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**PERFORMATIVITY, GENDER  
SUBVERSION AND INJURY IN  
THE MEXICAN SERIES LA CASA  
DE LAS FLORES (NETFLIX, 2018)**

**A MODEL OF ANALYSIS OF GENDER  
DISSIDENCE FOR FICTION SERIES IN SPANISH**

**PERFORMATIVIDAD, SUBVERSIÓN DE GÉNERO  
E INJURIA EN LA SERIE MEXICANA LA CASA  
DE LAS FLORES (NETFLIX, 2018)**

**UN MODELO DE ANÁLISIS DE LA DISIDENCIA  
SEXOGENÉRICA PARA SERIES DE FICCIÓN EN ESPAÑOL**

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**ABSTRACT**

The article analyzes how sex and gender dissidence is represented in the first season of the Mexican television series *La casa de las Flores* (Netflix, 2018), created and directed by Manolo Caro, which includes, among others, gay men, transvestite characters, and trans women. In the month of its premiere, the series generated an audience of 7.4 million people and became the most watched in Mexico. From the series understood as generator of the social transformations and diffuser of a discourse of normality (Carrión 2011), a Model of analysis of sex and gender dissidence from performativity and gender subversion is designed for fictional series in Spanish that allows to identify the performative acts, resistances subversive, insults and logics of power that govern gender and sexuality in a narrative system understood from the narratology postulates of Mieke Bal (1990) and observed from the theory of performativity of Judith Butler (1997, 2001, 2007, 2009). This analysis identifies that, more than a subversive example, the series is a powerful beginning in which gender-sex dissidence is represented with strong traditional and performative overtones of gender, and tenuous but powerful subversions of discourse, critical subversions, and quotidian subversions.

**PALABRAS CLAVE**

*LGBT Studies; On Demand TV; Gay; Trans; Masculinities.*

**RESUMEN**

El artículo analiza cómo se representa la disidencia sexogenérica en la primera temporada de la serie de televisión mexicana *La casa de las Flores* (Netflix, 2018), creada y dirigida por Manolo Caro, que incluye, entre otros, a hombres gay, personajes travestis y mujeres trans. En el mes de su estreno, la serie generó una audiencia de 7,4 millones de personas y se consagró como la más vista en México. A partir de las series entendidas como remolques de las transformaciones sociales y difusoras de un discurso de normalidad (Carrión 2011), se diseña un Modelo de análisis de la disidencia sexogenérica a partir de la performatividad y la subversión de género para series de ficción en español que permite identificar los actos performativos, resistencias subversivas, injurias y lógicas de poder que rigen al género y la sexualidad en un sistema narrativo entendido desde los postulados de narratología de Mieke Bal (1990) y observado desde la teoría de la performatividad de Judith Butler (1997, 2001, 2007, 2009). El análisis identifica que, más que un ejemplo subversivo, la serie es un vigoroso inicio en el que la disidencia sexogenérica es representada con marcados tintes tradicionales y performativos del género, y tenues pero poderosas subversiones de discurso, críticas y cotidianas.

**KEYWORDS**

*Estudios LGBT; Televisión on demand; Gay; Trans; Masculinidades.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this research is to analyse the representation of sex and gender dissidence in the first season of the Mexican television series *La Casa de las Flores*, a series created and directed by Manolo Caro in collaboration with the streaming platform Netflix and premiered on August 10, 2028. This on-demand series was Netflix's fourth Mexican production and was immediately recognized as a huge media success. In the month of its premiere, the series generated an audience of 7.4 million people becoming the most watched series in Mexico and the seventh series with the highest rating in Latin America (Castañares, 2018).

This analysis responds to the need to better understand and explore the representation of sex and gender dissidence in Spanish on demand TV to potentially identify new approaches to queer identities that move away from normalized identity narratives and representations of LGBTIQ+ people (Rodríguez-Blanco & Zurian, 2022). Our baseline hypothesis is that *La Casa de las Flores* may constitute an opportunity to resignify non-normative male identities as the plot includes gay, bisexual men, trans women, trans characters/drag queens. Using an analysis and critique of audio-visual narrative, the goal of the analytical model of TV fiction narratives presented in this research is to carry out an in-depth critique of the heterosexual assumptions present in our society.

