

**Transformational potentials of transgression in Netflix's
series *The End of the *** ing World and You*.**

Master Thesis



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Introduction

Over the last few decades, television series have developed from well-known soap operas to a dynamic cultural commodity that accurately captures and conveys the mood of the times. It is challenging for me to imagine my life without series as the most well-known means of entertainment. Series hasten the convergence of television and the Internet; they reflect a symbiotic relationship between technical capabilities and media, and as a result, they appeal to people of all ages. According to NPD Group research, 27% of all entertainment hours in 2018 were spent watching movies, series, and all kinds of shows (PRWEB 2018). Streaming platforms play a huge role in the power of these shows. As of March 2021, the total number of subscriptions of the most popular streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney Plus, Hulu, HBO Max, Peacock, Paramount +, Curiosity Stream, Apple TV Plus is about 615 million (Businessofapps 2021). Thanks to their device, they allow the audience to consume content in any way and time convenient for them. The consumer has the ability to select his or her own content, which is much more challenging to do on television. Streaming platforms give their users complete control over the process of consuming media products. Despite this option, the audience of streaming services can still be manipulated and consume the most popular shows with transgressive elements.

The analysis in the thesis is framed by the phenomenon of transgressive elements vividly illustrated and implemented in modern series' narratives. Thus, this research will focus on the transgression of social and cultural norms in the series. With all the variety of series, film productions, and video streaming services, Netflix has the reputation of being the most open-minded and progressive (Avery 2020) and has become a global phenomenon. According to statistics, Netflix is a market-leading, ambitious, rapidly expanding, and developing streaming platform. As of January 2021, Netflix had 204 million paying subscribers worldwide, making it the most extensive online telecommunications subscription network (Businessofapps 2021). Back in 2019, there were only 150 million subscribers, but starting from 2020, however, the video streaming platform outperformed itself. According to the first quarterly earnings report, over 15.7 million people signed up for Netflix in the first three months of this year (roughly + 10% increase in Q1 2020) at the height of the Coronavirus pandemic (Businessofapps 2021). As of March 2021, more than 5838 movies and shows on the Netflix platform, more than 1800 of which are original (Businessofapps 2021). Moreover, Netflix has transformed the face of entertainment globally by supporting international production. By the end of 2020, Netflix has funded a growing library of series produced in over 27 countries on six continents (Businessofapps 2021). This online streaming platform offers its consumers an excellent balance between education and

entertainment. As a consequence of this popularity, Netflix has become an essential source of media messages and an exciting and essential subject of study. To understand the popularity and influence of a streaming platform, I need to provide an overview of its development and arrangement chronology.

The Netflix platform has been around since 1998. However, it was not until March 2011 that Netflix began purchasing original content produced, co-produced, or distributed exclusively on its platform. Thus, in 2013, the iconic series *House of Cards* appeared. Another point worth mentioning is Netflix's algorithm. Its algorithm works with recommendations and ratings over time and duration. Netflix tunes not only the content but also its packaging. For example, in 2016, the algorithm started to work with the visual component - the graphics of a particular media product title. The covers of films, series, and shows are selected for a specific user. Product names also take an important place in the recommendation system. Now the service can analyse which media products' names are mostly liked by the users and suggest semantically close variants. As a result, Netflix accurately and fast recommends a user to watch the most appropriate for him show.

Therefore, a vast number of users, original content, and a system of personalized recommendations allow Netflix to dictate cultural context and set trends. Even more critical is that Netflix releases all the episodes at once, thereby pushing users to watch the entire series in one or two days. Due to the abundance of content on the platform, the audience began to spend many hours watching movies, series and shows to relieve stress, relax, or escape reality. One episode follows the other, and the audience is unaware of how dependent it is becoming. Users fail to watch just one episode when they realize they can turn on a sequel. As a result, time is lost, and this phenomenon is called the "Netflix effect" and also binge watching (Morgan 2019).

This arrangement of the video streaming platform has made it very global. Undoubtedly Netflix has impressive power and can be named the first genuinely global television channel with 204 million subscribers. Every year Netflix is becoming an increasingly cultural phenomenon. Each new series excites the audience and forces them to be interested in different things presented there. For example, in 2020, Netflix released the series *The Queen's Gambit*, a story about Beth Harmon, who dreams of being the world's greatest chess player. This series had the effect of an exploding bomb: the game of chess went from nerd entertainment to mainstream one (Forbes 2021). Anthony Barzilay Freund, editorial director of fine art at vintage site 1stDibs, confirmed that there was a 100% increase in chessboard sales in just a month after releasing the show (Keller 2020).

The other example is the inspirational sports documentary *The Last Dance*, which revolves around Michael Jordan's career, emphasizing his final season with the Chicago Bulls. The documentary had a considerable impact on sneaker sales. In the month since the launch, the cost

of various Nike Jordan models on the resell platforms has risen sharply by \$ 150-300, while the annual revenue of this sneakers line has grown by 15%.

The audience also copied the fashion style of the main character in *Emily in Paris*. Shopping platform Lyst claims the show has made a phenomenal contribution to the fashion industry (Mau 2020). Online searches for the Kangol hat featured in the series increased by 342%, Red Berets increased by 100%, Aldo bag requests increased by 64%, Marc Jacobs increased by 92%, and Kate Spade New York increased by 34% (Mau 2020). Thus, with the help of Netflix, brands, occupations, cities are romanticized and filled with a specific meaning. Netflix's users seamlessly consume its content across multiple devices; they are increasingly consuming whatever its algorithm suggests and do not notice something they should not like but end up loving (Hughes 2019). That is how the series' transgression appears, which can be enjoyed by most of the users.

Cult and popular cinematography have always included transgressive elements (Grant 123). Movies, however, have faded into the background as a result of digitalization and the abundance of media content. With so much content being delivered to viewers week after week, it becomes more challenging to produce a series that feels truly special for the viewer. TV series take over the elements of cult cinema, and therefore, transgression and unusual stories are used. For example, the most popular series in the world, *The Game of Thrones*, attracts the viewers with its fairy plot and constant open sexual violence, incest, murder, abuse, and lots more. Surprisingly, transgressive cinematography tendencies are being adopted by countries with more conservative perspectives, such as Russia. The series *The Squeeze Game*, which is available on Russian streaming platforms, depicts not only murder and violence but also bright episodes of rape and cannibalism.

Almost any product produced by Netflix has a positive assessment from the audience, even if it carries immoral values or transgression. What will most likely be condemned in real life is apparently well received in media products. For example, the recent scandal with the film *Cuties* confirms this assumption. In 2020, Netflix released a movie about 12-year-old dancing girls heavily sexualized in the film and on its posters. However, despite this sexualization, the film found many followers and defenders. Looking at a few more successful projects from Netflix, there will be no doubt that the platform has an indescribable impact on its audience. Netflix creates its series with transgression so that the viewer feels compelled to empathize with the main characters. The platform glorifies transgressive images and sees its actions as neither harmful nor immoral. On the contrary, Netflix strongly supports the characters, empathizes with their losses, falls, and rejoices in their triumphs. Even the actor Penn Badgley who is the main character of the *You* series, expressed shock on Twitter, emphasizing that his character is a murderer who the audience should not love. Viewers are attracted to a transgressive storyline with particularly

violent content, and as a result, they are disinterested in other media products. The series' creators, in a sense, indulge their viewers with such content. They create their own demand and then try to stick to it. Obviously, the more a person's fantasies are perverted, the less susceptible he becomes to cruelty, and the more he demands it. That is why it is crucial to understand how exactly Netflix creates affection and love for serial characters with such transgressional behaviour.

Research Question

Modern markers of an exciting and popular series among the audience are manifestations of the main characters' extraordinary cruelty, bloody scenes, sexual preoccupation, and mental deviations and disorders. How is it that viewers are willing to fall in love with any show, any character, even if they exhibit immoral behavior? Why is transgressive art, the purpose of which is a particular sin and violation of morality, is so popular with a broad audience? How does transgression work in these series, and how typical are these tendencies on Netflix? The question of how the platform makes its audience fall in love with its provocative series will be central to this thesis. I have chosen the specific representative cases to concretize the research and analytical process. The two series analyzed in this study - *The End of the F***ing World* and *You* exemplify particular patterns of transgression on Netflix. In the research, I will focus on the series and demonstrate how transgression is generated in them. When discussing the choice of the two-specific series, I need to mention that they represent a unique complex media product, but their justification is explained later. In the series, transgression carries transformative potentials. According to Julian Williams, transformation is associated with norm transgression and violation, which can also be viewed dialectically as a potential for development. He claims that even violations of formal rules can be interpreted as a potential indicator of genuine development opportunities (Williams 190). That means that this transgression is capable of changing the viewers' norms and values and becomes transformational in its nature. And that is what we can observe in the several series. Thus, the research question is: **In what ways do *The End of the F***ing World*, and *You* demonstrate the transformative potentials of transgression?**

Research Justification

I need to argue which series represents the kind of transgressions that I am interested in. I can endlessly list Netflix series and shows. Many of them include elements of transgression. Then,

how do I choose between a plethora of TV shows? To select the most accurate versions of the series with the transformational potentials of social norms and values, I began by researching the Netflix platform's content, particularly the top-rated shows, as well as the literature on transgression in cinematography. First and foremost, it is necessary to define transgression. Many philosophers define this term as "going beyond the boundaries of what is permissible." I will return to this concept in the theoretical section of the study, but for now, I need to briefly describe it to understand how one can choose a series. American filmmaker Nick Zedd was the first who coined the term "the cinema of transgression." As a result, he described films with shocking content and elements of black humour and irony. In "Cinema of Transgression Manifesto" he states: "We propose that a sense of humour is an essential element discarded by the doddering academics and further [...]. All values must be challenged. Nothing is sacred. Everything must be questioned and reassessed in order to free our minds from the faith of tradition. Intellectual growth demands that risks be taken, and changes occur in political, sexual, and aesthetic alignments no matter who disapproves. We propose to go beyond all limits set or prescribed by taste, morality, or any other traditional value system shackling the minds of men. We pass beyond and go over boundaries of millimeters, screens and projectors to a state of expanded cinema" (Zedd 10). Thus, according to Zedd, transgression necessitates a sense of humour, the ability to cross boundaries, risks, and changes in tastes, morality, and traditional values. Its central idea: All values must be challenged, and these are what characterize the transgressive content.

It is now necessary to turn to Netflix's shocking content, which contains signs of sexual violence as well as humour. I stumbled across a slew of extreme series involving lawbreaking, cruelty, and immoral behaviour. Shows with a criminal plot are almost always at the ratings' top and thus the most interesting to the audience. People are pleased to see a type of cruelty they have never seen in real life. Many shows with such abusive and transgressive content are available on the Netflix platform. Among those shows are *The Bridge* and *Dexter*, with a unique view of violent killings, *Narcos*, *Ozark*, *Innocent*, *Broadchurch*. There is also the cult and extremely transgressive series *Hannibal* because cannibalism is a severe subject in film transgression. Such series are labelled on the platform with the hashtags "dark" and "crime."

Despite the apparent presence of transgressive elements in the series mentioned above, they are not particularly interesting for analysis. The genre of detective stories and brutal murders undoubtedly entertains the viewer. In this case, however, transgression is presented as something harmful and blameworthy. The viewer is aware that the criminal will eventually be punished. He is immersed in a harsh and dark world from the first episode, witnessing how permissible boundaries are crossed and awaiting a sentence. Furthermore, these series lack the humour and

self-irony that Nick Zedd identified as necessary elements of transgressive cinematography. It is far more interesting to investigate series in which the audience feels empathy for the characters who engage in transgressive behaviour. A person shares a life experience with the main characters in such a series and becomes infected with their emotions. The filmmaker understands how to correctly conceptualize the plot to see the positive signs in transgressive actions. The use of humour and sarcasm highlights the viewer not perceiving transgression seriously in this context. These types of media products penetrate the soul, revealing the audience's hidden desires. Typically, these series are not associated with heinous violence and bloodshed. An adequate person, for example, is unlikely to want to rape and murder children. However, everything related to sexuality and disobedience, which is also a manifestation of transgression and violation of moral, social norms, is the most interesting for the viewer and thus the most interesting to research. It is also worth noting that the media products created by Netflix Originals are the most intriguing for the study because they reveal what the platform believes is best suited to its massive audience. Hence Netflix's views are reflected in films produced directly by the platform. By releasing its products rather than buying ready-made ones, the company assumes responsibility for shaping the values and tastes of millions of people, particularly its young audience. Thus, there are countless transgressive series with hashtags "dark," "crime," and "steamy," however, humour and Netflix Original production provides a lens through which to narrow down the vast array of transgressive series. As a result, I focused my attention on the following series: *The End of the F***ing World* and *You*.

Most importantly, the series *The End of the F***ing World* meets all of the above criteria. This show is a Netflix Original production entirely based on black humour, cruelty, and violence. At the same time, the main characters are, in a sense, positive characters who instil empathy and compassion in the viewer. On the one hand, the plot of *The End of the F***ing World* series revolves primarily around the road trip of two teenagers. Adolescent problems are depicted in vivid detail. It makes the series very appealing to generation Z, who seek answers to specific questions and, unlike any other generation, can maximize empathy. On the other hand, the main character of the series calls himself a psychopath and dreams of killing a non-adult girl. For most of the screen time, he misbehaves and demonstrates manifestations of aggression. The series 'plot is full of scenes of psychological, physical, and sexual violence, the expression of cruelty, and murders committed by minor children. What is even more interesting is the construction of the series' narrative and plot. Despite the characters' ambiguous actions, all of their efforts have moral intentions. In doing so, they achieve honest intentions by taking transgressional approaches. With the help of different cinematic and directional tricks, the series' filmmakers convince the viewer

that these transgressive approaches are correct. For example, on the one hand, the main characters break in and destroy someone else's house, and on the other hand, they solve the case of murder and rape. Thus, the transgressive protagonist is slowly and surely forcing the audience to sympathize and empathize.

The following series, *You*, is also the original Netflix series with elements of violence and irony. At first glance, we see Jo, an ordinary bookstore manager who desperately wants to find his love. From the beginning of the series, he is portrayed as an ideal and caring man, but with the plot's disclosure, the viewer realizes that he is a psychopath, a stalker, a maniac, and a murderer. However, the main character continues to captivate the viewer, penetrating his tragic love story. From the first episode to the end credits, the viewer wonders how he can sympathize with a serial killer and how a bookstore manager twists the phrase "I did it for love" into the new psychopathic meanings (Campos 2019).

Therefore, I believe that these series can be very interesting for the study as I see vital elements of transgressive cinematography as well as its transformational potentials in them. In these series when the viewer sympathizes with the murderer, he investigates his own personality. The dynamic cast and plot of the shows portray compelling emotion, a shocking storyline, and a thought-provoking message. Hence when the story is told in such a colourful way, everyone tends to sympathize with even the most heinous killers, and I would like to explore how the filmmaker is able to create these feelings.

This study takes a fresh look at an old idea - the phenomenon of transgression - by interpreting it through a popular format - contemporary TV series. In the past, researchers have investigated the issue of transgression in cinematography and other visual arts. However, perception and historical context are critical in this case, as the boundaries and meanings of what constitutes transgression in art can change and evolve. Furthermore, most of the works are dedicated to the cinema of the previous decades and have little relevance to new media content. The phenomenon of transgression has yet to be extended to modern series. Furthermore, investigating the transgression in the Netflix series is critical because media can significantly influence societal behaviour. Every year, the role of media is only increasing, especially now at the time of digital consumption. Online platform series have become more popular due to their convenience and portability and severely impact young people's social behaviour and lifestyle. This study shows why transgression is popular, how it can vary, and how maximum empathy is achieved among the audience. Awareness of this topic will help the viewer decide what he considers negative and positive.

