



Costume as Communication in CABLE GIRLS

A Semiotic Analysis of a Spanish Period Drama



Name: Giorgia Ninzoli Enderlin

Student number: 6474764

Program: BA-Media and Culture

Supervisor: Dr. A. W. Badenoch

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Abstract

Costume in period drama represents a crucial element as it is through costumes, amongst other components, that the show manages to evoke the time period it portrays. It is well established that the historical accuracy of the show depends on the costumes. However, some scholars have identified other purposes for costumes that far exceed the historical representation. Roland Barthes first stated the connection between systems of signification based on signs and the fashion system, which he claimed being a metaphor of language. More recently, the discourses around fashion expanded and deviated from Barthes' conception where fashion depends on language towards the idea that clothes convey meanings within their visual objects (i.e., colours, shape, fabric, etc.). These meanings have been discussed to be embedded in fashion choices that derive from social and cultural tradition. According to Pam Cook, costume in period drama can be historically credible or unfaithful. However, behind the choice of deviating from more accurate representations there are specific meanings. This analysis focuses on the meanings behind these choices. On the basis of Barthes' idea, this research regards elements of the costumes of the Netflix series *CABLE GIRLS* as communicative of meanings, in particular colours, accessories, make-up, and clothing style. Moreover, it shows how the series creates the tension between the historical accuracy and the need to communicate to viewers. By answering the question "how do the costumes in the Netflix series *CABLE GIRLS* contribute to the construction of the female characters?" through a semiotic analysis and an initial textual examination, this research argues how costumes communicate something about the characters and work around this tension.

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1. Introduction

The Spanish series *CABLE GIRLS*, released in 2017, is a Netflix period drama. It tells the story of four women in Madrid from the late 1920s until the late '30s. At the beginning of the show, the four main characters Alba, Angeles, Marga and Carlota start working for the first telephone company in Madrid. They all have different backgrounds, ideas and personalities, and each of them has their own storyline in the show. However, they all share the desire of showing their ability and independence as women. The late 1920s was a controversial time for women: it was difficult for society to recognize women's independence, but it was also the time of new opportunities and the revival of their freedom. The women in the show, are just beginning to gain recognition as employees, and jobs in the telecommunication field are ones of the few jobs offered to them in Europe.¹ In addition, it marked the difference in women's history and communications methods.²

Period drama, or costume drama, is a particular genre set in a past time frame that presents costumes and props that are evocative of the historical period. Costume is a defining feature of this particular genre. It can refer to a style of the clothing, garments, accessories, and hairstyle that are characteristic of a specific country, period and type of people. Pam Cook states that costume design is one of the most under-researched areas of cinema history.³ Even though the academic field evolved and expanded research on costume design, the approach towards it can be tied to ideas for which period drama's costumes rely mainly on historical accuracy. However, some academic discourse argued that there is more than mere historical accuracy in period drama.⁴ For instance, Katarina Kuruc has analysed the costumes in *SEX AND THE CITY* as driving elements of the narrative and demonstrated that they can exist independently of the script.⁵ By building on the arguments of Kuruc, this research aims to contribute to the academic understanding of costumes and costume design not only as evocative of the time period, but as communicative means for character's identity. What makes this case interesting to research is how it creates the tension between historical accuracy and the need to communicate to contemporary audience. It does so for instance by combining accurate set, narrative, and costumes, to a certain extent, with contemporary soundtrack. Obviously, the

¹ Raquel Pico, "La vida secreta de las señoritas telefonistas. Librópatas," *Destacado, Libros y Literatura No Comment* (2016).

² Idem.

³ Pam Cook, *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), 41.

⁴ Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 52.

⁵ Katarina Kuruc, "Fashion as Communication: A semiotic Analysis of Fashion on 'Sex and the City'," *Semiotica* 2008, no. 171 (September 2008): 197-198.

costumes of the leading actors characterised by short haircuts, hats, and flapper-style dresses evoke the Spanish “Roaring Twenties;” however, the costumes’ design in *CABLE GIRLS* not only fulfils the historical accurateness with shapes, fabrics, and accessories, but also depicts the personality of the character that wears them.⁶ In this way, the costumes visually define the characters and distinguish them within the ensemble. This is a specificity of the genre’s narrative that can be related to the work of costumes in *SEX AND THE CITY*. In particular, they connect physical appearance to identity, and as Cook puts it, they are “exterior indicators of the inner self.”⁷ They enable the viewers to get references and context about the characters themselves and their relationship with each other.

This research focuses on the way in which the costumes in the show work to indicate the characters’ identity (i.e., their origins, personalities, the way they perform gender roles and their social status). In particular, the way in which they grow and achieve a higher position in society both as workers and as women, as well as they become mothers, wives, divorcees, and as they develop unconventional romantic relationships, and above all, they build a deep friendship. *CABLE GIRLS*, despite being set in the late ‘20s, engages with its audience by portraying issues that are crucial now as they were back then. One of the specificities of the post-feminism era in which the series is written and produced, is the #MeToo movement that is a social movement against sexual abuse. The movement started in 2006 with Tarana Burke and expanded several years later on social media through a tweet by Alyssa Milano.⁸ It is clear that in an era dominated by post-feminist discourses and mobilisations such as the #MeToo movements, the issues raised by the series have more grip. The storyline of Angeles for instance, follows the character through the struggle of domestic violence and sees her escaping it. On the same line, the storyline of Carlota and Oscar, once known as Sara, presents important issues for different reasons. One of these reasons is presenting their homosexual relationship, and later also the transition of Oscar. These two storylines are representative of the ways in which the show communicates and connects with modern audiences, in which the costumes play a critical role.

On the basis of Roland Barthes’ idea of fashion and its evolution into newer conceptions within more recent academic discourses, I argue how the costume in *CABLE GIRLS* conveys

⁶ Leslie Harkema, ““Felices años veinte?”: Las chicas del cable and the Iconicity of 1920s Madrid,” in *Televising Restoration Spain. History and Fiction in Twenty-First-Century Costume Dramas*, eds. David George, Jr., and Wan Sonya Tang (Palgrave Mcmillan, 2018), 224.

⁷ Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 52.

⁸ Gill Gurvinder, and Imran Rahman-Jones, “Me Too founder Tarana Burke: Movement is not over,” BBC, July 9, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-53269751>

symbols about the characters and their story, and by doing so, how they untangles the tension highlighted above. Through the use of semiotic lens, this analysis observes the costumes of the female characters and considers them to be important aesthetic tools. The focus is on how the aesthetics of the costumes and identity are linked, therefore answering the question: how do the costumes in the Netflix series CABLE GIRLS contribute to the construction of the female characters? In order to answer this question, I conducted a textual analysis of selected scenes, and then a semiotic analysis based on these findings and regarding the design and costumes as patterned to symbolism. The following sub-questions were answered in the analysis:

- 1) What are the elements of the costumes that present recurring patterns? And what are the elements that present significant changes or contrasts between characters?
- 2) What are the functions of the colours within character's costumes?
- 3) What are the functions of make-up, accessories, style?
- 4) What aspects of the costumes are more credible and what are unfaithful? What are the purposes of costumes' historical inaccuracy in CABLE GIRLS?