The definition of sexual and gender dissent used in this research is based on the work of González Ortuño (2016), who has tried to move away from concepts such as "queer" and "sexual diversity" to embrace and advocate the concept of "sexual dissidence", a term that will be used as "sex and gender dissent" in this article. This concept refers to the permanent intention of some individuals to dissent and shift away from normative cis and heterosexual gender and sexual systems which are perceived as indoctrination.

*La Casa de las Flores* is a melodrama that depicts the challenges of De la Mora family, an upper class and privileged family who obsessively struggles to keep up their facade and hide their secrets: the suicide of the patriarch's mistress, different infidelities and sexual/gender dissent of some family members. In a world of lies, the family represents a social model to be followed. Their credibility as well as their income and social status depend on their family business: a floristry shop. However, as we move through the first episodes of the first season, the family members find out that the fortune amassed over the last years actually comes from the profits generated from a trans/drag queen cabaret that belonged to the family patriarch and his mistress with the same name: "*La Casa de las Flores*". With an average length of 30 minutes per episode, this Black comedy drama invites viewers to learn about the complex personalities of the main characters in their fateful attempts to be perceived as the perfect family. Finally, the morale of the story lies in the value attached to appearances.

In this article, this TV series will be analysed using Carrión's framework (2011), who perceives series as a vehicle of social transformations that builds and spreads a normalization discourse shaping what is considered correct and incorrect by society. Fictional narratives, especially in mass communication media, exert a profound influence at a personal and collective level as they have an impact on the meaning people give to life and their understanding of different identities, cultures and sensitivities (Rincón, 2006). Also, the representation of a story unveils aspects of the

viewer's own reality which is also built upon it. (Orozco, 2020). "What you see on TV is the truth and if it is not mentioned, it does not exist." (Núñez & Loscertales, 2005, p. 33).

Claiming to offer innovative content, Netflix has been a huge success among people in a social group that have the economic means to pay for a monthly subscription to have access to a content which has shown the predominance of international series and an increasing presence of Mexican content. The concept of "Telesujeto" (rough translation, Tele-subject) coined by Carrión (2011) indicates that regardless of their critical perception of fictional content, viewers are directly or indirectly influenced by TV fiction content in terms of the way they interact, perceive and experience their reality and sexual and gender identities.

### 1.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON AUDIO-VISUAL CONTENT IN SPANISH

TV soap operas have been an important part of Mexican's sentimental and emotional education (Martín Barbero, 1998). Traditional narratives, commonly focused on the love and lack of love drama, have addressed the topic of sexual and gender dissidence in more informal, superficial and an almost ridiculous manner. Nonetheless, soap-operas have had a key role building social imageries and as such, these representations have become important points of reference for individuals to reflect on and experience their reality (Franco & Orozco, 2010). Whilst soap operas may be considered the preamble and the past of today's series (Cueva, 2018), it is necessary to reframe and carry out a critical analysis of what and how these new formats are depicting reality using on demand TV in Mexico and what they are saying about Mexico using the series format, which, in turn is understood as media that may create performative acts (Butler, 2007).

Tough competition among paid channels, streaming platforms and open TV have forced the latter to address some topics that recently were unthinkable in Latin America. This has also sparked greater academic interest on the representation of gender and sexual dissidence in the Spanish audio-visual industry.

To illustrate this, Maximiliano Marentes (2017) studied two gay love stories with a protagonist role in Argentinian TV melodramas in a piece of research that shows social homonormativity. In Chile, a group of researchers led by María Cecilia Bravo (2018) published *Gender pluralism and sexual diversity in Chilean TV* (2018), which identifies gender stereotypes in different TV shows. In Mexico, the publication of Paul Julian Smith (2019), *Multiplatform Media in Mexico. Growth and Change since 2010* analyses cinema, TV productions, series and local movies with dissident characters produced by streaming platforms such as HBO briefly referring to *La Casa de las Flores* in his conclusions. Johanna Ángel and Joseba Buj (2020) coordinated the publication of *Exclusion and drift. Boundary dynamics in the digital work*, in which they analyse the different conditions of exclusion and violence reproduced in new hegemonic and symbolic frameworks of digital heteropatriarchal spaces. Likewise, Ilana Dann Luna (2018) published *Adapting Gender. Mexican feminisms from literature to film*, in which she investigated subversion processes in Mexican cinematographic adaptations in the 90s regarding silent heteronormative power structures in Mexican cinematographic adaptation of the 90s which coincided with the entry of TLCAN (1994) and new ways of female subjugation and the deaths in Juárez. Whilst these works recognize the existence of a heteronormative system, there is a greater focus on exclusion and violence against women rather than gender and sexual dissidence.