Theoretical Framework

1.1 The phenomenon of transgression

In this study, the phenomenon of transgression is primarily perceived with a negative connotation. It is critical to demonstrate how the serial industry manipulates the viewer's consciousness and can make people fall in love with their media product using specific techniques. However, transgression is not just a violation of the border between good and evil; it is a question of the existence of these borders. These can be societal and moral boundaries and the limits of finiteness; all of these can be determined through transgressive action, which can both confirm and deny these limits.

The term "transgression" originally appeared in psychology and was carried over into anthropology and cultural studies. The original meaning of the transgressive act means human need, inclination, desire to accept challenges, overcome obstacles, and cross borders. It is a natural human need in an intellectual and behavioural sense (Paleczny 232). In a philosophical sense, transgression can lead to searching for unknown phenomena, their discovery, study, and an attempt to comprehend reality. It turns out that any cognitive activity necessitates going beyond the boundaries of knowledge, and any new idea or theory is considered a transgression. Transgression is frequently regarded as oddly heuristic, creative, sometimes open, exploratory, and risk-taking, progressive, and radical (Paleczny 232). For example, creative activity is a definite crime since it goes beyond the norms. Crime is often antisocial and anti-religious, while transgression includes anti-art, anti-culture, counterculture, and subculture. Therefore, it is often innovative because it tends to interpret values and norms alternatively (Paleczny 233). Paleczny states that "[...] transgression broadens the borders of culture and enriches it by introducing new elements, not only practical inventions but also creations of a symbolic nature. [...] creative transgression is the engine of progress and cultural development." (Paleczny 232). This is a significant statement, as it explains the popularity of the transgressive in serial content. To better understand what transgression is, it is needed to turn to the origins of this term.

Since time immemorial, all cultures have had their own set of generally accepted behavioural constraints and norms. Their transgression is met with public chastisement and condemnation. On the one hand, people are afraid to break these taboos for fear of repercussions from society. On the other hand, by breaking the law and committing a transgression, a person demonstrates his independence and strength in front of other community members. Transgression is a central idea

in postmodernism, referring to the act of crossing an impenetrable border and, more importantly, the line between the probable and the impossible. Transgression is a metaphysical, sociological, and theological term that refers to boundary breaching, wrongdoing, sin, or, more figuratively, self-examination (Verrone 179).

In a social context, the term transgression and its nature were first actively described by the French philosopher and novelist Georges Bataille. Bataille borrowed this term from Roger Caillois, who reflected on transgressive behaviour in the context of celebrations and rituals. Caillois frequently used the word "excess" to describe transgression. To concretize the phenomenon, he mentioned terms of "licentiousness," "revelry," and "liberty." For the author, the celebration itself is a transgressive phenomenon. Caillois writes: "The festival lasts several weeks, or several months, punctuated by rest periods of four or five days. It often takes several years to re-amass the amount of food and wealth ostentatiously consumed or spent, and even destroyed and wasted, for destruction and waste, as forms of excess, are at the heart of the festival." (Caillois 98). Caillois believed that any celebration is a mass gathering of excited people and their spiritual exaltation, forcing the participants to surrender to the will of irresponsible impulses uncontrollably. He cites the liberties that are frequently permitted at carnivals as an example. Further, the author mentions mournful celebrations, which also contain the germ of the same excess and revelry, where people dance, sing, eat and drink alcohol to the point of certainty. According to the author, the sacred is only manifested in the form of prohibitions. These prohibitions protect the sacred by preventing encroachment on the world order. In Caillois's opinion, the world is governed by a universal order. As a result, prohibitions or human redemption are the only manifestations of the sacred. The model of a raucous, tumultuous celebration that deviates from the norms of measured daily life can be generalized and applied at all levels of society.

In his book *Edge of Surrealism* Caillois also writes about fairy tales and fiction created by a person. This can be drawn as a parallel to the plots of the series. He contended that there is no question of breaking the rules in fairy tales, and this never occurs, whereas they must be followed in fiction. He says: "Fairy tales take place in a world where enchantment is taken for granted and magic is the rule [...] the fantastic, the supernatural elements are transgressive, they "disrupt the stability of a world whose laws were hitherto considered strict and immutable. They constitute the Impossible, unexpectedly arising in a world that by definition excludes the Impossible." (Caillois 46) He believed that science fiction is a specific violation of human boundaries because it goes beyond norms, especially death. Such a violation becomes a pleasure for the reader or viewer.

Caillois, interestingly, does not advocate for transgressive acts, and he chooses life rather than death as the foundation of a sacred community. The author points out that based on the sacred,

a person always finds taboo that prohibits specific behavior based on norms and social values. Caillois draws a clear distinction between "freedom" and "independence." He believed that when a person's desire for freedom considers only the requirement to act as he wishes while being protected from any punishment, that desire is not independent and incapable of establishing anything. The author, unlike Bataille, does not always view transgression positively. Thus, the development of the transgression is a particular human foundation, regularity, and abstinence preceding the "celebration."

Bataille criticizes the conventional definition of transgression as the unethical yielding to provocation or urge. In his book *Erotism* where Bataille most explicitly addresses the idea of transgression, he discusses the relationship between sexuality, death, and social sanctions. First, Bataille touches on how the animal and the human are related in man as animal nature remains in a person to the end of his life: he eats, empties, and copulates. Bataille says: "We know little about the transition from animals to men, but its importance is fundamental. [...] We know that men made tools and used them to survive [...]. At the same time, they imposed restrictions known as taboos. Quite certainly, these taboos were primarily concerned with the dead. Probably at the same time, or nearly so, they were connected with sexual activity." (Bataille 30). Animal motives can be convicted because people have a tool called the mind to evaluate them. As a result, a man performs the same actions as an animal, but more humanely, following established laws and taboos.

In his book *Totem and Taboo* Freud states that taboos are ancient prohibitions that were once imposed on an earlier generation of primitive people. These prohibitions concerned actions for which there existed a strong desire. Freud claimed that "the basis of taboo is a forbidden action for which there exists a strong inclination in the unconscious." (Freud 38). According to him, the taboo's magical power stems from its ability to tempt man; it behaves like a contagion and because the forbidden desire becomes displacing in the unconscious upon something else. The child socializes with a certain mindset about these forbidden things. The forbidden becomes a fruit of passion, and that is how transgression emerges. Freud believed that many taboos and restrictions exist for no apparent reason, and it never occurs to people to question these rules. People are often convinced that any form of transgression will automatically be punished. Freud also mentions the term "innocent violation," after committing which criminals still fall into a deep depression. Here he also says about the restrictions on sexual intercourse, which imply sexual retention and renunciation. The most surprising thing for Freud is that anyone who has committed an act of transgression assumes the nature of a forbidden object as if absorbing a dangerous charge. He says: "though without understanding it, that anyone who does what is forbidden, that is, who violates a

taboo, becomes taboo himself" (Freud 38). Freud believes that taboos refer to those aspects of life that cause an unconscious attraction in a person and provide pleasure. According to the author, this is precisely why the prohibition guards them.

Bataille, on the contrary, criticizes Freud's point of view and conceals that ban does not always prevent desire but saves a person from the feeling of horror caused by death. He says: "The taboo does not necessarily anticipate the desire; in the presence of a corpse, horror is immediate and inevitable and practically impossible to resist. The violence attendant upon a man's death is only likely to tempt men in one direction: it may tend to be embodied in us against another living person; the desire to kill may take hold of us." (Bataille 47). Killing, according to Bataille, is a manifestation of natural rage that is forbidden in everyday society. As a result, the prohibition on killing is regarded as a general prohibition on rage.

Furthermore, Bataille believed that a person gets pleasure from deliberate violation of norms and taboos. For him, it was crucial to study taboos, as they can reveal human nature. The author points that to understand the individual; it is necessary to investigate his violations, and therefore transgression acts. According to the author, the desire to violate any prohibition stems primarily from the fact that it exists and is associated with sexual desires. Bataille cites two central excesses of the world of rage, which are deeply interconnected - the excess of sexual love and the excess of death. Therefore, human subjectivity and the temporality of existence can be eliminated by eroticism and death. Bataille clarifies that the closest approach to death is eroticism because they both undermine and violate the world order of things. Death, for Bataille, is a transgressive act, a form of crossing the conditional line. According to Bataille, pleasure, and freedom of reproductive goals return a person to the continuum of everything and to a stream in which everything is interconnected. He states that while following sexual release, there is an emotional celebration, the culmination of which is similar to physical death. Therefore, the sexual act can then also be considered a transgression. Moreover, the critical process of sexual satisfaction is associated with a waste of life. The destruction of life, in turn, is ineffective, has no benefit, and is a manifestation of death, and therefore equates to excess.

If certain social norms were not imposed on the public, people would not desire to violate them constantly. Bataille, just like Freud, claims that transgressive actions are associated with fear and disgust. However, this prompts a person to violate. Here the author gives a crucial statement that will be needed for the series further analysis. Bataille believes that transgression violates the taboo and has a close and complex relationship with it. He says: "Transgression is complementary to the profane world (world of taboos), exceeding its limits but not destroying it" (Bataille 67).

In addition to all of the above French essayist, Maurice Blanchot describes transgression as a movement that culminates in something otherworldly. According to this concept, the word itself defines the sphere of the known and possible for man and confines it within certain boundaries, thereby removing the possibility of novelty. John Gregg states that according to Blanchot "The law and its transgression share the exigencies of impossibility and failure: the law, because it contains an inherent weakness that temporarily authorizes violations of it, and transgression, because it fails to do away with the law once and for all; limits are always eventually restored" (Gregg 50). Blanchot connects transgression with "knowing the world" and surrendering oneself to God. He claims that tragedy is caused by a person's unwillingness to stop, and he uses revelation in confession as an example of going beyond the boundaries. Bataille also talks about religious ecstasy. Religious ecstasy, in his interpretation, is a human's transgressive beyond the limits of everyday life. According to Bataille, the only means of violation are various sexual rituals, in addition to the death drive, hatred, and aggression. He saw the creative potential to relive transgressive experiences in the sadomasochistic mixture of lust and pain. In his chapter, "Mysticism and sensuality," Bataille mentions that "two forces attract us towards God: one, sexuality, is 'written into our nature'; the other one, mysticism 'comes from Christ [...] superficial disagreements may temporarily disrupt but cannot destroy the profound harmony between the two.'" (Bataille 227). For him, sexual attraction and death drive can be transgressively combined and intertwined into a single one, which is again associated with the phenomenon of taboo. He says: "The transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it [...] the taboo is there to be violated" (Bataille 63). He suggests that any taboo, by definition, will elicit an opposing viewpoint. Therefore, taboos are transgressed because they automatically prompt a person to violate them. The philosopher believed that transgression is needed for the individual to reach a transcendent state. He writes: "[...] he was forced despite his principles to accept the transcendence of the personal being as a concomitant of crime and transgression. What can be more disturbing than the prospect of selfishness becoming the will to perish in the furnace lit by selfishness?" (Bataille 175). Thus, in his opinion, transgression is an act of cultural liberation, that is, going beyond its boundaries. Transgression denotes a state beyond moral and ethical boundaries, beyond good and evil, that is, something that cannot be measured and has no white and black counterparts.

Following Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault described the transgression in one of his essays, "A Preface to the Transgression", supplementing Bataille's ideas. However, according to Foucault's interpretation, the transgression was exaggerated and transferred from the social to the philosophical context. In Foucault's view, the transgression is not associated with the Bataille

tradition but rather as a uniquely modern phenomenon conditioned by secularization and the "death of God."

Unlike Bataille, Foucault does not mention death as an excess, apparently believing that it is a relic of the past. Death has not disappeared, but people are no longer concerned about it as they were in the past. Thus, Foucault excludes all social and ritual content from the transgression and interprets it through the lens of the individual's inner experience, which does not imply anthropology or dialectics. According to Foucault, dialectics replaced the questioning being. For him, transgression is "groping apparition of a form of thought in which the interrogation of the limit replaces the search for totality, and the act of transgression replaces the movement of contradictions" (Foucault 50). Foucault calls transgression as a gesture directed at the limit. Transgression, according to him, is not a form of denial or opposition to anything, and it contains no opposition at all: "transgression contains nothing negative but affirms limited being-affirms the limitlessness" (Foucault 35). Foucault says that transgression denies development and is a step beyond which there is nothing. It pushes the boundaries of what is permissible, not for the sake of something tangible, but for the sake of the crushing itself.

According to Foucault, transgression has become a current initiative. Foucault sees a link between Bataille's transgression and Nietzsche and de Sade's philosophy which saw God as the most significant criminal. According to him, Nietzsche's concept of the "death of God" grants man sexual sovereignty and world, which manifests in sin, ultimately legitimizing the taboo. Foucault says: "The language of sexuality has lifted us into the night where God is absent." (Foucault 31). Therefore, he defines transgression as a human being beyond its sexual limits, searching for the void where God once existed. There is no polarity in the absence of God and thus no limit to infinity. Transgression, in another sense, is the passage from the world of physical objects and sensations to the world of hallucinations and dreams. Simultaneously, Foucault claims that transgression, like social norms, has its limits. He states: "Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses." (Foucault 34). If the transgression has its own limits, there is a contingency between them, rendering them meaningless in isolation. Thus, the act of crossing the border is a utopian gesture that defines the border as a transient phenomenon that cannot be precisely defined (Stiglegger 24). Therefore, for Foucault, violations aim to push their boundaries, crossing them for a short period and then returning to maintain the limit.

According to the modern author Chris Jenks, a transgression is a reflexive act of denial and affirmation. As many other authors have stated, transgressing goes beyond the law, but it is also

lauding this law. In his book *Transgression*, Jenks covers a wide range of topics, including the history of ideas, significant theorists, development, and his own thoughts of the concept of transgression. The author states that taboos are never imposed from the outside, but they are personal responses to their moral imperatives. Therefore, there is a potent natural desire to violate them. Jenks agrees with Bataille that transgressive behaviour does not deny limits but instead completes them and is a rule component. The author, like Bataille, believes that it is critical to recognize and investigate transgressive acts because this is how people can be understood. Hence for him, it is contributing to regard modern society through the metaphor of excess. Further, Jenks also noticed the “death” of God and the explosion of immoral values. He says: “The possibility of breaking free from moral constraint in contemporary culture has become an intensely privatized project” (Jenks, n.p.). Jenks suggests that the primary purpose of transgression is to remind people of the importance of order. He claims that transgression cannot be measured and cannot be classified as better or worse. As previously stated, there is no white or black. Jenks says that it is critical to understand that crime, which is typically defined as an adverse action, is not the same as transgression. Jenks states: “If boundaries, prohibitions, and taboos are to be tested in a transgressive manner, then the relationship between perpetrator and the act must be willful and intended, not accidental or unconscious.” (Jenks, n.p.). For the author, those acts that are defined as transgressive, naughty, and wrong are the desire and sensual attraction that all people have. As a result, many authors believe that transgressive behaviour is not harmful but somewhat positive. Transgression, according to them, elicits hidden sensations and allows a person to explore himself.