2. Theoretical Framework and Academic Positioning

2.1 Fashion discourse: Fashion as a Metaphor of Language

Investigating the costumes in *CABLE GIRLS* through a semiotic involves understanding how fashion works as a system of signification like language. This connection with language is dictated by the conception that sees language is a system in which values are created reflecting social institutions.⁹ This research focuses on the role of fashion within period drama by building on the belief that costumes can be regarded as a system in which meaning is created, therefore analysed with a semiotic lens.¹⁰ It departs from the academic discourses on the semiotics of visual that bridge the research gap since the focus of most semiotic studies has been on language.¹¹ However, to understand this, we must first understand the concept of semiotics. In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes approaches semiotics as a method of investigating how meaning is created through visuals. Its origins lie in Ferdinand de Saussure's semiology, the study of how signs create meaning in language.¹² Barthes is one of the first to bridge the concept of semiotics and fashion; in *The Fashion System*, he uses fashion to demonstrate how semiology works.¹³ Analysing fashion images in popular culture, Barthes proposed a tripartite method for arguing that any piece of clothing exists within three distinct structures: the technological which is the actual object and its features (i.e. fabric, colour, etc.), the iconic structure, namely how the article is pictorially depicted, and the verbal structure which is the verbal description of a piece of clothing.¹⁴ Starting from this assumption, he proposed a system for the study of fashion that is solely based on language, arguing that fashion has no sense without words.¹⁵ Barthes focused on the connections between visual representation of the clothing and the language used to communicate them which, he believed, were the basis of the propagation of social values.¹⁶ Essentially, Barthes ideas of fashion opened the possibility for a connotative meaning for which abstract elements of our lives are referenced by visual concrete elements appearing in a picture. This work laid the groundwork clothing from a

⁹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

¹⁰ Barthes, *Mythologies*.

¹¹ Stuart Hall, ed., "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Second Edition* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2013), 24-30.

¹² Barthes, *Mythologies*.

¹³ Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*. Translated by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Barthes, *The Fashion System*, 5.

¹⁵ Idem.

¹⁶ Idem.

semiotic perspective.¹⁷ Such attention to the verbal structure of clothing rather than its “technological structures” is conflicting in contemporary academic discourses.¹⁸ His conception remains tied to language stating that the meaning of images (and of other semiotic codes, like dress, food, etc.) is always dependent on, verbal text.¹⁹ As a result of this controversy, different scholars such as Kress and van Leeuwen in *Reading Images*, moved away from this conceptualisation. They add to Barthes’ theory semiotic approaches that focuses on visual objects and their connotations.²⁰

Building on the same argument that fashion choices are important parts of social behaviour, Maria Gracia Inglessis embraces Barthes’ idea suggesting that fashion can be seen as a social process that incorporates and transmits meaning through symbolic communication.²¹ However, she moves away from language and, in Barthes’ terms, she takes the material aspect and brings it on the iconic level. Moreover, she focuses on the connotative level where fashion indicates one’s social status and identity.²² This is important to acknowledge in relation to CABLE GIRLS and gender identity. In her dissertation, Inglessis provides an example of a semiotic study that focuses on people’s perceptions; she interviews a number of Hispanic women regarding their fashion choices. Inglessis asks them what fashion items are more feminine and grasps the idea of femininity amongst a specific social and cultural group. The findings of this study gather around concepts of gender and femininity expressed, for example, through skirts, dresses, detailed accessories, silk materials, and ruffles.²³ Findings reveal the existence of a binary perception of gender expressed through clothes which is found to be the reflection of the traditional gender view within Hispanic culture.²⁴ Here, the author introduces the concept of the ‘clothing code’ for which clothing is linked to meanings because clothing is symbols.²⁵ She stresses the fact that the clothing code is strictly dependent on the context,

¹⁷ Yuet See Monica Owyong, “Clothing Semiotics and the Social Construction of Power Relations,” *Social Semiotics* 19, no. 2 (July 2009): 192-194.

¹⁸ Idem.

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*. Translated by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1990).

²⁰ Gunther Kress, and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design, Second edition* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

²¹ G.B Sproles, and L.D. Burns, *Changing appearances. Understanding dress in contemporary society*, 1st Edition (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1994).

Maria Gracia Inglessis, “*Communicating Through Clothing: The Meaning of Clothing Among Hispanic Women of Different Levels of Acculturation*,” PhD diss. (Florida State University, 2013), 1.

²² Idem.

²³ Inglessis, “Communicating Through Clothing,” 111-112.

²⁴ Inglessis, “Communicating Through Clothing,” 112.

²⁵ Inglessis, “*Communicating Through Clothing*,” 12.

therefore influenced by the cultural values; she emphasizes how the Hispanic culture of *marianismo* and *machismo*, regarding sex roles, impact the response leaning towards traditional gender forms for clothing.²⁶ *Marianismo* and *machismo* are gender roles themes epitomized in Hispanic culture where *marianismo* sees women in a passive role, as generous mother and faithful wife, while *machismo* as an exaggeration of masculinity of the male dominant figure that is negatively seen.²⁷ Although this particular research focuses on Hispanic culture, the terms *marianismo* and *machismo* originate within Spanish Catholicism, language, and tradition.²⁸ Recent research revealed that Spanish female portrayals in media fall into the binary depictions described above.²⁹ Specifically, two studies conducted on Spanish television commercials identified that the roles played still follow traditional gender distinction (females portrayed as mothers or home keepers and as submissive to males).³⁰ Although *CABLE GIRLS* fights these stereotypical depictions, it also portrays these standard roles within the story of Angeles and Mario in the first season. Angeles is the loving mother and faithful wife, Mario is the aggressive, unfaithful, and dominant husband. As outlined in the analysis, these roles are represented in the clothes of the characters, especially later in the story when Angeles breaks free of the oppression, and her clothes, accessories and make-up change.

Hava Rosenfeld builds her analysis of fashion as a communicative tool on Downes and Miller study of media language that communicates messages to the audience in mass media.³¹ Moving to the fashion sphere, Rosenfeld connects semiotics with specific visual choices like colours as meaningful signs signifying different things in different cultures, recalling the study of Kress and van Leeuwen.³² Similarly, Alison Lurie, shows what clothes say about the wearer from different perspectives: historical, social, psychological and anthropological. Expanding on Downes and Millers, she demonstrates how colour, material and clothes cut are not mere designing choices that can be instinctively understood, rather they metaphors of language with

²⁶ Inglessis, "Communicating Through Clothing," 27.

²⁷ Idem.

Jorge Villegas, Jennifer Lemanski, and Carlos Valdez, "Marianismo and Machismo: The Portayal of Females in Mexican TV Commercials," *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 22, no. 4 (October 2010): 327-346. DOI: [10.1080/08961530.2010.505884](https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2010.505884)

²⁸ Marysa Navarro, "Against *Marianismo*," in *Gender's Place*, eds Montoya R., Frazier L.J., Hurtig J (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-12227-8_13

²⁹ Marcelo Royo-Vela, Joaquin Aldas-Marzano, Ines Kuster, and Natalia Villa, "Adaptation of Marketing Activiries to cultural and social Context: Gender Role Portayals and Sexism in Spanish Commercials," *Sex Roles* 58, no. 5-6 (2008): 379-390.

³⁰ Royo-Vela, Joaquin Aldas-Marzano, Ines Kuster, and Natalia Villa, "Adaptation of Marketing Activiries to cultural and social Context," 379-390.

