



Australian
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**Examining controversial themes in teen thrillers: a
close reading of *13 Reasons Why* and *Élite* with an
analysis of fan-made subtitles**

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January 2025

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy of
The Australian National University

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

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January 2025

Acknowledgement

I would not be here without the guidance I received from my supervisors. I am immensely grateful to my primary supervisor, Dr Fabricio Tocco, who knew how to guide me through this journey. Looking back now, I not only appreciate his constant academic support but also the friendship he shared with me. Thank you for carefully going through all my drafts every two weeks and making sure that I developed a skill I did not have before. Some of them would stay with me for the rest of my life, such as ensuring that I do not repeat the same word in a paragraph. I also thank my associate supervisor, Dr Wesley Lim, for reading my thesis draft painstakingly and giving me critical feedback to sharpen my work output.

The ANU University Research Scholarship (International) and the ANU HDR Fee Merit Scholarship supported my research. I do not know how to express my gratitude because this generous support changed my life as an international student from a middle-class family in a developing country. I was able to study in the best education destination in the world without having to think about my expenses, and that is a dream. I also want to thank the HDR administration team, who supported me in my candidature and when I was a prospective student.

My dearest Jinadari, you inspire me to be better every day, and you believe in me more than I believe in myself. You raised me up whenever I felt down or started doubting myself. Thank you for everything.

My parents and brother see me as a hero, even though it is technically the other way around. Your love and well wishes are with me even though we are a thousand miles apart, and I can feel your presence every passing day. Thank you for being my support system since day one.

Finally, I want to thank Sri Lankan taxpayers for giving every child a free education. Look how far I have come because of you.

Abstract

This thesis offers close readings of two recent Netflix teen thrillers, the American *13 Reasons Why* (2017-2020) and the Spanish *Élite* (2018-2024). Both shows engage with the portrayal of rape, suicide, nudity, and teen aggression which raised controversy in critical and general reception. I read *13 Reasons Why* by addressing the portrayal of suicide, revenge, and rape informed with the camera work of selected scenes to understand the show's delivery of aggression. The production receives criticisms as a series that glorifies suicide and poses a risk among teenage viewers. In conclusion, I prove that the production does the opposite of "glorifying" suicide, and this psychological thriller could be a crime thriller in disguise. There are imbalances in the reception of representing rape. On the other hand, I explore *Élite*'s treatment of rape, murder, and pornification, backed up with scene analyses. I propose that *Élite* has trivialised and disregarded the repercussions of teenagers committing murder, considering how *13 Reasons Why* (a production aired in close time proximity, albeit in a different national context) depicts a character's demise and its impact on others. I define onscreen violence and sex as two separate concepts which should solely focus on relatability to the main plot and characters in determining the gratuitous nature rather than defining them with rape myth acceptance and rejection. Both productions experiment with topics for the first time on teen television. Finally, I examine these shows from a different perspective: I engage with how fan-made subtitles or "fansubbing" create meanings in Sinhala for these productions. I examine whether this amateur production of subtitles can convey the source text meaning observed by the close readings and existing literature. To do that, I employ back translation technique and a theoretical framework, where the subtitles are translated back to the source language and then compared with the original dialogue. This audiovisual translation (AVT) component of my research offers an innovative perspective that suggests fansubbing as an interdisciplinary tool for AVT to expand to screen studies.

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Introduction

In the early stages of drafting the research proposal for this thesis, I wanted my project to be entirely about subtitles and their impact on understanding screen productions. There were two factors involved in this initial research goal. The first was my early exposure to many foreign imported shows and films on free-air television, specifically the national television network, Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation. The second was my academic background in translation studies, as I gained an introductory experience learning and participating in audiovisual translation (AVT) activities. This learning experience was not sufficient to be a professional dubbing artist or a subtitle creator, because it involved more theory than practice. As I proceeded to understand the importance of the amateur subtitling landscape in Sri Lanka in my thesis, I realised that this imbalance between theory and practice became relevant, since it brought to the fore another gap, the one that separates screen and translation studies. Because the current translation studies curriculum at the undergraduate level is very theoretical in Sri Lanka, it excludes broader discussions about screen productions.¹ This is due to the discipline's focus on the language component. AVT's interdisciplinary nature, however, welcomes other aspects, such as media, that also involve (cultural) translation. It is in this sense that Jan Bloomaert sees translation studies as a discipline biased towards written communication, at once concerned and not really concerned about language (Michael Boyden 2008:150).

A similar gap takes place with the exclusion of other disciplines, such as screen studies, which explores much more than scripts. Sri Lankan universities produce professionals who then would go on to work in the AVT industry. However, when translators fail to fully grasp the intended meanings of a scene, the outcome does not do justice to the original text. To translate them, subtitle creators should be able to properly understand and connect with the story. This connection is reminiscent of and could benefit from a key aspect of screen studies: scene analysis. I learnt then to what extent translation studies scholarship in Sri Lanka limits its scope to solely dealing with language accuracy. This thesis aims to address and, hopefully, narrow this gap, by focusing on the importance of amateur subtitling because this non-professional holistic process is more source-oriented (Yousef Mohammed Sahari 2017:15). In short, whereas professional and amateur subtitling are two sides of one coin that is within the scope of translation studies, this thesis seeks to also see subtitling through screen studies, instead.

Januka Edirimanna Mohotti (2019:2) reminds us of this limitation in AVT in the Sri Lankan context, despite the country's long history of subtitling and dubbing as an entertainment tool. According to her, the 80s and 90s were the industry's golden period (1). Then, the entertainment industry did not require a significant demand to engage in AVT on a grand scale. Years later, in 2012, channels recruited undergraduates for dubbing purposes to level up with the demands of foreign imported Korean shows (1). Mohotti (who, before becoming a researcher in the field, was one of those undergraduates) realised then that simply knowing the language was not enough, as she had to master other skills. For instance, she weighs in on dubbing, lip-syncing

¹ Current curriculum of Translation Studies in Sri Lanka: University of Kelaniya (2018) Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree, Department of Linguistics, accessed 16 January 2025.
hu.kln.ac.lk/depts/linguistics/index.php/portfolio-2/special-degree/translation-studies

and, of course, subtitling, all of which require a unique set of skills other than language proficiency: if a dubbing translator is keen on lip movement, a subtitle translator should practice translating in a way that allows the texts to fit into two lines within the given time frame.

During the golden period, there were no university-level courses specifically targeting AVT, and studios were a combination of amateurs and professionals who ignored the specific characteristics attributed to them, such as their bias towards visuals and language, the two mandatory components of an accurate translation. Today, beginners and professionals work separately, which contributes to the dismantling of AVT's interdisciplinary nature. Amateur subtitle creators became a rare breed because they report to no one and work on their terms. Hence, they are not bound to be accurate in their work, unless there is a unique micro-ethnic system in the subtitling community they belong to. Amateur subtitle creators have become a phenomenon (Donna Chu 2012:261), and I note that this is because they do not follow professional standards and accuracy but focus on content distribution. In what follows, I examine amateur subtitling as a tool for AVT to thrive in both screen and translation studies.

To establish the validity of amateur subtitling, I adopt fan-made subtitles from two websites: *Basicopelk* and *Cineru*. Although I emphasise Sri Lanka with my local subtitling corpus, the absence of multidisciplinary in AVT is not unique to the country. Prominent scholars in translation studies, such as Carol O'Sullivan and Jean-François Cornu (2019:3), think that there is still an "unchartered territory" in the history of AVT at a global level, despite the growth of dubbing and subtitling since the silent era (15), and they call for further research.

My intended examination blends AVT and screen studies through scene analysis because subtitling can be defined as the rendering from speech to text in media (including films, TV, video and DVD) "in the form of one or more lines of written text presented on the screen in sync with the original verbal content" (Henrik Gottlieb 2012:37). Dialogues, a central component of a scene, are essential in understanding an audiovisual production. It is impossible to analyse one without examining the other. Accordingly, I come up with my research objectives: analysing whether subtitles can grasp the original meanings conveyed in a dialogue, especially, when referring to niche themes. In this sense, my thesis initially started as a project that fits entirely within translation studies but soon became part of screen studies, too.

I chose two TV shows for the scene analysis. I found two productions that have several elements in common, i.e.: Brian Yorkey's *13 Reasons Why* (2017-2020), and Carlos Montero and Darío Madrona's *Élite* (2018-2024). I narrowed my search to Netflix originals because I wanted to select two shows that by no means have licensed Sinhala² subtitles, as Netflix does not provide that option. The chosen productions fulfilled my selection criteria, as they had many elements in common: both are set in fictional high schools, they feature a story that starts with a mourning of the death of a teenage girl, they include flashback as a central plot device, and they thematise sexual abuse and aggression. Equally, each show engages with other controversial themes and topics of their own. Furthermore, both productions could be grouped

² Sinhala is the most spoken language in Sri Lanka, and about 75% of the country's population speaks it (Martyn 2013, as cited in Ekanayake and Jayawickrama 2024).

under the meta-genre of thrillers, a broad term that covers many genres, i.e.: spy thriller, heist thriller, crime thriller, psychological thriller, and so forth (Martin Rubin 1999:4). Because of this versatility, thrillers can reach a wider transnational audience and reception. Even upon examining Sri Lanka's history of imported TV shows in a professional context, thrillers are a central part of it: *Knight Rider* (1982-1984), *MacGyver* (1985-1992), *The X-Files* (1993-2018), and *Prison Break* (2005-2017) are some of the imported popular thrillers on national television networks with Sinhala subtitles. It was well before the rise of streaming platforms, a key element in the transnational circulation of thrillers. In the case of *13 Reasons Why* and *Élite*, both could be defined as teen thrillers, i.e.: crime stories that involve teenager characters. As I proceeded with the research, I devised three chapters.

Chapter one: “*13 Reasons Why*: Does suicide overshadow rape?” details the scene analysis of *13 Reasons Why*, a series that starts with the suicide of a high school student named Hannah Baker. The main character, Hannah records cassette tapes pinpointing several other high schoolers she thinks are responsible for her decision before committing the act. For the close reading, I delve into suicide and the four rape scenes of the show: three female rapes and one male-on-male rape. I investigate to what extent the camera work, the relevance of these rapes to the storyline and the character arcs, they all inform the gratuitous nature of selected rape scenes. Even though I prioritise rape and suicide scenes, I also discuss other forms of teen aggression, considering how they interact. These other forms of aggression tend to do with general often male-centric assault. I examine how *13 Reasons Why* portrays male-centred aggressiveness by introducing characters with traditional and modern masculinities. Chapter one also argues against the common misperception that the show glorifies suicide, claiming that it emphasises suicide awareness, instead.³ To demonstrate this, I incorporate a theory named Papageno effect that explores the media's influence on actually preventing self-harm. Ultimately, I argue for the show's belonging to the crime thriller genre, by examining how those named in the tapes ambivalently bereave with guilty-stricken emotions. As such, creators not only portray them as victim survivors of trauma but also as accomplices of a crime.

Chapter two: “*Élite*: Redefining sexual scripts” offers a scene analysis of the show and focuses on the extent to which its portrayals of sex and rape are gratuitous, an issue that I examine in a two-fold manner. First, I argue that the sex scenes in the production are less gratuitous until the end of season three, as I explore them and detail their relevance to the story and its themes. As the creators shift away from the crime and mystery thriller build of the first three seasons, the narration blends with characteristics of a softcore-porn production with arousing visuals that do not necessarily contribute to the story in a justified manner. I also identify that *Élite*'s transformation is linked to introducing new characters in each season, unlike the first three seasons, which maintain the audience's suspense. In the second half of Chapter two, I detail the visuals and post-assault stages of an implied rape scene and its gratuitous nature with its inclusion as a subplot to create a redemption for a previous serial rapist. I explore how the scene exploits semi-nudity, as the camera sexually objectifies the female rape victim. Furthermore, I argue that the production does not pay attention to the trauma of these high

³ See Ching (2017), Beal (2018), Voelker (2019), Bridge et al. (2020), and Ferguson (2021) for readings against the show's representation of rape.

school students based on the response to murders. I contrast this with *13 Reasons Why*, whose teens do feel guilty throughout seasons for something they are not necessarily directly responsible for. In addition, I emphasise the ambivalence of *Élite* in reproducing and debunking rape myths. For example, there is a scene of sexual harassment that reinforces rape myths, where a teenage male victim engages in consensual sexual encounters with his harasser. By contrast, another scene, focused on the post-rape stage of a female victim, debunks rape myths but problematically since, as I mentioned earlier, this is a part of a serial rapist's redemption arc.

Chapter three: "Fansubbing: Between accuracy and functionality," investigates whether amateur subtitles can deliver the intended meaning of original dialogues by performing an analysis on specific scenes I read in the first two chapters. I proceed with my research by placing how fan-made subtitle makers operate with not wanting any profits. I bring the monetary aspect to my thesis because it relates to the quality of my corpus. Some creators go the extra mile to generate creative subtitling by focusing on the target language. Then, we have fans who make subtitles in a rush and deliver the meaning through a more source-oriented approach. I follow two methods to find the accuracy of the selected subtitles. The first is "back translation"⁴, a process where a translated text is rendered to its original text again, followed by a comparison to identify whether the latter has been honoured. The second one is a theoretical framework coined by Frederic Chaume (2004:12-24), which uses an "analysis based on signifying codes of film language", a type of scene analysis that examines subtitles not just linguistically but also by paying attention to cinematographic codes. According to Tessa Dwyer (2018:443), amateur subtitling epitomises the participatory culture by constituting a social transformation with its interesting take on how consumers can be contributors at the same time. Equally, he adds that this practice signals a paradigm shift in attitudes on the part of media consumers which I see as the repositioning of being linguistically based to a blend of factors which is the argument for the third Chapter of my thesis. Based on this, as I proceed with the analysis, I detach from accuracy and focus on the practicality of these non-professional subtitles which invites to define the amateur practice as an interdisciplinary tool with cross-functional qualities so that AVT can utilise it to establish its connections with screen studies. I argue that the fluidity of fansubbing assists AVT, but it is yet to make an appearance in academia as a major subject area in screen studies, and fansubbing is AVT's strongest opportunity to break the barrier into the discipline.

In problematising the ways in which both thrillers portray characters, include, and elide scenes, this thesis will contribute to the scholarship of both screen and translation studies. As I concur with and diverge from the show's reception, I offer a new perspective for AVT to thrive in filmic disciplines academically for scholars and personally for amateur subtitle creators: after all, this practice, performed as a leisure time activity, has more functionality and importance to it other than a simple hobby. Any underestimation of fansubbing is solely because of word accuracy. This thesis is the first of its kind on the Sri Lankan context, emphasising the importance of fansubbing in academia and everyday life and how it is usable as a tool to reflect on the interdisciplinary nature of AVT. In short, my thesis encourages Sri Lankan scholars and

⁴ In 16th century, Juan Luis Vives and Roger Ascham recommended this technique (Kerr 2014:75).

policymakers to initiate better pathways for foreign language learning, strengthen the micro-ethic system of fansubbing communities, and acknowledge its presence in both screen studies and translation studies.

Chapter 1:

13 Reasons Why: Does suicide overshadow representation of rape?

In this chapter, I offer a close reading of scenes from the American psychological thriller and teen drama series Brian Yorkey's *13 Reasons Why* (2017-2020). This chapter addresses the portrayal of suicide, revenge, and rape backed up with the camera work of selected scenes to understand the show's deliver of aggression. Experts of mental health community criticise *13 Reasons Why* as a series that glorifies suicide (Christopher J Ferguson 2019:1178) and poses a risk among teenager viewers. In conclusion, I try to evince that the production does the opposite of "glorifying" suicide, and this psychological thriller could be a crime thriller in disguise.

Created by Brian Yorkey, *13 Reasons Why* revolves around the suicide of a high school student named Hannah Baker. In the story, Hannah records 13 cassettes explaining the events that would eventually lead her to take her life. Each cassette is labelled for someone, and she explains how the consequences of their acts made her commit suicide. This show holds the record of most tweeted-about series in the history of streaming platforms.⁵ Due to its massive popularity, it is worth analysing how it speaks to burning issues such as teen aggression, bullying, trauma, sexual assault, mental health, and suicide prevention among teenagers. As a result, now each season premiere starts with a warning saying that the production speaks of "tough real-world issues", discouraging its viewing for audiences who would be struggling with such issues. The show's producers also created a documentary entitled *13 Reasons Why: Beyond the Reasons*, where the cast and health experts discuss the drama.

Over the past four years following the production's finale, scholars have taken interest in the issues it addresses. To the extent that, creators did some changes to the show, for instance, removing Hannah's explicit suicide scene after receiving criticism for graphic depictions. The series raised concerns among medical experts,⁶ mostly because of the suicide scene. The show, however, has much more controversial content to offer the viewers. In what follows, I offer a series of scene readings with some of the overarching themes in Yorkey's story.

1.1. Representation of rape

1.1.1 From suicide to revenge

I begin by examining the scenes that revolve around suicide and revenge. Aamina Ali and Kerry Gibson (2019:400) link suicide to helplessness, worthlessness, loneliness, and social isolation. Hannah, the show's main character, is someone experiencing these situations with a moderate involvement of her peers. As such, the series implies the indirect relevance of others in her suicide. According to Qianyue Yang (2022:343), Hannah's suicide itself is a type of revenge because it makes those who bullied her feel guilty and suffer mentally. In the first tape, for

⁵Seventeen (2017) '13 Reasons Why' Just Broke a Netflix Record, Seventeen, accessed 27 January 2024. <https://www.seventeen.com/celebrity/movies-tv/news/a46406/13-reasons-why-netflix-broke-record/>

⁶ See Ayers et al., 2017 and Niederkrotenthaler, et al 2019.

example, Hannah admits that she is recording to make others endure this guilt. To do so, she takes the time to narrate her life's most gruesome experiences and makes sure to share it with her peers before ending her life.

Hannah's revenge suicide is even more enhanced in the narrative of Clay Jensen, Hannah's close friend, as he hallucinates seeing her throughout the story. I propose that these hallucinations are based on metafictional techniques adapted by the creators to distinguish the lines between the fictional world and reality. There are certain extended shots of Hannah's pale looking ghost staring at Clay and the viewers. It gives an idea that she is there to make sure that Clay avenges her death. Of course, this is only a fantasy. Writers include Hannah as a hallucinatory ghost, a spectre that differs from the one we typically see in horror stories and is more closely related to the ones that crowd psychological thrillers. This is made obvious by the fact that this version of Hannah only shares information Clay already knows. But this would be noticeable only by paying attention to detail. Otherwise, it is possible for an audience, especially for gullible teenagers, to think that one can come back to some human form to overlook things; in this interpretation, revenge even after death. Lynn Schofield Clark (2005:6) explains the said contingency with an attempt to identify ties between teens, entertainment, and supernaturalism. He refers to experts on teenagers' prevalence of supernaturality. In particular, he quotes Andrew M Greeley who claims that "young people may be more open to experiences with the supernatural than those who are older". Furthermore, this is supported up by Miriam Lambouras, who points out that young people can evoke "vivid visual images of specific objects that are not present in actuality but are present to their conscious or sub-conscious imagination" (as cited by Clark 2005:6). This explains Clay's hallucinations as he sees the visual image of Hannah.

As observed, metafictional techniques by the makers of this show draws a distinct line between the reality and the fiction which would lead us to believe that this is just Clay's way of dealing with his trauma. However, a study by psychologist C.M. Staehlin, confronts the above-mentioned dilemma, as he finds out that "through the power of suggestion, young people can experience imagined phenomena as real" (Lambouras 1997 as cited by Clark 2005:6). This means that, unless attentive, it is possible for the young viewers to think that Hannah's ghost is real. At the same time, through Clay's hallucinations we can see clearly how Hannah's suicide is portrayed as a revenge suicide, but this is not to say that it glorifies the act of revenge either.

Her suicide ties up with the revenge story through the unreliable narration we get from the tapes. This is mostly visible with Hannah's ambiguous personality. Creators expose Hannah to viewers as a vulnerable teenager, but the second season reveals that she is once a bully who made a fellow student stop her schooling. Hannah's ambivalence, half-bullied, half-bully, leads to a point where the viewers are left with the dilemma of empathising with her character. Jessica Davis, another friend of Hannah, tells Clay that "Hannah's a user and a liar. You can't believe anything that she says ... on the tapes ... She's the one who ended our friendship, and she knew it. She's a liar. Was a liar". This scene highlights the extent to which Hannah is an unreliable narrator, as according to her tapes, Jessica ends their friendship. Therefore, the mismatched stories we hear from and about Hannah propose that she wants to make others suffer even at the cost of her life.

13 Reasons Why does not solely focus on revenge related to suicide: it also focuses on revenge caused by rejection. Episode “*Tape 2, Side B*,” reveals that the tape is for a student named Tyler Down. He stalks Hannah for a while, as he takes photos of her kissing Courtney Crimsen, a closeted classmate. As Hannah rejects Tyler, he leaks the photos to a school group chat, damaging her friendship with Courtney. Cyberbullying by leaking photos onto the Internet as an act of revenge is a habit that keeps building over the past few years. Consequently, the show's period (2017-2020) falls during a time when online harassment is a daily occurrence. According to Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Sarah Friedland (2015:9), a leak portrays the online subject as open, vulnerable, and perhaps desperate, i.e.: all attributes that traditionally ties to femininity. The link between vulnerability and femininity applies to Hannah's character from the beginning of the series. The tape in the first episode “*Tape 1, Side A*” is for Justin Foley, the classmate who happens to leak a photo of Hannah, which he takes while they are dating. This circulation stigmatises Hannah as lustful, which speaks to a common social “role in enabling and normalising a revenge mindset [which] is highlighted along with social acceptance of scapegoating and stigmatisation” (Mark Trechter 2011:iv). Therefore, there is a relationship between stigmatisation and feelings of revenge. Hannah wants to avenge, and her tapes narrate how society gradually enables her mindset.

Hannah undergoes similar types of aggression when her former best friend, Alex Standall objectifies her by including her name in a list he complies with “Who's Hot” and “Who's Not” in the school. A separate cassette is named for Alex in “*Tape 2, Side A*” because this list is also a contributing factor behind Hannah's death, as it labels her as someone who is easy for men to take sexual advantage. With that in mind, Marcus Cole, a fellow student, takes her on a date and touches her in front of his friends to cause public humiliation. When Hannah rejects him, she gets a “thought you were easy” response from him. For this scene, camera work is fast-paced and intercutting: the camera rushes from showing Marcus aggressively touching Hannah's inner thighs to the reaction of both characters. The camera captures well Hannah's disgust and both hers and Marcus's humiliation in front of friends. Obviously, Hannah deals with humiliation because of the assault, but Hannah's rejection causes him embarrassment, too. This can be taken under “humiliated fury”, a term coined by psychoanalyst Helen Block Lewis in 1971. As the name suggests, it is a rage people feel when ashamed of themselves. Marcus feels this embarrassment in front of his peers and become verbally aggressive. At the end, the camera lingers on Hannah as she says, “I couldn't move”. It shares her feelings of uneasiness, and discomfort with the viewers.