1.1 Transgression in cinema.

Popular culture provides people with fun, pleasure, and liberty (Duncum 233). Bataille and Caillouis also state that the transgression is an act of cultural liberation. According to Paul Duncum people have transgressive tendencies because they believe they are the creators of their cultural artifacts. In visual culture, transgression often dominates and destroys the linear construction of the scene from the foreground. Visual culture is created by a person who expresses his fears, secret desires, and dark thoughts through his work. According to Duncum Transgression is the foundation of popular culture, and it traces both conformist and transgressive personalities. As we know from Foucault's perspective, transgression fixes the phenomenon of crossing the border, that is, the border between the possible and the impossible. As a result, the transgressive artist pushes the generally accepted boundaries of artistic creativity and is willing to defy the artistic canon in order to promote his vision of creative dialogue (Goidich 3). Transgression marks magazines, advertising, music, painting, and of course, television and cinema (Duncum 232). Thus, transgressive art walks the fine line between reverence and irreverence, between sacred and profane.

Since the 1970s, cinema has been a basic form of self-expression, with taboos being broken in various ways. Surrealism, voyeurism, and the American tradition of transgression are all representations of transgression in cinema. Nick Zedd, an American pioneer and key figure in New York's Cinema of Transgression, first coined the term "cinema transgression" in 1985. Along with Zedd, the phenomenon of transgression received the most powerful expression in the 1980s provocative films of the artist and photographer Richard Kern. Many have described his work as perverse, sadistic, theatrically bizarre, and darkly humorous (Moma 2018). Simultaneously, "transgressive" filmmakers made low-budget films that defied conventions and featured shocking imagery and humor. For example, David Lynch was a master of transgressive cinema. He influenced Stanley Kubrick and Lars von Trier, who are also known for their transgressive elements.

In their research, Sakhosh and Menninghaus analyse why people enjoy watching so-named "trash" films, which are mainly characterized by transgressive elements. They discovered that transgressive elements have the potential to elicit both positive and negative affect, depending on the context in which they are presented in cinematography. According to them, when transgressive elements are linked to ironic viewing, the viewer positively re-evaluates 'bad films.' In contrast,

relating transgression to low cultural value elicits negative responses (Sakhosh & Menninghaus 48).

According to Canadian film critic Barry Keith Grant, the phenomenon of transgression is an essential component in the formula of any cult film. Films, in his opinion, can only become cults if they break through existing barriers. According to the critic, it can be understood in terms of attitude, subject matter, or style. In the first case, the filmmaker deliberately provokes the audience. In the second case, he tries to awaken the audience with hidden or explicit social comments, touching on ignored or taboo topics in society. Such issues may include abuse, rape, incest, violent murders, devaluation of religion, slavery, social criticism, or capitalist greed. In the last case, there may be, for example, "cruelty approach" or "kinetic visual pyrotechnics" (Grant 123). What is more exciting and essential for this is Grant's assertion that cult films can be both transgressive and recuperative: "to reclaim that which they seem to violate." (Grant 124). This is what Grant refers to as "ideological manipulation." Thus, when a viewer sees transgressive art, and the filmmaker convinces him that it is correct, the viewer does not feel guilty for enjoying the content that would be publicly condemned in real life. Films with both elements allow viewers to escape into fantasies about breaking taboos. They provide both forbidden pleasure and punishment, eventually returning the viewer to conformity and erasing the uncertainty of their emotions.

In their book *Cult Cinema: An Introduction* Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton also point that cult cinema must necessarily be transgressive. They describe that this kind of transgression often makes the plot feel freaky, weird, and sick. They say: "The apparent desire of cultists to experience something "different" can lead to strange forms of appreciation." (Mathijs & Sexton 97). Here, the authors describe that the feeling of disgust is an integral part of transgressive cinema. This sickness plays a crucial role in the construction, promotion, and reception of the film. According to Mathijs and Sexton, we need to understand how opposing taboos work in order to understand why elements that are repulsive or disgusting to viewers become tools for building a sense of community and admiration. They believe that everyone has the destructive potential of self-destruction, so there are taboos in the world. And because this destructive potential is laid on a subconscious level, a person is constantly striving to free it. Therefore "transgressive films are a means whereby we can act out urges in ways that do not endanger ourselves" (Mathijs & Sexton 102). At the same time, the authors clarify that even when the taboo is presented through the cinema, it can still cause public outrage. In their view, the audience experience may contain performative and affective reactions to moments of disgust and impurity in cinema. As for the weirdness and freakiness, this is, according to the authors, an essential part of transgressive cinema. Freakiness can manifest

itself in a variety of ways, including behaviour and appearance. Freakishness allows audiences to take up positions of distinction and superiority (Mathijs & Sexton 103).

In his book *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime on David Lynch's Lost Highway*, the polish philosopher Slavoj Zizek analyses the transgressive elements in the cinematography. He begins his narrative by examining several iconic, transgressive movies. For example, he writes that in the film *As Good As It Gets*, the viewer is allowed to enjoy unlimited political incorrectness because, in the end, the main character will take the proper path. The author describes this as the structure of an innate disorder. The viewer is permitted to consider something transgressive because the character will be punished or redeemed in the end. Furthermore, the author categorizes transgression as external and inherent based on the way it is constructed. According to him, a viewer can easily consider external transgression, while inherent transgression does not occur in the frame, but it can appear in the viewer's mind. The viewer's thoughts about what is possible or impossible in the film are an inherent transgression. As an example, Zizek uses the concept of "the femme fatale" from John Dahl's film *The Last Seduction*. According to the philosopher, this character is a metaphor, and it represents the "inherent transgression" of the patriarchal symbolic world. According to Zizek, the "Fatale Woman" is the embodiment of a man's fantasy of a cruel, exploitative, insatiable sexual object (Zizek 15).

The philosopher argues that film requires both types of transgressions. Zizek investigates this phenomenon using the example of a three-second scene in the movie *Casablanca*, in which the viewer is perplexed about the characters' bed scene. On the one hand, the audience receives coded signals indicating that sexual intercourse occurred, and on the other, several parallel elements show the opposite. As a result of this scene, the viewer is left with a slew of contradictory thoughts. Zizek writes: "Ilsa and Rick did not do it for the big Other, the order of public appearance, but they did do it for our dirty fantastic imagination. This is the structure of inherent transgression at its purest, and Hollywood needs BOTH levels in order to function" (Zizek 10).

As mentioned earlier, the phenomenon of transgression in the film industry is most often associated with David Lynch, whom Slavoj Zizek calls a "perverted filmmaker." However, one should not assume that transgression in cinematography consists solely of vulgarity or bloody scenes with extreme cruelty. Transgression can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Lynch employs a typically modernist style in his art within late "surrealism." As a result, not all of his films should be labelled as transgressive solely because they contain perversions. Suffice it to say that Lynch's cult film *Mulholland Drive*, in which a borderline between dream and reality is crossed, is also transgressive and bears a surrealist imprint. If one remembers the plot of this film, it will seem rather amusing. And indeed, Zizek also describes Lynch's universe as "funny". However, at the

same time, he believed that these films contained far more than they appear on the surface because they can lead the viewer to topics that go far beyond the "Lynch universe" (Zizek 91). And this is how the transgressive manifests itself ingeniously. Alexander Pavlov, a Russian philosopher and film critic, said of Lynch: "This is the great art - the perverse "art" of understanding that the "funny" is "exalted" to a much greater degree than anything else." (Pavlov 14). Indeed, after watching the film *Mulholland Drive*, the viewer will be surprised and wonder what the film's deep or, at the very least, superficial meaning is.

As previously stated, the transgression does not necessarily imply harshness and bloodshed but somewhat beyond the boundaries of consciousness. The appearance of human bodies is given a special place in transgressive cinematography. Transgressive bodies have external deformities, disabilities, physical flaws, or an unusual appearance that deviates from accepted human reality. To give specific examples in a cinema with a non-standard depiction of human bodies, it is necessary to mention human robots or the so-called cyborgs. This term originated in the USA in 1960. Niall Richardson, in his book *Transgressive Bodies: Representations in Film and Popular Culture*, pushes the boundaries of gender, race, and sexuality analysis in popular culture by applying them to hyper-muscular, fat, transgender, and disabled bodies (Ellis 323). Richardson alludes to the fact that material and "fake" bodies presented in cinema make them safe and visible to social norms (Lelea 59). According to the author, the body is not an essential attribute of a person but is culturally shaped (Richardson 9). As a result, the popularity of various "non-canon" bodies increases viewer loyalty to visual exceptions, allowing them to be no longer treated as such.

The environment can also become an act of transgression in cinema. It can be the city's destruction, the apocalypse, fear, and pain associated with nature. The filmmaker attempts to draw the viewer's attention to the problems related to consumer attitudes toward ecology by incorporating transgression into the film. He tries to cause shock, fear, and calls to comprehend human existence. Transgression and the prospect of the end of the world are required to understand anxiety. Here I want to cite the disaster film *Melancholia*, a science fiction drama about Earth's death. It is a classic example of an apocalyptic cinema montage that serves to reflect on death. The narrative of this genre is typically focused on a group of characters' desperate attempts to survive or escape tragedy, and this what we observe in *Melancholia* (Soler 245).

When we consider cinema from the standpoint of its creation, we can see that this process can also be transgressive. Any film is the result of people interacting with one another as well as a specific filming process. These can also go beyond what is permitted or realized. Thus, transgression can be manifested at the level of filming organization by the author's approach. It is enough to recall films shot in the first person by a single operator and with a single camera. These

films purposefully are not distinguished through high-quality work, stylization, or special effects and instead appear extremely real and close to the viewer. These movies are often shot in the exact locations, which may not differ in terms of beautiful scenery. This can be run-down city districts as well as old apartments and basements. Also, there are acts of violence in such films whose primary goal is to criticize violence rather than poeticize it. For example, short snuff films depicting murder and extreme sexual perversions without the use of special effects. Violence serves primarily as sexual transgression in this genre. As we know, the temporary defeat of the prohibitions is what ultimately reaffirms the prohibition. In this case, the transgression operates exactly as Grant described: the end credits in snuff film inform the viewer that no one was hurt and therefore restore the social norms and prohibitions that were temporarily violated in artistic reality.

At the end of this section, I would like to compare Freud and the serial Netflix algorithms. As previously stated, Netflix employs a sophisticated system of programmed algorithms to capture user preferences, draw parallels between them, recommend the most appropriate media products, track taste changes, and forecast the future. The service's tags are embedded in user accounts, which can then navigate by them. In this, I see a parallel with the psychological diagnosis. Netflix is aware of "its users' diagnoses and, as a result, constructs a vector of viewers' living "- that is, simulates" treatment." Furthermore, the Netflix personalization system categorizes users based on their interests and generates recommendations based on individual group members. For me, this is analogous to an impersonation of anonymous group therapy, in which common thoughts, triggers, experiences, and worldviews are popularized.

In his book *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis example*, Freud developed the theory of self-determination based on psychic sessions with his patients. He states that women behave unbalanced due to sexual violence perpetrated against them at a young age. Repressed memory of early childhood sexual abuse or harassment was proposed as a necessary prerequisite for hysterical or obsessive symptoms. Later Freud concluded that many of these stories about adolescent violence were invented by these women, which is a significant remark. For Freud, that means that impulses, fantasies, and conflicts originated not from outside sources but within the child's mind. These fantasies had psychic reality and arose as a result of necessity: "We cannot avoid the impression that such experiences of childhood are in some way necessary to the neurosis, that its iron rule claims them. If they exist in reality, then well and good, but if reality has withheld them, they are constructed from suggestions and supplemented by the imagination. The result is the same, and to this day, we have been unable to trace any difference in the results, whether fancy or fact played the larger part in these childish occurrences." (Freud 325).

It is clear from this analogy that a person requires certain impressions, even if he must create them himself. Because many of these impressions are nearly impossible to achieve in real life, the human brain generates them in its imagination. People invented such stories before the advent of cinema and shared them with psychologists because fantasy, in this case, takes the form of an emotionally coloured monologue. Therefore, fantasy is projected into the outside world. It can be linked to the violation of the taboo and the inheritance received due to this act. In his taboo's analysis, Freud also described them as being closely related to neuroses. The author bases on the ambiguity of desire and repression. Taboos, according to Freud, are the result of mechanisms for controlling one's own desires. Taboos are prohibitions that aid in the concealment and suppression of desires that manifest as visible and tangible during the transgression process. With the ability to transfer all human fantasies to cinema screens, they are being supplemented with various visual products. Therefore films and TV shows with high viewer loyalty are more likely to include transgressive elements. Such media products elicit a desire to return to them again and again, piercing the audience's heart. According to Freud's theory, transgressive products can reflect something sick, but at the same time, necessary. They assist in opening feelings, delving within oneself, and discovering oneself at the limit and beyond expectations.

2. Methodology

I use an observational research method to find an answer to the following research question **“In what ways do *The End of the F***ing World*, and *You* demonstrate the transformative potentials of transgression?”**.

The three selected series reflect such important themes of transgressive cinema as murder, violence, maniacs, mental disorders, sexual promiscuity, and heavy abuse of the fears. Thus, the main focus of the study of serials will be on these essential topics. These themes are of great importance in the analysis of crime and occupy central roles in transgressive cinematography. Earlier, I have already listed the structural elements of the selected series to claim to be cult titles conditionally.

As a basis for the analysis, I took the book *Film Art: An introduction* by David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Jeff Smith. According to the authors a film presents illusory motion. Its art involves the viewer by engaging his senses and emotions. When there are emotions then the viewer will follow a story and all the patterns of narrative elements. The success of the film and the emotions it evokes are heavily reliant on the film's rigger, from the plot, from the camera movement. However, Bordwell et al. state that it is difficult to guarantee that the filmmaker will elicit a specific emotional response. The context created by the form determines the emotions displayed on the screen. In their book authors distinguish two main directions of the films' analyses – Narrative form and Mise-en-scene.

2.1 Narrative

People have been telling each other stories since ancient times, and it is a fairly common occurrence. No culture is complete unless it has its myths, legends, mystical and sacred stories. When there were no digital gadgets, storytelling was the only source of entertainment in everyday life. Since infancy, people have been telling stories to children, so it is an essential part of human development. Certain aspects of the narrative may be borrowed from the narrator. This ancient fun has taken the form of cinematography, and therefore narrative form is its fundamental basis. According to Bordwell et al., “narrative is a chain of events linked by cause and effect of occurring in time and space.” (Bordwell et al. 73). In cinematography, authors recognize the distinction between story, i.e., narrative and plot. They claim that the plot is constructed from the story. A story is a series of events or the sum of the stories in the film. A narrative form illustrates a series of changes from an initial situation to a final situation in a chronological order. At the same time, several plots can exist concurrently. As a result, the viewer may notice different plot lines that may

or may not intersect. Alternatively, the viewer may return to specific flashbacks or the distant future.

In his book *Poetics of Cinema*, Bordwell also analyses storytelling. In the chapter “Three Dimensions of Film Narrative”, he notices the importance of spoken language. He says: "One reason that narrative emerged as a distinct area of study rather late is that for centuries it was identified largely with spoken language. According to ancient tradition, a narrative was a story told, whereas a story that was enacted was considered drama. The rise of film, comic. And the like encouraged theorists to rethink things. [...] A story can be presented not only in the language but also in pantomime, dance, images, and even music." (Bordwell 3). At the same time, the author states that language remains one of the essential instruments of storytelling. People's words can tell a lot about his personality. So, once the viewer sees the character's narrative form, he understands his identity and motives. Therefore, narratives introduce characters to the viewer. Bordwell also states when the viewer thinks of the narrative, then he first thinks of character. Thus, to analyse the series' narrative, one should explore the characters' attitudes, skills, habits, taste, and psychological drives (Bordwell et al. 77).