Maria Rosa Berganza Conde, Mercedel del Hoyo Hurtado, "La muyer el hombre en la publicidad televisiva: imagenes y estereoripos," *Zer* 11, no. 21 (2006): 1633-177.

³¹ Hava Rosenfeld, *Fashion as a Means of Communication* (Editura Gloria Mundi, 2018).

Brenda Downes, and Steve Miller, *Media Studies* (New York: McGraw-Hill Trade, 1998).

³² Rosenfeld, *Fashion as a Means of Communication* (2018).

a precise vocabulary and grammar with rhetorical purposes.³³ Clothes announce our sex, age, social position, and can communicate our emotions and tastes.³⁴ Each element of clothing constitutes a word in a sentence which in turn creates a whole process of signification; therefore, fashion can be viewed as a metaphor of language.³⁵

2.2 Reading the Fashion Code

By drawing on the same assumption that fashion is intertwined with social structures as gender, there are two dimensions from where the messages can be derived - *denotation* and *connotation*, - Katarina Kuruc conducts a semiotic analysis of *SEX AND THE CITY*.³⁶ Following Saussure and Barthes', *denotation* is the basic descriptive level, while *connotation* is the interpretative level that connects the elements to broader themes and meanings, linking them with the semantic field of our culture for which we recognise abstract things.³⁷ Kuruc analyses fashion choices and garments that appear in the show by associating them with the narrative and eventually demonstrates how fashion is a dictating element of the narrative existing independently of the script.³⁸ As shown in the analysis chapter, fashion in *CABLE GIRLS* works differently than in *SEX AND THE CITY* where some plotlines revolve around pieces of clothing.³⁹ This does not happen in *CABLE GIRLS*; here, fashion serves rather than drive the narrative by introducing the characters and developing with them throughout the story. Nonetheless, Kuruc's research is valuable for the way in which it analyses fashion within TV series and its role in making characters' identity. She looks at how fashion signifies the character persona and role within the episode, therefore helping the viewers recognising the characters. Just as clothes announce our sex, age, social position, and more specifically, our tastes and emotions; they announce those aspects of fictional characters.⁴⁰ Kuruc draws examples that relate to stereotypes and cultural values introduced above in the discussion of Inglessis' research. With associations and contrasts the audience supposedly naturalises the eclectic dress code of Carrie for instance, as her extravagant fashion sense signifies her personality.⁴¹ The fashion choices made for Carrie do not match the other characters. Miranda's outfits, by contrast present her as

³³ Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*, (Random House, 1981) 27.

³⁴ Idem.

³⁵ Idem.

³⁶ Kuruc, "Fashion as Communication," 197-198.

³⁷ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 26.

³⁸ Kuruc, "Fashion as Communication," 201.

³⁹ Kuruc, "Fashion as Communication," 202.

⁴⁰ Lurie, *The Language of Clothes*.

Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 41.

⁴¹ Kuruc, "Fashion as Communication," 202.

the strong woman focused on her professional life, her masculine dress-code is accepted by the audience. Cultural values that come into play present the stereotype of the empowered woman dressing more masculine in order to showcase her success.⁴² This latter idea incorporates the connection between the use of costumes in the representation of female characters in media and cultural values, which are summarised by the concept of stereotype that perpetuates traditional masculine and feminine forms for which women are masculinized in order to be successful in a male environment.⁴³ Kuruc's analysis provides instances of how fashion can be regarded as serving the narrative, moreover, it outlines fashion choices that occur also in *CABLE GIRLS*, such as the masculinisation of a woman's dress-code to demonstrate her power.

2.3 Period Drama: Translating the Restoration Period

Besides individual characters, analysing period drama makes us consider how costumes reflect meaning representing a specific period. Costume drama as a genre, as Jerome de Groot states, "is never just a genre but always a site of contention about memory, national identity, and nostalgia. It is produced by a set of cultural institutions with their own agendas, by writers with particular biases, and for a set of markets with particular tastes and desires".⁴⁴ This because period drama is by definition a work set in a particular historical time in which costumes, props and sets are important evocative tools for the period represented. Pam Cook suggests that historical representations evoke the past for the purpose of the present by mirroring current ideas about the historical period.⁴⁵ She draws the attention to costumes and their importance in period drama which she claims have a duplicity in their purpose: to suggest a period and to reflect contemporary fashion.⁴⁶ By analysing the connection between fashion, culture and national identity within Gainsbourough's British period romance, she identifies a dual characteristic of costumes: their historical *infidelity* versus *credibility*.⁴⁷ Historical *infidelity* is the downplaying of accuracy in favour of spectacle and emotional inner self of the character, therefore choices for the mis-en-scene move away from the historical authenticity to

⁴² Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 202.

⁴³ Kuruc, "Fashion as Communication," 208.

⁴⁴ Jerome De Groot, "Foreword," in *Upstairs and Downstairs: British Costume Drama Television from The Forsyte Saga to Downton Abbey*, eds. James Leggott and Julie Taddeo (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

⁴⁵ Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 67.

⁴⁶ Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 75.

⁴⁷ Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 76.

communicate with the viewer.⁴⁸ Costumes in period drama produce meanings that far exceed the more immediate needs required to achieve a proper sense of historical accuracy.⁴⁹

Drawing connection to *CABLE GIRLS*, period drama relies on the accuracy of costumes to represent the era in which the plot develops, nonetheless more aspects must be regarded such as the role of costumes in conveying characters identity. Leslie Harkema initially points to the historical period in which *CABLE GIRLS* is set. She praises the show for presenting Spanish Restoration period not as a “lost paradise” in between wars and dictatorship, rather embracing the notion of Madrid 1920s as an intense place and time.⁵⁰ Therefore, not as frozen by the impositions of the dictatorship, but as dynamic, full of uncertainties, possibilities, and injustices, recalling the problematics of the present to which the show is talking to.⁵¹ Indeed, the series leverages the fact that it presents a group of working women struggling for independence in a misogynistic society, including themes as homosexuality and domestic abuse that, amongst the others, are the ones that most identify with nowadays society.⁵² Much of the academic investigation on costume drama, centres around the importance of its accuracy.⁵³ However, what makes costumes relevant to investigate is their potential as communicative tools and especially their referential aspect. Also relevant for this research, is Nicholas Wolters’ analysis of the wardrobe of the TV series *LA SEÑORA*, also set at the end of the Restoration period and portraying female protagonists. Wolters firstly notes how the clothing and cosmetics are responsible for visually reconstructing the period in order to communicate to contemporary audiences. Then, he continues by saying that in the show, and in costume drama in general, the wardrobe is one of the essential elements used by the viewers to evaluate the historical adaptation.⁵⁴ However, what comes into play when analysing period drama is not only the extent of its accuracy. Indeed later on, the author finally suggests that *LA SEÑORA*’s costumes produces meanings (i.e., non-verbal cues about the character personality and story), affecting the way we understand the narrative that goes behind mere historical adaptations.⁵⁵ A close examination of the clothing choices in the series unveils how it packages

⁴⁸ Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 77.

⁴⁹ Nicholas Wolters, “Dresses, Cassocks, and Coats: Costuming Restoration Gender Fantasies in *La Señora*,” in *Televising Restoration Spain. History and Fiction in Twenty-First-Century Costume Dramas*, eds. David George, Jr., and Wan Sonya Tang (Palgrave Mcmillan, 2018).