First, *13 Reasons Why* introduces us to Hannah as an innocent female character who blindly trusts Justin, the classmate she dates. In turn, he ultimately makes her feature in a list by a fellow highschooler. Then Tyler becomes a part of the story, an immature character who thinks of the idea of leaking photos as an answer to rejection. However, the viewers also feel these characters' guilt, as they struggle with what they did to Hannah, ratifying that her death is indeed a revenge suicide. What is interesting, here, is that name-shaming and cyberbullying are portrayed in the series as something that impact negatively not only the victim but also the perpetrator. At one point, the plotline takes us to the past, dealing with the heinous things Hannah's fellow students did to her. Right after, the audience is exposed not to hers, but their suffering. In short, the students sway from complicity in Hannah's suicide to victims of their own aggressions, which complicates the film's genre: as the story is about a suicide other people caused with a possibility of involuntary manslaughter, this film, read and labelled by

the critic as a psychological thriller, could be read as a crime thriller, instead. I will return to this later.

Hannah deals with violence in the first season. For Charles Joseph and Delphine Letort (2019;115), as the series unfolds in the second season, it transplants this violence to other characters, making her no longer the centre of attention. This is because the second season does not focus so much on Hannah's tapes, but on courthouse scenes, as Hannah's parents file a case against the school, Liberty High, for their daughter's demise. Joseph and Letort's argument, however, can be challenged, as Hannah's demise still affects everyone throughout other seasons, maintaining the centrality of her character. Because every individual Hannah blames in tapes becomes hurt or killed at worst, as a butterfly effect of her demise. For instance, Alex murderers Bryce Walker, the teenage rapist, as he thinks the destruction of the lives of his friends is because of the latter's influence. The truth about Bryce as a rapist comes into spotlight only after Hannah's death. This is one of the ways in which she remains the central character of the show. Creators remove her suicide scene because it graphically shows the way she cuts her wrists in the original release, and it is controversial. However, Netflix decides not to censor a very detailed rape scene despite the viewers' requests. I now turn on this and other scenes representing rape.

1.1.2. Revenge and rape

Usually, Hollywood productions include rape scenes to elicit an affective reaction of disgust, that can last through the entire duration of a show or a movie (Amanda Spallacci 2019:1). *13 Reasons Why* carries this detestation as the story features multiple rapes that leave us with antipathy till the end of the series. Spallacci (1) further says that the representation of rape on screen evolves from the act itself to its impact by emphasising stories of post-traumatic stress. Further, she quotes Allen Meek to state that Hollywood tends to show rape instead of the trauma because of its impossibility to display the real state of emotions.

13 Reasons Why includes three female and one male character as rape victims. On one hand, Hannah herself, and two of her friends, Jessica, and Chloe Rice as the girlfriend of the rapist himself. On the other, Tyler, Hannah's harasser. Perhaps the fact that the suicide scene receive critical reception more than the show's portrayal of abuse could be explained because of the said regularisation of rape in the film industry. To be sure, even though this is certainly not the first series to talk about rape, its innovation is that it emphasises male-on-male explanatorily.

The production's male-on-male rape scene captures attention and sparks conversation within public and entertainment websites, but hardly of scholars. Emily D Ryalls (2020:1-13), for example, talks about representing rape culture on teen television, especially referencing *13 Reasons Why*, but neglects Tyler's rape. Nicole Cox (2023:4129), in turn, argues that the female rape scenes in the series are normalised in the eyes of the audience and Tyler's scene, by contrast, triggered the public. This is why the public reached out to creators through social media to delete this scene, claiming that it is an unrealistic situation (Stephanie Soteriou 2019). Tyler's rape trauma makes him want to kill others and kill himself as well, indicating signs of murder suicide, the act of committing suicide after taking lives of an individual or group of people. Tyler's severe aggression to kill people could only be caused by a trauma which is equally terrifying. His rape scene visually delivers the gravity of emotions which naturally causes the trauma afterwards.

The scene is set up in the school bathroom. Monty drags Tyler and shoves his head in the toilet. At that moment, a low angle shot is shown from a bit of a distance. There are two other friends with Monty, but this shot focuses solely on him and Tyler, indicating a conflict between them and signs that something brutal is about to happen. That long shot disappears within split seconds, as Monty moves away from Tyler to grab a mop in the bathroom. We hear an unpleasant squealing sound technique, but Monty's words and Tyler's shaky voice are louder than that. Monty's two friends are there to help him surrender Tyler, but their faces do not get proper screen time. Maybe it is because they are just following orders from Monty or because they do not want to do something barbaric. Their passive presence makes the male-to-male rape even more intense.

Viewers see close-up shots of the rapist and the victim with quick transitions. Depth of the mop stick's insertion in two angles carry the savagery of the abuser and the pain of sufferer symbolically and visually. First, a deep focus shot of the head of the mop is visible, as Monty inserts it into Tyler. In this shot, characters remain offscreen, and the mop's head slowly goes through the toilet door, almost disappearing from the shot. Simultaneously, Tyler screams in pain, but the other two characters shut his mouth. The other angle that enhances the brutality of the aggression focuses on the blood mark on the mop, which stretches out for a considerable length, disturbingly enough to understand that it is immensely painful to the victim. Then, the rapist and the two henchmen leave Tyler helplessly lying on the floor. This scene is a medium shot, which focuses on Tyler's emotions as well as the viewers' reaction. It makes the audience take an additional effort to examine his thoughts. Tyler wants to scream his lungs out, but we can only witness a silent cry. Once the rape is over, the pain is still there. This scene instantiates what Kathy Doherty and Irina Anderson (2004:86) claim about most male rape survivors, who do not report the act since they fear social stigmatisation and homosexual allegations. This is the case of Tyler, who keeps the rape a secret for a long time, and I read that his decision to be silent is announced right after the rape scene, when we see him lying on the floor silently crying.

In the same episode, we not only see Monty's aggression but also Tyler's revenge, as he visits a school event with guns, including an assault rifle. Clay stops Tyler, the witness of Hannah's ghost, who avoids a possible school massacre. Just like Hannah, Tyler is also someone who wants revenge. According to Bryan Vossekuil and others (2002:21), most school shooters in America go through a traumatic event, like bullying or any other form of harassment. In *13 Reasons Why*, Clay might have avoided a similar situation by stopping Tyler. In this context, whereas the show receives accusations of romanticising suicide,⁷ it accurately portrays the consequences of revenge.

Tyler hesitates to open about what Monty did to him, but he finally discloses his thoughts to Clay. Monty's narrative ends up with him going to prison and getting murdered. He gets framed for Bryce's death in addition to raping Tyler. By contrast, Bryce, a teen highschooler who rape three girls: Hannah, Jessica, and Chloe, only gets 3 months' probation for raping Hannah's friend Jessica, a small punishment compared to Monty's. Bryce receives charges only for

⁷ See Beal (2018), Bridge et al. (2020), and Scalvini (2020).

Jessica's case, and he is not found guilty of raping Bryce's own-ex-girlfriend Chloe and Hannah. Both rapists become victims of murder, which can be seen as an indirect form of revenge, because the victims, Hannah and Tyler, are not directly involved with murdering their predators but someone else avenges them.

Before Tyler, the first rape victim of the show is Jessica. In "*Tape 5, Side A*," the viewers encounter her rape by Bryce from Hannah's point of view. At that time, Jessica dates Justin, and they try to make love at a summer party. Justin notices that Jessica is unconscious and steps down to bring her some water. Bryce steps into the room and rapes unconscious Jessica. The series gives us the impression that Justin does not act strongly enough to prevent Bryce from doing that. Hannah witnesses everything as she hides in the room itself, traumatised by the act happening in front of her eyes. In this tape, Hannah blames herself and Justin for not being able to avoid it. Hannah's displacement of guilt can be understood by the way people react to trauma that ties with responsibility. According to a study by Sharon Todd (2001:599), some of the participating "students make claims about feeling responsible for deeds they have not committed and despair because they believe they have not done enough to help out those who suffer". Hannah carries the weight of this guilt which ultimately become one of the reasons for her to commit suicide.

But much like Tyler, Hannah is not always this sensitive towards others. In this regard, the show casts a shadow of ambiguity on the story's victims, whose portrayals are there as perpetrators of violence, too. In a later episode we learn about how Hannah herself once used to be a bully who makes a friend leave school. Tyler and Hannah's characters, then, follow the inverse path of that of their colleagues: whereas we see the former swaying from victimhood to complicity in aggression, the latter, as mentioned earlier, oscillate from aggressors to victims.

Todd's study reveals (603) that the ones who feel guilty about inability to help someone who suffered an act of violence have a two-way thinking pattern: it could either be the urge to do something to improve lives, or to act in a way for people to suffer less. However, Hannah fails to do anything, not only at that very moment but also soon after. She could have informed the police or any authority about this after she escapes that room, but she hesitates. It is understandable why she does not do anything immediately with her vulnerable characteristics. The camera's point of view, emphasising the shaking and blurred visuals, caters to the fear Hannah had at that moment. This is another instance of the ambiguity of her character that I mentioned above, as she does not inform any authorities but puts the blame on herself and Justin.

In "*Tape 6, Side B*," the audience goes through the second male-to-female rape featured in the story: Hannah's. The camera work is very subtle yet powerful to convey Hannah's emotions. She is in a hot tub with Bryce, and he starts forcing himself on her. Initially, Hannah fights but then surrenders against her will. This entire scene happens in an outdoor pool seconds after other friends get out of it and go away. First, Bryce approaches Hannah, assuming she prefers to have sex with him. Right after, he grabs her, hindering her ability to protect herself. Through a high angle shot, the camera clearly shows us how Bryce is in complete control of her, leaving her without any possibility of escaping. Then comes the close-up shots of Hannah's face, her hands, Bryce's face, and hand movements. The eerie background score starts to play, accompanied by Hannah talking about death in a voice over. These close-up shots are intercut quickly from her painful face with disgust, discomfort, and pain to Bryce's ominous pleasure.

At first, she resists but, quite horrifically, she surrenders at one point. Such thoroughness and agency to an onscreen rape victim is something previous rape scene in cinema failed to capture. The quick jumping between the camera shots becomes gradually slower, and the viewers get to stare at Hannah's almost lifeless face. Initially, she tightly holds on to the edge of the bathtub, but even her hand becomes passive and out of the hold, almost as if she gives up on her life. Here, this scene seems to suggest that facing rape echoes death, which, in the case of Hannah, reminds us of her suicide.

According to Sarah Projansky (2001:66), there are two types of rape narratives. One is where the victim is vulnerable from the onset before the act; the other one is when an independent, strong person becomes vulnerable because of it. Out of the three female victims in the series, Hannah plays the vulnerable role through her suicide, even when rape is not the sole reason behind it. The independent and strong character, by contrast, is Jessica, who becomes a vulnerable victim just because of her unconsciousness.

1.1.3. Rape and gender

Letort (2019: 23-24) discusses whether Hannah has a voice in this narrative despite her central presence in the show. I am in accordance with the point of view that she does not have a voice even though she narrates her stories through tapes. This can be better examined, considering that we see contradictory stories, as others claim Hannah is lying about certain scenarios. She chooses death over being misjudged but she is open to the same level of judgement even after. Letort (23-24) also points out how Clay acts as a hero in the storyline by giving less importance to Hannah's voice. To be sure, he is an introvert person in earlier episodes, but becomes influential in everyone's life after the tapes, i.e.: after Hannah's demise.

In addition, Letort (2019:25) notes that *13 Reasons Why* fails to challenge the rape myth of putting the blame on female victims. She argues that the show stresses female powerlessness. If a young female's photo is in circulation for specific reasons without her consent, she is already not able to share her side of the story. This is even worse when her name is associated to a list which straightforwardly objectifies her. She has no power to regain her respect. So, she ends up with accusations for things that happened to her. Letort's claim applies to all the production's female rape victims. Hannah is helpless even in front of the school counsellor as he questions her back, implying maybe she gives consent to the rapist. This is a crucial scene, as Hannah takes her life only a few hours later. Besides, she is someone with a labelled perverted image, as Alex featured her name in a list which indicated she has the "best ass" in the school. I concur with this idea as I observe the initial stages of Hannah's life, but I would also like to argue that the series, despite Letort's claim, does challenge rape myths. It does so, however, through the graphic depiction of male-on-male rape instead. To begin with, because rape is not female-centric in the production, as we see detailed visuals on Tyler's rape by Monty. Even though Letort questions the show for its portrayal of female powerlessness as embracing a rape myth, it is interesting that she hardly discusses Tyler's sexual harassment which I explain below in the Section "Revenge and rape".

The third and last female victim of rape is Chloe, whom Bryce harasses while dating. Initially, the love-making scenes between them are passionate for both. In later episodes, especially in "*The Third Polaroid*," the audience sees sexual interaction between the couple, but Chloe is blankly staring at the TV, implying her lack of agency. Unlike Hannah, Chloe goes through an abortion all by herself. She does not even want to let Bryce know that she is pregnant with his

child. According to Bettina Spencer (2016:2), if the male perpetrator of rape belongs to a rich family, the female victim is likely to be blamed. This is what happens, to some extent, in the case of Chloe and Bryce, who gets a negligible punishment of three-month probation only, despite being convicted as a rapist. In Hannah's case, he is not even proven guilty. It feels like Chloe has accepted that there is no justice for victims of rape, since there is no escape from the rape culture and that she as a woman who must live with limited choices (Cameron Greensmith and Jocelyn Sakal Froese 2021:97). Chloe understands the bias favouring male perpetrators and backs down.

Cox (2023:4129) is one of the few to examine the portrayal of Tyler's rape. Cox quotes Ariana Romero, who says that "media have normalized seeing women violated and raped in graphic ways but the same cannot be said for men". This could be the reason for Tyler's scene receiving criticism from social media users, compared to the rape scenes featuring Hannah and other female victims. While Cox is correct on the generalisation of women rape in fiction, the condemnation is mainly by the viewers in a less academic context, and scholarly articles, instead, focus on the suffering of Hannah, Jessica, and Chloe. There is, however, a growing body of scholar discussion on male-on-male rape, for instance, on shows like *Family Guy* (1999-Present), *Law and Order Special Victims Unit* (1999-Present), *American Horror Story* (2011-Present), *Outlander* (2014-Present) and *American Crime* (2015-2017).⁸ These productions are relatively older than *13 Reasons Why*, so the omission in the literature of our show may look like a delay in criticism. But the existing literature about its male-on-female rape reveals that the lack of production's literature on this topic is negligence and not by time.

This privileging male-on-female rape in the scholarly discussion is addressed in two scholarly articles. Ryalls, for instance, states that rape culture objectifies women and how there are structural issues in reporting rape (2020:2). This is relatable to the female rape victims as the audience sees how they cope with their situations differently. In addition, Ryalls (2020:3) points out how the rape culture might imply that if a girl says "no," it might be "yes" because, according to the perpetrator's point of view, girls do not know what is best for them. In the worst-case scenario, a girl's silence could be interpreted as a signal for consent. This is how the show portrays Hannah's rape, as she goes into a silent but distressed situation in the outdoor pool. The series accentuates the impact of this narrative as the school counsellor misreads her silence and hesitation as consent, which, as I mention above, immediately leads to her suicide.

According to Greensmith and Froese, females like Jessica are guided by the rape culture as they think that their worth is predicated by the way they endure gendered and sexual violence. To get access to a fantasised "good life," girls accept their lives the way they are (2021:88). They coin the term 'cruel optimism' to understand Jessica's attachments to this surrender. The said "good life" for Jessica is not associating herself as a rape victim. She gets that optimistic fulfillment but at a "cruel cost". They (95) note how Jessica is a 'cruelly optimistic' teenager, as she is initially not ready to accept the fact that she got raped. Instead, she takes the word of Justin as he says she is not raped by Bryce, while the show urges the audience to empathise with girls like her and Hannah (96). Jessica is in denial and blames others instead of accepting

⁸ See Krelko (2013), Stephens (2016), Cohen (2020), Nagouse (2018), and Akrivos (2019) for further reading.

truth. I think that she tries to make up her mind by thinking that her body is untouched and convincing herself that Hannah is lying about the rape. However, in Season two, Jessica thinks of seeking justice by the legal system, only to get the final verdict of just three months probationary to the rapist.

The fictional portrayals of rape in *13 Reasons Why* raise awareness on the existence of this toxic culture and its dangerous effects. Ryall, Greensmith and Froese, much like the rest of the literature on the show, focus on female rape. These articles state that men normalise rape culture and women expect men to dominate their lives (2021:88). While all this is true and the emphasis is at men in dominant roles, why would similar articles neglect the gruesome portrayal of Tyler's rape? After all, it also takes place within a male-dominated context, with Tyler also making the decision to live up with the fact that another male sexually assaults and now he must live with it, just like Jessica and Chloe.

Perhaps this is because, even though the series intentionally does not want to be female-centric, Hannah's suicidal narrative still overshadows the other characters. Once Tyler opens to Clay about his abuse to him, and Monty goes to gaol. This is not the case for Jessica, Hannah, or Chloe, as Bryce receives an uneven punishment for a rapist. One could argue about how rape culture treats women as they are somehow responsible, unlike Tyler. Bryce is a rich, white male from a very respectable family in the community and Monty (Tyler's rapist) is just someone with a regular family background. Therefore, he is in prison. This observation aligns with what Lisa Funnell and Ralph Beliveau (2022:1) interpret when a screen production team consists of "largely white, middle-to-upper class, heterosexual, able-bodied cis-men," they tend to incorporate the privileged perspective to their creations no matter how they give rise to controversy.

I assume that male victims go unnoticed with the ideas of traditional masculinities rooted in a society where they cannot be weak to be raped. Further, I believe that scholars who are concerned about rape myths and screen texts paradoxically submerge themselves mostly into the traditional male-on-female rape reinforcing the stereotypes. This gives a privilege to female victims as their issues are on the spot, but it also reproduces the myth of females as weak, as they are portrayed as the only sufferers of masculine domination.

Most screen productions have gratuitous inclusions of rape that hardly contribute to the narrative structure of the story (Projansky 2001:95). To be sure, some creators sensationalise rape and use it as a plot device, but it is inevitable to disregard representing rape when it is integral to the storyline. According to Carine M Mardorossian (2002:743), contemporary feminist theory sees sexual violence as taboo, and "rape has become academia's undertheorised and apparently untheorisable issue". Mardorossian invites us to read through preceding scholarly articles to see where feminist scholarship offers solutions instead of questioning or problematising abuse. I concur with her stance, as I went through scholarly literature on what makes rape on TV justified. This literature all-too-often involves subjective theories and convoluted ideas against sexual violence on TV, but they do not offer solutions for the problems raised by TV shows such as *13 Reasons Why*, i.e.: proposing the correct way to represent rape on TV.

This is why, it is important to narrow down my analysis of the show to the characters' post-assault agency, paying attention to the camera work at the rape stage, and how it connects with the overall narrative and character arcs. In this context, I reflect on rape survivor's agency,

namely, “how they attempted to shape their experiences” (Megan R Greeson and Rebecca Campbell 2011:582). According to these authors, many rape victims and survivors seek help through medical and legal channels. This is the case for all the abused characters in *13 Reasons Why*. Hannah meets the school counsellor, and her parents take it to court. Chloe gets an abortion. In turn, Jessica takes the case to court and becomes a student activist who stands against sexual violence. Tyler not only takes it to authorities, but his rapist also gets to serve in gaol. Even though Hannah is victimised again at the hands of the counsellor who doubts her, the recorded cassettes symbolise her agency through the series, so her character dually shapes the post-rape stage. The camera work captures agencies for all characters except Tyler, subjecting him to sexual abuse with a gratuitous portrayal.

To begin with, we do not get the abuser’s but the victims’ point of view onscreen, in the cases of both Hannah and Chloe. We only see the lifeless and blank expressions on their faces, and there is even a self-narration in Hannah’s scene. There is no sexualisation. The scenes are all about the pain on their faces. In Jessica’s case, we see the rape through and with Hannah. It is a form of agency to let the viewers know that this rape would not go hidden, unreported, or unnoticed. This non-gratuitous trope changes its direction with Tyler. Unlike its female counterparts, here we see more screen time, the rapist’s point of view, and blood are foregrounded, implying the penetration. By contrast, for female victims, the screen presence is slight and mainly consists of long paused shots of the sufferer’s face, giving us time to reflect on the pain they undergo. The male-to-male rape scene also receives a less critical and more general reception, and it has more horrific elements to it. The rape in question is an act of revenge, and it is possible to portray aggression in other ways. Therefore, *13 Reasons Why* is gratuitous in its male abuse, and it feels forced and a deliberate inclusion to add shock value. For a show catered to young adults, the creators carry out the scene in a crude manner, unlike the subtle nature of female rape on the show. *13 Reasons Why* is a teen show that openly talks about sexual violence, even featuring a serial rapist. All his victims have different agencies, which adds value to the overall narrative, whereas in Tyler’s case, omitting the scene or making it less gratuitous would do no harm to the story.

1.2. Masculinity, vulnerability, and strength

1.2.1. Bullying the weak

Masculinity is another prominent theme worth exploring in *13 Reasons Why*. Traditional masculinity influences aggression. It is a common problem for adolescents and this behaviour is usually attached with many factors including school bullying (Elisabeth Malonda-Vidal, E. et al. 2021:1). *13 Reasons Why* inspects teenage aggression encouraged by traditional masculinity, specifically by examining sexual and general assault. I will be now focusing on the latter. The show takes a twofold approach to picture this behaviour. The first one is the way the strong punishes the weaker. According to Ian Wellard (2009:14), sports normalise displays of hegemonic masculinity by presenting characteristics such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, and toughness as necessary for success. Male athletes are stereotypically portrayed in teen movies as being more popular, verbally, and physically aggressive, and unintelligent than other male teenagers (Jason Beck 2011:30). This is well-portrayed in American teen productions, making them the stereotypical bullies. *13 Reasons Why* is not an exception.

In the episode "*Tape 6, Side B*," Clay confronts Hannah's rapist, Bryce, to confess to his crime. Bryce does not only come from a wealthy family and is the captain of the football team, but he also portrays a spoiled teenager who thinks he can do anything with his money and power. In fact, the court legitimises this by absolving him from the alleged accusations. These qualities align with Beck's observations (30) on the lack of intelligence of sporty characters in teen dramas. As a culprit, Bryce would have been careful with his words about a horrendous crime he was responsible for. But, because he fits into the stereotype of the unintelligent sporty male teenager, he falls into a trap by Clay to get a confession from him. Bryce beats Clay for simply demanding a confession. Later, the audience understands that Clay intentionally makes Bryce angry to get him to admit he raped Hannah.

