality with other axes of oppressions could be explored in further research as well as the reception of these products or characters for bisexual audiences.

Quantity is important when discussing representation, because it affects and reflects who is on the margins of hegemonic discourses and, as such, society. But numbers are not everything. And representation is not inherently good. It certainly does not feel possible to discuss in absolute terms regarding good or bad. What feels fundamental is quality representation of oppressed collectives because, without it, quantity means nothing. If minorities are exclusively represented as evil or dangerous villains, those who belong in those collectives will probably end up identifying with those images, they will negotiate the meanings in order to create a space where they can re-interpret the narrative in order to see themselves and, thus, validate their own existence. Nevertheless, media and culture are irrefutable sources of (informal) education. Cultural representations may have consequences on how certain identities are viewed in society and it will serve to justify hate discourses and violence. When all the messages coming from the media correlate queerness with villainy or monstrosity, it is no longer the audience's responsibility to negotiate with those meanings. Instead, the need is to break through these hegemonic discourses, ones that promote hate, that otherize, marginalize and criminalize the difference.

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