⁵⁰ Leslie Harkema, “Felices años veinte?": Las chicas del cable and the Iconicity of 1920s Madrid,” in *Televising Restoration Spain. History and Fiction in Twenty-First-Century Costume Dramas*, eds. David George, Jr., and Wan Sonya Tang (Palgrave Mcmillan, 2018), 228.

⁵¹ *Idem*.

⁵² *Idem*.

⁵³ Harkema, “Felices años veinte?”.

⁵⁴ Harkema, “Felices años veinte?”.

⁵⁵ Wolters, “Dresses, Cassocks, and Coats,” 122.

and constructs the character to be understandable for the twenty-first century interests.⁵⁶ Wolters explains that fashion in fiction is codified for the viewers to decode it: for instance, the change in fabric from silk to cotton can symbolise a downfall.⁵⁷ Fashion retains the capacity for allegorical significance that goes beyond the reconstruction of a given historical moment.⁵⁸ While maintaining a more or less rigorous allegiance to the style of the 1920s, costumes and cosmetics in *LA SEÑORA*, as in *CABLE GIRLS*, are also used to affect the ways the viewers interpret characters and their narrative circumstances.

⁵⁶ *Idem.*

⁵⁷ *Idem.*

⁵⁸ *Idem.*

3. Methodology

Based on the academic discourses outlined above, this analysis aimed to systematically investigate the characteristics of the costumes of *CABLE GIRLS*. Through the use of semiotic lens and by checking against the narrative, this research explored how the costumes in the series contribute to the understanding of the characters' identity in two ways: by identifying the costumes' patterns for each character and by tracing the character's development from the first to the fourth season. To establish the general patterns, an initial examination was conducted as basis to select relevant screen captures.

3.1 Selection Method

For the purpose of this research, *CABLE GIRLS* was accessed on Netflix platform. The show consists of four seasons, plus a two-part fifth season. The material selected is composed by scenes from the first episode of the first season (*DREAMS*) and of the first episode of the fourth season (*EQUALITY*). The selection, consisting of six scenes from both seasons, is representative of recurring patterns and important contrasts in the entire show. Throughout the analysis, more scenes presenting recurring patterns that appear in the six selected scenes were mentioned as evidence to reinforce the arguments and findings. The first episode of the first season was chosen for its introduction of the main characters. This was particularly important as it is the first impression that the viewers receive and plays a crucial role in understanding of the characters. Whereas the episode from season four was chosen as it shows how the characters have developed. In season four, the characters have gained a level of growth and maturity that stresses more the distinction with the first season. This episode amongst others presents significant changes and a relevant level of development both in the social and personal lives of the characters compared to previous seasons. The specific scenes selected provide enough material and evidence to allow an analysis not only of the character identity but also of the development of their identity throughout the narrative, and their emotions. The female characters in the series, particularly present a variety in the costumes, hence the choice of centering the corpus analysis around them. Although the female characters were the main focus, their costumes were compared to the male costumes in order to trace the similarities in terms of material and style. In specific, the first pair (figures 1 and 2) was selected because it presents the main characters together at once as an ensemble. This enabled first of all, the comparison between them, finding contrasts and similarities. Secondly, the comparison

between two different situations but seasons apart. Lastly, the composition seemed to work together with the colours to communicate something about the characters, especially in the pilot episode as the characters are first presented to the audience. The second pair selected (figures 3 and 4) represent only Alba and Marga in two different occasions. The two scenes present many elements in common that show identity patterns. The third and last pair (figures 9 and 10) focuses on Carlota and her relationship with Oscar in the fourth season. This last selection enabled the comparison between public and private place and the concept of femininity and masculinity, which is stressed through the two characters especially in this season.

3.2 Analysis Method

An initial textual analysis reported findings that were then approached with semiotics to answer the research, specifically focusing on how the characters are visually represented. This double analysis consisted of observing and questioning aesthetic elements that create meaning within the piece and thus, understanding how the findings fit into a larger context using a semiotic lens. After observing the episodes multiple times, the first step was to systematically note certain elements and group them in three tables, one per pair of scenes (see appendix 2). The corpus of the analysis focused on the functions of the recurring colours, accessories, make-up, and style and their contrast and similarities, and changes between seasons both in the personal life of the characters and social position that might have influenced these changes in the costumes. This chapter is divided in three sub-chapters. Based on the results of the initial textual analysis, the first sub-chapter focused on the roles and functions of the colours of the costumes that contribute to the understanding of the characters. The second sub-chapter analyzed the functions of make-up, accessories, clothing style, particularly focusing on their role within the character's development. Lastly, the third sub-chapter analyzed the accuracy of these aesthetic choices and the purposes behind unfaithful representations. In order to do this, two academic sources were used to check the accuracy of the costumes in the show: Anna Fischel et Al. and their analysis of fashion in history, and Maggie Angeloglou and her examination of the use of make-up throughout the years. Lastly, the analysis by De Bortoli and Maroto on the conception of colours across cultures, provided insight into what the use of certain colours might symbolize.

4. Analysis

4.1 Colours as Character's Patterns

The use of colours in the show signal patterns that helps the viewers visually recognise the characters and distinguish them between one another. The colours remain the same for almost every character, or slightly change but remaining on the same tones in the fourth season as in the first. The first evidence is Alba; in all of the selected scenes, she wears red, a black hat. Not only the colour red is a recurring pattern in Alba's outfits (see appendix 3), also the recurring dark colours associated to her character (see appendix 3). She is the only character wearing such dark colours which the viewers immediately associate with her. Alba Romero/Lidia Aguilar is a central character; she is strong, and active symbolised by the colour red, which also reflects the love and sexuality that follows her storyline and romance with Carlos and Francisco.⁵⁹ She is portrayed as the stronger character, more accomplished, and experienced since the beginning compared to the other female characters. This clash between her personality and the other characters' is reinforced by specific contrasts within colour schemes collaborating with the narrative. For instance, Alba and Marga are often portrayed together (see appendix 3). In these scenes, Alba wears red and dark colours, while Marga wears pink, white and other pale colours. Before analysing this contrast, it is important to understand the personality of Marga. For Marga, the colour pink recurs in multiple scenes (see appendix 3). However, in one of the scenes (figure 2), she is wearing cream and darker pink, which is a change from pale pink to a more serious colour but still a soft colour (see also appendix 3). The first noticeable feature of Marga is her shyness. She grew up in a small village in the countryside with her grandmother. At first, she struggles with her insecurity as she arrives in Madrid to the point that she wants to go back to the village. The use of pinks, pale and plain colours is frequently associated with her naivete. It happens often that Marga is either confused by, or oblivious to, events in the show. In all these moments, Marga enters the scene with a surprised or scared expression always wearing pink or pale colours (see appendix 3: scenes in which Marga is surprised or unaware). Therefore, this association between pinks, shyness and naivete. Not only Marga is very naïve, but she is also often looking what other characters do, such as Alba, admiring their courage. For example, in season 1 episode 5 (see appendix 3), the

⁵⁹ Mario De Bortoli, and Jesus Maroto, "Colours Across Cultures: Translating Colours in Interactive Marketing Communications," Global Propaganda, 2001. <http://www.globalpropaganda.com/articles/TranslatingColours.pdf>

contrast is visible in their outfits; Marga is wearing a white nightgown, while Alba wears an audacious red. The viewers associate Marga's pales and pinks with naivete and insecurities, and by contrast associate Alba's reds and darks with strength and audacity.