The same narrative of the stronger beating the weaker continues, as a fight unleashes between Monty and Alex, leaving the latter with wounds. Hannah allocates a tape for Alex for compiling a list of girls including her, but his character is a portrayal of someone who accepts his wrongdoings and regrets. However, like Clay who stands against Bryce, Alex confronts Monty, another school athlete, who is renowned for being a bully. Alex is the first person from Hannah's tapes to acknowledge his contribution to her death. Perhaps because of that, he becomes a victim of his own aggression.

Monty, secretly gay, thinks that he would be humiliated among his peers if he came out. He beats up Winston Williams, an openly gay character, at a rich kids' party for simply saying "hey, it was nice to meet you. We should hang out sometimes". They have had a sexual encounter before and Winston, talking to Monty in public, makes him angry. Nevertheless, even in this scene, Winston is not scared. Bryce bribes him so that he would not take this issue to the authorities. In a way, these scenes challenge the stereotype of other students' inability to stand against the school jocks.

At the end of the show, Alex even murders Bryce. In this sense, the unreliable narration can be seen with the portrayal of Alex as well. The audience is left with a morally ambiguous character. In the beginning, he makes a list objectifying Hannah, then he tries to kill himself filled with guilt, he stands up against the bullies and finally he becomes a killer. In turn, Clay wants justice for Hannah, so he does everything possible to throw Bryce behind bars. Aware of this, Bryce threatens Clay, who does not want to stop. In this context, Clay gets beaten up by a group of fellow teenagers. Even after that, he does not stop fighting for Hannah's justice. Here, with the depiction of Clay, we see a non-traditional gender portrayal of masculinity: Clay is a compassionate, caring, and trusty companion, as opposed to the mainstream media portrayal of teenage boys like Bryce who is arrogant, aggressive, and untrustworthy.

1.2.2. Violence between peers

By contrast, the show portrays violence between the strong and the strong as well. In the episode "*And then the Hurricane Hit*," Bryce attacks Zach Dempsey, another football player, to stop him from playing. This triggers a long-time rage within Zach, and he beats up Bryce back. According to Samantha Schäfer (2011:13), fictional villains are hardly human, and they are not simply driven by the power and greed but also a joy towards being who they are. This description fits with Bryce as he is inhuman, who bullies fellow students and rapes women. Zach appears as someone who never liked the bullying culture of his gang and has been supportive of others when they needed help. He breaks at one point when he could not bear the rejection from Hannah and exposes some of her personal notes. However, in later episodes, we

see how he helps Chloe in her abortion as if he is trying to forgive himself for his guilt over Hannah.

In the episode “*College Interview*” of the fourth season, the audience witnesses another rivalry between two sporty characters: a close friend of Bryce, Diego Terrace, and Zach. With his gang, Diego confronts the latter as he acts up as Bryce’s killer. This makes Diego beat Zach’s face till he bleeds. The significance of this scene lies in the fact that the viewer gets to watch it from Zach’s point of view and receive punches from the other end. However, he mocks Diego and hardly shows any signs of pain. This is because he is visualising that as the moment, the way he hits Bryce. Creators use hallucinations again as we see a shot of Zach beating himself. It implies the self-hate he has been dealing with since Hannah’s demise. His circle of friends at school are spoiled bullies and he no longer wants to be a part of it. The self-beating hallucination is his anger towards himself for associating with the said circle.

According to Connell (1987:70), toxic masculinity is avoidance of femininity and the demonstration of aggression and anger. The series, for instance, depicts this with Monty, who does not want to come out, and instead outs his anger. A content analysis on ‘tween TV programming’ (Ashton Gerding 2011:13), i.e.: entertainment for individuals aged between 10-12, concludes that male characters are more likely to commit violence and be the victims of violence as well. It is in this context that in *13 Reasons Why*, male characters go through rape, assault and even death, when compared to female characters. However, Hannah’s suicide overshadows all of this, resulting in a gap in literature compared to female-centric studies related to the production. As I hope to have shown here, this can be seen in the ways in which the show deals with sexual assault in particular and violence, in general, between strong and weak characters, as well as between strong characters themselves.

1.2.3. Hate and self-loathing

In this section, I delve into Clay’s mental deterioration to explore the show’s portrayal of self-hatred. It all happens with him receiving tapes and listening to a recording with his name. Hannah leaves that cassette to let him know that he is unlike others, and she wants him to know that he should not feel guilty about her suicide. Contrarily, it is Hannah’s demise that initiates Clay’s mental decline.

As the story builds, writers fail to make the audience sympathise with Hannah because she makes a tape for a character as innocent as Clay. I compare this with the depiction of Walter White from *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013). He is the anti-hero of the story and a character who justifies his acts regardless of the morality. Despite that, his illustration is a flawed hero (Martin Tuček 2014:39) with characteristics that realise and makes him acceptable for choosing to go against the law. According to Siobhan Lyons (2021:229), White’s decisions are at the forefront of the show, but the supporting characters are also at fault for morally questionable behaviour. While this is true, another element writers use is to create characters who do not feel regret for their actions by not seeing themselves as bad. This is applicable to characters like Walter White and even Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos* (1996-2007). Likewise, in a context of established archetypes of anti-heroes, *13 Reasons Why* shows teenagers who are consumed by guilt even for the things they do not wish to do.

In *13 Reasons Why*, Clay carries this guilt after listening to his tape as he convinces himself that he could have saved Hannah. His tape includes a scene where Hannah becomes

comfortable with Clay and to a point where they become intimate. In this scene, creators use inception flashback as a technique to show how Hannah sees every other male who mistreats her through Clay, while having sex. She shouts at him to leave the room, and he acts accordingly. The tape plants survivor's trauma in him as she says that she wishes Clay stays even when she asks him to leave. The director uses foreshadowing, a technique that is mostly used in literature to indicate the upcoming events or to create suspense. According to (Rorie Franklin 2024:9), the use of this literary device is not only limited to written works but also applicable in television. He claims that foreshadowing in television gives multiple opportunities as well as challenges as he only focuses on the technique used in opening credits of tv shows. I see this towards the end of the season one when it is applied to hint about Clay's hallucinations with an alternative conversation between Clay and Hannah instead of him leaving at her request. It gets worse and he ends up in therapy. The chaotic nature of foreshadowing itself is an opportunity for an audience to stay intrigued. In *13 Reasons Why*, some of us would see the first hallucination as a cliffhanger or a way to understand Clay. In either way, it helps the gradual storytelling and audience engagement. Clay does not do anything immoral to Hannah, and because of that Hannah's character becomes questionable and unjustified. Defining Lyon's theory (2021:226-244) about *Breaking Bad*, a black or a grey character goes unnoticed with equal-coloured characters who go against morality. But in *13 Reasons Why*, between Clay and Hannah, the suicide survivor is injected with suffering by the words and actions of the suicide victim.

"In the United States, the term 'suicide survivor' is used to describe individuals left behind to grieve, who try to understand the reasons for the death and who learn to carry on with their lives following a suicide death. While this terminology is well accepted in the United States, internationally 'bereaved by suicide' is a more widely used term" (Julie Cerel et al. 2013:413). I prefer the American term because those who mourn an unexpected death of a close person literally become "survivors," in that they must face the challenge of continuing to live with the trauma, almost as if they would have overcome an almost life-threatening situation for themselves. Treating Clay as a suicide survivor gives the idea that the painful experience of losing a loved one could result in both trauma and a sudden urge to make things correct for the departed. Clay's personality shifts from being an introvert to someone who seeks justice for Hannah with an unbridled rage for those who deemed to be responsible for her death, including himself.

1.3. *13 Reasons Why* as a paradox

1.3.1. The Papageno Effect in *13 Reasons Why*

I address the debate between the harmful and positive effects of the show through the Werther and the Papageno effect. David P Phillips (1974:340) introduces the term "Werther effect" where the media directly influences suicide. This term coins with the influence of a fictional poet named Werther who commits suicide, a character by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. On the contrary, Thomas Niederkrotenthaler and others (2010:234) introduce the term "Papageno effect" as the impact media causes for suicide prevention. This term is based on the fictional opera character Papageno by Mozart. In *13 Reasons Why*, it seems that most of the experts unanimously think the show carries the Werther effect as I cite in the next paragraph. However, the Papageno effect also remains valid, as the series influences youngsters to be empathetic and take care of their peers. It also addresses the importance of a proper mental health system.

The Papageno comes to effect as the production gives a message of hope that all people can engage with suicide prevention and not just professionals. If anything, the show even challenges the so-called professionals through the figure of the school counsellor, who fails to do his job when Hannah comes to him seeking help. Clay, a teenager, questions the school's counsellor as why he did not avoid something avoidable.

Rebecca Voelker (2019:490), quotes Victor Hong, a medical director of the Michigan Medicine's Psychiatric Emergency Services, who shares his thoughts about the suicide portrayal of Hannah in *13 Reasons Why* in an article solely dedicated for that purpose. In this article, Hong points out that the series makes the audience feel like suicide was a natural reaction to traumatic life events in one's life. He also mentions that instead of giving concern to mental health problems, the show commodifies suicide, by putting it on centre stage. His perception of how real-life teenagers deal with most of the situations that Hannah handles in the fictional world questions the narrative of the story. Even in the fictitious world of *13 Reasons Why*, many other students go through traumatic situations but continue to live. By the time of the publication of this article, the explicit portrayal of the suicide had been removed from the show. But, as it is taken away two years after their original release, it is still possible for users to access to that initial footage through internet repositories. According to Keith Hawton and Kathryn Williams (2002:1374), the impact of the media on suicide is very high when the method is shown as in detail as it is in Hannah's case. The worst possible scenario Hawton and Williams could imagine in 2002 is access to photographs of a deceased person and big headlines. Set in 2017, the production offers a much more visually detailed suicide scene.

Should we simply acknowledge the experts' interpretation of *13 Reasons Why* as a production that romanticises suicide? The widespread accusations the series receive through studies conducted by various individuals and organisations have one claim in common: the fact that the show triggers real life suicide. A study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* (Niederkröten et al., 2019:934) identifies a growth of suicide among teenagers of United States after the release of the production. Similarly, *JAMA Internal Medicine* (John W Ayers et al., 2017:1527) finds out a connection between the growth of googling suicide related terms and the release of *13 Reasons Why*. In 2017, the US National Association of School Psychologists states that they would not recommend the show for vulnerable parties with suicidal ideation as it could trigger the audience to romanticise taking one's own life. Equally, compared to positive readings of the series, more experts including the *British Medical Journal* (2017), the Germany's Professional Association of Paediatricians (2017), and the US Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide (2018), see the show negatively.

By contrast, another study (Michael C Carter et al., 2021:1110-1132) does comprehensive research with a sample of 5000 participants, which consist of teenagers and their parents. The study is designed to understand the reception of *13 Reasons Why*, among groups from different countries and backgrounds. It concludes that instead of romanticising suicide, the production actually has influenced its prevention, by causing teenagers and parents to talk and educate themselves more about it.

Can there be a direct relationship between fictional content and suicide? Phillips (1974:340-354) claims that there is a relationship between suicide and non-fictional media, such as news with attractive headlines. He further reminds us how the father of modern sociology Emile Durkheim, who famously writes about suicide more than a century ago, rejects this connection.

Durkheim observes that suicide is not something to be imitated, but a feeling driven by inherent will. It is possible to say that Hannah's will is guided by the feeling of not getting any help from society, which Durkheim defines as a "social phenomenon". Therefore, Hannah does not commit suicide just because she goes through unfortunate events. She does so out of helplessness. We can clearly see this in the last scene prior to the suicide, as Hannah stares at the counsellor's door thinking that he would come after her to give her the solution she needed to overcome the trauma caused by rape. It is not a character's portrayal of someone who quickly wanted to end her life.

I argue that the removal of the graphic suicide scene might have made it look like an easy solution for everything. While experts found it alarming with a medical approach, I find that removing the initial scene makes committing suicide look easier. The original version depicts the gruesome and painful experience of self-harm with the use of both haptic and optic visuals. However, this is when the moral obligation of a producer joins the conversation. Instead of removing portions or exercising creative freedom limitlessly, a producer can take additional steps to make a show more receptive, e.g.: warnings, disclaimers and most importantly the documentary named *Beyond the Reasons*, mentioned above, can be streamed on Netflix now. Here, the author of *Thirteen Reasons Why* (the novel that inspired the TV show), Jay Asher, says that suicide is something to talk about regardless of the discomfort and avoiding to do so could be more dangerous. Not every teenager is fond of watching television discussions and interviews on suicide prevention. A teen TV series is a tactical way of approaching youngsters to spread awareness of a societal issue instead of making it taboo. Therefore, it seems that Netflix listened to experts and makes amends but stays loyal for the message of the story on suicide prevention which confirms that *13 Reasons Why* falls more clearly under the Papageno rather than the Werther effect.

1.3.2. Does *13 Reasons Why* glorify suicide?

Suicide bereavement is the emotional distress a person experience after losing a close person to self-destruction. *13 Reasons Why* is a narration in this stage of bereavement. A study that specifically targets bereaved adolescents (Andriessen Karl et al. 2015:300) finds out that despite being exposed to suicidal feelings, a friend taking his life could act as a protective barrier that might mitigate adolescents from killing themselves. According to Andriessen and others (299-300), bereaved people experience emotions such as guilt, shame and blaming. Such emotions are clearly present in Liberty High school students' reaction to Hannah's death.

The very same peers who look down at her go through bereavement and their own aggression consumes them. As we mention earlier, Clay's mental situation aggravates up to the point of hallucinations, even though he does not cause Hannah's death. On the other hand, Alex tries to commit suicide. The rest of the students linked to her death are in guilt and it affects their character arcs. I argue that if the creators wanted to truly glorify suicide, for instance, they would have made Hannah's parents win the trial. Instead, they lose. Apart from that, the most controversial tapes do not even make it to the court since both parties in the case thought they would be a disadvantage. Therefore, making others feel guilty via a deceased voice does not work the way Hannah probably fantasised it would be before her demise. The parents not only suffer the loss of their daughter, but they are also deal with more worries. None of these factors are very glorifying aspects. Instead, the series initiates a discussion among people about suicide

prevention. Ultimately, all the characters become victims, as some of them might have to bereave for the rest of their lives.

The unreliable narration is mostly centred around the content of Hannah's tapes. This becomes contradictory as people from the tapes have stories of their own with slight changes to the recordings. In the court proceedings, the lawyers try to discredit Hannah by contradicting the stories she tells in the tapes, which causes the court to deem them as unreliable. For an instance Justin says that he tried but failed to save Jessica from her rape with his intoxication and Bryce locks him out. This makes the lawyer question Justin about not exactly knowing what went behind the doors and convincing the jury that Hannah is unreliable. Even Hannah's reasons for committing suicide are questioned, as the lawyers start pointing out her family situation and the home environment. He brings her parents' separation and financial issues at home in the court and they seem more certain to the judicature compared to the voice recordings. This uncertainty stays still throughout the series, making us experience the complicity of a suicide case as it is hard to pinpoint exact reasons behind the decision.

Angelique Jenney and Deiner Exner-Cortens (2018:412) and Ryalls (2020:7) point out how it is Alex's list that causes unfortunate events to happen in Hannah's life, ultimately leading to her suicide. Alex makes that list as revenge against her ex-girlfriend, Jessica, by putting her at a lower rank. He might not have thought about it thoroughly, but it makes Hannah a target among the male characters. She could not escape from the gossip and the male gaze when she walks through school corridors. In this context, the show demonstrates the extent to which toxic masculinity invades male characters including Hannah's father, who takes the list as a negligible compliment. Even the heroic figure of the story, Clay, thinks that the list is a praise. According to Ryalls (2020:7), *13 Reasons Why* displays how featuring on such a list becomes a part of flattery in one's eyes. However, in Hannah's own voice, we hear something different: "...but you didn't walk that hall. You didn't feel those eyes on you. You never heard those whispers" (Tape 2, Side A). This is her voice against characters like her father and Clay who thinks that objectification is an appreciation.

Margot Goblet and Fabienne Glowacz (2021:1) define "slut-shaming" as "stigmatisation of an individual, based on his or her appearance, sexual availability, and actual or perceived sexual behaviour and is primarily aimed at women and girls". They also mention that suicide and relational issues are prone to trigger slut-shaming in adolescence (2021:2). Hannah breaks her heart after seeing the way even her female friends start to denounce her due to the list and the photo leakage. Jessica used to be a close friend of Hannah until the said list. It instantly makes Jessica stop her friendship with Hannah, by putting all the blame on her without even trying to talk to Alex about it. She specifically uses the term "slut" to address Hannah. In "*Tape 3, Side A*", Courtney spreads disinformation about Hannah to avoid any type of attention towards her, since Courtney and Hannah are in photos leaked by Tyler. Apart from that, as sensitive as it is, Ryan Shaver, the curator of the anonymous collective of the school, posts an intimate poem written by Hannah without her consent. He publishes it as an anonymous post, but Jessica identifies Hannah's handwriting. This puts Hannah in a further difficult position as she is already dealing with the stigma.

As an updated remark to my aim of reassuring the vilifying nature of suicide in *13 Reasons Why*, the camera work on the current parts of the suicide scene starts with a mirror shot that lingers on Hannah's emotional distress. She takes heavy breaths and starts slightly shaking,

conveying that this is not something she would do fearlessly. Afterward, the medium shot of her mother finding Hannah's dead body in the bathroom was not something that would inspire a teenager to commit suicide. The parents' emotional breakdown leaves a message about the pain they undergo afterward. As Bryce is not found guilty of raping Hannah, Hannah does not get justice after sacrificing her life most horrifyingly. These factors are unwelcoming and hurt the act of suicide. The present-day scene is not as graphic as the original version but still manages to break the so-called romanticisation of suicide with the cinematic use of haptic visuals.

1.3.3. Psychological or crime thriller?

Children in danger, revenge plots, crucial scenes depicting psychological torture, and unreliable narration are a few characteristics of the psychological thriller (Kristopher Mecholsky 2014:1). At first glance, *13 Reasons Why* falls under this genre. But could it fall under another genre within the broad genre of thrillers? For Rubin (1999:4), the thriller is a meta-genre that gathers several other genres. These subgenres include crime, detective, mystery, suspense, and horror. They can share characteristics unique to one subgenre at first glance when they fall into one genre. Taking this into account, the thriller identity of the show is to be answered by the concept of involuntary manslaughter.

13 Reasons Why gained controversy for portraying suicide as something only caused by others without any other external factors (Erin Brodwin 2018). It is a pertinent interpretation if we read the storyline by relating it to involuntary manslaughter. There are two forms of this act and the one that aligns with Hannah is mostly negligent. None of the students want Hannah to die, but their portrayals offer criminal viability to her death and the whole narrative changes. In a manslaughter case, the victim could be placed at any form of injury, including suicide (Paul McGorry and Marilyn McMahan 2019:25). In suicidal instances, this form of wound is purely psychological. As the viewers listen to each tape, they receive information about how each person contributes to the psychological injury of Hannah. It is a collective act but without the will to take her life. That is why most of them feel distress after the suicide.

But quite interestingly, there is an interconnection. A photo circulation puts Hannah in the spotlight in the middle of teenage schoolboys who crave sexual intimacy. The photo was an upskirt image that Justin takes as they go on a date. She does not even know that he is taking a picture because he secretly does it when she is just on a playground slide. This act is the butterfly effect that causes unfortunate events in her life. Alex's list appears to follow the photo circulation, which makes her even more vulnerable. It is as if every person mentioned in the tapes gets together to conspire against her, but these are individual acts. Following the list, Marcus goes on a fake Valentine's date to entertain his friends. These events lead macho teenagers like Bryce to get closer to Hannah. He continuously asks Hannah to stay in relaxation while she tries to escape from her during the rape. I believe that the photograph and the alleged list of schoolgirls inspire him to approach Hannah.

In 2017, an American teenager was prosecuted for manslaughter as she verbally supported her then-boyfriend's suicide attempt. The case is far more severe than *the 13 Reasons Why* characters' semi-murderous involvement in Hannah's suicide. The said teenager assists her boyfriend by instructing him to get into a car with carbon monoxide poisoning. Her appeal to the court is based on the fact that manslaughter could not be constituted by words alone (McGorry and McMahan 2019:25), and there are no physical acts initiated. Whereas in

Hannah's case no one verbally commands her to commit suicide, the show seems to suggest that she gets hurt to the point of verbal harassment and physical abuse. It is the school counsellor who puts the last nail to the coffin, as he questions Hannah's sincerity and later pressures her to let go of her rape if she is not ready to share everything in detail. The suffering and the guilt of her schoolmates after her demise point out that they know they are guilty at heart. In this sense, the series has some characteristics of a crime thriller. Not just because an actual crime happens when Alex kills Bryce or because there are police investigations for different matters at school, but because Hannah is a victim of manslaughter, and a crime occurs without anyone noticing.

In conclusion, I offer a series of close readings on several scenes of *13 Reasons Why*, focusing on sensitive topics like teen aggression and revenge, male-on-male rape, male-on-female rape, suicide, masculinity, and vulnerability. The portrayal of aggression is male-centric as the traditional and modern masculinities oscillate from the roles of abuser and sufferer. Hannah's suicide overshadows this representation. I evince how critical reception gives less attention to the male-on-male rape in the production regardless of how it is a gratuitous inclusion compared to the male-on-female counterpart. Ryalls (2020:8) specifically mentions that the series received criticism for the suicide scene but not for Hannah's rape scene. I believe that Tyler's rape scene deserves the same concern in the scholarly conversation on the show, which has, so far, been understudied. Further, I observe how the show is more weighted towards accepting rape myths despite how creators defend the inclusion of the scenes.⁹

Apart from that, I pay attention to the camera work of selected scenes, focusing on how it changes the reception of the scene. I disagree with the idea that the series presents a glorification of suicide through how *13 Reasons Why* engages with the Papageno effect. Suicide does not only impact the main person, but it negatively affects everything that surrounds them. The portrayal of suicide-related acts on screen is not about the act itself but its chain reaction on its characters and then to the audience. Lastly, I question whether the series can be solely taken as a psychological thriller when there are clear signs of a collective crime against Hannah. This chapter points to the fluidity and diversification of thrillers because the show was initially a psychological thriller, but later, I analyse it as a hidden crime thriller. The inclusion of a gratuitous suicide scene overshadows the scholarship of rape the series had to offer even after its removal. While the portrayal is unwarranted, suicide is the critical point of this production and does not inspire others to commit suicide as opposed to what many critical reviews claim. I come to this conclusion with the steps the creators make to prevent self-harm. *13 Reasons Why* portrays both rapists and victims under the revenge-rape narrative so that there is no heroism added solely to victims who go on a journey to avenge. However, it failed to debunk rape myths thoroughly and contributes to the how several scholars of reinforcing these myths, as I outlined in this chapter.

⁹ Brian Yorkey expresses his views on the inclusion of sexual assault scenes and recovery as a way of examining a rape victim's transformation from a sufferer to a survivor (Strauss 2018).