2.2 Mise-en-scene

Bordwell et al. imply that mise-en-scene is crucial in film making as it helps to achieve realism in an imaginary world. The authors describe several possibilities that mise-en-scene can offer to the filmmaker, like setting, lighting, costume and makeup, acting, décor. They say that “the overall design of a setting can significantly shape how we understand story action.” (Bordwell et al. 174). The filmmaker can manipulate a shot's setting and create props which are the objects that are actively operating within the ongoing action. Costume and makeup can also furnish props for the film's narrative system. The authors cite sunglasses as an example of protection from the outside world. Therefore, the elements of clothing and makeup convey the character's personalities, as well as their specific position. Lighting in the films is not less important as an image comes from its manipulation. I think that lighting is crucial for the analyses of transgression. Filmmakers often use lighting to convey a certain dark and ominous character in the film.

Acting is the most typical case of expression in the cinema. The authors say that performance is specially created for filming and consists of several visual elements like appearance, gestures, facial expression, and voice. Performance cannot always be realistic, especially in a comedy. However, I believe that realism in acting is an integral part of transgressive cinema. As far as

realistically, the actor will convey emotions, the viewer will be able to plunge into the atmosphere and start sympathizing with the transgressive characters.

2.3 Cult film

In the theoretical section of the study, I mentioned that Canadian film critic Barry Keith Grant stated that transgression is the content core of cult cinema. As a result, transgression is an essential component of any cult film. Cult films push boundaries, whether by defying stereotyped forms, revealing taboo subjects, or simply shocking the audience. This is how Bataille, and Foucault defined transgression: going beyond one's own limits. Why am I returning to the subject of cult cinema? Because cult films, according to some authors, are aimed at a broad audience, just like the Netflix series. In their book, Mathijs and Jamie Sexton write that the mainstream of films with exploitation success lies in their cult appeal. They also argue that cult movies can often be referred to as "naughty cinema" and have elements of "sex, rape, murder, corruption, drug addiction, perversion, and any other distorted emotion." These are also the elements of transgressive cinema discussed by Nick Zedd. The authors argue that Cult Attraction is the public's zeal and curiosity for new sensations, even if what they see is "something weird" (Mathijs & Sexton 13).

Consequently, cult cinema is aimed at a broad audience and at the same time contains elements of transgression. In this regard, I want to analyse serials for an element of the cult because any filmmaker and any production company, especially Netflix, wants to make their product that way. Since most transgressive films claim to be cult and vice versa, I would first like to check if the series can be named cult. And to become a cult series, they need to have several characteristics. Alexander Pavlov, in his book *Tell your kids. One Hundred Eleven Experiments on Cult Cinematography* notes that the concept of "cult" can also be applied to TV series (Twin Peaks). The author lists "... **transgression, reflection, rejection, ugliness, intertextuality, and irony**" as indicators of cultism (Pavlov 41). Mathijs and Sexton have also devoted entire chapters to transgression, reflexivity, ugly horror, intertextuality, and irony in their book. I would also like to point that, while Pavlov separates the transgression from the subsequent elements, I consider them all to be elements of transgressive cinema. For example, Žižek considered reflection to be a part of transgressive cinema in his analysis of David Lynch's cinema. In addition, Mathijs and Sexton emphasized the importance of self-reflection in these types of films. Furthermore, Zedd stated that irony is an essential component of tragic cinema. In this case, rejection can be interpreted as a

reaction to the shocking and ugly content of transgressive cinema. Body ugliness is also considered a transgression. As a result, while Pavlov, in a sense, separates these elements from transgression, we can consider them to be a part of it. This observation, in turn, demonstrates that the concepts of transgressive and cult cinema are heavily intertwined.

As a result, I am curious to see if these elements are included in the series. Further, I will analyse a lot of transgression and reflection (on one's mental state), since these are obvious signs of these series, but first I want to dwell on other elements listed by Pavlov: **rejection, ugliness, intertextuality, and irony**. In next part of cultism analyses I periodically refer to other authors and theories for supporting my statements. Furthermore, I also focus on several camera movements that are relevant to mise-en-scène analysis and which the filmmaker uses to enhance the perception of the previously listed elements. Afterwards I examine the ethos of the main characters and analyse several representative cases.

2.4 Storylines

Before starting to analyse the series, I will briefly describe their plots.

2.4.1 The End of The *** ing World

This is the series about a psychopathic schoolboy and his disgruntled classmate. The series begins with the narration of the main character about his childhood and subsequent life. 17-year-old James is convinced that he is a psychopath. He says that as a child, he dipped his hand in boiling oil, and now he also tortures and kills animals as a hobby. James complains that he has not felt anything since childhood. He also confesses in his plans to kill a real person to finally feel something. One day, during a break, a classmate Alyssa speaks to him. She is enraged by her classmates and bored in a provincial environment. She persuades James to become her boyfriend, who in turn sees her as the ideal victim for his plan. Young people run away from home in James's father's car, without money. The viewer realizes that Alyssa is a rebellious sociopath who decides to run away from home to find her own father. This is where their adventures begin.

The couple begins to wander around England, along the way, committing serious crimes. First, they spent all the money on laser tag; then they crashed the car. At the same time James always thinks about killing Alyssa, but he does not dare to do so. Then Alyssa, even more, penetrates to James and insistently invites him to find her father. On the way, young people burst into someone else's house. Later, the house owner appears to be a serial maniac, and James must

kill him to protect Alyssa. After the fatal murder, the detectives start looking for the teenagers. Then James realizes that he has feelings for Alyssa and most likely is not a psychopath.

Further, the teenagers disperse for a while, but soon they reunite again and, having stolen someone else's car, continue their way to Alyssa's father. Committing a series of petty crimes, they finally find her father in a small trailer on the coast. After talking with her father Leslie, Alyssa realizes that he is a loser and a drug dealer. At the same time, detectives assume that the youngsters are with Alyssa's father and are preparing an ambush. The teenagers find out about this and decide to take Leslie's boat to leave the country. However, the father sees the TV reportage and calls the police in order to hand over the children. One of the detectives arrives, and Alyssa hits him in the head with a gun. Then James runs to the boat, but a police squad arrives. Then he hits Alyssa with a weapon and takes all the blame on himself while realizing he fell in love with her. A shot is heard, and the series ends.

2.4.2 You

You series begins with the charming bookstore manager Joe meeting the beautiful young writer Beck. They have a friendly conversation, and then Joe is already looking for her on social networks. After that he even goes to her apartment and discovers she has a boyfriend Benji. Such a passionate interest in the girl leads to the fact that Joe rescues a drunken Beck when she almost fell on the railroad tracks. Then the girl again goes into the bookstore to thank Joe, and he asks her out on a date. Afterwards the viewer sees that Joe lures Beck's boyfriend into the store's basement, hits him with a hammer, and locks in a cage.

Further, the viewer observes the development of the couple's relationship, along the way watching the actions of the psychopath Joe. For example, he pours peanut butter on Beck's boyfriend Benji, and he dies of an allergic reaction. At the same time, Beck experiences the sudden disappearance of his boyfriend, and Joe decides to burn his body in the forest. Along the way, the viewer hears the thoughts of the protagonist, who is sure that all his actions are justified by his love. Beck expresses caution to her friends about Joe and therefore decides to spend time with another man. Also, there is Beck's girlfriend named Peach who interferes with Joe. She is distrustful of the psychopath, and he decides to neutralize her as well. Then he follows the girl for a run and hits her on the head with a stone. Again, the main character is sure that Peach harms his beloved Beck. In parallel with this, the viewer is also told the story of the Joe's neighbour. He is a little boy and his mother's boyfriend beats and terrorizes them. Joe tries to help the child, and here the viewer sees his good deeds. Joe also realises that he could not kill Peach, but he succeeds in

the subsequent episode. After her death, the couple's relationship deteriorates, and Beck decides to break up with Joe. A few months after the breakup, Beck begins to miss Joe and offers to meet, which leads to their reunion.

Further, the viewer is transferred to flashbacks where Joe's heart-breaking love story is told. It turned out that his ex-girlfriend Candice was cheating on him. Beck is interested in Joe's past, but he does not reveal his heart to her. Then Beck decides to figure it out herself. She discovers a hiding place in Joe's bathroom, where she finds her friends' cell phones, as well as tooth and hair backslash. Joe sees her and locks her up in the basement of a bookstore. Joe then explains to Beck his motives for killing Benji and Peach. The girl seems to sympathize with Jo and attracts him into her cage. She tries to escape, but she fails, and then Joe kills her and sets her therapist up for her murder. This is where the show ends.

Bataille, sex is a taboo topic, but it is not rejected. Mathijs and Sexton also see sex as a part of transgression which can be greatly perverted. Therefore, the filmmaker presents the sexual relationship between the characters in a perverted manner. For example, their first kiss scene appears to be extremely revolting because the girl literally licks his face (see *image 1.2*). Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* states that bodies play a structural role in maintaining stable order. In her opinion, all human fluids cross the boundaries between what is inside and outside the body. Douglas writes that this is disgusting and is a subject of taboo (Douglas 177).

Image 1.2



Mathijs and Sexton also see the act of licking as transgressive element of cult film: “Consider the act of licking, which we referred to earlier. It could easily be argued that such exchanges of body fluids triggers cultism – makes a film cult and allows audiences to use its shock value as a tool in seeing it as cult.” (Mathijs & Sexton 99). Saliva in that scene is the same liquid, which is a certain prohibition in society. As a result, it is a transgressive and perverted occurrence because the viewer witnesses a striking exchange of bodily fluids that causes mixed feelings. Teenage sexual relationships have also the potential to defy social norms. When the sexual act is also presented in a dirty and unclassical manner, the observer experiences unpleasant feelings. Moreover, in this scene, we can also notice the reverse atypical transgression. Hastings Donnan and Fiona Magowan in their book *Transgressive Sex: Subversion and Control in Erotic Encounters* state that sexual

Image 1.3



relations among teenagers are almost always transgressive, because the boy always plays a dominant role and forces his girlfriend into violent sex (Donnan & Magowan 42). In this series, such a role is played by a girl, Alyssa, rather than a boy. She pounces on James, who is clearly not pleased. Such actions are extremely transgressive and unconventional, and as a result, the viewer rejects them.

I continue with the concept of **ugliness** in the show. I have already mentioned that the image of the animals’ mutilated corpses is a presentation of

ugliness. However, the filmmaker also depicts the unattractive body, which Richardson describes as a transgressive one with scars and imperfections. As an example, when James was a child, he dipped his hand into boiling oil. At this point, the viewer notices how the camera zooms in on his scalded hand, which looks eerily similar to Freddy Krueger's (see *image 1.3*). It is also an **intertextual** reference to the 1980s cult horror films. This is not the only reference in the series. For example, there is a scene where James and Alyssa dance in the same manner as the main characters in Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction*. The scene where Alyssa meets a long-haired cashier named Frodo reminds of the *Lord of the Rings*. The boy Frodo begs the main characters to take him on a journey, demonstrating his adventurous spirit and desire to burn all bridges. He seeks approval from his peers and is open to all circumstances and outcomes. In this, he is similar to Frodo Baggins, an enthusiastic hobbit inspired by stories and incredible adventures, while the main characters are similar to Bonnie and Clyde. This scene also contains a hint of irony. Mathijs and Sexton noted that irony and intertextuality can be combined into one, forming a humorous parody.

Irony is one of the foundations of this series. Subtle humour is an essential component of the show's transgressive potential. In his book *Transgressive Fiction* Robin Mookerjee says that ironic style in transgressive cinema is a gesture of strength and a demand for the viewer's attention (Mookerjee 73). Ironic cinema is also called smart cinema. With the twenty-first century regarded as the birth of ironic cinema (Mathijs & Sexton 230), it is clear that it is a popular genre among audiences. Irony techniques are quite common in today's cinema in this regard. The irony can be found in the characters' ethos, storylines, and the series' overall narrative. The entire adolescent culture is built on irony and includes primitive and hackneyed themes, known to all stereotypes and beliefs. It does not look silly or annoying here because the filmmaker manages to play it very colourfully. The transgressive elements in this series also allow the viewer to reconsider corny jokes and stereotypes. In addition to constant ironic jokes and playing with stereotypes, the series also has plot irony. Throughout the series, no one supports the main characters, and the only people attempting to assist them are representatives of the law. On the one hand, they must protect society from the dangerous criminals, but on the other hand, they feel empathy for them. For example, when Alyssa is caught shoplifting, instead of punishing her, the security guard gives her cookies, listens to her problems, gives her advice, and finally lets her go. Then the police officer tries to save the teenagers from the situation in the same way. Surprisingly, this desire to save teenagers comes from the strangers who is forced to condemn them but not from their parents. The people who must protect James and Alyssa become their main enemies and this is the biggest irony in the series.

3.2 Ethos

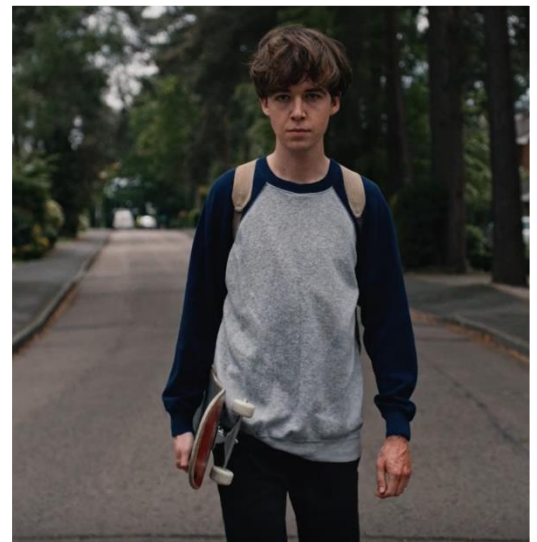
In this section, I examine the ethos of the main characters, James and Alyssa. In the first episode of the series, the viewer gets to know them as teenagers talk about their lives, feelings, and reflect a lot. I use film analysis elements such as narrative and mise-en-scene to analyse the ethos. As I previously stated, narrative assists us in analysing the personalities of characters. The character communicates with the audience through the narrative, that is, the story and words. The mise-en-scene is also critical for analysing ethos. This includes the following elements: setting, lighting, costume and makeup, performance, and decor. Clothes and play can reveal a lot about a character's personality. His relationship to the world around him is also conveyed through the decor and lighting, while music and camera movements evoke a specific emotion in the viewer.

James is 17 years old, and we that he does not act like a typical teenager. Or perhaps he wants us to think so.

At the beginning of the first episode as it is seen on the *Image 1.4*, he walks with a rather dull and even angry expression on his face along a deserted street, so he looks very transgressive and odd. Bordwell et al. state that with the help of facial expressions as well as with the bodies actors can develop their characterizations (Bordwell et al. 240). If we look closely at this image, we see that he is dressed like an ordinary teenager, but not very remarkable. His clothes are dark in colour, while his skin appears grey, and there are large bruises under his eyes. Obviously, the

filmmaker concentrates on the colour of his skin and bruises because the actor wears special make-up for this look. His skateboard is probably the only thing that betrays him as a teenager. As a result of this look, the viewer realizes that James is unconcerned about his appearance - he wants to be different. One might assume that this is a depressing image of a typical teenage maximalist who wants to go against everyone. There is a stereotype in his image as a whole. To add drama to his personas, the nostalgic and depressive pop music "Laughing on the outside but crying on the inside" plays in the background. Music plays crucial role here in conveying the image of James. The image in this scene is also quite dark as the lightning is dim. It also adds drama and transgression to his sociopathic portrayal.