Figure 1: Alba, Marga, Angeles and Miguel observe the father of Carlota forcing her to go home. Time code: 24:04. Season 1, episode 1, DREAMS.



Figure 2: Alba, Angeles, Marga, Miguel, Carlos and Oscar calling the hotel in which Carlota is meeting Gregorio. Time code: 02:30. Season 4, episode 1, EQUALITY.



Figure 3: Alba and Marga arriving late the first day at the company. Time code: 10:10. Season 1, episode 1, DREAMS.



Figure 4: Alba and Marga after Marga and Pablo divorced. Time code: 27:53. Season 4, episode 1, EQUALITY.

Colours not only help the viewers visually identify the characters, but they also give an immediate understanding of what is happening in the scene. In multiple occasions, these techniques of contrasts and association convey another aspect of Alba's character: her emotional fragility. Alba is frequently portrayed in tears in close-ups through the episodes which shows her fragility (see appendix 3: close-ups of Alba in tears and figure 8). The entire third season follows Alba looking for her daughter that was kidnapped by Doña Carmen during

the fire of Alba and Carlos' wedding. This season in particular shows the vulnerability of Alba emphasised by plain black or plain white outfit (see appendix 3: Alba's scenes from season 3). For instance, the first episode of the third season opens with Alba's nightmare in which she wears a plain black silky dress while desperately escaping doctors, followed by a scene in which she wears a white surgery vest when she discovers she lost the baby; as soon as she wakes up, she checks on her daughter while wearing a white nightgown (see appendix 3: Alba's nightmare). The costumes often lean towards whites and pale colours in moment of vulnerability in the show's narrative. Angeles' white outfits that, at some point of the show, signal her fragility. Angeles is the most experienced telefonista and, at the beginning, she is the only character to be married and to have a child. She is devoted to her work and to her family. She is caught up in an unhappy marriage and appears fragile and submissive. The first episodes of the second season, follows the climax of her struggle with domestic violence. In these scenes, she wears whites matching with the paleness of her face (see appendix 3: Angeles and Mario).



Figure 6: Angeles in her house with her husband and daughter. Time code: 00:37. Season 1, episode 1, DREAMS.



Figure 5: Angeles and Mario at the hospital. Time code 35:55. Season 2, episode 1 THE CHOICE.



Figure 8: Alba in tears after the fire. Time code 29:17. Season 3, episode 1 TIME.



Figure 7: Alba meets Carmen at the police station. Time code: 01:05. Season 3, episode 4 REVENGE.

In some cases, the colours work with the composition to signal the female characters in contrast with male ones. In the selected scenes, the contrasts between Carlota's outfits and the surrounding characters are visible through the colours. Carlota is the upper-class daughter of a controlling colonel. She wants independence, and for this reason, she starts working at the company. She and Oscar are the only two characters in the show engaged in the feminist movement, moreover, their storyline involves several themes that are relevant to the contemporary society such as homosexuality and transsexuality. While the relationship between the two characters starts already in season one, it is only in season two that Oscar begins his transition. In several scenes, the composition emphasises the contrasts of the costumes: in figure 9, Carlota is at the centre of the composition with Gregorio; the bright yellow of her suits and the dark red of her beret and bowtie make her stand out contrasting the monotone and dark colours of the male figures in the background. It is not a surprise in this show to see the contrast between men and women emphasised by the wide range of bright colours used for female costumes compared to the sameness of the dark male costumes. This contrast is further stressed by the presence of Oscar: although he is wearing feminine clothes, the plain dark colours of his costumes blend in the group of men in the background. In season two, Carlota and Oscar are standing in a street corner in front of the company; the dark of Oscar's outfit seems to blur in the dark (see appendix 3 and figure 11). In the next scene (figure 10), Carlota wears a silky white nightgown, while Oscar wears a dark oversized male pyjama. Also in this case, the colours Carlota's clothes stand out representing her feminine identity while the colours used for Oscar's costumes stress his male identity.



Figure 9: Carlota and Gregorio at the speech day for the campaign as mayor of Madrid. Time code: 08:56. Season 4, episode 1, EQUALITY.



Figure 10: Carlota and Oscar at home hugging each other. Time code: 19:07. Season 4, episode 1, EQUALITY.



Figure 11: Carlota and Oscar hiding in the street corner. Time code: 23:39. Season 2, episode 1 THE CHOICE.

4.2 Make-up, Accessories, and Clothing Style

While the colours in the show remain the same signalling the characters, there are elements that change following the characters' development. An aspect of the female outfit that changed for all the characters from season one to season four is the clothes cut. Compared to the first season, the dresses are longer and tighter on the waist, emphasizing the feminine silhouette (figure 12), as well as the material is thicker. More importantly, the female's characters' wardrobe starts to incorporate straight cut female suits recalling the male ones. However, each character's wardrobe undergoes specific changes. For instance, Marga's outfit present differences between season one and four symbolising her passage from country girl to urbanised modern woman. First of all, her straw hat in the first season signals her identity as a person from the countryside, as well the flax fabric of her clothes. The straight cut, buttons through characteristic of her clothes, and the soft colours suggest her calm and introvert personality. The little corsage attached to her clothes symbolizes her origins also after her urbanisation, and recurs in multiple outfits in different episodes, especially important occasions (figure 2). At the beginning of the series, she had straight short hair (figure 13), a bit different from Angeles and Alba, however, in the fourth season, she has mid-length wavy hair, as the other two characters. In season four, she wears make-up, and her clothing style changes as she becomes more urbanized; the straw hat is replaced by a modern one and the flax material and buttons thought of her outfit is replaced by shiny fabric and lower neckline. Specifically, the clothing style recalls the masculine one as can be seen with Carlota in season four for example

but also with Alba and Marga (cf. 4, see also appendix 3.16, 3.31). She also acquires more social power working at the company, she gets married to Pablo, and eventually gets divorced.



Figure 13: Marga leaves the countryside. Time code 00:45. Episode 1, season 1 DREAMS.



Figure 12: Alba walks away. Time code: 25:11. Season 4, episode 1 EQUALITY.

In some cases, the style of the female clothes in the show presents elements that signal the character. Angeles clothes are similar over the seasons; the colours do not recur systematically, however, her clothes often incorporate white and soft colours such as light blue, light green, and cream. She mostly wears chiffon fabric and flutter cut with floral patterns (see appendix 3). She is the only character wearing such clothes. It seemed logical here to draw a connection between the chiffon, aflutter, and floral dresses with the vulnerability of her position as submissive wife and devoted mother. In season two, she escapes this relationship gaining her freedom; later, she begins a relationship with another man, and eventually starts an illegal business while still working at the company but in a more powerful position. This passage is well symbolised by the use of make-up, especially in the scene from season two, in which, after killing her husband and understanding that she had to be strong to hide the crime, she stands in front of the mirror staring at her reflection while putting on a red lipstick (figure 14). This is an important change in the costumes because, except for first season, all the girls wear makeup which identifies a crucial character development compared to the beginning. For Angeles, make-up works as a symbol of her change. An exception is Alba, whose make-up signals her character. In season one, she is the only character wearing make-up; red lipstick symbolizes her identity, and the viewers can associate the red lipstick with her. In the show, makeup symbolizes femininity and feminine strength: Alba wears red lipstick as the stronger female character since the beginning, while Angeles puts lipstick on once she finds the strength, and freedom as a woman, and in general, all the female characters wear make-up in the fourth

season. Similarly, Carlota is the only character to wear more elaborated make-up; she wears visible dark eyeshadow, which was common at the time – flapper style (see appendix 3.7).⁶⁰



Figure 14: Angeles puts make up on. Time code: 33:10. Season 2, episode 4 GUILT.