Chapter 2:

Élite: Redefining sexual scripts

In this chapter, I offer scene analyses from the Spanish crime thriller series *Élite* (2018-), created by Carlos Montero and Darío Madrona. *Élite* explores this aggression but also experiments modern masculinities with the recurring theme of sex in the show. This TV show takes a new narrative in the entertainment industry, as it focuses on renewing the public conversation around sexual abuse and harassment through the depiction of threesomes and other soft porn scenes. It is more visible if we compare it with *13 Reasons Why*, where the conversations around sexual aggression and rape myths only evolve around rape. This chapter addresses the show's portrayal of aggression, sexual assault, and nudity. Additionally, I address its treatment of objectification, class difference and power as underlying themes, backed up with evidence taken from the camera work of selected scenes. I try to evince the inconsistency between the perpetuation of and opposition to rape myths portrayed in the series. Equally, I propose that *Élite* has disregarded the repercussions of teenagers committing murder, considering how *13 Reasons Why* (a production aired in close time proximity) depicted the demise of a similar character and its impact on others. I do so by applying the concept of "perpetrator trauma," which I define below. Finally, I attempt to find how the pornification of the sexual scripts in this fictional, unrealistic, and "oversexed" teen show (Codrai 2021) could be an opportunity to advance the characters and storyline.

Much like Hannah's death in *13 Reasons Why*, the demise of one of the overarching protagonists in *Élite*, Marina Nunier Osuna, a female character, becomes the driving factor for the series. Whereas we see Hannah throughout the whole story, as she builds up the plot and impacts every character introduced in the show, Marina's presence constructs only the first seasonal arc of the show, which aired for two more seasons. *Élite* is set in a fictional high school called Las Encinas. As such, Marina's death reminds us of Hannah's because both are teenage students. But the cause of her decease is a murder and not suicide. In fact, the killing spree does not end with her, as it evolves around other highschoolers by making them killers and victims, interchangeably. However, the murder plots are not interconnected and the screentime to express the remorse of killing is additionally given to only one character, Polo Benavent Villada, a high school student and Marina's murderer. I compare this with *13 Reasons Why* indicating the difference between major plot and seasonal arcs. First, I elaborate on the scenes portrayed in the show which engage with sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence, but I come back to Marina's death below.

2.1. Sexual assault and gender-based violence

2.1.1. Manipulation of consent and token resistance

Élite features two love triangles, engaging with issues such as manipulation of consent, through agency, passivity, and uneven power dynamics. The first is a triangle of homosexual characters. One of them is Patrick Blanco Commerford, a new student introduced in the middle of the show, who is portrayed as a master of manipulation. He is the son of the new principal, which gives him an excessive power to control others, especially those who are vulnerable. For instance, Omar Shanaa, a Muslim student who must take a test to keep his scholarship at school, and his boyfriend Ander Muñoz. Hierarchical power given to Patrick as an immigrant from a wealthier nation: the United Kingdom encourages his dominance. According to Alexander

Kustov (2019:988-989), a study conducted in Spain concludes that origin status of an immigrant is decisive since those with higher status are preferred than individuals from poor countries. For that reason, Patrick has the status power along with the economic, social, and administrative capability.

At the other side of this spectrum, there is another immigrant: Omar. He, as a Muslim, represents a very identifiable minority in Spanish society, as the Spanish Reconquista expelled Muslims from the country in 1492 (Jørgen S. Nielsen 2009:58), and the migration of the Muslim community has become a recent development with the country's transformation to democracy (Mikaela H. Rogozen-Soltar 2017:xv). This explains the significance of a scholarship for Omar, a Muslim immigrant from a working-class background, in a private school. In this context, Ander is desperate for his boyfriend's grant because he wants both to study in the same school. Patrick seizes this opportunity to interfere the relationship of the couple, Omar and Ander, specifically to get close to the latter. As Amy E. Lyndon and others say (2007:291), manipulative men position between those who resort to aggression and those who participate solely in consensual sexual encounters. This defines Patrick's nature, as his approach is a blend of force and creating an environment for Ander to have consensual sex with him later.

Patrick's manipulative nature is visible in a scene that occurs between Patrick and Ander, set in a gay nightclub. The camera pans from Ander to Patrick, signalling that the former is walking towards the latter. Then, the camera focuses on Ander's emotions through close-up shots. His uneasiness is foregrounded: he looks around as if he is disorientated. On the contrary, Patrick wears a confident smile on his face. As Patrick starts to kiss Ander under the blue coloured lights of the club, it initially seems like both are enjoying the moment. But the anguish of Ander's face shows that this is not why he is there. Despite him saying "stop" and "enough", Patrick unzips him, which makes Ander walk away. He is there to make sure Omar passes the test and Patrick knows it.

I read this through what Lyndon and others call "manipulative tactics," e.g.: "verbal pressure, continual arguing" and "use of authority" to coerce the other person to engage in sexual activity" (2007:292). These characteristics can be seen in Patrick, as he says, "it's more dangerous to say no to me than to say yes": Patrick overrules the laws of consent by invoking the power dynamics at play in the encounter. He uses his power as the principal's son when he directly asks Ander about him being there only for Omar's test. Patrick presents his deceiving nature when he continues to touch and lick Ander. At this point, *Élite* remains clear that Ander is against being touched. But later in the same episode, a conversation between Patrick and Ander connects dots between two scenarios with an ambiguous reaction from the latter. I explain these two scenes with more clarity by reading the descriptions embedded by Netflix and translated to English.

Scene one: **Patrick:** "Look, how far would you go to help Omar?"
 "Or is this no longer about helping him?"
 [Ander's face floods with guilt.]
 [Patrick undoes the zipper and buries his face inside.]
 Ander: "Okay that's enough alright!"
 "I'd do anything to help Omar"

Scene two: **Patrick:** “So, all we did was dance?
 “You really don’t think that, do you?”
 [Omar spots them smirking.]

The Scene one is from the interaction at the club between Ander and Patrick. Ander stands up for himself and makes it clear that his intention is to help Omar and nothing else. However, that point of view changes the characters’ portrayal in the Scene two. It is the test date for Omar, and Patrick offers to help him with a cheat sheet. Omar finds out about Ander’s involvement and asks his boyfriend whether there is anything else he should be aware of. Straightforwardly, Ander answers that they just danced at the club. Scene two occurs after the test where we see a group of friends celebrating Omar’s results. Omar sees Ander and Patrick smirking, but the viewers hear the monologue. The smirk between them implies that there must have been something more than a dance as suggested by Patrick. Here we can see one of *Élite*’s contradicting attitudes towards sexual abuse, the same scenario, as it goes from denouncing a rape myth to normalising it.

The rape myth at stake here is in Ander’s ambivalent behaviour. This is best described as “victim masochism”¹⁰, i.e.: the idea that rape victims can enjoy or even desire an act of rape. By smirking, Ander accepts that he liked the physical interaction in the club despite his initial implication of refusal to be touched against consent. Later, Ander’s ambivalence goes further, as he develops a sexual relationship with Patrick, even dragging Omar to engage in a threesome. The show incorporates less discussed topics of sexual violence onscreen into the creation, and that is what I described earlier as exploring new ways to portray sexual abuse compared to *13 Reasons Why* and in general. *Élite* sheds light on less discussed topics like “token resistance” and “victim masochism.”

Through these characters’ storylines, the show turns consent into a vague aspect, which can potentially cause misunderstanding for teenage audiences. For example, there is a character as a potential victim, but the same character engages in consensual sex with the intended harasser later. An act of this nature is “token resistance [which indicates] that one does not want to have sex when, in fact, one does want to.” (Charlene L. Muehlenhard and Zoë D. Peterson 2005:15). According to Autumn Shafer and others (2017:S45), men who rationalise their sexual acts believe that token resistance is a submissive tactic by the other party and, hence, a sexual miscommunication. As per the study, men would believe that the refusal to accept sex is a barrier to overcome, even though a clear rejection is coming from the other end. Whereas this definition is set on a heteronormative context, it can also be applicable to read Ander and Patrick’s interactions.

Creators depict Ander’s character as someone who does not come from a restricted background. This is especially true if we compare him with Omar. Accepting sexual orientation and coming out is a challenging process in and of itself, but it is particularly complex for those from Muslim families because the religious structure brands homosexuality as a sin (Kahu and Tuffin 2018).

¹⁰ Krafft-Ebing coined this term after Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, who wrote novels with masochistic themes, more or less (Bernhard Berliner 1942:386).

Ander, by contrast, is open about his sexual orientation, even with his family. Apart from that, he rejects Patrick by almost picking up a fight in front of their classmates as he makes him aware that he is already in a relationship with Omar. This scene implies Ander's urge to set up clear boundaries since Patrick is already aware of Ander and Omar. Still, Patrick manages to manipulate Ander to a point that he ultimately finds it acceptable to betray Omar.

The changing nature of the interactions between Patrick and Ander is visible with the setting shifts from dark blue lights of the night club to bright and clear colours. In the first scene, the use of darkness impedes us from properly reading the characters' emotions, even though there are clear signs of rejection from Ander. Therefore, the nature of their early interaction is cryptic. Here, darkness visually translates Ander's "token resistance" and Patrick's manipulation of consent: everything is muddy, obscure, and vague. I interpret his complicated nature as an act of "survival sex," because it "limits the ability to consent freely and exercising sexual agency" (Konrad Czechowski et al., 2022:293). Patrick continues to touch Ander even though it is against his will. Ander's passivity in Scene two endorses scene one and thereby normalises the rape myths of token resistance and masochism. The fact that *Élite* features such ill-defining serious issues, in a context where movements like MeToo are still active, is dismaying. At a time in which people from real world share their experiences of sexual abuse to expose their perpetrators, Ander's representation in terms of lack of agency and resistance seems strikingly obsolete.

According to Barbara E. Johnson and others (1997:706), the traditional gender roles set the stage for a rape culture with its definition of women being more passive than men. This is observable in same-sex relationships as well where the community treats the passive partner with contempt, much like a woman would in a heterosexual relationship (Jerzy Adam Kowalski 2015:87). Furthermore, the impact of the depiction of unwelcomed sexual behaviour in *Élite* and its contradictions are perceivable through cultivation theory where the consumption of television leads to a media-influenced reality, which reflects a homogenised view that reveals the dominant values of society (George Gerbner et al. 1981:43). Accordingly, we see the power dynamics between Ander and Patrick whose passivity and dominant nature comply with said rape myths.

The second triangle that instantiates how *Élite* portrays manipulation of consent appears in the narrative of Armando de la Ossa, a wealthy businessman, and Mencía Blanco Commerford, Patrick's young sister and another high schooler at Las Encinas. She starts having sex with Armando for money and gifts, much like Ander starts engaging with Patrick for a material benefit (i.e.: preserving Omar's scholarship). Mencía meets Armando as she steps out of her house and is looking for a place to stay, after fighting with her father. Armando offers her a luxurious room but pretends to leave like he has no other intention, manipulating Mencía to ask him to stay for sex. His manipulation is intertwined with materialistic benefits, as he first makes sure that Mencía can have anything she requests. In the context of sexual coercion, "not all pressures [are] believed to be harmful because a person can be sexually coerced through promises, gifts, pleading, and the use of loving words" (Laurie Serquina-Ramiro 2005:486). Armando manipulates young Mencía with said gestures, as opposed to Patrick's more explicit technique with Ander.

Aged seventeen, Mencía is over the age of consent in Spain (Sandra M Parra-Barrera et. al 2021:4), but Armando is thrice her age. According to Ellen M Volpe and others (2013:2081),

there are differential effects of power dynamics in wide age gaps relationships. The characters in question are not in a romantic relationship, but Mencía is under Armando's control since she has no decision-making power in their sexual encounters. Later, Mencía finds out that Armando is a friend of her father, and she gets blackmailed by him to continue the sexual activities, reaffirming the power hierarchies at play.

Sexual blackmail enters the scene as Mencía hesitates when he inappropriately starts touching her in public. Based on the survival sex scholarship (Czechowski and others 2022:294), I see Armando as someone who constrains the capacity for sexual agency, including consent because Mencía is not in a position to negotiate with him. According to Ann Cotton and others (2002:1791), rape and prostitution myths could be linked in similar ways. One of the rape myth items, as mentioned by Diana Lisa Payne (1993:142) is noticeable in Armando's way of looking at Mencía: "if a man buys a woman things like expensive clothes and jewellery, he is entitled to sex from her." With that said, Armando's character is a clear portrayal of a harasser, unlike the more ambiguous relationship between Patrick and Ander. Armando is someone who believes in rape myths, but his perspective is more clearly denounced. He manipulates and blackmails Mencía and even tries to kill her sister.

According to Karen McMillan and others (2018:1518), paid sexual activities carry a range of labels, which involve slight differences such as "sex work," "transactional sex" and "survival sex." Mencía's practice is best described as sex in exchange of her survival because she gets shelter, food, and money. In this context of an almost similar practice, Mencía subverts the rape myth of thinking that there is no harm in sexually abusing prostitutes (Jody Miller and Martin D Schwartz 1995:1) because Armando is harassing her mentally and physically by blackmailing with his authoritative nature. In the beginning, Armando is so considerate of Mencía to a point where he says he would stop anytime she wanted, later he thinks that he has the right to touch her as much as he wants because of the gifts he offers in exchange.

Much like Ander and Patrick's, Armando and Mencía's first interaction is set in a pub with a blue-coloured setting. At first, the close-up shots of Mencía's face suggest that she does not even like Armando to sit next to her in the bar. But later, something changes her mind. This is a possible connection to show how she feels less support, love, and approval from her own father. While she is maintaining her relationship with Armando, Mencía is romantically involved with Rebeka Parrilla, another high school student. At first, Rebeka is unaware of her girlfriend's sex work but later finds out, and they continue to date. Mencía continues to sleep with Armando for money.

According to Maria Krisch and others (2019:116), "young people who engage in transactional sex also report that they are selective about their customers and the sexual acts that they perform, and that they do not view themselves as sex workers". Perhaps this is the case of Mencía: visible in her reaction when Armando asks her to serve another man. This new client asks her to cooperate with his kinks and she hesitates to do so. The client is perceivable as someone who believes in the rape myth of "all prostitutes are the same because he does not respond to Mencía's disapproval.

To conclude, both Ander's and Mencía's storylines feature stark contradictions as *Élite* both perpetuates and debunks rape myths, because we can see both features coexisting in the two triangles. This speaks to Rebecca M Hayes' (2023:87) stance on media's impact on viewers, as

the media, including pop culture, both reinforces and challenges rape culture. Apart from that, the show portrays the role of power dynamics in sexual abuse with Patrick and Armando.

2.1.2. Gender-based violence

European Commission (2022) defines gender-based violence as “the brutality directed against a person because of that person’s gender or an act of cruelty that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.” This definition seems to be pertinent to help us identify the range of aggression in *Élite*, because the discourse of gender-based violence less commonly identifies men as possible victims (Abhijth Ghosh and Ambika Kumar 2024:117). I start this section by exploring the physical aspect that comes under these gendered atrocities in *Élite*’s male characters.

Cruz Carvalho, a Portuguese footballer who comes out of the closet at an advanced age, becomes the victim of a brutal attack, which ultimately takes his life. At first, it does not start as violence only targeted at him but more broadly against the LGBTQIA+ community. The aggression begins when Cruz celebratorily waves the rainbow flag as he is standing on the football ground. These initial shots are fast paced, showing the intensity of the homophobic crowd. But they are followed by a series of silent cinematic slow-motion scenes. At the same time, the camera constantly pans back and forth between the mad crowd and Cruz to convey the loneliness, fear and injustice faced by Cruz. In the scene, a group of homophobes target him for his sexual orientation.

According to Silvia Díaz-Fernández (2022:2531), *Élite* redefines traditional masculinities, crosses boundaries of heteronormativity with its openly gay characters like Omar and Ander, which enjoyed a positive reception. In such a progressive context, Cruz’s death as a hate crime towards his sexual orientation has the potential to deliver ‘bury your gays’ trope, i.e.: a narrative that uses a death of a gay character as a plot device (Kelsey Cameron 2018:1). In this trope, queer characters of a show are meant to have a gruesome murder, mostly perpetrated by a straight character. Villanelle in *Killing Eve* (2018-2022), Poussey in *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019), and Oberyn in *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) are one of the notable characters of this trend. It is important to identify that none of these characters are necessarily killed because of their gender identity but they happened to be part of the queer community. *Élite* has progressive storylines of other queer characters, their acceptance and normal life. In this sense, the show tries to convey the harsh realities of gender and sexual minorities by including Cruz’s death.

Apart from this hate crime against gay men, the series portrays violence within the queer community as well. Going back to Omar, for example, he loathes Patrick because of his interaction with Ander. The scene transcribed below is a rough sexual encounter between Omar and Patrick, which is manipulated by the latter and initiated by the former characters.

Scene three: “Leave Ander alone. Leave us both alone.”

Patrick sits on the table.

Omar steps forward.

Patrick: [clicks tongue] “Look I can step aside”

“But he might come for me.”

Omar: “I don’t know. You just wrote to him, and he didn’t come, did he?”

[Patrick chuckles]

Patrick draws near.
 Their lips almost touch before Omar turns his head.
Patrick: “But you did”
 [Omar sighs]
 “Do Ander and I make you jealous, or do you want a piece of it?”
 [Omar inhales sharply]
 [Patrick gasps]
 Grabbing Patrick’s neck, Omar forces him onto the table
 [panting, chuckles slightly]
Patrick: “I can only think of one way to improve this position”
 Omar turns him over and pulls down his pants. Then licking his hand, he rubs Patrick and begins to thrust.

Through the relationships, *Élite* portrays manipulation of consent as another instance of gender-based violence. Patrick uses his tactics on Omar as well but, unlike his relationship with Ander, there are no romantic feelings attached. In addition, unlike other sexually interactive scenes where Patrick’s face is visible, emotions are hard to read, and this unexpected sexual encounter does not have much screen time. While it could be them just having sex, it is also a possibility of Omar’s urge to subject Patrick to powerlessness because in consensual rough sex, individuals are allowed to express sexual agency. According to Rebecca L Burch and Catherine Salmon (2019:384), perceived meanings of these terms are possible to change with contexts and people. In Scene three, the agency is with Omar because we do not see any movement from Patrick other than moaning and surrendering to Omar. But in the first part of the Scene three, it appears that Patrick is in control.

In Chapter one, I discuss similar forms of violence: in *13 Reasons Why*, the victim of male-on-male rape is straight as opposed to the rapist who is secretly gay. In addition, peer violence is onefold as it is shown to occur only between heterosexual characters. Instead, *Élite* sees aggression between peers in a twofold manner of heterosexual and homosexual settings which is a more innovative representation of modern masculinities onscreen. And it is observable through Omar’s perspective, as he expresses anger with sex. According to Claudio Longobardi and Laura Badenes-Ribera (2017:2039), “sexual violence between intimate partners is defined as a sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without freely given consent of the victim or against someone who is unable to consent or refuse.” As I explained in the previous paragraph, the scene is rushed, and facial expressions are unnoticeable. Patrick might not have the capacity to comprehend the nature of Omar’s act, in other words, he must have been in a position where he is unable to consent or refuse. Violence between heterosexual peers can also be seen as an act of revenge as Guzmán Nunier Osuna, Marina’s brother, becomes physically aggressive with his colleagues. He brutally beats Pablo, Samuel and even tries to torture his best friend, Polo.

Psychological violence has the power to cause other forms of physical damage if unleashed terribly. Polo, the murderer of Marina (the girl whose death causes complications within the community), engages in a heated conversation with Lucrecia Montesinos Hendrich, another friend from the elite high school circle. Because everyone finds it surprising that Polo is released on bail, Lucrecia questions Polo as to why he is still coming to school after killing Marina. She does this because of her feelings towards Marina’s brother. At this stage, Polo is a

dysfunctional character traumatised by his own deeds. However, he breaks the silence and starts bewildering Lucrecia, as he tells her that she is worthless and just a pawn for her friends. As mentioned before, the cruelty that ruins the mental state of a person has consequences that could lead to other forms of atrocities. Drunk Lucrecia, while holding a cracked glass bottle, accidentally stabs Polo. It is not intentional, but the intense emotions planted by Polo have a boomerang effect on him.

Finally, *Élite* explores the intersections between gender and economic violence, in the narrative of other three female characters: Cayetana Grajera Pando, Carla Rosón Caleruega, and Lucrecia. As any elite education establishment, the high school consists of students from wealthy and powerful families, and it is pointless to fake one's identity just to be a part of that circle. This is explainable through "flexing," a behaviour that makes people fake their identities to be accepted by society (Yusuf Nanang Qosim and Dewi Umronih Yusuf 2024:1052). This is usually associated with lifestyles that promote themselves as wealthy such as influencers at present times. They further stresses that flexing occurs when there is no self-awareness. This could make someone from a poor background to irrationally follow the lifestyle of a wealthier person. *Élite* features a case of flexing with the story of Cayetana, a new student who goes through this situation just to be bullied by the high-class clan for hiding her identity of being the college cleaner's daughter. Her self-unawareness leads to disruptions with her mother since Cayetana begins to look down at her as if she truly belongs to a higher class. But her identity gets revealed, and she drops out from the circle and the lifestyle she yearns. However, this leads to a redemption arc. Cayetana's arc transitions from being a morally ambiguous working class-student who finds tactics to fit into the private school, to becoming a graduate from the same institution made of students who mock her after her identity has been revealed. Therefore, bullying does not have any psychological impact on her. Cayetana eventually gets to deal with class struggle and accepts the inequality of contemporary Spain, as she is seen as the college janitor by the end of Season three. While her re-appearance seems like the writers' attempt to keep her around Las Encinas for future plots, it is also interpretable as the representation of social inequality for having to do the same labour job as her mother.

Whereas Cayetana shifts from being more working class, "pretending to be rich" and then back to square one, another female character, Lucrecia, changes her social status downwardly due to gendered violence. Her father discovers she is maintaining an incestuous relationship with her stepbrother. To punish her, he cuts her income, resulting in the financial collapse of her entire future. In doing so, the father is abusing the daughter by not providing her with the means for education. For Olufunmilayo I Fawole (2008:168), "economic violence is when the abuser has complete control over the victim's money and other economic resources or activities". This type of brutality is as important as other types, and maybe it is possible to cause other types of violence, like physical and psychological.

Something similar happens with Carla, another student, who was once Polo's girlfriend. She encourages him to confess to Marina's murder in court, and when he is about to do it, Carla's father asks her to stop doing anything about it. He pressures her to refrain from incriminating Polo, since the father's business might get affected by her statement. Therefore, she must lie in court, otherwise her father tells her that the mother would not be able to survive with the money left. Usually, she is very manipulative and gets what she wants. In the psychological and physical form of aggression, there is a reaction to be expected. By contrast, economic violence is an abuse that could go unnoticed since the victim might not realise, they are being violated.