In Spain, Francisco Zurian (2013, 2014, 2017, 2018a, 2018b) has studied normative gender stereotypes as well as LGBTIQ+ representations in TV fiction narratives especially in one chapter in which he analysis sexual and gender dissidence on open TV since the Transition to the Zapatero government (Zurian, 2018a).

Not only has this body of research contributed to this analysis it has also helped us to define and position the object of analysis by identifying a window of opportunity in Spanish on demand TV fiction to examine the representation of sex and gender dissidence in the series *La Casa de las Flores* produced by Netflix, a non-normative digital media narrative of contemporary Mexican society.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES

O1: The main goal of this research is to carry out an analysis of the representation of sexual and gender dissidence in *La Casa de las Flores*, through the identification of Functional Events that make up the narrative structure of this series to determine whether sexual and gender dissidence is represented only by performative acts or the presence of sexual and/or gender subversions.

O2: In line with the previous goal, our goal is to identify whether injury is another relevant element presented in this series in relation to sexual and gender dissidence as well as power structures related to gender, sexuality and morality within the diagesis of the story.

## 1.3. JUSTIFICATION

The role of audio-visual narratives in digital non-places has a key role to understand the intersection of power dynamics and sexual dissidence as they present control dynamics (Castells, 2009) that penetrate private spaces. In this research, we present a cause and effect relationship that characterizes the exclusion practices and precarious conditions of sexual and gender dissidents and the control dynamics exerted by digital non-spaces such as Netflix.

Our research approach is based on Judith Butler's key concept of gender performativity which has allowed us to design a narrative analysis model of sexual and gender dissidence to analyse *La Casa de las Flores*, a series that, according to our hypothesis, may be a clear example of progressive and contemporary audio-visual media narrative. An analysis of its narrative structure must be carried out to: a) identify whether the representation of sexual and gender dissidence is construed only by performative acts or if the element of subversion is also present, b) determine if sex and gender dissidents are presented in situations of injury and c) identify the power structures and dynamics presented throughout the diagesis of the story.

## 2. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

An inductive analysis model of the narrative structure of *La Casa de las Flores* will be used to study the representation of sex and gender dissidence in its 13 episodes. Our assumption is that this series format is a vehicle of social reality and an attempt to explain the world around us, an assumption that is in line with Butler's theory (2007) who indicates that a performative act brings into being or enacts that which it names, and so marks the constitutive or productive power of discourse.

## 2.1. MAIN THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PREMISES

From a methodological perspective, the analysis model used in this research is based on Judith Butler's theory (1997, 2001, 2007, 2009). According to Butler, the discourse and narratives presented in the world of cinema, TV and social interactions continue to present the idea that heterosexuality is the norm and that sexual and gender dissidence is <sup>1</sup> a negative and anti-natural phenomenon that is utterly rejected by society. Butler (2007) explains the concept of performativity as an influence that implies a historical burden of expectations, obligations and practices that create subjects with a determined gender or sexuality and that are immersed in a social system that organizes and suppresses some utterances and concepts placing sexual and gender dissidence in an inhospitable and unthinkable territory. Gender performativity is a contextualized ritual that sets off a number of social rules, prohibitions, desires, actions and objects that create individuals that have been moulded and categorized based on a specific gender which triggers the illusion of essence, truth, quality, originality and perdurability. Each action, utterance and speech act have a performative effect based on a previous discourse. "Performativity is neither free play or theatrical self-presentation (...). Constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity" (Butler, 2007, p. 47).

The purpose of this research is to carry out a critical analysis of this series from the point of view of performativity and performativity subversions understood as social resistance to performative discourse. A subversive act is a permanent attempt to shift away from conventions and basic assumptions. To counteract the premise that heterosexuality is mandatory, subversion aims at reconfiguring our thought patterns related to gender, opening our ways of thinking, including those who were excluded, eliminating labels, giving visibility to invisible ways of being and living. According to Butler (2007), language is politically useful and can be used to surpass the boundaries of our thoughts, redefining the powerful principles of speech discourse creating new subjectivities.