Carlota is also the one character whose wardrobe changes differently from the others in season four. The style and cut of Carlota's suits recall very masculine ones, trying to position her on the same level as them. In season four, she is running for mayor which for a woman was unusual at the time, as well as wearing pants. While the fabric and cut of Carlota and Oscar's clothes follow the same changes over the seasons as the other characters, their costumes undergo a further change that can be observed within the one episode. On the one hand, when they are in a public space, Carlota's costumes resemble the masculine ones, remaining separated from the men thanks to the bright colours. Oscar, instead, resembles feminine figures except for the use of darker and dull colours. On the other hand, in their private space where they can perform their own identity as a homosexual couple and, for Oscar, as a transsexual man, Carlota wears more feminine clothes, while Oscar wears male costumes, before all identified by the dark colours (see appendix 3.17, 3.20). In the same way, the composition of the scene (figure 10) and the dark of the room seems to function both as the symbol of their private intimacy, as well as the fact that their relationship is secret, which is one of the main facts triggering the following events in the story. In these scenes, the clothes communicate something; the style of Carlota in the first scene seems to seek for similarity with the males one, while in the second one it stresses her femininity compared to Oscar.

⁶⁰ Maggie Angeloglou, *A History of Make-up* (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

4.3 Credibility Versus Infidelity: Communicating with Contemporary Audience

In *Fashioning the Nation*, Cook states that period drama “re-present the past for the purpose of the present.”⁶¹ As well as other elements, costumes collaborate in the dual task of suggesting the historical period in which the artwork is set and reflect the contemporary idea of fashion in order to evoke associations in the audience mind.⁶² In *CABLE GIRLS* costumes evoke the idea of fashion during the Restoration period, however, some elements deviate from certain rules in order to connect with the audience and symbolise narrative changes. *Credibility* and *infidelity* come into play defining these particular fashion choices of *CABLE GIRLS* and this sub-chapter identifies the purposes of unfaithful representation. Some of the changes identified in the above sections follow the authentic look of the time. In her analysis on the history of fashion, Anna Fischel et Al. outline the main feature characterising the time period in which *CABLE GIRLS* is set, and which is also shown in the show: from a youthful look with knee-length skirts and low-waist dresses characteristics of the “Roaring Twenties,” to a more glamorous style with longer and leaner silhouettes in the ‘30s.⁶³ However, there is a neat separation between these two styles in the show which alludes to deeper meanings behind these choices.

The four main characters developed and became more powerful women in society and in their personal life. They acquire more experience and independence in romantic relationships. As well their wardrobe changed in order to accurately match their new identity. The main observations regarding their development relate to the make-up and the clothing style. This latter resembles more the masculine one in the fourth season. Following cultural conceptions for which masculinity is equal to power, the clothing style of more powerful women recalls certain clothing style common to masculine outfit. Especially for Carlota, whose outfit clearly recalls masculine traits: bowties and the trousers were not common for a woman at the time (for women trousers were used as sporty clothes or as beach outfit).⁶⁴ In this case, her costumes indicate her powerful position by creating an association with masculine outfit. On the other hand, bright colours in her outfit seems to recall her feminine identity. In the same way, making Carlota wear such outfits rather than others underlines Carlota’s identity: she is probably the only character that could match the brightness with her personality. Such masculine outfits, however, was not common for women in a professional environment.⁶⁵ The

⁶¹ Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 67.

⁶² Cook, *Fashioning the Nation*, 75.

⁶³ Anna Fischel, Ann Baggaley, Scarlett O’Hara, Alison Sturgeon, Camilla Gersh, and Ashwin Khurana, *Fashion: The Definitive History of Costumes and Style*. New York: DK Publishing (2012), 255-270.

⁶⁴ Fischel, *Fashion*, 280.

⁶⁵ Fischel, *Fashion*, 275-80.

connection between female suits and power is an association more common today. The show stresses this association in order to be understood by contemporary audiences, therefore preferring *infidelity* over *credibility*. For instance, in the fourth season, Alba is the new director of the company and, when she sits at a table of men as their boss, her outfit blends with the males' ones (figure 15). In this sense, the show leverages the same contemporary stereotypes for which Miranda in *SEX AND THE CITY*, wears masculine outfits.



Figure 15: Alba sitting at a table of men as their director. Time code: 21:45. Season 4, episode 1 EQUALITY

Compared to Carlota's scene, here Alba blends more within the composition; both the style and the colours of her suits resemble the one of the men in the scene. It demonstrates that she is on the same level of the men by resembling the outfit and colours of the male characters. This resemblance creates an association between masculine outfits and powerful profession. In a similar way, the use of make-up in the show also wants to create association in the mind of the viewers. Angeloglou explains that the use of make up in the 1920s was influenced by the Hollywood stars and was characterized by the "vamp style": long fake eyelashes and dark eyeshadow around the eyes.⁶⁶ In the show none of the girls uses such modern make-up other than lipstick. The only character that experiments more with eyeshadows is Carlota since season one. The use of make-up in the show wants to create the image of Carlota as the modern woman (reflected also in her sexual identity), standing out the group. In the second season, Angeles meets Victoria to ask her for information about Cuevas (see appendix and figure 16); together with the previously mentioned scene (figure 14), this scene symbolizes the beginning of her change into stronger independent woman. In both scenes, make-up is the protagonist, especially for the fact that for the first time we see Angeles wearing such heavy make-up. In

⁶⁶ Angeloglou, *A History of Make-up*.

the same way, the make-up in the show, is mainly used to communicate with the audience rather than accurately reflecting the time period.



Figure 16: Angeles meets Victoria. Time code: 08:10. Season 2, episode 4 GUILT.

Fashion in *CABLE GIRLS*, presents the characters to the audience and to confirm their identity episode after episode using contrasts and associations. Like *SEX AND THE CITY*, *CABLE GIRLS* is an ensemble drama, and in a similar way, the costumes are used to define each character amongst the others. Such costume choices stress certain themes with which contemporary audience could identify. The masculine presence of Carlota, for instance, not only represent her scent to social power, but also her homosexual identity and her struggles as lesbian woman in such family and society. The way in which this theme, as well as the transsexuality of Oscar, was dealt with in the show, made them timeless, therefore speaking to a more contemporary audience rather than merely presenting them. Together with these topics, also domestic violence is present in the show within the storyline of Angeles. The way in which she manages to get out of such situation communicates to the audience a message of feminine strength and hope. Once more, instead of going for authenticity, the show goes for infidelity and gets closer to the audience. The use of costumes emphasizes this transaction; the use of feminine light chiffon clothes and garments at the beginning, are replaced by glamorous makeup and style symbolizing this passage.