Carla lets herself to be controlled by the father. This scene is also explicable with the “minorisation” of women (Rita Laura Segato 2016:615), because it sees women as lesser beings. This concept allows patriarchal societies to interpret women as vulnerable.

2.1.3. Non-consensual taping and image-based abuse

The only on-screen rape victim of *Élite* is Isadora Artiñán, a new student at Las Encinas. Ander is not a victim of rape but sexual assault because there is no penetration. “Sexual assault” is a hypernym coined to describe an array of physical acts including unwanted touching and groping as faced by Patrick, but rape is specifically about penetration.¹¹ According to Stacie Merken and Veronyka James (2020:1178), popular media, especially crime TV shows formulated the myth of rape as a crime by strangers. Contrarily, Isadora is raped by three of her juniors, Hugo Múler, Javier, and Álex Díaz while she is unconscious and intoxicated.

In addition, the show goes further as it adds another layer to its portrayal of rape, by bringing to the fore the issue of taping. One of the rapists records Isadora’s rape using a mobile, bringing another form of assault: image-based abuse. Taping could be consensual or nonconsensual, but in most cases, the abuser is highly likely to use them to blackmail the other person. If not, any other purpose still has the risk of leaking. As two other students, Iván Carvalho and Phillipe von Triesenberg, see the video, they are convinced that she is not conscious. At school, the rapists show the video to them because both happen to be in the same room, but they are only witnesses, not perpetrators, as they do not partake in the rape.

The scene reminds us of *13 Reasons Why*, when Justin fails to save Jessica from her rapist. Similarly, Iván and Phillipe also cannot rescue Isadora despite their presence in the same room because they are also unconscious with alcohol and drug consumption. When Hugo, one of the rapists, shows the video to Iván and Phillipe, he hints to them that Isadora is enjoying it. He makes comments such as “she was so horny” until Phillipe denies them and says, “she could have kissed us all,” implying that Isadora could have reacted like that if she were sexually aroused at that moment as they believed. It is in this sense that Lawrence G Calhoun (1981”17) and others note how “two popular myths about rape are that many cases involve false accusations, and that women ‘enjoy’ being raped”. The male characters presume her enjoyment, because she is not resisting the act. In *13 Reasons Why*, Jessica’s rape is identical to Isadora’s because both are drunk and unconscious with no body movement to stop the rape, due to their lack of agency.

A blend of slow motion and fast-paced action can be seen in this scene to give an idea about how Isadora is not aware of things happening around her, while the rapists know exactly what they are doing. Fast paced action follows the latter, but it shifts to slow motion when the rape is shown as POV shots from Ivan and Phillipe’s perspective, implying that the witnesses were under the heavy influence of drugs and unconscious. The scene is not very explicit, as it does

¹¹ (Cook et al. 2018) *What’s the difference between sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment and rape?*, accessed 24 July 2024. <https://theconversation.com/whats-the-difference-between-sexual-abuse-sexual-assault-sexual-harassment-and-rape-88218>

not show any nudity other than an overhead shot of Hugo, Javier and Alex touching and kissing her.

Shamus R Khan and others (2018:433) note how college rape cases are very rarely reported, as victims are not comfortable with it. In addition, unlike the “false accusations” myth, rape survivors often do not come forward since they reckon that justice would be difficult to achieve. In this context, Isadora, after the rape, enters an in-denial phase, but Phillipe and Cayetana encourage her to file a report, which she finally does, after learning how much people care about her.

Élite foregrounds other types of image-based abuse. In non-consensual taping, sex might be consensual, but the recording might not be. For instance, Cayetana finds out that Phillipe is secretly taping them having sex. She finds this out as she gets ready to go to ‘le Bal’, a formal dance event organised by Phillipe, who besides being her date is a French-Spanish prince. We should remember that Cayetana is the college janitor. As she falls in love with a prince, and just when the audience is expecting to consume yet another fairy-tale love story, she finds out about the recordings. Then, she dissociates from everything around her. A follow-up steady camera moves with her to let the viewers know that something unexpected is going to happen. Her face is only revealed on the dance floor through a POV shot where the audience can see her uneasiness. In this scene, the location plays a significant role, because the media personnel who came for the event coverage observe dancers. A slow pivot shot pans from Cayetana to Phillipe as she is questioning him while they are in the spotlight. Devastated, Cayetana leaves the scene without knowing if he shares these videos with a group of friends, as someone who is involved in image-based abuse typically would.

Phillipe justifies the making of these videos, arguing they are for his safety, in case of any blackmail attempts and sexual allegations, as he belongs to a royal family. Despite his answer, Cayetana makes sure to tell him that nonconsensual taping is a form of sexual abuse. Her character portrayal is different to the others who endured sexual harassment. She has sexual assault awareness and is also vocal about it with Phillipe who downplays it. According to Rachel R Reynolds and Maria Giovanna Musso (2019:13), television rarely does anything except reinforcing rape myths. This is one of those rare television moments because Cayetana breaks the myth of rape definition as a sexual act. This is another example of how *Élite* contradictorily reproduces and denounces rape myths. This character favours the latter distinguishably.

Alexandra S Marcotte and Jessica J Hille (2021:319-332) categorise three scenarios about consent complexity in our digital age. First, in relation to the sexual activity and the creation of the recording. For instance, Cayetana and Phillipe could both have each other’s consent for sex and for the tape, but their desire to record could be uneven: Phillipe could like the idea of recording more than Cayetana. Second, the possibility of having consensual sex but nonconsensual recording and dissemination. Third, the nonconsensual taping of a sexual assault. *Élite* toys with another category that Marcotte and Hille’s classification (2021) does not contemplate: consensual sex with nonconsensual taping that serves another reason other than disseminating. Phillipe first gives this impression of being under that category by denying his motives with an unconvincing reason to Cayetana.

In a later scene, Cayetana forgives Phillipe and for a moment thinks of restarting the relationship. But she changes her mind as they are kissing inside his limousine. She

continuously tells him to stop the act, but he refuses to listen. The intensity of that moment and the fear of getting raped is visible through the quick camera cuts of Cayetana begging him to end the kissing and touching. She manages to escape from him, as he looks at her with a look of self-frustration.

In the following scene, when most of the characters around Phillipe are busy kissing their partners as it is New Year's Eve, he reaches Elodie, his ex-girlfriend and a victim of his rapist nature. Instead of calling, he sends a voice message to Elodie by asking her to take it as the evidence for his confession as Cayetana's escape seems to trigger his guilt.

The Cayetana-Phillipe storyline nearly became another rape story, but the writers attempt to make it a life changing experience for Phillipe. A rapist's guilt and his confession to the victim, however, do not produce any justice in real life. In *Élite*, the rape victim must remain silent because of Phillipe being a prince. The series had the potential to promote legal action against rape, since Elodie has a voice recording as evidence, but the show falls short of this possibility, in that she just exposes the rape story to her fellow students in the middle of a party. The inconsistency between the rape myth acceptance and its opposite can be found again as the victim does not bring Phillipe to court but merely exposes him to his peers at Las Encinas. Paradoxically, Phillipe's redemption arc does not include punishment for breaking law, but instead shows his attempts to assure Isadora's rapists get penalties. Season six features an ellipsis as we hear that he has gone back to France to resume his duties as a prince. There is no physical appearance of him in this season, but his name is still mentioned. Much like *13 Reasons Why*, this production realistically portrays the possibilities of impunity, but concurrently implies that there is no cogent attempt to challenge rape myths.

2.2. The troubled life of Marina

2.2.1. A victim of statutory rape

Much like Hannah, in *13 Reasons Why*, Marina faces a series of unfortunate events including statutory rape. Pilot episode of *Élite* introduces her as the main character whose death is going to cause continual troubles for her colleagues. The triggering incident of the series starts with a description of her status and flashbacks of her life. This is similar to the narrative style of *13 Reasons Why*, except that Marina's death is due to a homicide, not suicide. Despite that, what they have in common is gender-based violence and explicit sexual abuse, in that *Élite* features a subplot about statutory rape which results in Marina getting HIV.

Creators write her story as a teenager who engages with emotional promiscuity, and whose priority is centred around feeling romantic connections. As a minor, she gets HIV infection from Pablo Ruiz, a scholarship holder at the school, aged seventeen at that time. At first, both do not understand the gravity of their act. Young adults who have intercourse with minors with whom they have small age gaps tend to believe that having sex is not a crime (Barbara A Oudekerk et al. 2013:861). This is noticeable in a conversation between Marina and one of her love interests, Samu, where she tells him that she thought Pablo would stay with her because both have something similar, even if it is a life-threatening infection. In this context, the show emphasises how Marina is not aware of being a victim of statutory rape and is just smitten with the highschooler who had sex with her.

While this is understandable considering her young age, what is striking is the way the show treats events related to the statutory rape. In fact, only the police brings the seriousness of the

crime, as they conduct police interrogations for Marina's murder. This rape in question could have been portrayed as the midpoint of Marina's storyline but everything related to it is limited to dialogues. For instance, we never see Pablo's face and every detail attached to this act is limited to just one episode in the first season. Marina's rape story, narrated in a single episode, is minimal, if we compare it with Mencía's storyline that continues for several episodes.

This downplay of statutory rape is further explainable by the way Marina's family reacts to the situation. Her parents could have simply brought her case to the police and try to achieve justice for their daughter, which would have been much easier for them considering the wealth and the power they hold within the society. Instead, the family bribes Pablo to not to go to police because Guzmán, Marina's brother, brutally attacks Pablo inside the men's washroom to avenge her sister. Two of his friends accompany him. Even in this scene, Pablo's face is not revealed to the audience as if he is an insignificant character. Marina's family values their reputation over the urge to find justice for their daughter. That is why they are more focused on covering up Guzmán's assault.

Marina does not get justice from the court system, nor does she get a sense of relief from her family either. Besides the fact that they do not notify law enforcement, it is she who receives all the complaints for having sex and getting infected. Mostly, the show captures these accusations through camera shots of her family members' empty stares at her, whenever she talks about it or about a sex-related topic, such as having a new boyfriend.

Jan Jordan (2012:247-248) identifies six key silencing agents in censoring rape victims: internalised self-censorship, police responses, court and trial processes, formal and informal supports, researchers/academics and media. *Élite*, however, foregrounds another instance which Jordan does not contemplate: the victim's own family. The moment Marina talks about a love interest, her family either denies her presence or disapproves her interaction. Nevertheless, she is vocal about her condition with family members even though they ignore her when she is speaking which gives an idea about women's agency in a patriarchal family. This silence and helplessness lead to another aspect of her character which is the objectification.

2.2.2. Objectification of the patriarchal society

Barbara L Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts (1997:173-206) introduce the theory of objectification by examining the ways in which societies perceive women by merely taking them as objects instead of functional human beings. Marina's pathway to becoming an object has started from her home itself with her coming-of-age ceremony. This is a ceremonial custom to mark a girls' passage to womanhood. In these ceremonies, a family presents a girl to the society as she is an ideal woman, most importantly objectifying her as a virgin. Marina finds it absurd for her to have something like that since she is no longer a virgin. These coming-of-age ceremonies are more accurately an invitation for suitors of the community that the girl is ready to be a woman. They differ in certain cultures, as some of them directly objectify girls by having these ceremonies to mark the first time of menstruating. In Spain, and most Spanish-speaking countries, however, the ceremony is held after a girl turns fifteen. Families advise girls to adapt more feminine features within puberty rites. These advises are a part of the patriarchal society, where they could be mostly verbalised by mothers at home.

In this wealthy family of Marina, gender roles play an important part to emphasise the power of patriarchal society. Father does the decision making when mother keeps acknowledging her husband's choice. Guzmán, the eldest son of the family, is also in control of activities at least led by his sister. Marina wishes to invite Samu for her coming out party and Guzmán disapproves that. But, instead of accepting her fate and embracing self-objectification, she still invites Samu for the party. Self-objectification is when a woman thinks of perceiving herself as an observer. It is possible for a woman to adopt the expected gender roles with this phenomenon. However, Marina does not let herself fall into that situation.

By contrast, Hannah, in *13 Reasons Why*, is a victim of the male gaze, gets objectified and, at the same time, she observes herself. Marina's resentment towards being an object often comes out when she argues with her parents that she is an HIV-infected person and that they should accept it and overcome this fact instead of despising her. However, her father does not let her take away his authoritative figure. According to Beatrice González-de-Garay and others (2019:414-433), a Spanish study exploring the nature of gender representation in prime-time television reveals that family and social relations mainly portray female characters. In this narrative, Marina is seeable as a troublemaker and her parents, as protective. But the reason they avoid seeking justice for Marina by bribing Pablo is because they want to protect the family name, not her necessarily.

Even after knowing her condition, Samu says he wants to be with her. Later, she romantically involves with Samu's brother, Nano, who also loves her regardless of her state. As we are never exposed to her bond with Pablo, these could be the first times Marina gets into relationships with people who do not objectify her. Therefore, she goes from being objectified at the comfort of her home to emancipation from men who are perceived to be distant to her in terms of socioeconomical backgrounds. While breaking the class barrier is progressive itself, breaking the gender-violence myth is more liberal of Marina's character, because she is an HIV- infected high school student who is made to believe by her family that people from working class are mere opportunistic cheaters. However, she gets past that mindset and befriends with Samu and Nano first. According to Mervyn Nicholson (1990:314), female liberation involves "personal-sexual and socio-political emancipation," and Marina takes control of her life by trying to achieve both, whereas these decisions were previously taken by her family on behalf of her.

2.2.3. Perpetrator trauma in a teen thriller

It is relevant to discuss *Élite* in relation to "perpetrator trauma." According to Erin McGlothlin (2020:100), a clear definition for "perpetrator trauma" is yet to be established considering how it differs from the trauma experienced by the victims of violence. Furthermore, the term includes a range of atrocities starting from mass cruelties to violence originating in and committed against individuals. Hence, we can define the concept as an umbrella term that investigates trauma experiences of the perpetrators who engage in violence. To begin with, the triggering incident of both *13 Reasons Why* and *Élite* are the traumatic news of a teenager's demise. Whereas *Élite* exposes us to the ongoing investigations of Marina's murder, *13 Reasons Why* starts with people grieving and receiving voice tapes from Hannah, who records them before committing suicide. In Chapter one, I have argued that even though *13 Reasons Why* is a psychological thriller and not a murder story, it is interpretable as a crime thriller by identifying how a set of people made someone take her life. Therefore, it is reasonable to name them as perpetrators and, in every episode, they carry the weight of guilt, except for the rapist.

Contrarily, *Élite* does not need to interpret non-criminal incidents as murders because the characters engage in killings beyond doubt. It is more clearly a crime thriller, as murders are a central part of the storyline. In addition, the exploration of the criminal's psychological reasons is less prominent, as writers seemingly disregard these teenage characters' reaction to the crimes they commit. Crime fiction carries a plethora of issues that deals with damage (Leanne Dodd 2019:235) and because of that both shows I discuss in my thesis cause trauma as a subset literature. It means that besides being thrillers, these productions have an underlying trauma fiction narrative. For Dodd, crime as a genre creates issues which lead up to trauma in any manner. This is visible through the first season of *Élite* as people are grieving, fuming, panicking, regretting, and startling with the loss of a human being who shared her life with them. But this range of emotions is only visible in that first season. Therefore, the underlying trauma narration is less evident in *Élite* compared to the American teen thriller of my thesis. By contrast, *13 Reasons Why* carries the entire weight and direction of the series based on that one incident from the pilot episode up to the end. To be sure, a TV series does not have to be based on one canon event, but *Élite* forgets the trauma of killing after the first murder. The first and the only realistic perpetrator trauma portrayal in *Élite* is written for Polo. He reaches a traumatic state where he even attempts committing suicide. Whereas in *13 Reasons Why*, we had Clay, who sees an imaginary ghost of Hannah, here, quite similarly, Polo sees hallucinations of blood. According to Lawrence Luchoomun (2012:297), "the primary function of some few filmic representations of hallucination appears to be symbolic. The hallucination is represented as being experienced by an imagining subject, but at the same time it is a symbolic expression of this character's madness." He further stresses that cinema delivers these symbolic hallucinations in the best possible manner. This technique, however, expands from movies to TV productions as the two shows discussed in my thesis are examples of this transition. Polo strikes Marina with a school trophy and covers himself in her blood. Shocked by his wrongdoing, he walks to a nearby bathroom and gets rid of blood stains with the help of some friends. At that moment, he is not looking for help to cover up the murder, but his friends save them. Later, he sees his hands covered in blood as a reminder of how he cannot escape from Marina's murder, and this causes a suicide attempt. Whereas Clay's trauma in *13 Reasons Why* is presentable through hallucinations of a person, Polo's guilt is a symbolic expression. Murder is a constant feature of the show, but the perpetrators fail to portray intense emotions after the first season.

Perpetrator trauma is central to the basic Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis. It is in this sense that Polo seems to be constantly suffering from PTSD and panic attacks at school. At this point, much like several characters in *13 Reasons Why*, he becomes both a victim and a perpetrator. His inability to think clearly almost causes him to kill Ander, one of the friends who knows this secret. His character is built up as chaotic as possible to demonstrate the trauma he deals with, and it equals the weight of murder. But that ends with Polo, and the storyline includes other killings without any severe repercussions to it.

Conversely, *13 Reasons Why* carries out story build up, character development, and more conversations by focusing on Hannah's suicide. This does not mean that other characters are less visible, but their developments and arcs are based on Hannah. Throughout the entire series, her flashbacks are seeable along with changes of other characters. As *Élite* moves forward, an insufficient screen time is given for Marina's character, making her a less significant character

at midpoint. The show's plot continues with other killings (e.g.: when Lucrecia stabs Polo) as the surviving characters withdraw from the trauma component.

Much like Philippe, Lucrecia flies overseas and that is the end of her plotline. So does Guzmán, after killing another character. We never see them again, and we do not get to see whether they are dealing with some form of a trauma like Polo or not. Escaping (in the form of traveling overseas) brings to the fore the issue of the perpetrator trauma within these teenagers.

To sum up, *Élite* is a show that has multiple murder scenes committed by teenagers compared to *13 Reasons Why*, which is centred around one death. Despite that, every single teen character of the latter production is given some screen time to express that they felt a pressure for not being able to avoid Hannah's death. Moreover, the guilt of thinking they caused the death itself carries the story from start to end. *Élite* does that up until Polo's character and let teenagers to kill people without showing signs of any guilt afterwards. The media-influenced reality discussed by Gerbner and others (1981:39-72) in cultivation theory suggests that prolonged viewing of violence can have an impact on its viewers. In this context, *Élite* portrays teenagers easily escaping punishment from violent crimes they committed. Besides, the causes of death are brutal enough to let go without enduring a traumatic period. For example, Lucrecia stabs Polo in the chest and leaves the country for higher education. As I have said the trauma is only presentable through Polo and he also gets a bitter ending as a victim.

I now turn to explore other themes I find in the show that might have shaped up the complex lives of the *Élite* characters.

2.3. Shaping of behavioural profiles through social experiences

2.3.1 Class difference and religion

According to Rosemary Crompton (2006:658), class has become an inevitable factor in creating structured social inequalities in contemporary societies. *Élite* nurtures this idea from the title and the first episode itself when three working class students get scholarships to Las Encinas. This is not an act of kindness or recognition but simply a tactic by an upper-class character to cover up unethical businesses. Ventura Nunier, Marina and Guzmán's father, offers these scholarships to Samu, Nadia and Christian because his construction company made their previous school collapse as he had chosen low-quality products. This premise of the show speaks to how "recent empirical work has found that higher class individuals have a greater tendency to behave unethically than lower class individuals" (David Dubois et al. 2015:437). Ventura, for instance, is an unethical businessman who offers said scholarships as a bribe to lessen the damage caused by his company.

At the school, the new students face discrimination because of their social class. Paradoxically, it is Ventura's son, Guzmán, who bullies them frequently. Later, we find out that Pablo's interaction with Marina which caused HIV infection made Guzmán an elitist who loathes everyone that represents social classes below him. Ironically, his intuition turns to be right when the school, specifically his family, faces constant issues after the new students' arrival, who belong to the said working class.

Marina's romance with Nano has a butterfly effect on her death because she helped him to steal some expensive watches to pay his debts, and Polo finds out about it. First, Nano reaches Marina with the intention of financial benefits which questions Dubois' assumption about

social class and ethics (436-449). Nano later grows true feelings towards her but also becomes a suspect on the run for Marina's murder. Polo and his friends let Nano, an innocent man, to go into hiding for a crime he does not commit.

The Season one is more focused on depicting class difference through daily life in Spain, for instance by showcasing how lower middle class teenage boys gather on streets to drink. The country does have a history of local youth gathering in public places to drink off-licensed alcohol. This custom is called *botellón*, literally meaning "large bottle." Christian is one of the teenagers in the show who take part in these roadside gatherings. By contrast, wealthier characters go to high end bars, galas, and other upper-class functions for drinks. Furthermore, working class teenagers stick to that definition by having to do part-time jobs while studying. Samu works as a waiter, Omar and Nadia work in their father's grocery store. By contrast, the privileged class gets credit cards from their wealthy parents. Teenagers from both these societal units starts gathering only at school functions, but a clash between the two parties can be seen when those from the working class get invited to high class functions. This subtle aggression and hate towards the other class is not a visible in house parties of working-class students. Instead, in an upper-class function, Samu gets humiliated for going to a rental service to get a blazer.

Élite goes against the definitions of social reproduction by lowering an upper-class character, Lucrecia, and upgrading a working-class character, Nadia, as they chase a scholarship to study abroad. Social reproduction is the production and reproduction of capitalist and labour classes (Jack Norton and Cindi Katz 2017:1-2) which simply means that the rich will stay the same and the poor will maintain their economic status for the generations to come. As Lucrecia's father cuts her income, she is on her own to finance studies. Prior to this new economic status, she was a mean character who looks down at peers less wealthy than her. Loss of financial freedom changes her into a humble character who wants to work together with Nadia to collectively achieve the dream of studying abroad.

In addition to class difference, *Élite* also explores issues of religious discrimination, as it portrays European Islamophobia through the immigrant siblings, Nadia and Omar. Nadia wears a Hijab, which the new school principal asks her to remove. According to Sara Slininger (2014:77), Muslim women are a target of what is known as "intersectional discrimination," because they receive criticism for the way they wear the traditional attire. The hijab might look like a hindrance to a random observer. Some Islamic women, however, fight against its bans, because they feel less safe with the male gaze (77). *Élite* addresses this issue but also makes it look like Nadia feels free and confident without a hijab, something she embraces in the first few episodes. The scene takes place in a nightclub with a slow motion take of her appearance on the dance floor with the hair style update and Guzmán looking at her in awe. Slininger (68-70) further states out that some women are forced to wear hijabs while some deliberately wear it as they are comfortable with it. A conversation between Omar and Samu subtly implies the islamophobia against Omar when he reveals that Omar does not hear back from a restaurant where both applied for a job as waiters. Omar's character arc faces challenges not just from the outer world but from his conservative Islamic family, which I explain in the next section.