Image 1.4



From the very first seconds James is a narrator in the series. As we know from Bordwell et al. the narrator can be a character in the story. They state that “a character narrator might be highly subjective, telling us details of his or her inner life.” (Bordwell et al. 98). In a monologue about his life, the main character reflects and analyses his emotional and psychotic state a lot. James is convinced that he is a psychopath. At the very beginning, when he talks about himself, he seems to be convincing of this. James performs actions that, in his opinion, can only be done by a real psychopath: he has no friends; he does not laugh at his father's jokes and hates him; he deliberately hurts himself and kills animals; his biggest dream is to kill a human. One gets the impression that James does this on purpose to fit the image of the psychopath he invented. From the story of James, we can conclude that he has transgressive behaviour. Robert Lueger stated that manifestations of youthful transgression are personality-problem-type, excessive anxiety, difficulty with peers, guilt, depression (Lueger 453). We can say that this behaviour is even too stereotyped and the director signals this in every possible way. This is manifested in the acting of the actor himself, who in certain scenes deliberately plays his role in an unnatural and sarcastic way.

Another important element in revealing James' identity is his relationship with his father. James describes his hatred for his father in detail. He calls him bad words and hints at his stupidity. It looks like James is trying to exalt himself at the expense of his father. To clearly illustrate this attitude, the filmmaker presents the father in a very stereotypical and clichéd way. Stereotyping the father's character can help to convey a great contrast between father and son and evoke appropriate feelings in the viewer. As we can see on *image 1.5* in the first scene with James's

Image 1.5



father, he sits in a plaid shirt, and he has a red beard. This is a typical image of a middle-aged man. Such images are frequently seen in American films and television shows. The filmmaker also added such props as a sandwich, a can of beer, and a TV to the father's image. James also mentions that his father enjoys shopping on the couch and purchasing home appliances from there. These are most likely excellent benefits for the average consumer society family man. As a result, James' father's image is heavily clichéd and ironic, and his relationship with the son is nowhere near as bad. In this scene the viewer sees James's transgressive behaviour and complex relationship with the father.

These clichéd scenes, subtle humour and stereotypes help the viewer to experience positive emotions rather than negative ones. It turns out that the filmmaker can show transgressive and disgusting behaviour on the screen but with the ironic and clichéd elements. The viewer will then be content to watch the unfolding of events without feeling guilty about watching inappropriate and immoral content. Satire and stereotypes play a positive role in this series, as if to reassure the viewer that everything is fine and there is nothing to worry about. And indeed, according to Sakhosh and Menninghaus, when transgressive elements are linked to ironic viewing, the viewer positively re-evaluates “bad films.” (Sakhosh & Menninghaus 48). Zizek also states that clichéd elements are essential for transgressive cinema. He points:” In the Lynch universe, the psychological unity of a person disintegrates, on the one hand, into a series of clichés, into intolerably ritualized behaviour, and on the other hand, into a flash of harsh, non-sublimated reality, expressed by intolerably intense, (self-) destructive psychological energy.” (Zizek 125)

Returning to James, we can conclude that he lives an outsider's life and refuses to communicate with anyone. When Alyssa first approaches him, it is clear from his expression that he is dissatisfied with the situation and is attempting to distance himself. It becomes clear that no one usually approaches the boy, and he does not approach anyone. As a result, such situations force James out of his comfort zone. To convey James' undeserved hatred for the world around him, the filmmaker depicts it as bright and iridescent. We can see that teenager lives in a bright apartment with white furniture. There is beautiful nature and greenery all around him, but he is shown rather gloomily. As a result, it is difficult for the viewer to justify his hatred. But James can justify himself because he believes he is a psychopath and requires a special treatment.

Alyssa is revealed to be more emotional, but no less repulsive. She, like James, is extremely pale (see *image 1.6*). The use of light in shots of teenagers discussing their lives is quite unusual. Because the filmmaker wishes to elicit feelings of disgust and strangeness, the light falls on the teenagers' faces in such a way that the viewer can see every wrinkle on their faces. When Zizek examined Lynch's films, he noted the exaggeration of such things. The author stated in transgressive films that light can blind, and fire can burn. If we take a closer look at *image 1.6*, we can see that the girl does not wear makeup or dresses femininely, which distinguishes Alyssa from her peers. Alyssa like James discusses how she despises everything around her. But unlike James, the girl's actions are difficult to justify.

Image 1.6



She does not consider herself to be a psychopath, and she does not appear to be oppressed by her peers. When Alyssa sees James for the first time, she immediately makes an obscene remark: she informs the boy that he is not a good skater. In the same scene, James decides to ask the girl out on a date. He thinks, "I knew that people in love went out on dates." At this point, we notice irony, stereotyping, and a certain mockery of human relationships. After the date Alyssa invites him to engage in sexual acts doing so in a rude and disgusting manner. Referring to Mathijs and Sexton, the display of sexual relations is a transgressive phenomenon.

If we draw conclusions about the characters from the first episode, then we will not notice any transformational potential of transgression. On the contrary, the main characters demonstrate sufficiently flared transgressive behaviour to match a teenager. The first episode depicts two unruly, cruel, and rude children. So, the filmmaker tries to instil as much hatred in the viewer as possible. At first, one is perplexed as to why one should watch such rudeness, because a feeling of disgust is not what the viewer desires. However, as the series progresses, the main characters become more positive and loved. Interestingly, the filmmaker shows the main characters as repulsive as possible, so he only tells a portion of their life in the first episode. To explain such a directional trick. Bordwell et al. refer to Hitchcock films which as we know are extremely transgressive. The authors describe this trick as "manipulation with knowledge's depth. They state that "plunging into mental subjectivity can increase our sympathy or rejection for a character and can cue stable expectations about what the characters will later say or do" (Bordwell et al. 93).

Thus, the viewer is not shown Alyssa's family or any background information about her life. All the viewer sees is obnoxious behaviour. After all, if the filmmaker had shown her family, perhaps the viewer would not have judged her so harshly. James, on the other hand, is quite the opposite. It was critical for the filmmaker to depict James's attitude toward his father because it is the foundation of his entire image of a psychopath. As a result, the filmmaker can tell the story from various perspectives in order to create the desired image in the viewer's mind.

3.3 Cases with transformational transgression

In order to identify the potentials of transgression certain storylines and twists need to be analyzed. Thus, we can trace the transformation of the transgressive in this series. I want to look at several cases to explore how transgression works and how it turns positive. In this section, I examine both the narrative form and the mise-en-scene. The cases go consistently with the

development of the plot. They are selected based on the presence of transgressive actions that have several potentials. In each case, the transgression is transformed and takes on a different meaning. I chose these cases because the main characters exhibit very transgressive and immoral behaviour at first, but as the plot progresses, the viewer is willing to justify them

3.3.1 Alyssa's family

Image 1.7



In the first scenes, the viewer watches how Alyssa is unfairly cruel to everyone. However, the scene with her family can rehabilitate Alyssa in the eyes of the viewer. We see that a party is taking place at the girl's house. In this episode, the mise-en-scene is crucial in demonstrating the difference between mother and daughter. Everyone in the house is dressed up in white, intelligent costumes (see *image 1.7*). If we look at the props and audio effects, we see a presentation of a very clichéd party: backyard, bright flowers, snacks, champagne, cake, and classic music. Alyssa's mother is seen giving her daughter clothes, implying that her appearance is inappropriate for the occasion. She instructs her daughter to change and accompany her to the guests to distribute canapés. At the same time, Alyssa's mother forbids her from touching food, treating her as if she were a servant. Also, Alyssa's mother gives her a waitress outfit rather than a dress. She has new husband and children, and she is clearly uninterested in the girl because Alyssa does not fit into her ideal family picture. The filmmaker emphasizes the significance of a mother appearing unrivalled in the eyes of others while being terrible in the eyes of her daughter. Certain desires, such as being good and positive, can backfire, according to Žižek. He believed that prohibition and censorship could play a dual role. Alyssa's mother is making an effort to appear perfect in the eyes of strangers. She forbids herself to be genuine and portrays herself as an excellent and caring mother, which she most likely believes. Her desire to be perfect, on the other hand, harms her relationship with the daughter who requires mothering assistance. Thus, “good” is transformed into “bad”.

In the scene with Alyssa's stepfather, he makes sexual remarks and compliments to the girl, and touches her without the permission. During the party, the stepfather comes up to Alyssa, and she tells him that their whole life is nonsense. The stepfather responds that no one is holding her,

and that Alyssa will do them all a great favour if she eventually vanishes from their lives. In the scenes with the stepfather, we also trace the violation of social norms and prohibitions. In her book *Cross Generational Relationships and Cinema* Joel Gwynne points that to desire someone younger than oneself is not something anormal (Gwynne 1). Sexual relations between an adult man and a young girl are, of course, viewed differently in the societies. Such actions are considered transgressive in some places, but the norm in others. If we concentrate on the European audience, the stepfather's behaviour will almost certainly be immoral. Moreover, there is a certain violence in these actions, since the girl is against such a relationship with her stepfather.

After the conversation with her stepfather Alyssa, almost in tears, runs to James, and asks him to flee. In this scene she again invites him to have sex. It becomes clear that the previous sexual proposals are simply an attempt to feel loved. Her rudeness is merely a symptom of her desperation. This is an insult that girl carries within herself and occasionally spews out. Bataille also associated such a strong sexual desire with the loss of selfhood and with an attempt to escape the truth. Therefore, there are numerous transgressive scenes at Alyssa's house: rudeness, complicated relationships with elders, and even sexual harassment. After these scenes, the viewer will probably begin to despise completely different characters and the feeling of rejection for the girl fades into the background

3.3.2 The car

After the scene with Alyssa's family the teenagers decide to flee, and James is forced to steal his father's car. The scene begins with James' happy and smiling father getting out of the car with a food bag. James' father is depicted as a very good-natured man once more. He is dressed casually in a light-coloured shirt, jeans, and a jacket. He waves his hand, shows a bag of food, thereby showing his concern to James. However, James slaps his father in the face, jumps into the car with Alyssa, and drives away. Once again, the viewer is treated to an unpleasant and perplexing scene. Because the filmmaker is probably attempting to convey a father's love to his son, it is unclear why the teenager is so cruel to him. James's situation is completely different from Alyssa's - her parents do not care about the girl. As a result, if Alyssa hit her mother out of rage, she can be justified and understood. James's act resembles a betrayal because the father has spent his entire life living for him and doing everything to ensure his son's well-being. Earlier I have already listed how the filmmaker creates such an image. So, for example, James's father is a cheerful simpleton, who constantly jokes and buys gifts for his son. In general, James' father is showing signs of attention to his son on an ongoing basis. Therefore, James's hatred of a person who loves him can begin to irritate.

The car, however, explodes the next day. For the first time, the viewer sees James express emotion - he regrets because this car was important to his father. If we pay attention to the *mise-en-scène*, we can notice that at the moment of feeling regret, the lighting dies down a little. The performance is also changing dramatically. While he is driving in the car, he does not show any emotions and behaves as usual. At the time of the accident, the emotions on the actor's face change dramatically. At first James is frightened, then angry with his girlfriend, and then he is sad. Now it is clear that James is not as insensitive as he attempted to appear in the first episode. This is insufficient to justify a teenager, but the viewer is willing to forgive the wrongdoing if there is evidence of regret.

3.3.3 Theft

After being left on the side-lines without a car, James and Alyssa decided to hitch a ride. We see James without a T-shirt attempting to catch the vehicle while Alyssa hides in the bushes. Nobody stops James' car, and he honestly does not understand what is wrong. Alyssa tells him that without a T-shirt, he looks like a psycho, and only that psycho will stop the car. Indeed, in many films, men rarely stop the vehicle unless they see a beautiful woman. But Alyssa is very discontented with this situation. She is hiding in the bushes when she could be assisting James.

The car comes to a halt at that moment when Alyssa says that only a psycho wants to help James. In this, the viewer can already replace a certain hint from the filmmaker that something is wrong with the owner of the car. The *mise-en-scène* here immediately tells the viewer a lot about the teenagers' new acquaintance. With the help of the *mise-en-scène*, the filmmaker was able to create the image of an unpleasant and disgusting man. As for the actor's costume, it raises no questions: we see the man in his fifties who drives a vintage car and wears a green jumper and a trench coat. The actor's makeup no longer inspires confidence in the character. As we know, with the help of makeup, one can depict certain emotions on the face of an actor. A man's red moustache which is a classic sign of a maniac in cinematography rushes into the first line of sight. Also, each wrinkle is drawn very colourfully and accurately. As for the actor's performance, he behaves very mysteriously but friendly. His eyes dart about, which testifies to a dishonest person. He speaks politely, always smiles, and even refers to James as his son while offering the assistance. This, however, does not instil confidence in Alyssa or the viewer. In general, the man appears unappealing, and it is strange that he stopped the car for a naked boy without even asking what happened. The filmmaker made him to look like a middle-aged man with suspicious tendencies, and he succeeded in it.

Now, we return to the plot's development. Alyssa refuses man's help, but James decides to take matters into his own hands and agrees. James sat in the front seat, which irritated Alyssa. It becomes clear that she is terrified and that being in this man's property is extremely unpleasant for her. Alyssa is rude to the driver. In this scene it is essential to draw on the actor's performance as well as the camera's movement. The man does not respond to the rudeness in any way, but when Alyssa speaks to him, he smiles, silently narrows his eyes, and looks at her

Image 1.8



in the rear-view mirror (see *image 1.8*). At this point, the camera zooms in on his eyes and we see a close-up of his face. His facial expression is filled with rage and vindictiveness. In this the camera conveys the man's bad intentions while also raising questions in the viewer's mind. The man makes an unfavourable impression due to the staging of the mise-en-scene, so the viewer understands the girl's behaviour.

After the scene in the car, they stop at a diner, where Alyssa expresses her concerns to James, but he thinks the man is perfectly normal. Probably, the viewer, like Alyssa, is perplexed at this point: is James so silly that he does not see the obvious things? The fact that the man sits as close to James as possible in a cafe adds to the suspicion. At that time the boy appears perplexed, but it is unclear which aspect - Alyssa's rudeness or the man's behaviour perplexes him more. While Alyssa is out on the street, James goes to the restroom, and the man joins him. The viewer sees a particularly unpleasant scene near the urinal. The man looks at boy's hand and inquires to what is wrong with it. He moves in closer, taking the teen's hand, and kissing it. James stares at the wall, thinking that sometimes he just goes with the flow and does not know what to do. The man then starts harassing James, which Alyssa notices and prevents from happening. She threatens him and steals his wallet.

At this point, we see the manifestation of transgressive sexual relations. An old homosexual man harasses a teenager. Firstly, any relationship between an old man and a young teenager is already outside the boundaries of normal, and in this scene the relationship is homosexual. According to Donnan and Magowan, despite the fact that homosexuality is accepted by the general public, it is still not ready to observe it, and homosexuality is frequently silenced (Donnan & Magowan 14). The man himself describes his actions as transgressive. He is a "proper" family man who understands that harassing a teenager will land him in trouble with society, so he hides in the toilet where no one can see. Alyssa's transgressions, which include rudeness and theft, are

transformed by the acquisition of a positive potential. The rapist and pedophile were punished by the girl. Going above and beyond social norms is acceptable in this scene and cannot be condemned.

After the scene in the toilet the teenagers go out into the street, and James tells Alyssa that he has no idea what to do in such terrible situations and how to interact with other people. It is widely acknowledged that James is extremely vulnerable and weak. Again, the viewer is left wondering what happened to the boy that left such an impression on him. As a result, the viewer realizes that James is powerless to protect himself from the outside world. Most likely, his murderous thoughts are a reaction to a specific trigger. Earlier, James revealed that his mother had died so that the audience could associate his actions with her death. After the case with the man, James gradually instils feelings of compassion and empathy in the audience.