5. Conclusion

This analysis aimed to provide an insight into the role of costumes in period ensemble drama focusing on the female characters wardrobe of the Netflix series *CABLE GIRLS*. This analysis started from Barthes' conception of fashion as a metaphor of language and situated in more contemporary discourses of fashion in television. The findings of this research demonstrated a deviation from the idea for which fashion is strictly connected to language but showed the existence of pattern schemes, for example within the use of colours in the show. Moreover, much of the academic investigation focuses on the credibility of props in period drama however, results show that the role of costume in the show is not limited to evocate the historical period that it represents, it rather serves as a means of communication with the audience. This research took a similar direction as the works of Cook and Wolters, regarding the spectacle of the Restoration period as described by Harkema. *CABLE GIRLS* connects to the contemporary audience by portraying the spectacle of the period conveying a message of feminine strength within the struggles that it presents. This desire to approach its viewers is shown also through the costumes that work in relation to the narrative. Colours, fabrics and cuts have a role within the characters' outfit itself; they tell something especially through the creation of contrasts and associations between them.

The colours were found to help the viewers visually recognise the characters and distinguish them from one another, as well as to make them immediately understand what is happening in the narrative. Colours also work with the composition to make the main female characters stand out the surrounding male characters and background. The clothing style, accessories, and make-up were identified to both signal the character's development within the story (i.e., Marga urbanisation and growth, and Angeles rebirth as a woman), as well as to indicate unchanged aspects of the character (i.e., Alba's red lipstick, Marga corsage, and Carlota's style). For these purposes, sometimes they move away from accuracy, for instance through the use of trousers for Carlota, the use of suits in working environments for Alba, and the use of lighter make-up compared to what was common at the time. Analysing these observations on their connotative level, the changes in the costumes from one season to the other followed the characters personal and professional growth, as well as the increasing acquisition of social power. The findings lead to the conclusion that while the range of colours remain the same for each character from the beginning to the end as to symbolise their identity, the more powerful the female characters become within society and private family, the more the costumes resemble the men's ones in terms of material and style. Furthermore, the series

shows contrasts and association in the characters' costumes that communicate to contemporary audience. This demonstrates that, although the historical accuracy remains crucial for this period drama, the costume plays the key role to convey important aspects of the characters and their stories.

It is important to acknowledge that this research limited its perspective to the female characters, and to little extent, to their contrasts with the male characters' wardrobe. Moreover, the findings and observations were achieved through the use of two specific methods and specific frames. Future research could present further starting points and concepts. The focus of costumes' elements could be also expanded or directed to specific garments of the outfits. Lastly, this specific series allowed the perspective of one Spanish drama which presents characteristics inherent to Spanish and Western European culture. Further research should take into consideration different geographical context both in terms of production and consumption.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Summaries of The Selected Scenes

1.1 Summary of The First Two Selected Scenes: Season 1, Episode 1 (DREAMS), Minute 24:04 - Season 4, Episode 1 (EQUALITY), Minute 2:30

Figure 1 and 2: Angeles, Marga, Alba and Miguel appear in both scenes while Carlota and her father appear only in the scene from DREAMS, and Carlos only in the scene from EQUALITY. Starting from DREAMS, the four girls decide to meet and have a drink after work. They are chatting at the dining table when the father of Carlota comes to drag her home. When he pushes her out of the café, the scene moves outside, and a car is waiting to bring Carlota home. Carlota and her father have a discussion because he finds it unacceptable that a girl of her social class works and seek independence, and eventually slaps her in the face. The four other characters are watching this scene from the entrance of the bar; Miguel, Angeles, and Marga are standing on the door while Alba is still inside and is looking from behind a large window. EQUALITY opens with the party to commemorate Carlota's campaign for mayor of Madrid. The following scene takes place in a different environment: during the day, at a wedding venue, and the characters are neatly dressed up (one learns later in the episode, that this particular scene, is the result of a series of events that are shown later in flashbacks). This is the day Carlota and Oscar get married; but Carlota is missing. Alba knows that she is meeting with her rival in the election, who is blackmailing her with pictures of Carlota and Oscar together. In this specific moment, they are trying to contact the hotel where the two were supposed to meet.

1.2 Summary of The Second Two Selected Scenes: Season 1, Episode 1 (DREAMS), Minute 10:10 - Season 4, Episode 1 (EQUALITY), Minute 27:53

Figure 3 and 4: Alba and Marga. In the scene from DREAMS, all four girls are there, but the analysis only focused on Marga and Alba, and the same apply to the scene from EQUALITY. In the first case, it is the girls' first working day at the company. Alba, Marga, Carlota, and Angeles arrive late to the examination, and they find the doors closed. What we see at this moment is Alba trying to convince Oscar to let them take the exam anyway. Alba holds Marga as to rescue her, even if they do not know each other. In the second scene, the two characters are outside the courthouse in which Marga just got divorced from Pablo. This time, as her

friend, Alba tries to support Marga. She is not holding her as in the first scene, but from her expression it seems that she is sympathising with her.

1.3 Summary of the last Two Selected Scenes: Season 4, Episode 1 (EQUALITY), Minutes 8:56-19:07

Figure 9 and 10: both selected from EQUALITY, the points of attention are Carlota and Oscar. In the first scene, Carlota exchanges few words with her rival candidate, Gregorio. She is about to go on the stage and make a speech. All the girls are in the audience to listen to her. Oscar is behind Carlota to support her. In this particular moment, Carlota is the only feminine figure surrounded by men, while Oscar appears a bit in the background. In an opposite way, the second scene portrays the couple in an intimate moment in their private space which is the family house of Carlota. Oscar is embracing Carlota from the back while they look at their reflection in the mirror. The light in this scene is significantly darker than in the previous scene.

Appendix 2: Tables Showing the Results of The Textual Analysis of The Selected Scenes

Table 1

Season one, Episode one, (24:04)	Colours	Clothing style	Accessories and makeup	Composition and lighting	
Alba	Red/Black	Dress; light fabric; knee-length; sleeveless; not thigh; V-neckline	Dark hat that hides part of her face; short curly hair; red lipstick	Standing in the dark, inside the bar, behind the window	
		Dress; mid-length; thigh on the waist emphasising the feminine silhouette; long sleeves; V-neckline	Knit dark hat shaped according to her head; mid-long wavy hair; red lipstick	Standing in the middle of the composition; centre of attention	Alba

Angeles	Green, blue, white, and pink	Dress; light chiffon fabric; loose cut; knee-length; short flutter sleeves; V-neckline	No makeup; soft handbag; hat with band and garment on the side; short curly hair	Standing in the light of the bar in between Miguel and Marga	
	Cream and purple	Set-up blouse and mid-length skirt; chiffon fabric of the blouse; short flutter sleeves; ribbon on the neckline	Floppy and asymmetrical hat; mid-long curly hair; make up	Standing on the right side of Alba	Angeles
Marga	Soft colours: pale pink and purple	Dress; flax fabric; knee-length; short sleeves; buttons through; straight cut	Short straight hair; leather handbag; straw hat; small corsage attached to the upper part of the dress	Standing in the light of the bar next to Angeles	
	Soft colours: creme and dark blue	Set up (blouse and mid-length skirt); short sleeves; buttons through; straight cut	Modern hat with grosgrain band; mid-long curly hair; makeup; small corsage attached to the blouse	Standing on the left side of Alba	Marga
Men	Dark greys and blacks	Heavy fabric suits		In the shadow, the viewers only see half of him since the colours are blurring with the furniture of the bar	
			Oscar is wearing a corsage for his wedding day	Blurred in the background. Oscar in this particular capture is calling standing in the front, however, since the attention is on the female characters, he is not visible	Men