2.3.2 Homosexuality and parent-child relationship

Islamic theological studies target homosexuality including but not limiting the discussion to the holy scripture, the Quran and the Islamic law named "Sharia." Accordingly, it is hard to

accept inclusivity and acceptance in Muslim communities beyond heteronormative contexts (Rusi Jaspal 2016:1-6). Yusef, Omar's father, is portrayed as someone who lives up to his religious beliefs. In fact, he has an estranged daughter who left the house because she could not tolerate the rules and religious practices at home. Her story is not detailed but it is enough to imply his reaction to Omar's gender identity. Ander's mother is the first to tell Yusef about his son's sexual orientation and his furious reaction makes Omar lie about himself. Later, the son comes out and has a heated conversation with his father. According to Elga Sikkens and others (2018:2277), parents tend to ignore the voice of their children if their ideologies are "radicalised" or modern. Yusef not only ignores his son's words "he is my boyfriend" (i.e.: Ander), but repeatedly responds that Ander is just a friend like it would magically convince Omar of it. He also looks for suitable brides for Omar but eventually accepts him.

The show portrays Patrick in the earlier episodes as a sole manipulator, but in Season five we see a slight change, as he breaks himself and finally acknowledges and regrets his manipulative behaviours. The writers take the parent-child relationship to a controversial state by making Patrick approaching Cruz, the footballer. The controversy lies because Iván, Cruz's son, is already dating Patrick. Iván questions this love triangle, but takes the side of his father by accusing his boyfriend of being a manipulator. It is often said that emerging adults have a lower trust in their fathers (Qiyang Ouyang and Rebecca YM Cheung 2023:210). Contrarily, Iván trusts his father over what happens between him and Patrick. The scenes give subtle hints that it is not just Patrick, but Cruz also seduces the former to start a relationship. In this timeline, Cruz has not come out yet and the audience knows the nature of Patrick, which is exactly why Iván chooses his father over boyfriend.

Philippe and his mother, Estefanía share another interesting parent-child relationship. She is extremely protective of her son and oblivious of his wrongdoings. A conversation between the mother and son reveals this nature when he blames her for the way she raises him up. Prior to that, we can see how she approaches Cayetana after the attempted rape by her son. Estefania is aware of her son's crimes and still disregards them. She asks Cayetana to get back with Phillippe because he is a prince, and it is good for her. This plotline is reminiscent of *13 Reasons Why*, which foregrounds the relationship between Bryce, the rapist of Hannah, and his mother, Nora. She is not aware of Hannah's rape until Bryce confesses to her at the stage of charges against him. Both these mothers and their sons have the wealth and power which make them sheltered in their respective societies.

In *Élite*, every parent figure has character flaws that end up being the decisive factor for their children to be what they are. For example, Patrick is distant with his father and tends to get others' attention by being the manipulator he is. The strict and arrogant nature of Omar's household is hard for him. As I have mentioned in earlier paragraphs, the wealthier parents control their children's lives through finances, but also make sure that they do not tarnish the family name. No couples end up together in this show regardless of their sexual orientation. Therefore, we cannot expect to see any healthy relationship between queer characters as well. Homophobia is visible based on religion and masculine stereotypes.

2.3.3 Pornification and implications

There are mixed reviews about *Élite* and its sex scenes but most of them think that it is unnecessary to include such detailed scenes for a teen show (Codrai 2021). At first glance the critics essentially equate the show with porn, but I argue that not every scene is gratuitous and

not just meaningless sex used for the shock value. Before that pornification needs to be defined. It is still an ill-defined term which defines the acts of pornographic incursions in mainstream media which are not necessarily regarded explicit (Karen Boyle:85-87 2018) such as television industry. This leads to the traces of softcore pornography which is visible in *Élite*.

It is complicated to define softcore pornography as a concept of its own since hardcore porn holds the title as a genre of its own. Therefore, both soft porn and semi-porn has become a type of mainstream content that hold qualities which cannot be seen in hardcore porn. The use of “mainstream” is important as it gives the idea that the content itself is necessarily not censored and possible to detect on screens. To be more detailed, both softcore and hardcore contain nudity and arouse the viewer but visual representation defers with the depiction of the body explicitly. In that sense, the key difference would be the shots of penetration with the display of penis, vagina and adult toys.

I present my argument by analysing few intimate scenes with its pornified elements and the implication they have on the storyline, character development and its implication in the aggression. Usually, the said aggression is linked with hardcore porn, and modern-day soft-core content is what used to be hard-core which makes the hatred and humiliation in pornographic content more violent (Eran Shor and Kimberly Seida 2019:16-28). That being said, I first look at how the show interprets sex to mark the territories when money could not be the defining factor for power. Samu and Guzmán have had issues from the beginning of the show and every time Samu accepts his fate with less power dynamics. However, the situation changes when we see Ari, the principal’s daughter takes an interest in both. Both female and male bodies are shown and there are gestures of penetration which are hidden to maintain the soft-semi-core blend of the scenes. The director uses a camera arc shot to make us feel the intensity and the continuation of the sex scenes that varies by each 360-shot. Ari takes turns with Samu and Guzmán separately and it feels like a competition to win her. The friendship between them which developed from the scratch returns to its starting point, and both even become physically aggressive at each other because of Ari.

As explained in a previous section, Marina maintains a complicated relationship with the two brothers Samu and Nano. She says that she wants to love Samu but ends up falling in love with Nano. I see that this confusion is untangled by the way she engages in sex with the two brothers. First, the audience sees her intimacy with Nano at a house party which is ironically a gathering by Samu. They meet in the washroom and after few words, start passionately kissing each other. This duo shares a visually detailed sexual script as they move to Marina’s home in the next scene. Both completely naked, but we do not see genitalia as that would have been considered as hardcore porn. They both switch from being the receiver and giver while having passionate sex. Contrarily, the sex scene between Marina and Samu is shown as an amateur couple having sex with less confidence. There is no passion coming from both characters unlike how it is with Nano. Marina does not switch and stays as the receiver, and she asks Samu to calm down while he keeps saying sorry after the fast sexual intercourse. Therefore, pornification in both scenes are visible but the execution is different even with the background details. I define this as a cinematic approach to identify Marina who is perceivable as a sophisticated character.

Élite uses pornified scenes to spread awareness about sexual abuse apart from character development and story build up. This is explainable through the image-based abuse faced by Nadia and Guzman since Lucrecia leaks a video of them having sex in the school locker room.

This scene itself is a remark for Nadia since she initiates kissing Guzmán despite the restrictions, she has made for herself because of her conservative Muslim family. We see and hear her giggles and moans in the middle of the intercourse. The leaked video is shared with Nadia's family as well. Visual pornography comes in two forms as the depiction of sexual acts and bodies. In in this sex scene we cannot see Nadia's naked body because her upper garment is not undressed. There is an indication of penetration, but it is hidden because of the soft-core setting. Still, it is evident enough to affect the mental condition of Nadia as she completely breaks down in front of her parents. Here, we see revenge porn and its implication, which is the distribution of intimate images and videos.

In conclusion, I see that both semi and soft-core pornification is applied in the series not only as filler scenes but as a meaningful plot device. In this Chapter, I offer a close reading of *Élite* focusing on the sexual abuse as it covers less spoken rape myths in screen studies such as token resistance and victim masochism. I also point out how the show discusses varied acts of gender-based violence which is necessarily not evolving around women. I also question the crimes carried by teenagers based on perpetrator trauma as I compare the guilt driven nature of characters from *13 Reasons Why*. Lastly, I examine how the pornification of sexual scenes serves a purpose other than giving shock value. Tara M Emmers-Sommer and others (2006:313) say that "sexuality within the context of a love story appears to be acceptable and more appealing as it is perceived as less gratuitous and more germane to the nature of the storyline". Nudity portrayed in the scenes I use for my thesis fits this definition because the characters are emotionally invested in each other. However, the inclusion of sexual scripts that have nothing to do with the storyline is visible only from season four, and the mystery thriller attributes are lost. In the first three seasons, writers use different techniques to keep up the suspense. For example, every episode starts with a question and ends with the answer, leaving, at the same time, a cliff-hanger for the next season. Season four does not have that anticipation other than reintroducing characters. There are also multiple scenes of boys taking showers naked and making out in the school bathroom, which do little to no contribution to the plot or a suspense build-up.

Contrarily, the rape scene is fully gratuitous, considering how it contributes as a subplot to redeem Phillipe, who is a rapist in early episodes. *13 Reasons Why* does encourage rape myths for its female characters. However, that narrative contributes solely to the victims and shows an in-depth relevance to the story without playing as subplots for other characters. *Élite* approves and debunks rape myths in the context of a female victim, but it is not entirely instrumental to her survival story. Instead, the inclusion of the rape acts as a pathway for a rapist to remove his guilt. Phillipe is the one who encourages Isadora to take legal action against her rapists and the one who disapproves of a rapist's false opinion on consent. After this so-called redemption, he no longer becomes a central character because he returns to his home country. This rape narrative develops a former rapist as a hero and reveals a victim that fails to take legal action. At least, as a part of taking justice to her hands, she drugs two of her rapists and tattoos them "rapists". Publicly humiliating her perpetrators is the only revenge she could do. Despite that, police catch these culprits in an attempt to rape another girl based on information from one of the guilty-stricken rapists. All in all, it seems like the inclusion of this rape serves as a platform for rapists as a redemption arc and not for the victim and her survival story.

Chapter 3:

Fansubbing: between accuracy and functionality

In previous chapters, I adapt close reading to develop interpretations of visual and oral texts from *13 Reasons Why* and *Élite*. Chapter three analyses fan-made subtitles created for these shows in Sinhala to examine whether “fansubbing” can convey the originality and connotations of a scene. I employ the back translation technique and an existing theoretical framework to do that. Apart from that, I aim to discuss how this distinct type of subtitling emerges from participatory culture, and I offer “fansubbing” as a solution for audiovisual translation to explore screen studies instead of remaining circumscribed to translation studies. Before that, it is essential to understand subtitling and the significance of the Sinhala fansubbing community in Sri Lanka, which is my approach to this Chapter.

3.1. An overview of fansubbing

3.1.1. Defining the terms connected to fansubbing

Priyanka Rachabattuni and J Prabhakar Rao (2025:27-29) outline subtitling, fansubbing and same language subtitling (SLS) as some of the audiovisual translation (AVT) modes. They define these concepts by placing them on equal grounds even though both modes mentioned latterly come under the broad meaning of subtitling. On this occasion, I am not just merely differentiating them but highlighting the importance of user-generated subtitles as a branch of subtitling and identifying how it caters to a niche audience that depends on free user-generated subtitles. In this context, the said sampling includes those who visit fansubbing websites to specifically download subtitles made for the shows I explore in this study.

In contrast with the previously mentioned categorisation, Dionysios Kapsaskis (2020:555) emphasise on interlingual subtitling even though Rachabattuni and Rao (2025:13) see the coined term as a traditional approach in AVT landscape. I stand on a middle ground, where it is important to define the concepts enough to not cause ambiguity. We cannot disregard the conventional categorisation because an emerging idea like fansubbing falls under interlingual and intralingual subtitles. The rationale behind this is the nature of subtitles to be in a different language or the same as the audio. Rachabattuni and Rao define modes of AVT in a way that feels like they are open to more than one interpretation. For instance, they describe subtitling as “adding a text of an audio dialogue on screen, which is heard from the audiovisual film/video. Subtitle text either can be in the same language of the dialogue heard or in a foreign language” (27). After this, they also define SLS specifically as “subtitles that appear on screen in the same script of as audio language of the video on the screen” (29). This definition is improvable by including a section that describes the subtitling of foreign texts, too. However, it is ambiguous for readers when there is a broader term of subtitling that covers both interlingual and intralingual perspectives. They simply explain the process as something “practised voluntarily by fans of a particular film/show. Such fansubbing does not have any license or official” (29). This is the procedure for both SLS and interlingual, just like how subtitling works as a broad concept. For instance, English-language movies and TV shows receive amateur subtitles in English, which is the same as the source language. By contrast, foreign-language subtitle translation is a widely translation practice across the globe.

At this point, I prepare the ground for remaining sections of this chapter by establishing the terms I intend to use after considering the ambiguous nature of these definitions. I would use “subtitling” for the translation practices where the original text is in a foreign language as opposed to its translated text. Henrik Gottlieb (1998:245) offers four channels to reflect in AVT translation as “verbal auditory (dialogue, background noises and lyrics), non-verbal auditory (music and sound effects), verbal visual (superimposed titles and written signs on screen), and non-verbal visual (picture composition and flow)”. In my study, I only focus on the interlingual approach which deals with translations from “verbal auditory and visual channels to verbal visual channels, displaying the translation as a two-lined text on screen” (Agnieszka Szarkowska and Anna Jankowska 2024:6). Dialogues and written signs on screen fall into verbal auditory and visual channels respectively. Further, I would only focus on the fansubbing which is a passage from a foreign language to the local language of the community, which is Sinhala in my thesis. The source text (ST) is the original form of dialogues in my study which are in Spanish and English for *Élite* and *13 Reasons Why*, respectively. The target text (TT) is the translated texts that I would examine towards the end of this chapter which would be in Sinhala.

According to Elena Di Giovanni (2016:7), subtitling implies the coexistence of two languages. These two languages identify as the “source language” and the “target language,” the terms translators use in general. However, this coexistence is not visible in other forms of translation such as literary and legal contexts, where a reader cannot see or hear the source text simultaneously, unless an extra effort is taken to find it. In the case of subtitling, this comparison occurs within a simultaneous context, in which we hear dialogues in the source language and read the subtitles, most of the times, in the target language. In that case, subtitling is not just about concept, but also about form: the transfer of one idea from one text to another is as important as the way it is transferred. For example, such practices include the placement of the subtitle, the colour, its display time, and the number of words used in a line.

The coexistence of two languages becomes challenged again when there are multiple people speaking in a scene. Dialogues are only presentable in a linear manner and therefore it is possible for an overlapping text to appear on screen (Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael 2020:83). Subtitle creators often use a dash in front of the text onscreen to avoid the overlap and distinguish lines. This is visible in the two shows I take for this thesis, if we focus on the rapid exchange of words when characters are fighting. There is also the issue of translating culturally significant terms where the viewers of the target language could potentially get confused. Some subtitle makers tend to add one line to explain the cultural term. However, Díaz Cintas and Remael (19) note that viewers find it hard to read more characters in subtitles. The dialog itself could be long enough to read with the given time so unless there is an option to pause the screen, added words damage the entertaining factor and the clarity of the translation.

“Creative subtitling” for the audiovisual outcome of translating literary and screen texts is a creative response to a film in terms of language accuracy and style (Rebecca McClarty 2014:592-606). She is attentive towards the stylistic approaches such as the font size and the animations embedded, such as the way texts appear onscreen. She also emphasises how the creative component differs from traditional subtitling where the translated texts continue to be in the same font, speed, style and how all these factors depend on country and the genre of the original media. In this context, non-English speaking countries are more focused on traditional

ways of subtitling, if compared to its counterpart. In that case, subtitle makers practice their creative freedom with an artistic response to the text by making small to drastic changes that would cater to their respective audiences. These changes are mostly incorporated with the use of cultural terms. Such a setting has the potential to either ameliorate or misinterpret the original text's intention. For instance, some subtitle makers think of omitting an entire dialogue or a set of words that are essential to produce the meaning of a scene. Dialogues are important in screen texts because it can reveal us about a character by not just articulating, but also by the ways in which their emotions are delivered. Therefore, it is important for a subtitle maker to balance the attention to detail in both accuracy and style. In that case, the subtitle creator's fluency in targeted language is relevant: a balanced conversion should not feel like a translation, otherwise the seams would be showing. Instead, the target language here should sound as the original as much as possible. In light of this, a traditional subtitle creator could also engage with creative licenses as long as it delivers the authenticity of a said text. This part of my thesis stresses the significance of both source language and target text.

There are many types of AVT translations but every one of them is dividable under two subcategories named professional and nonprofessional or amateur subtitling. The latter type is not forced to undergo the rules of subtitling, but fan made subtitles still try to maintain the original to target language meaning seamless. This will be further discussed when I compare selected dialogues from the show. Before that, I now turn to discuss fansubbing more in depth.

3.1.2. Fansubbing vs. prosubbing

In this section, I discuss the non-professional and professional division in subtitling with more weight on the latter. Instead of the said terms, hereafter I use fansubbing and prosubbing to refer to them, respectively since it highlights the main difference of being a professional at the same activity of creating subtitles. In my second chapter, I define soft-core pornography vis-à-vis hardcore pornography because of the mainstream and varying nature of the latter. In a similar way, this user generated practice is mostly understood through the lens of professional subtitling. For example, Jorge Diaz-Cintas and Pablo Muñoz Sánchez (2006:38) see fansubbing as an umbrella term for any type of subtitling which does not belong to its counterpart, professional subtitling. Accordingly, fan-made subtitles do not follow the standard practices and industry level guidelines by production houses in carrying out translations. In view of this, the non-professional subtitles could be in different sizes and font colours. They could even exceed the two-line rule by trying to compress the complete visual and audible text in source language to target language.

The origin of modern-day fansubbing starts with the ever-growing fandom for Japanese animated movies and series known as "anime" (Fred Patten 2004:7). It is important to understand the significance of this genre to understand the direction of modern-day amateur subtitling. Anime originates to cater to the Japanese audience despite its unexpected worldwide popularity. Even in the 1990s, despite an economic downfall, the anime market grew because Japan wanted to fulfill its entertainment needs (Gilles Poitras 2008:55-58). Therefore, it used to be insular in nature, and because of that, production companies paid less attention to subtitling them in other languages in the first place. In such a context, the need for subtitling anime arises from the international audience because the non-Japanese speakers are not the animators' target audience.

The anime fansubbing process starts with the acquisition of raw audio and video clips of anime once it is aired. Subtitle creators then embed translated texts to these acquired videos as final products and upload to Internet afterwards. This is where the modern-day fansubbing practices and anime differ. Most of the fan made subtitles, including the ones I use in this chapter, are just rendered texts saved in SubRip (SRT) files, ranging from manual translation with simple desktop applications like Notepad (Diaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006:40) to open-source software such as Subtitle Edit. It is still a copyright violation because fansubbers do not have a license to translate and distribute the texts, even though they do not gain any monetary benefit from doing so. LaToya D Rembert-Lang (2010:24-25) acknowledges the illegality because the screenwriters and the filmmakers do not get a compensation after their work is translated, subtitled, and distributed. However, her take on the copyrights in fansubbing suggests that the legal framework is consumer-focused rather than just author-focused (33). Because it is a phenomenon that deals with consumers' desires, she further states that this eagerness to watch unlicensed foreign TV shows and movies that are yet to air in the home country is the sole purpose of fansubbing. Once a domestic company gets the broadcasting rights, fansubbers are bound to cease their work. In reality, this might only sometimes be the case because there are instances of fansubs continuing to exist even after TV channels import foreign language shows and make licensed subtitles. For instance, in Sri Lanka, local channels broadcasted *Robin Hood* (2006-2009), *Merlin* (2008-2012), and *Arrow* (2012-2020) with licensed prosubs, but anyone can access fansubs for them even now. Therefore, it seems reasonable to think that there are disparities between the law and its impact on fansubbers' work. Surely, the value for the fansubs fades away when the same content gets licensed prosubs with accessibility and more accuracy, but that is insignificant for fansubbers who refuse to take down their work.

My thesis is focusing on the fan-made subtitles created for the two thrillers I examined in Chapter one and two. Therefore, now I focus on fansubbing with a definition by Jeffersson David Orrego Carmona (2011:12-15), as he divides user-generated subtitles into two: anime and general. He further states that subtitle creators in anime are the traditional fansubbers who are source oriented and careful in preserving cultural contexts in the translating process. In addition, he thinks that general subtitle makers aim at simply avoiding delays to deliver texts to their broad audience. This comparison assumes that anime is only being translated to English. Nowadays, however, it is being rendered to other languages especially by amateurs who could hold the said attentiveness as traditional anime fansubbers. Having clarified these terms, hereafter I use "fansubbing" to refer to the general practice.

Carmona (13) also thinks that amateurs do not care about the cognitive efforts of the viewers. At the same time, nevertheless, he cites Gambier (2009) who claims that fansubs are closer to the original text, wordier, assisted by freeware tools. He further questions the future of AVT based on amateurs' constant use of computer-assisted subtitling. This emphasises the fact that fansubbers only focus on the linguistic code of a scene to make a meaning. On the contrary, Ian Condry (2010:201) states that fansubbing covers both the linguistic and the cultural depth of a screen text, whereas prosubbing only caters to the linguistic structure of a dialogue. All these assessments of fan made subtitles, nonetheless, are problematic, as they solely stem from translation studies. By the end of this chapter, I want to show how the analysed texts prove whose argument is more convincing regarding fansubbing and its ways of creating meanings out of scenes. It is significant for this thesis to untangle this debate because the aim of my study is not normative: I do not wish to devalue any method, but to identify how scenes are interpreted

in the fansubbing context to deliver the emotions because those who depend on these user-generated subtitles, especially if they have little or no knowledge of the origin text, understand the production thanks to subtitles. This AVT analysis should be expanded to the field of screen studies, so that the meanings rendered beyond the linguistic component could be considered. I concur with Chaume (2004) as he brings this distance between AVT and screen studies to the researchers' attention, and more than a decade later, O'Sullivan and Cornu (2019:3) call for further research on film translation because, despite the interdisciplinary growth of AVT, there is an "unchartered territory" as the research up to that point has focused mostly on prevalent AVT theories.

Fansubbing has been a practice that is mostly carried out voluntarily (Rocío Baños and Jorge Díaz-Cintas 2024:129-144) but the story of Viki, a fansub community that shifted from not-for-profit to monetisation questions the dubiety of its nature. Dwyer (2018:437) notes that the nature of Viki is ambiguous with qualities belonging to both crowdsourcing and fansubbing. There is a subscription fee attached but the platform is driven by contributors, and there are forums with community engagement where users can suggest content to be translated. However, fansubs used in my thesis are taken from two Sri Lankan communities, *Baiscopelk* and *Cineru*, and they specifically mention in their websites that it is unsolicited, despite the time and effort they put into the process. According to Chu (2012:261), the fansubbing process starts from "raw acquisition, translation, timing, editing, typesetting to quality control, encoding and distribution". Nowadays, encoded videos are hard to find due to copyright allegations, but fansubbers overcome it by simply uploading an SRT file. Fansubbing has initiated a conversation of being a part of an online utopian community (Chu 2012:262), where the internet has become a platform to talk about interests, other than having profit-based interests. Profit-seeking parties take advantage of this community by downloading, embedding, and distributing someone else's hard work. There is another perception about the leisure being labourised and labour being leisureised that evolved around fansubbing (James J Brown Jr 2008:395-409) and comes under the term "serious leisure". This seriousness comes not only from the process but also from being aware of a community that expects a non-professional subtitle file whenever a new movie or a TV season is released. I further expand on this by exploring fansubbing as a participatory culture towards the end of this chapter.