3.3.4 Murder

After the case in the cafe, teenagers realize they are completely exhausted. Then they decide to take over the house that has no owner (see *image 1.9*). Now, we need to look at the decor in more detail to figure out who owns this house. It is large mansion, which in Britain denotes a wealthy and wealthy owner. The house is extremely clean and dark, with expensive dark-coloured furniture. This could imply that the owner is secretive and cruel. Alyssa and James' home, for example, was filled with white furniture and natural light. Their parents are upstanding members of society who have nothing to hide. As a result, the decor and setting in this house may not inspire trust in the viewer. The teenagers deduced from books and photographs that the owner is most likely a well-known professor. Surprisingly, the photo features another suspicious-looking moustachioed man. Most likely, the filmmaker ridicules this stereotype, and hints to the audience about another maniac.

Alyssa decides to look around the house and discovers alcohol. Then James chastises her for failing to respect other people's property and borders. In this regard, James wants to appear correct, which is strange as they previously robbed people, stole things, and, in general, he wishes to kill his companion. After a certain moment, James begins to behave properly and even prepares food

Image 1.9



for Alyssa, demonstrating his concern for her. At some point the teenagers fight each other and James is eventually left alone in the house. Despite his lack of expression, it is clear that he is distressed by the argument. Nonetheless, the filmmaker does not abandon the image of a psychopath in order to show the audience the character's other side. For example, he picks flowers from the garden to please Alyssa, demonstrating his oddities once more. This shows the viewer that, while James is not as insensitive as he once was, he is still transgressive.

While being home alone, James discovers bleach, duct tape and video scenes with violence, and abuse of underage students. The rapist also keeps photographs signed with the victims' names. Interestingly, the filmmaker demonstrates that this is not simply violence against children, but teacher violence against children. As we already know, Zedd noted that violence is an integral part of transgressive cinema. Violence is always something that is beyond a person's comprehension and feelings. According to Gwynne and Richardson status-role conflicts are also a manifestation of transgression. Hence when the viewer sees involuntary participants in the status-role conflict

Image 1.10



become victims of violence, it piques his interest a lot.

The filmmaker should visually depict the perpetration of this violence. When Alyssa returns home, she sleeps alone in the bedroom. At this point, the professor reappears and attempts to rape the girl. James hears screams, approaches the rapist, and slits his throat with the same knife he was supposed to use for murdering his girlfriend. In this scene, the viewer observes a lot of blood, which also in the Douglas's opinion is a great manifestation of transgression. The shot and performance are also presented in a very surrealistic way. So, the camera zooms at the head of the

murdered rapist, and pools of blood form a heart shape (see *image 1.10*). The teenagers themselves are bloody and stand still for about a minute (see *image 1.11*). Now it became clear to the viewer that James would not kill Alyssa out of sympathy for her. When she left, he mentioned it to her: when James was around Alyssa, his emotions began to awaken, and he loved it. But the filmmaker chose to show the viewer the knife's irony when, instead of killing, it saved the girl's life. This transformation finally causes the viewer to fall in love with James and undoes all his evil deeds, including the killing of

Image 1.11



animals and the murder of a person. Such a plot twist piques the viewer's interest even more and speaks to the various dynamics of the character's transformation.

The professor's murder is a critical question in terms of transgressive and ethical behaviour. On the one hand, the viewer sees someone else's property being hacked, as well as a rather brutal murder with a throat cut and a sea of blood. On the other hand, the professor attempted to harm Alyssa and other girls and maybe he deserved to die. At this point, transgression (murder and demonstration of human fluids) transforms into a positive potential. Although social boundaries and ethical norms are violated, there appears to be no desire to punish adolescents. This causes the viewer to reflect on what has occurred and to begin his internal judgment. According to Žižek, the viewer's sense of reflection is one of the most important abilities of transgressive cinematography. James and Alyssa transform from nasty characters to tangled, vulnerable people. The filmmaker also reinforces this feeling by introducing the police officer Eunuchia, who is the only one who is aware of the emotional tragedy that children are experiencing. The viewer also sees the scene where the professor's mother discovered her son's body, as well as his violent video and photographs. She made the decision to conceal this information from the police by destroying all evidence of his crimes. Interestingly, the viewer does not witness the main characters' repentance or the fact that they have chosen the right path. On the contrary, they continue to behave in the same manner as before, even murdering someone. The filmmaker, however, twisted the plot so that the audience unintentionally begins to love and sympathize with them.

3.3.5 James's mother

Even though the audience may not hold James responsible for the murder, the filmmaker uses narrative to rehabilitate the character. Thompson and Burwell stated that a plot can create a can create a sort of curiosity about some of character's motives. And that is true because in the first series the viewer cannot understand James's cruel behaviour. In order to explain these motives what caused the behaviour, the filmmakers return the viewer to flashbacks revealing some of the psychological trams (Bordwell et al. 94). For example, to make James more human, the filmmaker reveals all the triggers from his past. He takes the viewer into a flashback - a memory from James' childhood. The mise-en-scene is also very important here, as it conveys the mother's depressed state. If we look

Image 1.12



closely at her face in the image, we can see that even when she smiles, her face is filled with pain (see *image 1.12*). Her expressionless face suggests that she is unhappy with something. The mother is wearing no makeup, and her hair and skin literally blend with the colour of her light clothing. That is how the emotional state of James's mother is conveyed.

In that scene James requests his mother to feed the ducks. This is the opposite of what James previously described. He stated that as a child, he killed animals and did not feed them. The mother is not thrilled with the idea of feeding the birds, but she agrees to it. On the lake, she falls into the water in front of her son's eyes and drowns. As a result, James became an unwitting witness to his mother's death. Suicide is most likely one of the most extreme forms of transgression. According to Bataille, death is going beyond the limits of what is accessible and permissible. When a person is desperate enough to cross this line, he commits suicide as a means of transitioning to a different state. Since then, James's father has never taken him seriously and has only made unfunny jokes. This was the father's method of masking his pain. James' entire life was most likely turned into a great tragedy from that point forward. I cannot generalize, but since mother's suicide is a very tragic moment for a human being, the viewer probably no longer despises James. Therefore, their emotions smoothly transitioned from hatred to pity, while the murder fades into the background.

3.3.6 The guard

The scene with menstrual blood and security guard may be the final stage in developing Alyssa's personality and viewer's empathy. When Alyssa began menstruating after being left alone, she realises she has no money for tampons and new clothes after burning the evidence of murder. Alyssa decides to steal panties from the nearest store, where she was apprehended by the guard. This is another example of transgression. However, it manifests itself not only through theft but also through an abundance of menstrual blood. As I previously stated, any human fluid is a manifestation of transgression. Douglas points: "All bodily emissions, even blood or pus from a wound, are sources of impurity" (Douglas 35). Menstruation blood is described by the author as something disgusting and dangerous for a man since ancient times. The filmmaker appears to want to remind the audience of this repulsive feeling. The staging of the scene, as well as the actress' performance, create unpleasant sensations. So, Alyssa walks down the street, sticks her toes, and discovers a lot of blood on them (see *image 1.13*). This is not a pleasant moment for the viewer, but it is also a symbolic excess. Alyssa escaped from a maniac and a murderer and found herself at the end of the so-called committing herself.

Image 1.13



Therefore, with the onset of her period, Alyssa began a new life cycle. The beginning of a new cycle is marked not only by menstrual blood, but also by the girl's good deed. While Alyssa was with the guard, a little child was missing. The girl seizes the opportunity and runs away. Going out into the street, Alyssa encounters the lost child and, with a roll of the eyes, returns her to the store. Alyssa makes a personal sacrifice in the name of doing good. This is the first time in the entire plot that the main characters do something positive without any negative consequences. As a result, we can see how transgression can once again have transformational potential. The child might not have been found if Alyssa had not stolen the panties and escaped from the guard.

However, as I previously stated, the transformation takes place in the eyes of the audience, not in the characters themselves. Teenagers' personalities are simply revealed from previously hidden sides. The characters continue to act in the same manner as at the start of the series. For instance, we see Alyssa's conversation with her mother. The mother requests that her daughter return home, but the girl is rude and uses vulgar language. However, because there was a previous scene in which the police arrived at Alyssa's house, the viewer may no longer perceive this as judgmental. In that scene the police were astounded that the mother had not reported her daughter's disappearance, and that there was not a single photograph of the girl in the house.

3.3.7 Alyssa's father

After all the adventures, the teenagers finally got to Alyssa's father. The girl is certain that her father is the only person who adores her. Alyssa is clearly not as strong as she appears to be. She conjured up the image of a loving father, behind whom she fantasizes about hiding and protecting herself from the evil that surrounds her. After meeting with her father, the girl realizes that he is deceitful and hypocritical. For example, Alyssa assumed that her father was sending her birthday cards, which he, of course, confirmed. For the girl, the postcards were a remarkable expression of her father's love. However, it was quickly revealed that Alyssa's mother was the one who sent those cards.

Image 1.12



But first, I will decipher the father's image as presented by the filmmaker. Before Alyssa understands her father's true essence, the viewer may have some reservations about him as well. Now we take a closer look at the mise-en-scene of Alyssa's first meeting with her father. Teenagers are banging on the door of a filthy trailer. A trailer almost always means a low standard of living in the cinema. Now we take a closer look at the frame in *image 1.12*. The trailer's lighting is dark, which almost immediately indicates that we are dealing with a transgressive character. When we focus in the costume, we can see that Alyssa's father is disheveled and dressed in a green Chinese robe. His tattoos, rings, and chains signal about transgressive behavior. The filmmaker added a lot of empty beer cans as props. The father also offers Alyssa a can of beer and invites her to smoke a weed. According to Zedd, drug use, particularly among children, is a very transgressive act. The father does not care about his daughter, and as a result, he subjected her to alcohol and drugs. At that moment we can feel sorry for Alyssa. With such a staging of the mise-en-scène, the filmmaker was able to achieve the image of a bad father.

After a welcome with drugs and alcohol the father sees the news that announced a monetary reward for assisting in the capture of the teenagers and decides to use it for his own well-being. The man calls the cops and requests that they listen to what is going on around him. He exposes his daughter to emotions and encourages her to confide. As a result, Alyssa tells her father about the murder, and the police fix her confession. James discovers the man's scheme, but it is too late. Alyssa then grabs a kitchen knife and stabs her father in the thigh. She punishes him for his betrayal and deception. Can we blame her in this case?

I cannot say that every viewer can understand why a girl would do such a thing, because there are all kinds of age group, genders, cultural backgrounds, etc who are watching the series. I am aware that one cannot generalize, but this scene can trigger emotions that are very general among human beings. So, we can conclude that this scene has a very high percentage of evoking empathy in the viewer. I believe the viewer can no longer paying attention to her cruel antics. Her father betrayed his own daughter for money and own well-being and that is very sad. Alyssa's only hope for love and understanding self-destructs, and the girl realizes she has no one but James next to her. In this scene we see a rather stereotypical depiction of a dysfunctional and divorced family which can lead to the child's transgressive behaviours. Rosnati et.al state that "children whose parents separate, or divorce display a great variation in their response to parental separation, but

on average they show poorer outcomes (i.e., emotional problems and a variety of conduct-related difficulties) than do children of intact families” (Rosnati et al. 187). They also state that teenagers’ transgressive behavior is directly connected to the complex relationship with their divorced parents. According to their findings, divorced families have increased by 70% in Europe since the 2000s and that children’s transgressive behaviour is a common consequence. Based on this, I believe that many viewers will be able to connect what is happening in Alyssa's life to their own. According to Žižek, the beauty of transgressive cinema lies precisely in reflection and comparing oneself and one's actions with the character. If the viewer identifies with Alyssa, he will see an excuse to commit violence against the father. Furthermore, the father is portrayed as a bad and slick individual who engages in transgressive behavior. We already know that, according to Grant, the viewer usually wants punishment for a negative transgressor, and therefore he will feel satisfaction from such a knife strike. As a result, a knife strike transforms and is endowed with "good" potential in this context.

I want to complete my analysis of the final scene with father and the entire series. In order to save each other, the kids commit a number of transgressive acts. To begin, Alyssa hits a good policewoman in the head with a gun in order to escape and free James. Of course, this is a ruse because the detective wanted to assist the teenagers. However, the filmmaker immediately rehabilitates the girl when she is ready to take the blame for the murder on herself. Then James hits Alyssa on the head in the same manner, so she does not have time to say anything. In this case, the transgression is also transformed into a kind and innocent act, because teenagers simply want to protect each other. James wishes to save Alyssa and flee by boat which can be associated with committing the ultimate transgression - leaving his world to escape injustice for good

4. You

You's plot is very different from the previous series. What they have in common is the presence of a psychopath and murders. But in this series, the viewer sympathizes with a genuine psychopath and killer. This show's analysis also will be slightly different. The fact is that the storylines in the series *You* are so intertwined that it will be difficult to single out any individual representative cases. As with the previous series, I will examine the elements of cultism, ethos, and some plot twists, i.e., cases, in this series. However, for this series' analysis, I will be primarily guided by Lacan and Žižek's theories.

4.1 Cult analyses

Let me begin with examining the show for the cult elements. As we recall, the main aspects of this cinematic genre are transgression, reflection, rejection, ugliness, intertextuality, and irony. I mentioned earlier that I believe transgressive cinema incorporates all these elements. I might say that *You* is more of a transgressive description than a cult film. However, these elements are also present in the series.

The essence of this series is entirely based on the main character Joe's **reflection**. We are literally inside his head, hearing all of his thoughts and reasoning. The main character frequently analyses his actions, both good and bad, and almost always convinces himself that he is a generous and kind person. He also often reflects on his past, recalling a previous love that did not end well.

The **rejection** in this series is not as strong as it was in the previous one. The feeling of

Image 2.1



rejection to the characters does not appear in the first episode. The main character, on the contrary, behaves very politely and kindly, but I will get to that later. However, the filmmaker surrounds him with mean and transgressive characters. For example, his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend is a heroin addict and a murderer who preys on women. His next-door neighbour terrorizes and assaults the young boy and his mother. According to authors such as..., this violence and drug use in cinema is a component of transgressive cinema. Joe's girlfriend is also rejected because of her stupidity and excessive artificiality.

However, Joe himself is a murderer, but it appears that the filmmaker wishes to elevate him at the expense of the other transgressive characters.

Although **ugliness** is rarely depicted in the series, there is a scene in which Joe examines Benji's decomposing body (see *image 2.1*). Now we take a closer look at this mise-en-scene. The filmmaker added a hammer that Joe was about to smash Benji's head with as a prop. The viewer is most likely expecting to see a broken head and a leaking brain, but this does not occur. If we look closely at the actor's makeup, we can see that the filmmaker probably wanted him to appear as intimidating and unpleasant as possible. He not only acted out a corpse in front of the viewer, but he also made it very rejective. At this point, the camera zoomed in on Benji's face

and paused for a few seconds to allow the viewer to examine all of the details of the decaying corpse. Benji has open, transparent eyes and an open mouth with almost black teeth (see *image 1.1*). After that, Joe's vomit is shown in a camera close-up to give the viewer a sense of how the rotten smell spreads throughout the basement. In this scene, we see fluids bursting out of the human body, which Douglas interprets as committing a transgressive act. At the end of the series, the viewer sees Benji's torn and decayed teeth in Joe's box (see *image 2.2*).

Intertextual references are uncommon in the series. However, we can see the intertextuality of the plot itself. Joe and Beck's first meeting strongly suggests a reference to old romantic comedies like... Joe meets a cute blonde, Beck, in a bookstore and falls in love at first sight. Throughout the series, he fantasizes about winning her love by constantly arranging romantic dates for her and showing her gifts. Therefore, I can say that the entire plot is a reference to famous romantic comedies from the previous century.