	Colours	Clothing style	Accessories and makeup	Composition and lightning	Season 4, Episode 1, (02:30)
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Table 2

Season 1, Episode 1, (10:10)	Colours	Clothing style	Accessories and makeup	
Alba	Red/black	Dress; light fabric; knee-length; sleeveless; not thigh; V-neckline	Dark hat that hides part of her face; short wavy hair; red lipstick	
		Suit with mid-length skirt; heavy fabric; V-neckline; straight cut	Mid-long wavy hair; dark hat; red lipstick	Alba
Marga	Pale pink and purple	Dress; flax fabric; knee-length; short sleeves; buttons through; straight cut	Short straight hair; leather handbag; straw hat; small corsage attached to the upper part of the drees	
		Suit with a mid-length skirt; heavy fabric; straight cut; square neckline	Mid-long curly hair; modern hat; makeup	Marga
	Colours	Clothing style	Accessories and makeup	Season 4, Episode 1, (27:53)

Table 3

Season 4, Episode 4, (08:56)	Colours	Clothing style, accessories, and makeup	Lightning and composition	
Carlota	Yellow	Jumpsuit (trousers); bowtie; beret; red lipstick; very short hair	Daylight; in the idle; the focus of attention	

	White	Silky nightgown	Dark of the room, embracing with Oscar	Carlota
Oscar	Beige and dark green	Floral dress; straight-cut coat; very short hair; hat; neckline with eyelet garments; no makeup	Daylight; behind Carlota	
	Dark colour	Pyjama; oversized; masculine haircut	Dark of the room embracing with Carlota	Oscar
Men	Dark greys and blacks	Heavy suits	In the background	
	Colours	Clothing style, accessories, and makeup	Lightning and composition	Season 4, Episode 4, (19:07)

Appendix 3: List of Scenes Mentioned in The Analysis and Screen Captures

3.1	Season 1, episode 1	00:37	Shot portraying Angeles for the first time in her house (figure 5). Angeles wears a chiffon, light colored knee-length dress.
3.2	Season 1, episode 1	00:45	Close up portraying Marga for the first time while she leaves her hometown in the countryside off to the city (figure 13).
3.3	Season 1, episode 1	01:04	Carlota dancing with Miguel at a party, presenting them for the first time. Carlota is wearing a shiny fabric dress flapper-style dress; she wears heavy make-up.
3.4	Season 1, episode 1	06:08	Shot portraying Alba who just walked in at the company. Alba's outfit see appendix 2, table 1.
3.5	Season 1, episode 1	08:40	Alba tries to enter the director's office at the company, but she is caught by Carolina and a group of men (figure 17). Alba's outfit see appendix 2, table 1.
3.6	Season 1, episode 1	17:57	Close up of Alba with tears in her eyes.
3.7	Season 1, episode 1	30:31-32:52	Alba, Marga and Carlota at a party; Carlota tries to get Marga a bit loose while Alba tries to steal the keys from Carlos. Alba wears a black dress that helps her to blur in the dark of the room.

3.8	Season 1, episode 2	06:31	Carlota and Marga are walking out of work when they see Pablo; Marga is confused and shy. Marga wears a pink dress (see appendix 1, table 1 and 2).
3.9	Season 1, episode 2	18:15	Shot portraying Marga and Alba together. Alba wears a dark green dress, while Marga wears her usual pink dress.
3.10	Season 1, episode 4	16:03	Angeles and Mario together arguing at home. Angeles wears a light blue and white dress.
3.11	Season 1, episode 4	27:46	Marga runs away when she sees Pablo waiting for her at their first blind date. She wears her usual pink dress.
3.12	Season 1, episode 5	01:43	Alba gets home from a date with Carlos; Marga is waiting for her and secretly spying on her while she walks in.
3.13	Season 1, episode 5	08:03	Angeles is laying on her bed showing bruises and other signs of Mario beating her. She wears a white and light fabric pajama.
3.14	Season 1, episode 7	03:32	Close up of Alba and Francisco; Alba is in tears.
3.15	Season 2, episode 1	05:31	Shot presenting Alba and Uribe who is the new owner and director of the company. Alba wears a bright red dress while Uribe wears a dark suit.
3.16	Season 2, episode 1	11:45	Pablo and Marga say goodbye to her grandma visiting the city; Marga is unaware of the fact that she swallowed the ring that Pablo was going to use to propose to her. Marga wears heavy fabric pink outfit.
3.17	Season 2, episode 1	23:39	Carlota and Oscar hide in a street corner to kiss (figure 11).
3.18	Season 2, episode 1	30:09	Close up of Alba in tears.
3.19	Season 2, episode 1	35:55	Angeles and Mario at the hospital; Mario has been poisoned (figure 6). Angeles colours are white.
3.20	Season 2, episode 4	03:14	Carlota finds out about Oscar identity (figure 18). Carlota wears light colours (yellow, cream and white) while Oscar wears a dark suit. Carlota stands out compared to Oscar.
3.21	Season 2, episode 4	08:10	Angeles meets Victoria to ask for information about inspector Cuevas (figure 16). Angeles wears make-up.
3.22	Season 2, episode 4	33:10	Angeles puts on make-up after the death of Mario (figure 14).

3.23	Season 3, episode 1	00:02-01:10	Alba's nightmare: she is running away from doctors and falls from the ledge of a tall building. She wears a black dress.
3.24	Season 3, episode 1	01:11-01:28	Alba's nightmare: she lost her baby. She wears a white surgery vest.
3.25	Season 3, episode 1	29:17	Alba in tears arguing with Carlos after the big fire at their wedding where her daughter was kidnapped by Carmen Cifuentes (figure 8). She still wears her white wedding dress.
3.26	Season 3, episode 4	01:05	Alba meets Carmen Cifuentes at the police station (figure 7). Alba wears a black outfit.
3.27	Season 3, episode 5	10:05	Alba is at the hospital with Carlos after Carmen was in a car accident ordered by her. Alba wears a black outfit.
3.28	Season 3, episode 5	44:09	Alba goes to Francisco to find some comfort. She wears a black outfit.
3.29	Season 4, episode 1	17:31	Alba and Carlos talking.
3.30	Season 4, episode 1	21:45	Alba sitting at the table of men as their new boss (figure 15).
3.31	Season 4, episode 1	25:11	Alba walking away after a conversation with Carlos in the hallway of the company (figure 12). She wears a female suit, heavy fabric, dark colours; tight on the waist and mid-length that emphasizes the silhouette.



Figure 17



Figure 18

Appendix 4: Plagiarism Awareness Statement



entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.	
Name:	Giorgia Ninzoli Enderlin
Student number:	6474764
Date and signature:	 February 4, 2021

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