Fansubbing does not align with rules of prosubbing, but they maintain micro-ethics within their communities (Leticia-Tian Zhang and Daniel Cassany 2016:8) for certain factors such as money. According to Hye-Kyung Lee, (2021:1137-1138), "for the majority of fansubbers, the main drive for translating copyrighted files without the authorization of copyright holders has never been monetary or other type of commercial gain, but rather the pursuit of entertainment and the sharing of otherwise unavailable audiovisual content". This is the case for the selected subtitle providers in my study. Most of them even contribute under pseudonyms to maintain their privacy and subtitling as a hobby. However, it is not the case with Sri Lankan fansubbers who tend to insert their full name in the SRT file with a copyright disclaimer.

3.1.3. Fansubbing in Sri Lanka

I turn now to provide context on the AVT culture in Sri Lanka, which initiated with both dubbing and subtitling and is broadcast through free-to-air channels, including Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, the country's national television network. It is significant to understand this setting because it has shaped up the present-day fansubbing culture in the

country. Local channels import foreign language movies and TV shows from countries such as Australia, the United States, India, Korea, Japan, Turkey and so on. Over the last few decades, several free-to-air Sri Lankan TV channels, including the national television network, broadcasted dubbed and subtitled versions of popular Anglo-American shows, such as *Knight Rider* (1982-1986), *MacGyver* (1985-1992), *The X-Files* (1993-2018), *Prison Break* (2005-2017), *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019), and *Arrow* (2012-2020), to name a few. In the course of time, viewers drift apart from television as their entertainment needs become more sophisticated with internet. They no longer want to limit themselves to watch productions shown to them by programme producers.

According to Laurinda Van Tonder (2015), audiences turned towards web-based subtitling because they are unsatisfied with the prevailing statuses of the practice. This dissatisfaction can be explained through different regional factors, but it is mostly exacerbated due to financial reasons, as only a fraction of the general audience has access to streaming platforms.¹² These monthly subscriptions are an unwanted, expensive burden for the average income. In addition, embedded subtitles in Netflix exclude Sinhala as a language option. One of the common features of my selected shows are the need of fansubs, because it is highly unlikely for the community to get licensed subtitles from Netflix itself, given the user percentage of 7.2% as I explain in the next paragraph. The circulation of pirated movies on internet is another reason behind the influence of fansubbing (Saeed Ameri 2023:44). Internet being a movie database itself is not an influential factor for user generated subtitles, at least for Sri Lanka. Hence, a vast majority download these movies from torrent websites and download free Sinhala subtitles from the local subbing communities. Accessibility is another significant reason for Sri Lanka's growing demand for Sinhala subtitles. Downloading torrents offers a broader offer for Sri Lankans than other options, and it is not only about money: it enables them to find rare movies that are unavailable on OTT platforms, DVDs, or Blu-ray discs, giving visibility to foreign language entertainment such as Spanish screen productions that are unexplored by free-to-air channels.

For instance, series such as *La casa de papel* (2017), *Élite* (2018) and *El inocente* (2021) are available in the country through global streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime. Most of the popular Spanish audiovisual fiction that makes it to Sri Lanka are identified as thrillers, which could be the reason for them to perform well transnationally. Edgerton (2022) has identified a connection between the worldwide popularity of *La casa de papel* (2017) and transnational audiences, as the show depicts a common theme of state power, 'oppressive nature' of breaking own protocols and cases of torture, all of which are typical ingredients of thrillers. Miriam Haddu (2016:460), in turn, sees thrillers as a 'transnational cinematic practice,' affirming the worldwide popularity of the genre. However, language is also a barrier to entertainment despite the privilege of owning a streaming account. As mentioned before,

¹² Statistically, only 1.616 million users have subscribed to any over-the-top (OTT) platform, even though 10.10 million Sri Lankan consumers own devices that give them access to streaming applications (Perera 2022). In turn, Sri Lanka's population is 22.2 million,¹² and that makes the amount of OTT subscribers to 7.2% percentagewise.

Sinhala is not supported by any of these OTTs, and those who wish to see subtitles in their native language would have to look for fansubbing regardless.

Most fansubbers use a pseudonym, but that altruistic nature cannot be seen among Sri Lankan translators, because they not only add their real name with a watermark to the SRT file, but also remind the viewers by letting the name appear onscreen with fonts bigger than the size used in subtitles. Apart from that, these communities create websites on their own for easy accessibility. These websites display ads, and it is also displayed that the income generated through the ads are used for the sole purpose of maintaining the website. Unlike other fansubbing communities around the world, there is no recorded evidence of Sri Lankans promoting their cinema through fansubbing. The embedded English subtitles for Sinhala movies that could be found online are professionally made translations that were released as a part of the theatrical release. However, that itself would not have a much impact on a foreigner to be invested in Sri Lankan cinema. SLS, i.e.: the practice of subtitling with the language as same as the audio, is also not practiced among the country's fansub community.

In conclusion, Sri Lankans have economical, technical and entertainment related factors to be more invested in fansubbing. In fact, they do have a strong fansubbing community. Additionally, the translating culture is more focused on imported media, instead of the Japanese exported-media practice, aimed at making their Anime market more popular at a global level. It is highly unlikely for OTT platforms to consider investing on a project to include Sinhala in their subtitles because of the low user percentage. Therefore, some consumers become contributors by motivating a culture in which members help each other. In other words, communities shift from consumers to prosumers, a term coined by Alvin Toffler in 1980 (Pal Ahluwalia and Toby Miller 2024:259) to define those who produce for their own and others' benefit. These prosumers operate in a "participatory culture," a concept introduced by Henry Jenkins (1992) to illustrate how individuals both contribute and consume. This duality can be seen in fansubbers, (Vedrana Čemerin 2021:84) as they create subtitles for the community and utilise files made by fellow creators.

3.2. Fansubbing as a groundbreaker

3.2.1. Fansubbing as a participatory culture

As the name suggests, "participatory culture" is a community where individuals exist not just as consumers but as contributors. According to Henry Jenkins and Nico Carpentier (2013:277), members feel that it is their responsibility to contribute and support each other with a backup system. At present, internet-based communities play the role of these contributors as it is feasible for them to provide and share knowledge more than offline communities. Fansubbers are also an online body that contributes to the entertainment needs of fellow people without expecting anything in return.

Jenkins and others (2007:25) see individuals becoming a part of the participatory culture through affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem solving, and circulations. They have given examples for each of the ones previously mentioned. For instance, online communities are affiliations, fan fiction writing comes under expressions, working together in teams is collaborative problem solving, and blogging is a form of circulation. Fansubbing carries the attributes of participatory culture, even though Jenkins does not explicitly include fansubbing to support his categorisation. The lower popularity of the concept at that time could be a reason

for this exclusion. To be clear, there are online fansub communities, in which user generated subtitles can be a new creative form of its own, so it comes under expressions as well. Collaborative problem solving gets involved in a case like creating subtitles for a long TV show and getting help from fellow fansubbers. Subtitles circulate well across the internet; therefore, it covers the last component. The relevance of this to my thesis is how it enables me to think of scenes creating meanings through these lenses. To elaborate, in the first section I explained how some scholars tend to privilege linguistic aspects and lose sight of others. In short, beyond screen studies, fan made subtitles can also be read and examined through the four approaches of participatory culture. To my knowledge, user generated subtitles have not been interpreted through these cultural interventions. It would help to understand whether the fansubber has been able to deliver the original text without changing the meaning.

Fansubbing is a not-for-profit practice, and some communities declare this on their platforms (Abhijith Ghosh 2017:54), which is the norm of fansubbers in Sri Lanka, too. It is a passion-driven service as an act of social good. However, there have been incidents regarding the genuineness in the anime context. Even though fansubbing is supposed to be seen through a global lens, definitions are still deeply rooted around anime. These incidents do not have to be interpreted as a black mark against the whole practice which is beyond Japanese animated movies. There is a need of more scholarly discussions about mainstream and niche audiences attached to this practice. Furthermore, anime has a huge demand around the world and the niche audience is willing to pay the price for correct subtitles. There are licensed subtitles to anime that have been uploaded to OTT platforms and viewers have no issue with that. Then, there is the mainstream audiences like the one in Sri Lanka who are not focused on multiple genres of entertainment. In this context, fansubbing communities cannot see opportunities to generate money even if they want to do so, because no one would pay for subtitles unless they are licensed and delivered through a streaming service. In a linguistic perspective, it is possible to do an error analysis when the fansubbers rush their subtitles and distribute quickly, but mainstream audiences just want a little assistance to understand the scripts. However, both types of creators have one motivation, and that is to contribute.

Sattar Izwaini (2014:109) notes that prosubbers have seen the rise of fansubbers alarming, because of their potential to legitimise amateur subtitling as a valid practice instead of a profession. Nevertheless, he also emphasises how fansubbing could be healthy to the practice in general. He believes so because of the freedom a fansubber gets compared to a prosubber. This freedom could become an unhealthy practice if combined with other attributes, such as immediacy, availability, and cost-free nature.

Some fansubbers are known as speed subbers because of the time they take to translate a file. According to Dwyer (2018: 441), scholars define this fast approach with derogatory remarks because of its priority on “timing over quality” with the speed causing the scripts to be full of errors, i.e.: is the opposite of a healthy practice. A prosubber takes considerable time translating and proofreading the script to ensure the quality of their work. On the contrary, speed subbers are competitive with other communities in releasing the file from them first. Dwyer (441) thinks this negative interpretation of speed subbing is a rushed conclusion, but I stand with scholars like Denison, who see the fan culture shifting from being responsible to “profligate piracy,” as subtitles with errors still violate copyright. Dwyer (440-441) looks at speed subbing in the context of global hierarchy. It is about having similar access to a TV episode as the aired country audience, which gives the rights to the worldwide audience as “global citizens”, and it

applies to fansubbing in Sri Lanka as well. Some communities take their time and do the fansubs accurately, as they mention in their websites' guidelines. *Baiscopelk* explains their publishing procedure and how the subtitles should go for a double check by moderators to get approved, but some platforms want to release the subtitle from their website first compared to others. If so, how are these speed subbers so quick to release the files? It is through machine translation (MT) and computer-aided translation (CAT). According to Chunyu Kit and Billy Tak Ming Wong (2023:219), MT and CAT “serve the same purpose of enhancing translation efficiency via the utilisation of a computer”. Therefore, these concepts are not necessarily bad techniques; even professionals get assistance instead of making the machine do everything. The intervention and post-editing decide the quality of a subtitle that comes out as a machine output. MT deals with full automation, while CAT assists with human translation. Prosubbers use the latter approach when needed, but some fansubbers apply MT and leave the work to be fully automated, especially if the subtitler is inarticulate in the origin language. Existing literature on fansubbing does not connect the importance of language fluency, MT, and fansubbing. This gap may hinder screen studies from allowing AVT into the discipline because the scene analysis is circumscribed to the linguistic component instead of discovering other cinematographic elements if the scene is filled with mistranslations.

3.2.2. From translation studies to screen studies

Earlier, I mentioned that scholars in translation studies and similar disciplines see fansubbing as an amateur and unprofessional practice because they solely examine it through translation studies. Similarly, screen studies literature discusses fansubbing but does not heavily concentrate on it as an AVT technique. This is why Chaume (2004) argues that even from a translational perspective, AVT should be studied with contributions from both translation studies, and screen studies. The reason for this is the multiple layers that are to be discovered in a scene. It is indeed important for the text to be linguistically accurate, but in a filmic context, layers go beyond the dialogues. In practice, AVT must be relevant for both disciplines, but I narrow it down and focus on fansubbing because scholars from screen studies are interested in it. I hope to establish an interdisciplinary connection prior to the analysis, because the framework I intend to apply is a blend of both fields.

As I have mentioned before, subtitles offer multiple layers for the reading of a scene. According to Mona Baker and Kirsten Malmkjær (1998:245), a film is an operation of four semiotic channels in operation which can be identified as “non-verbal picture, written pictorial elements, dialogue, and music and effects”. These channels also consist of “verbal auditory channel; dialogues and background noises, nonverbal auditory channels; music and natural sound, verbal visual channel; written signs on the screen, and nonverbal visual channel; picture composition and flow”. The importance of these other semiotic dimensions can be seen when a scene is uncovered. All channels are given equal places, but a prosubber could find it a malpractice if a fansubber thinks of omitting song lyrics from their translated text. In a professional setting, a subtitler does the role to gain a commercial benefit. Prosubbers receive a document named dialogue list from clients or producers that contains the necessary dialogues, closed captions and any other onscreen texts that need to be translated. In a typical workflow, one subtitler would do the initial translation and proof reading which then go through a quality control process by a second translator. There is a third person involved known as the client manager who would do the technical checks and delivers the translated script to the client (Cintas and Remael 2021). By contrast, fansubbing is a much more precarious activity, as it

does not have a mechanism to do thorough quality control processes and technical checks that leave them in a position with a mere translation other than an accurate subtitle rendering. They have creative freedom to do anything within the micro-ethics of a fansubbing community, which sometimes involve omitting songs and closed captions used in the original text. This could be seen in my corpus, specifically in *13 Reasons Why*, which uses music as scene-setters. Fansubbers refer solely to the movie as their source text because no assistant or producer would hand them a script with texts to be translated. They are not academically or professionally trained to do accurate subtitling.

Even though my thesis does not intend to select the better practice out of prosubbing and fansubbing, it is important to describe certain characteristics attached to the way each are carried out. Sometimes, it is not the practice but the person: in that case, a prosubber could be best at delivering the idea of the original text to their audience by identifying the semiotic nature of a scene. In addition, it is also possible for them to focus solely on translating texts written on the dialogue list. However, even if this happens, the process goes through a second subtitler and a manager to ensure accuracy. By contrast, given the creative freedom, fansubbers do not stick to the script, and the translated text might or might not go through a quality assurance process like prosubbing unless it is specified in the community guidelines.

According to Baker (2014:xiv), “most of the literature published by scholars of audiovisual translation, while unquestionably useful and welcome, has failed to engage other disciplines and lay the foundation for interdisciplinary research.” Furthermore, she suggests that priority should have been addressing the practical needs of the field. In fact, it could be argued that this practicality is attached with fansubbing due to its presence in translation studies, screen studies (communities), reception studies, and anthropology (participatory culture).

I started this chapter by defining fansubbing and its impactful presence in the participatory culture which is heavily discussed in the academic field of screen studies with other communities such as fandoms and cinematic forums. Therefore, scholars could use fansubbing to allow academic discussions of AVT in screen studies because it is already in the literature as a developing phenomenon among different audiences. In the next section, I present the theoretical framework I use to read the selected scenes through fansubbing. It is a blend of a translation studies technique and cinematographic language that would focus beyond the linguistic code as I have discussed so far.

3.2.3. Back translation and screen language codes: a framework

Now, I present my approach to examine how fansubbing can create meanings through their rendering of scenes. To do that, I first utilise back translation, the process of converting an already translated text to its original language to make sure that the meaning is the same after the process. It is a quality assessment methodology used not only the field of translation studies but also in many other fields such as Medicine that needs cross cultural references. Then, I put the scenes through a framework introduced by Chaume (2004) to read AVT texts from a screen studies’ perspective. Consequently, I would be left with a balanced approach to examine fansubs with perspectives from both translation studies and screen studies.

Before the procedure, the audience sees a dialogue in its natural language, and the translator identifies it as the “original text”. Then, it gets translated into another language, which receives the “target text” name. Back translation becomes a part of the operation because the target text

gets translated back to the original language. After that, the original text from the first round gets compared with the newly reversed translated text to find similarities and dissimilarities. For instance, in the first round, we could use English as the original text and Sinhala as the target text. To do the back translation, Sinhala texts get translated into English. Finally, we compare the initial and translated English texts to get an output.

To be sure, according to Richard W Brislin and Carolina Freimanis (2001:36), “like any single method or approach, back translation is no panacea, and researchers should not depend on it solely”. This assessment of the method can be explained through the ongoing debate on the distance between AVT and screen studies. If the study is entirely based on the back translation, judging the text without input from a screen’s angle will be unfair. I incorporate Chaume’s (2004) cinematographic model to get a balanced framework of back translation and screen studies, respectively.

Many frameworks have been introduced to analyse AVT texts, such as textual analysis on general translation (Herbst 1987) and genres and types of audiovisual texts (Agost 1997). It is Chamue (2004:12-24), however, who comes up with a framework that specifically caters to the screen studies and not just linguistics. As his study states, I now introduce the framework that “signifies code of cinematographic language”. This specific language he refers to is the layers of a scene that we uncovered in an earlier section. I remove these layers again to emphasise the reason for choosing this framework. Scenes typically contain non-verbal pictures, written pictorial elements, dialogue, music, and effects. Out of these, we only see one component directly connected to the linguistic aspect: dialogues. If a scene contains a ratio of 1:3 and only gets observed with a framework that only caters to that 1/4th element, then the outcome would be insufficient. The framework I use for this study covers not only filmic units but also linguistic codes because dialogues are a part of the scene that directly impacts the creation of meanings. Chaume (2004) outlines 10 codes, but I choose 7 semiotics that are only relevant for fansubbing: linguistic, paralinguistic, musical, sound arrangement, iconographic, photographic, and mobility codes. I am selective because his framework is targeted at AVT in general, and some of the units are directly related to prosubbing and are to be featured on television.

To begin with, the linguistic code is about the translators’ attempts to make a written speech sound oral. Fansubbers can rewrite this script accordingly to make it sound more natural and less archaic. In addition, the paralinguistic codes, the symbols primarily used in television subtitling to depict particular emotions, such as using the forward-slash (/) to imply silence, is helpful in the synchronization of dialogues, especially for the television, as Chaume (2004) notes. I want to add that paralinguistic code is not only limited to television but also for the fansubbers. However, the coding systems could vary because different countries and regions have dissimilar codes. In that case, fansubbers can utilise ortho-typographical uses such as dots and subtitle cuts to generate suspense and silence. There is also a musical code attached where Chaume (2004) notes that songs usually require an adaptation. Unlike other codes explained here, I do not prioritise this because in Sri Lanka, whether it is prosubbing or fansubbing, song translation is not a requirement unless it is dubbed. Instead, sound arrangement codes are included, allowing the subtitler to make adaptations when the sound origin is not visible onscreen simultaneously to the sound.

Likewise, Chaume mentions iconographic codes, the most important code in the visual layer of a scene. He (2004) says that generally the icons are not translated unless there is a dialogue or a necessity to include them. Changing the colour of fonts falls under photographic codes. Mobility codes are important when there are multiple characters are speaking at the same time. Here, it is said that the characters who are closer to the camera gets their dialogues translated at first place.

In the next section, I assemble back translation and the framework of selected codes to understand the meanings created by selected scenes.

3.3. Analysis of fansubs

In this section, I aspire to find fansubbers' attempts to create meanings through their subtitles. To do that, I refer to two main fansub communities in Sri Lanka named *Baiscopelk* and *Cineru*. These communities are web based, and the web page gives information to users of the creator as they make subtitles under their identity. I also identify the participatory culture within these communities because subtitles for my selected episodes have not been created by the same person. I reach to two different communities instead of one because none of them have created subtitles for both shows.

3.3.1. Fansub analysis of *13 Reasons Why*

To examine *13 Reasons Why*, I downloaded subtitles from *Baiscopelk*. My first selected scene is Hannah's rape. This rape scene is shown as flashbacks while Clay is trying to get a confession out of Bryce, Hannah's rapist. I focus on key dialogues and monologues by identifying them through the framework. Then I explain the scene and how the subtitles create meaning.

Table 1: **Monologue**

Source text	Back translation
And I can't explain it...	I can't explain it...
but sitting there under the stars...	But sitting under the stars...
I felt at peace for the first time in days.	I felt at peace for the first time for the day.

Source: *13 Reasons Why*, (Season 1, Episode 12: *Tape 6, Side B*), Netflix.

Target text:

මම එක පැහැදිලි කරන්න බෑ...
 ඒත් තරු යට වාඩි වෙලා ඉන්න එක...
 දවසෙ මුල් වතාවට මම සැනසීමක් දැනුණා.

Source: Fernando R (2017), *Baiscopelk*

This is Hannah's monologue. She goes to a party that is held at Bryce's house. She has been in an argument with her parents. Hannah pronounces these words, as she looks up at the sky while in a pool. However, there is a mistranslation here because the scene and the original monologue create meaning about how she has been feeling lately and not specifically about that day, but the fansub gives the idea that she is talking about the present day. The linguistic code is being

breached because it gives an entirely different meaning to the scene. The heaviness of this opening monologue is important because while she is feeling relaxed after a while, she is about to be raped. However, the fansubber has used paralinguistic codes, three dots after each line just like the original to imply that she is taking pauses as she relaxes under the stars. Further, the use of photographic codes (yellow font) is noticeable. This is visible throughout the show, with many monologues that differ from the dialogues, which are in white font.

Table 2: **Hannah-Bryce conversation**

Source text	Back translation
Bryce: Only the cool people are left	B: Only the cool people are left
Hannah: And I qualify as “cool people”?	H: Did I get qualify as a cool person?
Bryce: Hell, yeah, you do. Coolest chick in the junior class. And the hottest.	B: For sure Coolest chick in the junior class
Hannah: Well, uh, I’d better get going. My parents are probably super worried by now.	H: I better go now My parents are probably super worried now
Bryce: You just got here.	B: You stay here
Hannah: Sorry, I gotta go.	H: Sorry, I gotta go
Bryce: Don’t go. We’re just having fun.	B: Don’t go. We are just having fun
Hannah: Bryce! [gasping]	H: Bryce

Source: 13 Reasons Why, (Season 1, Episode 12: *Tape 6, Side B*), Netflix.

Target text

B: ආතල් පොරවල්ලා විතරයි ඉතුරු	B: ඔයා මෙහෙ ඉන්නවා
H: මමත් ආතල් කෙනෙක්ට තේරුනා ද?	H: සමාවෙන්න, මම යන්න ඕනේ.
B: අනිවා. කනිෂ්ට පන්තියේ ඉන්න ආතල්ම කැල්ල ඒ වගේම සරාගිම	B: යන්න එපා. අපි ආතල් එකක්නේ ගන්නේ
H: මම ගියොත් හොඳයි. මගේ දෙමාපියෝ දැන් ගොඩක් කලබල වෙලා ඇත්තේ	H: බ්‍රයිස්.