The irony is a constant feature of the *You* series. The main character is extremely intelligent and, as a result, is ironic to everything that happens around him. Almost all of his inner monologues are pure irony and mockery of those people around him. Some of the storylines are also ironic. For example, the only person who truly cares about the main character Beck and is always doing nice things for her is a psychopath and a murderer.

In general, I would say this series failed the cult test, but that was to be expected, given that the transgression in this series is presented and transformed on an entirely different level. However, this is the essence of the fascination with transgressive cinematography, as it can manifest itself from various angles, assisting the viewer in discovering and experiencing new sensations.

Image 2.2

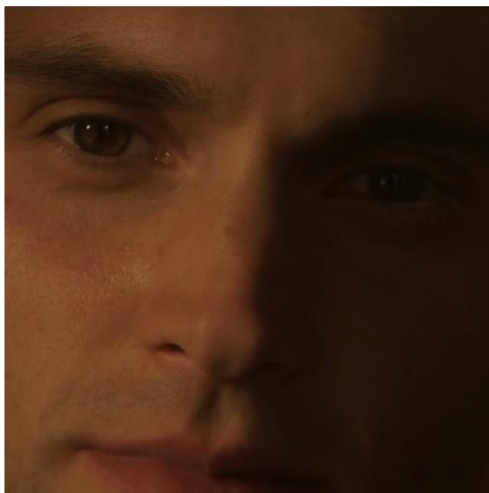


4.2 Ethos

In this section, I examine the ethos of the show's main characters, Joe and Beck. Beck's character is revealed immediately in the first episode, as Joe analyses and discusses her life, character, and behaviour. The viewer is almost immediately aware of what to expect from a girl in this regard. On the other hand, Joe is cut very slowly and gradually, which raises a lot of questions and interests. He reflects a lot on his own feelings, so it is easy to realize what is happening in his head. Therefore, I analyse the ethos basing on the first few episodes. For the analysis, I employ *mise-en-scene* elements such as setting, lighting, costume and makeup, performance, décor, and props. I also analyse the narrative itself, with a focus on the main character's words. In this part, I am guided by some theories, which include Zizek, and Bordwell et al.

Joe is the main narrator in the series. He is the young, handsome, intelligent bookstore manager. From the first seconds to the end of the series, the viewer literally most important form of the *You's* narrative. Moreover, it is the very tool that subsequently transforms the transgression of this series. We listen to Joe's reasoning about a strange girl Beck who he liked from the first seconds. Perhaps his analysis is a little puzzling at first, but as soon as he starts a conversation with her, suspicions disappear. In a conversation with a girl, he behaves easily, jokes, and tries to please her. From the first scenes, it is hard to guess that Joe might be a psychopathic killer.

Image 2.3



As to his appearance, costume, and makeup - he is wearing a shirt; he has black curls and a pretty face. I understand that one cannot generalize, but his appearance and behaviour resemble the man's ideal for every average girl. In general, the viewer should accept Joe because he is calm, polite, and appears to be good-natured. While paying closer attention to his thoughts, it becomes clear that Joe has contempt for other people. He is well-versed in them because of his well-readiness and intellectual abilities. He despises the majority of people, but only in his head. In real life, he acts oppositely and attempts to please those people.

The first calls about the strangeness of the main character appear later when a girl leaves the bookstore. Now we take a closer look at this scene. Joe stands by the window, watching Beck go. He thinks that everyone around him is disappointing and asks a question, "I wonder if you are like that too?". At the same time, the camera focuses on his eyes, and we see his face's close-up

(see *image 2.3*). He stares intently while mysterious music plays in the background. According to Bordwell et al., the eyes hold a special place in film as it is the most expressive part, which signals how the character responds to the situation. Joe's eyes, in particular, play a significant role in the perception of him as a psychopath and transgressor. Bordwell et al. also state that actors' facial expressions can develop their characterizations (Bordwell et al. 135).

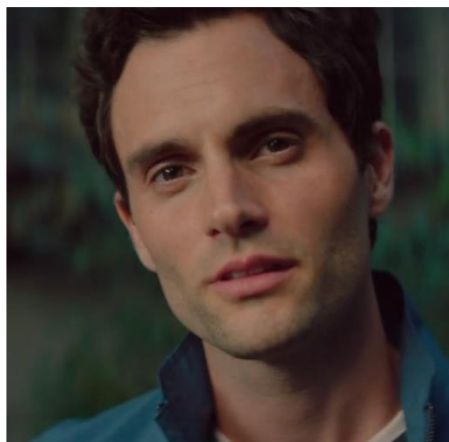
This directing activity and actor's performance - camera movement, music, and actor's facial expression created this sense of mystery and interest in the main character. Without these elements, it would be impossible to make such an illusion. Furthermore, in his book *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway* Zizek says that Hitchcock used such camera movement tricks to portray the emotions of maniacs. He says: "The zoom shot of the maniac's face [...], alone and immobile [...], seems to leap out at us." (Zizek 62). Therefore, this scene is crucial because the viewer is now posing the question: "Is there something wrong with him? Maybe he is transgressive?".

In the next scene, Joe walks home along a dark street. This scene's setting is reminiscent of a very marginalized area. We hear the internal monologue in which Joe talks about his unhappy treacherous love while still addressing the girl he met in the store. Joe lives in a relatively poor place. Neighbours are noisy, and the street is full of marginal people. Now we will look at *mise-en-scene* at his apartment. According to Bordwell et al., the filmmaker wants to build up the viewer's interest by arousing curiosity and suspense (Bordwell et al. 142). With the scene in the apartment, the filmmaker unquestionably evokes these emotions in the audience. It is dark and clean, with a lot of books used as props. With this setting, we can conclude that Joe is a perfectionist who enjoys having everything in its proper place. This is also can be a warning sign that a person is strange. If we remember the previous series' maniacal professor, his house was also licked to clean with many books. The area in which he lives, as well as the apartment's too dark lighting, can also contribute to a sense of suspicion. As we know, the presence of light in the frame implies that the viewer must think about something. Therefore, the *mis-en-scene* in this episode plays a crucial role in understating Joe's transgressive personality.

When Joe walks into the house, he notices a small boy on the landing. Obviously, this is Joe's neighbour, with whom he has a friendly relationship. When Joe learns that the boy's stepfather abuses his mother, he becomes very sympathetic to the child. This is a rather sad scene that reveals Joe to be a caring individual. When the main character enters his place, he goes to the almost empty fridge to grab some peanut butter. Afterward, Joe takes the laptop, finds Beck on social media, and scrutinizes her profile. On the one hand, we can already begin to guess about Joe's manic premises, but on the other, there is nothing wrong with analysing someone's profile on

social media. However, the filmmaker arranges the shot and the actor's performance so that it evokes suspicious emotions.

Image 2.4



Joe's identity is revealed in the following scene near Beck's house. In this scene, Joe is watching Beck in the window of her house. He again has a relatively long dialogue with her in mind. The framing in this scene again evokes mixed feelings. As Joe analyses Beck's actions, the camera zooms in on his face. At that moment, the viewer sees the actor's different facial expressions. When Joe criticizes and condemns Beck, his lips are pursed. However, as he moves away, the camera enlarges his face even more. At this point, Joe asks, "What can you tell me, Beck?" He almost challenges the girl. Then we notice his eyes squinting, his mouth opening slightly, and his head tilting to the side (see *image 2.4*). Mysterious music plays in the background, making the viewer realize that the main character is not as decent as he appears at first glance. Such directorial stunts elicit curiosity and reflection. The viewer is preoccupied with what the main character's next move will be. After this scene, I want to the point that it becomes clear that Joe appears to be very clever and cunning. Before approaching the girl, he examines almost every aspect of her life and follows her at work, school, sports, and social gatherings. Hence Joe is very thoughtful and willing to test everything before taking an action.

All suspicious feelings are confirmed when Joe enters Beck's apartment and kidnaps her "bad" boyfriend. Therefore, the series resembles some romantic comedy at first, but the filmmaker then destroys these references. Such a plot twist is quite shocking because, in the disruptive narrative, Joe only seemed like a romantic weirdo. As Bordwell et al. say, a plot can create curiosity about a character's motives. And even though Joe explains nearly every step he takes, the viewer cannot predict what he will do next.

Therefore, by the time the main character kidnaps Benji, it is clear that his behaviour is transgressive, as it transcends all social and ethical boundaries. We understand that Joe is a psychopath. But, if James from the previous series thought of himself as such, Joe is confident that he is the most caring man in the world. He is convinced that his actions are motivated by love. Thompson and Bordwell state that the filmmakers usually tend to let psychological causes inspire most events (Bordwell et al. 99). In this series, all the actions of the main character are motivated by his mental problems. In the next part, I will examine Joe's specific transgressional postures and the transformational potential of this transgression. When the main character constantly shares his

thoughts with the viewer, the viewer shares these feelings, and thus transgression is capable of transforming in his eyes.

However, before moving on to the case analysis, I would briefly discuss **Beck's** personality. Although she plays an essential role in the series, I believe she merely assists Joe in revealing himself to the audience. Through Joe's attitude toward Beck, as well as through her attitude toward him, the viewer is imbued with a deep sympathy for Joe's transgressive personality. Beck is not a character in the series who transforms transgression. As I stated, she is merely a tool through which the main character is revealed. The fact is that the filmmaker left almost no mystery in her personality, which, as we know from Bordwell et al., intrigues the viewer. I might assume that when the filmmaker does not manipulate deep knowledge about the character, he does not want to focus the viewer's attention on him. As a result, nothing distracts us from observing Joe's actions.

Through Joe's narrative and analysis, we learned all about Beck's life. Beck is a blonde and pretty-looking girl. When Joe finds her on social media, the viewer sees many vivid photographs from travels, parties, cafes, etc. Joe notices that all the details of the girl's life can be found on her social networks, and she wishes to be visible and accessible. Through Joe's words, the filmmaker conveys to the viewer the idea that Beck's life on social media is fake. In general, Beck does not arouse curiosity because the audience already knows Everything about her.

Now consider the scene in which Joe is watching her through her apartment window. In this case, the mise-en-scene also reveals a lot about Beck's personality. We notice a stark contrast between Beck and Joe's lives. Remember that Joe lives in a run-down and marginal neighbourhood and a dark apartment. Beck, on the contrary, lives in a bright, expensive apartment with large windows overlooking the central street. Beck is not afraid to stand half-naked in front of the windows, where any passer-by can see her. According to Bordwell et al., through the decor and lighting around the character, we can understand his personality better. With this setting, I believe Beck wishes to be open and visible on social media and in person, and maybe this indicates her mania for attracting attention. Moreover, the filmmaker himself convinces the viewer of this with the help of narrative. Joe first informs us that Beck may be silly and superficial, but this did not deter him from falling in love almost immediately. Her boyfriend then tells her that she has created a brand for herself on social media. Beck's deception also manifests itself in social gatherings, where she gives gifts to please the unfamiliar girls. Therefore, I repeat that the filmmaker not only did not leave room for the viewer to be surprised about her, but he also gradually began to persuade the audience that Beck is an unpleasant character.

Image 2.5



However, the scene with Beck's boyfriend Benji inspires a sense of sadness. When we dwell on the mise-en-scène in more detail, we see the boyfriend enter her home. Beck is angry based on the actress's performance. First, the filmmaker activates the body language that gives us Beck's expression (see *image 2.5*). Then the camera zooms on her face, revealing facial expressions of rage and sadness. Beck also rolls his eyes because she is powerless to resist his boyfriend (see *image 2.6*). Benji cheated on her at the party but found a way to justify himself, and the girl forgave him. As a result, the filmmaker introduces a transgressive character Benji who

is opposed to Joe. Now we see that Beck is weak, as she quickly leads to manipulations and insults by her boyfriend. The viewer is probably ready to understand the psychopath Joe because he wants to shield Beck from the cruel world around her.

4.3 Cases with transformational transgression

The events in this series unfold gradually, and all the storylines are intertwined. To understand Joe's behaviour, I examine his specific transgressive actions concerning the people around him, as well as how these actions are transformed. We already know that Joe is motivated by psychological motives, as is typical in classic cinematography (Bordwell et al. 94). The filmmaker has surrounded Joe with other transgressive characters who, morally, lose a lot to him. That is why, in comparison to them, Joe appears to be a good person to us. Joe fell in love with a girl who has a lot of problems in life, and all his transgressive actions are motivated by good intentions, as well as by psychological envy. We know this because we can hear Everything he thinks. We can feel intense empathy for the main character because we are so closely interacting with him. To understand why the viewer is willing to justify a psychopath and a murderer, I turn to the theory of Lacan, Metz, and Žižek. Therefore, I turn to the representative cases of the series, where the filmmaker manipulates the viewer's feelings, turning transgression into goodness. As in the previous series, I will not analyse *You* from beginning to end. I have chosen three representative situations that, with the help

Image 2.6



of theory, explain why it is possible to feel empathy for the murderer—the first case in the murder of Beck's boyfriend. The second is about the relationship between neighbour Paco and his stepfather. The third is the final transgressive act – Beck's murder.

4.3.1 Murders for love

Joe kidnaps Benji and eventually kills him. But first, I must tell how the filmmaker presented Benji to the audience, thereby making the viewer wish for Benji's death. In the first episode, we meet Benji, who is Beck's boyfriend. His image is somewhat clichéd and causes a firm rejection. His character is diametrically opposed to Joe's. I will start with his appearance and costume. The filmmaker portrayed him as a stereotypical "bad guy." Benji is a dashing blonde with a great hairstyle. He is dressed fashionably and expensively, implying that he is very wealthy. As I previously stated, he manipulates Beck's weakness and cheats on her at parties.

Regardless of whether the viewer dislikes fake Beck, he can recognize that she does not deserve this attitude, and thus Benji should be punished. Because of this behaviour, Joe kidnaps Benji and locks him up in the glass cage in the bookstore's basement. This is Joe's first truly transgressive act, but the viewer is aware of his motives as Joe embraces them. Benji develops into an even more repulsive, rejecting, and transgressive character during his time in the cage, which Joe easily defeats. The filmmaker creates those feelings through the narrative and actor's performance.

Consider the *image 2.7*, Benji is hysterical in this scene. We can see the actor's veins on his forehead. While the actor screams, he insults Beck. For freedom, he is willing to humiliate himself. The actor's performance and his facial expressions do not make the viewer sympathize with him, but rather the opposite. The narrative continues, and the viewer learns that Benji is a heroin addict who cannot function without a dose. In the *image 2.8* we see drug use and the subsequent state. Here, I am referring to Zedd, who believed that film transgression is incomplete without

drugs. If we look closely at the image, it is noticeable that even the mise-en-scene makes the viewer feel disgusted. Benji is only concerned with the heroin dose. As a result, as soon as he realizes

Image 2.7



what it is, he collapses on the floor, rolls his eyes, and smiles. He crossed the line into the real world and created an excess that is unappealing to the eyes of those around him.

Image 2.8



The filmmaker continues to make him a monster when Benji confesses to torturing and accidentally killing a gay boy. We are not only told this verbally, but we are also shown a video of the crime because "only our visual perception of the film, or our memory of its images after we have seen it, enables us to decide something" (Zizek 206). Now, all of Benji's transgressive actions are in one picture. We see a character who is handsome, wealthy, and star-studded and who gets away with everything.