Source: Fernando R (2017), Baiscopelk

This scene shows Bryce and Hannah in an outdoor pool. Earlier, there were other friends but now they are gone. Bryce is looking for an opportunity and he is trying to have a friendly interaction with Hannah as a start. As discussed in previous sections, Fansubbers do get the accusation of being source oriented and doing word to word translations. Here, the subtitle creator has made the script his own and talks to the target audience with the familiar day to day

slang used in Sinhala. All equivalents for “cool people”, “hell, yeah”, and “coolest chick” are proper choice of words. In creating the meanings, the fansubber portrays Bryce as someone who is still approaching Hannah gently and he grabs her towards the end of the discussion. The use of “you stay here” in the translated text instead of “you just got here” could be a mistranslation but also it is possible that the subtitler wants to emphasize to the audience to know that Bryce is slowly taking control of Hannah by ordering her to stay. Bruce is soft-spoken here as he tries to trap Hannah around the cultural convention of not leaving a place quickly. This social norm is common in Sri Lanka, too. As such, the translation can also be interpreted as the subtitler's need to uncover Bryce's true intentions. However, the show's original creators explicitly use that gentle tone to later reveal the verbal behaviour of a rapist. He would try to reassure the victim about no harmful intentions. Bryce is setting up that environment in the original scene. Therefore, pragmatically, the translated text does not contribute to the intended meaning of the “you just got here”. The fansubber's intentions could have been much clearer if there would be a paralinguistic code such as an exclamation mark. However, omitting the close caption of “[gasping],” the fansubber explicitly hinders the viewer experience for deaf or hard-of-hearing audiences because it adds more weight to Hannah's resistance when Bryce forcefully pushes her to the tub.

Table 3: **Clay-Bryce conversation**

Source text	Back translation
Clay: You raped her.	C: You raped her.
Bryce: What?	B: What?
Clay: You fucking raped her.	C: You raped her.
Bryce: Dude. Don't talk about what you don't know about.	B: Don't talk about what you don't know about
Clay: Why did you do it?	C: Why did you do that?
Bryce: Thank you for coming. Get the fuck out of my house.	B: Thank you for coming. Now get out of my house
.....	

Bryce: She came to my party. Mine. She got in the hot tub with me, without a suit on. Right? And she made eyes. [chuckles] I know that's hard for you to hear, that your crush wasn't pure and clean. But she fucking wanted it	B: She came to my party. Mine. She got into the hot tub. Without any garments. Right? And she has this look. I know that it is hard for you to hear that your love was not that pure but she wanted it.
--	---

Source: 13 Reasons Why, (Season 1, Episode 12: *Tape 6, Side B*), Netflix.

Target text

C: උඹ එයාව දූෂණය කලා

B: මොකක්?

C: උඹ එයාව දූෂණය කලා

B: උඹ නොදන්න දේවල් කතා නොකර හිටපන්.

C: උඹ එහෙම කලේ ඇයි?

B: ආවට ස්තුතියි. දැන් මගේ ගෙදරින් එලියට බැහැපන්.

B: එයයි මගේ පාටියට ආවේ.

මගේ.

එයයි හොට්ටියුබ් එකට බැස්සේ.

ඇඳුමක් දාගන්නේ නැතුව.

හරිද? ඒ වගේම ඇය බැල්ම දැම්මා.

උඹේ ප්‍රේමය පරම පවිත්‍ර වුණේ නෑ කියලා

අහන එක අමා රුයි කියලා මම දන්නවා.

ඒත් ඒකිට ඒක ඕනි වුණා.

Source: Anuruddha[Leo] (2017), Baiscopelk

This is a heated conversation between Bryce and Clay. Clay insists that Bryce has raped Hannah but with the adjective, so that it comes out as “you fucking raped her”. Clay’s intonation captures the character's pain and anger. The fansubber, however, chose not to pay much attention to these emotions. They simply repeat the first line and carry on the translation. It is also possible that the culture of censoring taboos practiced in Sri Lankan media inspires this omission. Bryce becomes furious and puts the blame on the victim, which is one of the show’s rape myths. A grave mistranslation in the target text backs up this myth by wrongfully interpreting Hannah’s garments. In the original text, Bryce says that Hannah got into the bathtub without a suit on. This suit refers to a bathing suit, which is uncommon in Sri Lanka. Most women wrap themselves in long clothes, like bath towels (Robert Barlas and Nanda P Wanasundera 2009:43). Here, Bryce refers to wearing undergarments instead of proper bath wear. She does so because Jessica, one of her friends, asks her to join the rest of the friends with that outfit. The target text translates “without a suit on” to “without any garments,” which breaches linguistic codes. However, the clear visuals of Hannah in the scene do justice to the brutality of the rape. Even so, the rest of the conversation gets carried out with the anger between two highschoolers, one accusing and the other being accused of. This must be why scholars such as Gambier and Carmona keep emphasizing the issue of linguistic breaches in fansubbing.

Table 4: **Male-on-male rape (Tyler-Monty conversation)**

Source text	Back translation
Tyler: I'm sorry about everything. If I hurt you in any way—	T: I am sorry about everything If I hurt you in any way—
Monty: They cancelled our fucking season.	M: They cancelled our game.
Tyler: I was acting out of a lot of anger and confusion.	T: I was acting out of a lot of anger and confusion
Monty: Oh, yeah?	M: Oh really?
Tyler: And I'm going to do better. And I hope that we can learn To talk to each other—	T: Now I am becoming better. I hope that we can learn to talk to each other.
Monty: God! You ruined my fucking life, faggot! Get up! [grunting]	M: You devil, you ruined my whole life, beanpole! Come! -
Tyler: [gasps] I'm sorry! Please, I'm sorry!	T: I am sorry! Please, I am sorry!
Monty: Hold him!	M: Hold him!
Tyler: [gasping] I'm sorry. I'm sorry. [groans]	T: I am sorry, I am sorry. -
[screams]	-
[shrieks]	-

Source: *13 Reasons Why*, (Season 2, Episode 13: *Bye*), Netflix.

Target text:

T: ඒ හැමදේම ගැන මට සමාවෙන්න
මම උඹට මොන විදියකින් හරි ඊදෙව්ව නම්-

M: උන් අපේ තරගේ නතර කරල දැම්ම.

T: මම හැසිරුණේ ගොඩක් තරහින්,
කැළඹීමෙන්.

M: : ආහ්, එහෙමද?

T: : දැන් මම හොඳ වෙන්න හදන්නේ.
මං හිතන්නේ අපි එකිනෙකාට
කතා කරන්න ඉගෙන ගන්න පුළුවන්

M: යකෝ, තෝ මගේ මුළු ජීවිතේම
විනාස කළා, කෝටුකිතයිගෝ!
වරෙන්!

T: :මට සමා වෙයන්!
ජලීස්, මට සමාවෙයන්!

M: : ඕකව අල්ලගනින්!

T: : මට සමා වෙයන්, මට සමා වෙයන්.

Source: Sampath U (2018), Baiscopelk

This dialogue is taken from the male-on-male rape scene where the victim is being raped by inserting a mop stick inside him in the college bathroom. To deliver the pain and other emotions of this scene, the linguistic codes are not enough. This is why scholars like Chaume (2004) recommends AVT to be interdisciplinary. The fansub here does the translation only by focusing on the verbal texts. This restriction is mostly seen in prosubbing with all the guidelines attached to it. Fansubbing has the freedom to translate in the most authentic way possible by preserving the originality of the text. In this scene, the victim does not merely say sorry. He begs for forgiveness. As I have discussed earlier, a scene has multiple layers to be uncovered. The nonverbal sounds sometimes help to understand a scene better than the words. Here, the fansubber fails to identify the sound arrangement codes when we can even clearly see the source of the sound. Tyler does not stop by groaning but he also screams and shrieks. These sounds are given the needed attention by the licensed English subtitles on Netflix. Instead, the fansubber fails to recognize the significance of these sounds in the scene, despite the freedom he has unlike a prosubber.

3.3.2. Fansub analysis for *Élite*

To analyse *Élite*, I download subtitles from *Cineru*. Things are more complicated in this case because these fansubbers are ineloquent in Spanish. Many communities in Sri Lanka deal with this when it comes to foreign language fansubbing. This is why I offer the back translation from the target Sinhala text to English. However, Spanish remains with its status as the origin text, technically.

Table 5: **Rough sex (Omar-Patrick conversation)**

Source text	Back translation (Sinhala to English)
Patrick: ¿Le miras el móvil a tu novio?	P: Are you stealing from Ander's phone?
Omar: Déjale en paz a Ander Déjanos en paz a los dos.	O: Leave him alone. Leave us both alone
Patrick: Yo me puedo apartar, Pero igual él viene a mi.	P: I can leave but he might come for me
Omar: Bueno, creo que le has escrito Y no ha venido. [Patrick ríe]	O: I sent him a message, but he is not here.
Patrick: Pero tú sí ¿Ander y yo te...? ¿Te damos celos o te damos envidia? [Omar respira fuerte] [golpe] [jadean] Solo se me ocurre una forma de mejorar esta postura. [gime] [Omar respira fuerte] [jadean y gimen]	P: But you Do Ander and I jealous you or are you jealous of us? I can do this in a better way

Source: *Élite*, (Season 4, Episode 3: *When Lies Dance with Temptation*), Netflix.

Target text:

P: ඇන්ඩර්ගේ දුරකතනයෙන් සොරකම් කරනවද?

O: එයාට තනියම ඉන්න දෙන්න
අපි දෙන්නම දාලා යන්න.

P: මට අයින් වෙන්න පුළුවන්
ඒත් එයා එයි මං වෙනුවෙන්

O: මං එයාට මැසේජ් එකක් දැන්මා ඒත් එයා
නැහැ මෙහෙ

P: ඒත් ඔයා
ඇන්ඩර්ගේ මමයි... ඔයාට ඉරිසියා කරනවද
නැත්නම් ඔයා ඉරිසියා කරනවද?

මට මේ වැඩේ තව ලස්සනට කරන්න
පුළුවන්

Source: Ramesh S (2019), Cinerulk.

Earlier, I have discussed how Carmona (2011) sees fansubbers as a community who is motivated to avoid delays in releases instead of delivering a well-crafted subtitle. *13 Reasons Why* fansub is not exceptionally rendered, but it stays faithful to the core idea of a scene. On the contrary, this can be taken as a speed sub where the linguistic codes are broken beyond the damage. According to Chaume (2004), linguistic codes are not even necessarily about making a meaningful sentence, but it is how the translator owns their text to make them more verbal other than reading a literary text. In this case, it cannot be even read as a literary text to get a meaning out a scene. It has evolved around three people, Omar, Ander and Patrick. Omar looks for Patrick and asks him to leave him and Ander alone since they are partners, and this third person gets too much involved in their relationship. This scene is executed to show us how Omar's frustration and anger turned into an act of consensual rough sex. Other than linguistic breach, not paying attention to the sound codes has also damaged the meaning.

Table 6: Implied onscreen rape (Isadora)

Source text	Back translation (Sinhala to English)
[música disminuye]	[music fades]
[música inquietante]	[disturbing music]
Javier: Creo que ha perdido el sentido. Tíos, creo que Isadora ha volcado.	J: I don't think she's conscious. Guys I think Isadora is dead.
Alex: Venga, macho, únete.	A: Dude, come join us.

Source: *Élite* (Season 5, Episode 3: *Toxic*), Netflix.

Target text:

J: මං හිතන්නෙ එයාට සිහිය නැ
යාලුවනේ,

මං හිතන්නේ ඉසදෝරා මැරිලා.

A: අයියෝ මවන්. අපිට එකතු වෙන්න

Source: Sachintha S (2019), Cinerulk.

In spite of the little amount of dialogues, this is not a short scene. Furthermore, it is probably one of the most alarming and controversial scenes in the show. The fansubbing attempt is another instance to prove that AVT should merge with screen studies so that sound codes do not go unnoticed in subtitling. This is a scene where a high school student is being raped by her juniors, the ones she knows very well. Therefore, it is a significant scene on TV that debunks the rape myth about victims not being raped by friends and family. Background music plays a huge role to make this scene as disturbing as possible. At one moment, everyone is dancing to loud music and Isadora, the victim to be, passes out. The loud music fades away but simultaneously an eerie music enters the scene. These are well grasped by the licensed subtitles both in Spanish and English, but the fansubber has once again paid attention solely to the verbal codes that rarely occur in the scene. Even that has not been carried out properly because Javier does not think Isadora is dead but that she is deeply unconscious.

3.3.3. Defining the better practice

I started this chapter with the aim of examining the way fansubbers preserve originality in their respective work. Fansubbing is still deeply rooted in its origins, anime; therefore, the practice receives both positive and negative feedback about how it functions. There are small communities that make fansubs in general by not solely sticking to anime content, such as Sri Lanka. This enthusiasm comes with the characteristics attached to fansubbing, such as freedom, immediacy, accessibility, and cost. This could be the exact reason for mistranslations when subtitlers rush to upload files. Gambier (2009) and Carmona (2011) strongly criticize fansubbing for its attachment to the source text, its use of freeware, and its sole focus on linguistic codes. On the contrary, Condry (2010) sees fansubbing as a practice that is more in-depth. There are innumerable communities in the world, and unless all of them have been examined, it is hard to reach conclusions about person-centric voluntary practices like fansubbing.

It is simplistic to define prosubbing as the better practice, when we see the fansubbing content struggle to create meaning through scenes. For small communities like Sri Lanka, both fansubbing and prosubbing are essential to fulfill entertainment needs. However, there are issues within the community when foreign language texts are to be translated, such as in *Élite* if the fansubber is not fluent in that language. The subtitles of *13 Reasons Why* are not perfect, but they give more meaning even within the linguistic code. The problematic nature of fansubs could be solved or controlled if the micro-ethics within the communities were stronger. They should not be immediately dismissed just because fansubbers are not professionalised prosumers.

Another factor to consider in fansubbing is focusing on the multimodality of AVT, which is a two-way street for both concepts. Generally, fansubbing thrives in practice despite its accuracy. In this context, AVT should use its fansubbing branch to reach other disciplines, such as screen studies. In return, this amateur subtitling could benefit as it gets insights from filmic language and codes to read a scene. At first sight, amateur subtitlers see the linguistic components, which are the dialogues, when layers of other codes are hidden in a scene to create meanings. Some of them are sound arrangement codes and paralinguistic codes. A framework based on these codes to connect AVT and screen studies was first introduced by Chaume (2004). According to

O'Sullivan and Cornu (2019), a decade later, there are still untouched territories as they call scholars to engage more in these two disciplines. My attempt is by no means to encourage the inaccurate practice of fansubbing but to understand its potential and suggest ways to conduct it better.

To conclude, I choose Chaume's (2004) methodology as it is the only theoretical framework to read a scene by emphasising cinematographic semiotics and linguistic codes. Both shows in my corpus only relate to linguistic and paralinguistic codes, and also with heavy mistranslations. To find these errors, I utilise back translation by comparing the original text and the reversed translation of the subtitler's work. The *13 Reasons Why* fansubber takes a little freedom to omit and use their own phrases but fails to read the pragmatic nature of the scene, which changes the meaning. In their translation mediated by English, the *Élite* subtitler does not even attempt to render the meaning with assistance from a freeware tool, which should not be accepted in the micro-ethics, at least when the scene delivers sensitive topics such as rape. I read the first two chapters and the underlying themes with the original dialogues, allowing me to understand the scenes linguistically and cinematically. My arguments on the representation of rape and its gratuitous nature would not be achievable if not for precise accuracy. In that case, anyone without basic knowledge of the source language could fail to understand the themes and the storyline. In this chapter, I have argued that mistranslations occur because of the orientation towards the source language and that linguistic attachment makes the fansubber forget the cinematographic component of his translation. I do not wish to pinpoint the errors but weigh the importance of fansubbing despite this type of amateur subtitling sometimes may fail to deliver ideas. Present scholarship in both translation and screen studies does not focus on the chances of gibberish translations, even at the amateur level, because they are familiar with defining anime subbing as fansubbing, which operates on a large scale and near perfection. I emphasise the need for more academic discussions on the diversity of fansubbing by detaching the phenomena from anime. My focus on fansubbing as a tool for AVT to function interdisciplinarily comes from how it is more of a valid source of accessibility to communities and its ability to remain in the screen studies discipline even when it can occasionally fall into misreading. If their functionality, even as a flawed instrument, is valid, adequately translated fansubs would have an advanced impact on the industry. This is when AVT can put its multidisciplinary nature to practice by combining both translation and screen studies knowledge on correctly reading a scene to make a precise subtitle.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I pursued two research goals and linked them with different chapters. My first goal was linked to chapters one and two, and it involved closely reading two TV shows with a focus on niche themes that raised controversy. My second goal was addressed in Chapter three: studying subtitles to find out whether they aligned with the original scene and, especially, to ensure they conveyed those intended controversial themes, explored in chapters one and two.

As I develop my thesis, I realised that my second goal became more prominent than my first. In this context, an important outcome of my second goal is intrinsically inter-disciplinary, because scene analysis is inevitable in inspecting the ways in which subtitles deliver the story. The outcomes of the adapted back translation process do not favour fansubbing because they show how this type of subtitling does not always capture the meanings correctly. However, it could be argued that these case studies serve as real-life examples of how communities attempt to rectify inequality with access to entertainment and gain the status of global citizenship (Dwyer 2018:441), because no matter how inaccurate these subtitles might be, regional fansubbing communities will have the demand.

Inaccuracy and language incompetency do not fully allow the global citizen status for its users worldwide, but it is not as unfair as being excluded from accessing entertainment, while continuously waiting for a professional subtitle in one's own language. It is possible that these subtitling requests might be satisfied with Artificial Intelligence (AI), but just like Netflix subtitles, the current AI plugins, such as Language Reactor, hardly allow the rendering to Sinhala. Restricting access to minoritarian linguistic communities is discriminatory, as it reproduces broader types of inequality. As long as this inequity prevails, fansubbing will dominate. It indeed grows without linguistic accuracy, and this area needs considerable attention from both translation and screen studies scholars. Whereas I do not advocate for its inaccurate practices, its presence remains in circulation among consumers, even with errors, so it should be considered as a valid study object. Fansubs in my corpus could not even pass the first step in the theoretical framework of reading subtitles with cinematographic codes (Chaume 2004:24-12), because the first of these codes is linguistic accuracy. This framework may apply to anime subbing. After all, fansubbing is still misidentified solely as anime content translation, but those who engage with voluntarily translating Japanese anime can achieve a better accuracy with the large communities and support systems, unlike the ones in Sri Lanka with Sinhala.

The first two chapters of this thesis explore the ways in which creators portray rape, suicide, nudity, and aggression in teen thrillers. As I reflected on *13 Reasons Why*'s take on rape culture, I noted how the show's critical reception often trivialises the fictional abuse more than the production itself. I came to this conclusion after carefully examining the existing literature on the show. Generally, shows feature plot devices, and the general audience actively reacts to anything perceived as controversial. As part of the audience, scholars can impact both parties: the creators, and the general audience, including how both think about the show. For example, in Chapter one, I discussed how the show removes a graphic suicide scene upon the critical reception by seeing the scene as a gratuitous act of self-harm. If so, the male-on-male rape scene should also be pressured to be removed due to mannerist gratuitousness, but it does not

raise the same concern among scholars to force a scene removal, as I discussed above. Beyond the numerical difference between three female rape victims and just a single male counterpart, I emphasise in the discussion how unwarranted and brutal the male rape scene is compared to the sensible representation of female rape. I perceive this disparity as a challenge to those who raise their voices against rape culture on TV because of the downplaying of male-to-male abuse. I believe this is why Mardorossian (2002:772) thinks that feminist slogans should shift from “break the silence” to “keep talking”. There is a continuity between the creators who overshadow male-to-male rape by solely focusing on female rape as a plot device and the academics who continue to circumscribe their writing to female rape, at the detriment of other types of rape.

The transformation of *Élite* from a murder mystery story to a soft-core porn production is the result of the gratuitous inclusion of nudity and sex into the show. I use the word downfall specifically because the first three seasons align with what Rubin (1999:6) reminds us about thrillers owning sensations and suspense as the key. Even after these first three seasons, the show simply does not detach from its meta-genre. In turn, sex is a key element of the show from first episode of the first season, but it is often justified through storytelling. The combination of pornified scenes and the anticipation in the first three seasons fits *Élite* to a definition of an erotic thriller, because this show is a production of “sexual intrigue incorporating some sort of criminality” (Linda Ruth Williams 2005:1). After three seasons of building suspense and storytelling, the fourth season, however, continues with sexual scenes now only as fillers that do not meaningfully contribute to the storytelling any longer. This is why we can discuss the show’s downfall from justified to unwarranted sex. The invisibility of perpetrator trauma in young adolescents is also evident in *Élite*. Teenagers who commit murders simply vanish from the story to travel the world and study abroad.

Another important divergence that sets apart *Élite* is how the creators introduce new characters to continue the show. By contrast, *13 Reasons Why* has a set of characters who make the viewer a part of the show in time. As an audience, we see the same cast from the beginning, and in addition, the storyline tries to stay true to Netflix’s binge-watching structure. This is exclusive to Netflix: the difference that makes binge-watching unique is the insulated flow between episodes and seasons. This flow is similar to DVD sets’ “play all” feature. Amazon Prime interrupts this flow with trailers between episodes, even though there is an automatic transition to next episode (Jenner Mareike 2017:126). Instead, the seamless streaming experience is unique to Netflix. *13 Reasons Why* enhances streaming without distractions. There is suspense until the show ends with other characters, even though we initially learn what happens to the main character. *Élite* follows the same narrative of revealing the murderer by the end of the first season. It is even better than *13 Reasons Why* in maintaining curiosity in the story’s first half, but later becomes an extension beyond the original story, as I have discussed previously.

I identified that *13 Reasons Why* deals with teen aggression between and within traditional and modern masculinities. To clarify, there are conflicts between the physically weak and strong, as well as the clashes within the group that consists of school jocks. By contrast, I hope to have shown how *Élite* deals with aggression through class difference and religion, and the creators are very careful in portraying these concepts, except for perpetrator trauma. I explored the

nature of the controversial suicide scene with the Papageno effect to emphasise the show's attempts to prevent suicide.

I generated all these arguments by closely reading the controversial scenes with the assistance of dialogues. I could not reach the same outcomes if my analysis involved the same scenario but with the subtitled versions. Here, I emphasise the significance of fansubbing by focusing on how it survives in an unfavourable environment that rejects linguistic errors. It does so by marking its territory as an essential element in the entertainment business that gives equal accessibility to any internet user. I suggest fansubbing as a portal for AVT to transfer to screen studies. A professional subtitle is unacceptable when there are mistranslations, but that is not the case with amateur subtitling. I do not intend to encourage inaccurate translations for the sake of accessibility, but I would like to offer fansubbing as a tool for scholars to link screen and translation studies. My thesis will pave the way for more linguistically and cinematographically accurate practices and for amateurs to understand the importance of their contribution and proceed with micro-ethics.

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