Most likely, the viewer wants to punish Benji, and Joe satisfies this desire. The main character puts peanut butter in his coffee, which causes Benji to die of shock. It is worth noting how vividly the filmmaker depicted the moment of painful death. Here I want to refer to Zizek in his book *Everything you always wanted to know about Lacan: but were afraid to ask Hitchcock*. The author writes: "the transgression which at first appeared to subvert the Law turns out to pertain to the Law" (Zizek 222). That means that people can engage in illegal driving, torture, and murder for the sake of law and order. As it turns out, Joe punished someone who constantly avoids responsibility. And, before punishing him, the viewer sees his true essence and nature and probably begins to despise him. According to Zizek, what the filmmaker does was simple manipulation of the audience's emotions. Zizek writes: First, he (Hitchcock) sets a trap of sadistic identification for the viewer by way of arousing in him/her the 'sadistic' desire to see the hero crush the bad guy, this suffering' fullness of being' Once the viewer is filled out with the Will-to-Enjoy, Hitchcock closes the trap by simply realizing the viewer's desire: in having his/her desire fully realized, the viewer obtains more than he/she asked for (the act of murder in all its nauseous presence - the exemplary case here is the murder of Gromek in *Torn Curtain*) and is thus forced to concede that, in the very moment he/she was possessed by the Will to see the bad guy annihilated, he/she was effectively manipulated by the only true sadist, Hitchcock himself." (Zizek 222). This is precisely what occurs in this representative case. Even though Joe is a psychopath and a murderer, the viewer is willing to justify him because he punished the repulsive character.

Not only does this save Joe from the wrath of the audience. I have already stated that Joe comments to the viewer his every move and step, and thus the viewer is aware of all his motives and desires. Here, I would like to turn to Jacques Lacan and Christina Metz. Until the murder, the viewer has a close relationship with Joe. Furthermore, the filmmaker portrays Joe as adorable, caring, and romantic. The viewer can see that Joe wants to protect his girlfriend from the evil that

surrounds her, which is present in other characters. When the viewer is completely immersed in the series, it will become the viewer's reflection. I connect it with Lacan's concept of "the mirror stage." According to Lacan, until the age of 18 months, a child has no idea of the possibility of feeling himself and thus associates himself with his mother. However, as soon as the child takes his first steps, he sees himself in the mirror and believes he is the centre of the universe. Lacan states: "We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image - whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term *imago*" (Lacan 95). Metz brings this concept to cinematography. He says that film is like a mirror. Žižek also supports this idea that "the film's structure is wholly specular" (Žižek 180). Everything in the movie can be reflected despite the viewer's own body. Therefore, the viewer has the opportunity to identify with the character. Metz states: "I am all-perceiving. All-perceiving as one says all-powerful; all-perceiving, too, because I am entirely in the side of the perceiving instance" (Metz 734). So, the viewer "takes himself" for the character by analogical projection. Therefore, the running commentary of Joe's thoughts throughout each episode makes the viewer feel like he is right there with him. The viewer sees his battle between the desire to do good deeds (via violence) and his desire to be an average person.

After another murder of Beck's friend Joe says: "But she (Beck's friend) was a dangerous flesh-hungry harpy. She forced my hand. I had to, Beck, I had to. I am not a bad person. She was going to ruin you. But you are safe now. Thanks to me. I just want you to live your best life. It is brave what I do for you. It is not easy. It is hard. Sometimes it makes me sick. I am brave. How many guys will do anything for the person they love? Honestly, Beck. You are lucky to have me." This is crucial for the audience, to whom Joe explains the reasons for the murder. The viewer encounters transgressive and negative characters who are punished by the main character and with whom the viewer begins to impersonate himself via a unique narrative form. As a result, transgression is transformed, and the viewer believes that breaking the law is beneficial.

4.3.2 Neighbours

The filmmaker introduces a separate storyline with the neighbours to make the viewer love Joe even more. Another transgressive and negative character is an alcoholic and abuser. This neighbour beats his stepson Paco and his mother while Joe tries to help the boy. As a result of this, Joe rises in the viewer's eyes once more as he sees a comparison with another more negative character.

Now we look closer at Paco and his stepfather. The boy comes from a broken family, and his mother lives with an abuser who beats both her and the child. The first mise-en-scene with the boy takes place in a dark entrance when Joe returns home. The viewer sees a 12-year-old boy. His facial expressions are fearful and sad (see *image 2.9*). As a prop, he has a book in his hands while sitting on the landing. The screams of his mother and stepfather, who most likely beat her, can be heard in the background. The main character feeds the child because he realizes he is hungry. We immediately see Joe's tender and caring attitude towards Paco. He regrets Paco's life circumstances and thus tries to assist the boy and replace his father. He walks with the boy, shows him interesting places, gives him books and food.

The first scene with his stepfather is set in the same dark entrance. This frequently occurs in the series, so it is reasonable to conclude that the filmmaker purposefully confronts the neighbour with Joe in such a frightening environment with low lighting. Let us take a closer look at the image of Paco's stepfather as a hulking figure. His appearance is also very clichéd when compared to the stereotype of the average rapist and abuser. We can see that he constantly smokes cigarettes, does not shave, and appears very untidy (see *image 2.10*). In the same scene, Joe's stepfather approaches him and threatens him with violence if he does not stop communicating with Paco. As a result of seeing such a negative character, the viewer realizes Joe's good deeds and care for the little boy after his murders, which also occur for the sake of love of care.

Image 2.9



Image 2.10



Therefore, we see periodic scenes of generosity to a child throughout the series, and this occurs every time Joe commits the evil or transgressive act. This is the only storyline in which Joe does good and worthy deeds without hesitation are with the boy. He shows Paco his library and even teaches the boy about life, precisely "respect for women." There is a certain irony on the part of the filmmaker and further proof that Joe believes in himself as a virtue. However, there is a point in the storyline with the boy where the viewer may question Joe's generosity to the child.

He requests that Paco purchase potassium nitrate, scotch tape, and lighter fluid to facilitate the disposal of Benji's body. This means Joe is attempting to take advantage of an innocent child for

personal gain. Joe's act may be disliked by the viewer, destroying his image of virtue. Paco's stepfather attacks Joe. In this case, a negative and transgressive character serves as a punisher who cannot persuade the audience. It becomes clear that he is not protecting the child but rather proving to Joe that he was correct, and that Joe is a psychopath. Joe, in turn, admitting his error to the audience and apologizing to Paco. This storyline with the boy Paco throughout the series seems to remind the viewer that Joe is a good person who will do anything for love.

As a result of the actors' performances, costumes, appearance, and facial expressions, a very negative image is created in the viewer's mind. These characters are the ones who suspect Joe of wrongdoing, while Joe himself does a lot of good, reflecting and apologizing to the audience. In this case, the filmmaker, like Hitchcock, manipulates the viewer and his desires (Žižek 222). The filmmaker depicts the transgression in a variety of ways. In one case, the viewer despises drug addicts, alcoholics, abusers, and murderers, while in the other, they could be ready to wish them dead, which is also a transgression.

4.3.3 Beck's murder

As I mentioned before, Beck helps to feel sympathy for Joe's character. Joe cares for Beck, solves all her problems, and protects her from bad people. Beck herself behaves transgressively and engages in endless sexual intercourse with other men while dating Joe. To instil even more disgust in the viewer, the filmmaker shows close-ups of Beck's sex scenes with the strange guys. Furthermore, Beck uses drugs with her friend and has lesbian sex with her. All this is very colourfully illustrated on the screen, contrasting all the romantic and kind Joe's deeds. Therefore, Beck becomes a very opposing character. Beck's betrayal, in a sense, elevates Joe in the viewer's eyes, making him a victim of love.

As their relationship progresses, Beck begins to see a psychologist, with whom she also has sexual intercourse. However, the girl convinces him otherwise. Then, Joe makes an appointment with him to find out what happened. At this point, the filmmaker hints that something happened to Joe in his childhood, and as a result, he acts in this manner. According to Bordwell et al., this is a widespread directorial trick in which the viewer is introduced to a transgressive character's deep triggers and motives. In this case, empathy grows because the viewer not only continues to reflect himself in Joe but also recognizes his trans.

During Joe's sessions with a psychologist, the viewer sees flashbacks from his life, which, as we know, can reveal some of the psychological trans (Bordwell et al. 94). In these flashbacks, Candice, his ex-girlfriend, betrays and cheats on him. Joe's feelings and thoughts about this are all

conveyed to the viewer. While it is impossible to generalize, I believe the viewer empathizes with Joe. First and foremost, it is a natural and common human emotion. Second, by the end of the series, Joe is becoming a Lacanian mirror for the viewer.

Image 2.11



pain, and resentment (see *image 2.11* and *image 2.12*). The actor conveys this through his eyes, brows, and pursed lips. According to Bordwell et al. emotions that the series evokes are heavily reliant on the plot and the camera movement. In this scene the filmmaker uses both narrative and camera movement to create empathy. Thus, after the viewer has already become acquainted with Joe's last trans through a flashback and empathizes with him, the filmmaker shows the viewer his pain once more. Beck, in turn, transforms into an entirely negative character, causing Joe pain. And this is what leads the viewer to the final scene, in which he is forced to kill Beck, who has discovered the truth about his murders.

To summarize, I cannot say whether the viewer, like in previous times, desired Beck's murder because she was not such a negative person like other killed abusers. However, the filmmaker's previous manipulations are capable of justifying Joe's actions. By the end of the series, the viewer is finally drawn to Joe while witnessing his inner and difficult struggle with himself. I cannot consider Beck's murder to be a transgression with transformational potential. However, it is precisely because of Beck's shallow attitude toward loving her Joe that his previous transgressions are transformed into good deeds and "to subvert the Law turns out to pertain to the Law" (Žižek 222).

When the viewer learns about Joe's unhappy love, it is also known that Beck still cheated on him with a psychologist. Now we will look at the *mise-en-scène* where Joe learns of this. At this point, the filmmaker wants to draw the viewer's attention to Joe's emotional state. The camera zooms in on his face, and we see the face's close-up in several frames. The actor conveys a variety of facial expressions which can develop his characterizations at that moment (Bordwell et al. 240). We can see rage,

Image 2.12



Conclusion

People in the West world have access to a vast amount of media information. There is sometimes so much information that a person does not have time to filter everything that comes into his field of vision and interests. In such circumstances, consumers must be as selective as possible and have a clear understanding of the type of content they consume. This becomes more difficult when media producers employ a variety of psychological and marketing strategies in order to compete for consumer attention. It is challenging for a media producer to succeed when there is so much media that suits everyone's desires, from the most innocent to the cruel and perverted. Because a modern person has seen almost everything, the media has been greatly transformed, and we observe quite transgressive content that goes beyond social norms.

Therefore, everything the modern media consumer sees is an echo of his own desires. Of course, I cannot generalize because sometimes it can be an excess, irritating and provoking the consumer to discontinue such media consumption. However, in most cases, the consumer becomes accustomed to seeing constant transgression and desires an increasing number of new and unresolved emotions. Furthermore, various advertising algorithms and personalization appear to remind him of these desires on a regular basis. As a result, even if a person once looked at something that goes beyond his own morality, he can continue doing that and becomes attached to this content.

Currently, streaming video services are the most popular form of entertainment. They are especially important in 2020 and 2021, when the majority of people are confined to their homes due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Streaming services, as opposed to television, are the most successful at meeting the needs of the consumer. Anyone with a subscription can watch films, series, and shows that interest him whenever and wherever it is convenient. It is critical for streaming platforms not to lose these subscriptions, so they must keep viewers interested in their content. Streaming platforms accomplish these using recommendations and a personalization system. Netflix is the most successful platform in this regard, with 204 million users. This service was the first to use a variety of personalized algorithms to keep the viewer's attention. In the theoretical part of this study, I already mentioned what the reason is for the Netflix's success. Netflix has the ability to dictate cultural context and set trends due to its large user base, personalized recommendation system and realising all episodes at once. But are these algorithms, however, truly personalized? As previously stated, the Netflix recommendation system is based on the personal users' triggers (similar media content) on the one hand, and the decisions of a group of people with fine desires on the other. As a result, the platform artificially generates this

demand, persuading the viewer that he enjoys this content. Also, Netflix has its own production that is tailored to its most popular recommendations. Thus, Netflix monitors internal social processes so its content could be as current and exciting to viewers as possible.

For this study, I drew on the transgression of norms in two popular Netflix series. Transgressive cinema exposes the audience to novel and unusual experiences. Transgression in cinema, as described in the theoretical section, is aimed at pushing the boundaries of norms, and most often manifests itself in sexual discourse, eliciting vivid emotions in the viewer. When Netflix uses transgressive elements in its original content, it liberates some human and even animal tastes, because as it was previously stated transgressive behaviour is associated with man's animal nature. As a result, the popularity of transgressive cinematography is determined by one's inner desires and impulses.

I researched two original Netflix production series because the original content accurately describes the company's policy in this area. Through methodology and theory, I investigated the angle of transgression in the series and its transformational potential. Transgressive cinema's transformative potential turns the media product into a complex thought process involving constant ethical analysis. Transgression, when combined with transformational potentials, appeals to values and attitudes, prompting the viewer to push the boundaries and conduct mental experiments.

Transgression is handled differently in the two series, but both emphasize the viewer's empathy. The filmmaker employs a variety of manipulations in order to elicit empathy in the viewer. In *The End of the F***ing World* the filmmaker starts with showing the viewer the negative side of transgressive characters. As a result, only a portion of the information was revealed to the viewer, prompting him to participate in the process on the screen. Following that, the filmmaker revealed the motivations of the transgressive characters through some scenes and flashbacks, allowing the viewer to reflect and feel empathy. So, the normative sphere compensates for transgressive behaviours such as stealing and killing, reducing the illegality the characters' actions. In *You* the filmmaker used a different psychological technique: the viewer literally heard the psychopath's every thought, in which he explained his motives and reflected on his actions. As a result, the main character became a mirror for the audience, allowing them to recognize and justify his transgressive actions. Furthermore, the filmmaker introduced characters into the plot who acted cruelly and inhumanely, making the main character appear better in comparison.

Consequently, the transgression in the series can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the angle from which the filmmaker introduces the character to the viewer. There can be positive or negative perceptions of transgression. The filmmaker is able to elicit a storm of emotions to the transgressive character, ranging from hatred to love, through manipulation. The filmmaker accomplishes this by using elements of the mise-en-scene and, most importantly, the narrative. He

tells the story necessary for the viewer through narrative, going deeper or not into certain knowledge. Furthermore, some transgressive characters may serve a function by eliciting empathy in other transgressive characters. I described cases in which secondary and negative characters committed the same murders as the main characters, but the filmmaker constructs the plot so that the audience could wish them a violent punishment. Hence the viewer becomes involved in the violation of norms, believing that punishment is both necessary and legal in this context.

As a result of the abundance of media content, today's viewer is uninterested in the story of psychopaths and rapists. Transgression changes depending on the form of the narrative, the actor's performance, his emotions, and other elements of mise-en-scene. With all these the filmmaker can manipulate the viewer and his desires. Transgressions in cinema require these transformational potentials, as well as a regulatory and compensatory foundation that allows the viewer to fully immerse themselves in what is happening on the screen and reflect on the permissible violations of boundaries and limits. These transformational potentials include a complete rethinking of social norms as well as a personal challenge.

Further research

When we look at the list of the most popular TV shows, we can see some without explicit content. However, we see an increase in the number of transgressive series. It would be interesting to know if TV shows with transgressive elements are more popular with viewers than TV shows without them in future research. To conduct such a study, a survey could be conducted. When watching transgressive TV shows, we can also investigate the viewers' motivations. To accomplish this, one must conduct an in-depth interview or focus group. This allows us to understand how cinematic transgression affects the viewer and what exactly it can catch him. Furthermore, it would be interesting to learn how watching transgressive serials affects the viewer's life. Is he emulating the habits and motivations of transgressive characters? Or it will be limited to watching a movie. All of this could fully reveal the theme of transgressive cinema.

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