The model also focuses on moments of verbal injury experienced by sexual and gender dissidents featured during the different events. Verbal injury is part of a speech discourse with a performative effect (Foucault, 1984; Butler, 2007). Butler explains that verbal injury takes place in power relationships. Verbal injury is not expressed only once. To be injured by speech is to suffer the loss of contexts – not to know where you are and you are placed in a place that may not exist (Butler, 1997). Injury may be a threat to our physique and body. Many injury acts may end up in submission. Injured individuals do not have the institutional support from the state and cannot escape from their vulnerability. The injury acts presented in the different narrative situations featured in the *Hose of the Flowers* will also be presented in this analysis.

## 2.2. THE INDUCTIVE ANALYSIS MODEL OF ON DEMAND NARRATIVES

Inductive analysis is based on categorizations and inferences as well as the identification and indication of the performative action or subversive resistance included in a narrative. It is primarily based on the narrative principles of Mieke Bal (1990) and Judith Butler's performativity theory

<sup>1</sup> People whose sexuality and/or gender expression shifts away from traditional gender patterns. Moving away from the establishment with the intention to construct diverse sexual interactions. The term integrates LGBTTTQIA and other sexual and gender expression that is not integrated in the previous acronym.



(1997, 2001, 2007, 2009). The components of Bal's narrative structure (1990) used in our model design are: Actor, Functional Event (FE), Action, Objects, Givers<sup>2</sup>, Helpers<sup>3</sup> and Semantic labels<sup>4</sup>. The analytical categories used in this model based on Butler's performativity are (1997, 2001, 2007, 2009): performativity, subversion, injury, power, agency and precarity.

The scientific validity of the inductive analysis model of fictional narratives is based on the relationship with the project's theoretical and methodological framework. As such, our assumption is that gender studies and queer theory as well as narrative research constitute the methodology that allows us to analyse our corpus (Zurian and Herrero, 2014). Our model is based on two main axioms:

**Axiom 1:** the reciprocal relationship among the components are the basis of the narrative system of the fable (narrative), understood as an arbitrary sequence which follows a chronological logic of Functional Events (actor+action+actor) There may be a structure within the fable which refers to a universal model of all narratives that follows the same laws which control human thought (Barthes, 1966).

Functional Events must be articulated in a statement with the following structure:

**Table 1. Functional Events<sup>5</sup>**

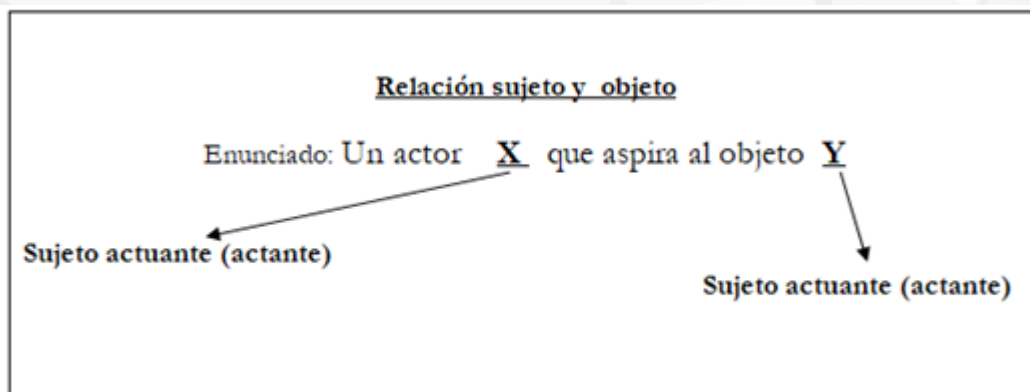


Tabla basada en los conceptos de Bal (1990)

**Source: Bal (1990). Own elaboration**

<sup>2</sup> The Giver is a power within the fable who enables or hinders the action or function. The Giver may be society, the family, religion, sexuality, gender, sex assigned at birth, destiny, time, egocentrism, intelligence, a person, etc. This model establishes a direct relationship with the concept of power and its mechanisms (Foucault, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> The Helper supports the subject throughout their journey when facing resistance. However, it only provides non-essential support.

<sup>4</sup> The fable processes may be an improvement or deterioration. A functional event will always drive actors from their initial position. Most often, we will see actors and actresses in a state of deficiency, wanting to introduce changes (Bal, 1990: 31). Semantic labels are attributes to the Action/process to determine whether it is an improvement or deterioration and, as such, are linked to two elements of performativity: capacity of agency (improvement label) and precarity (deterioration) (Butler (1997, 2001, 2007, 2009). The six improvement labels are: (1) fulfilling a task; (2) intervention of an alias; (3) eliminating an opponent; (4) negotiation; (5) attack, (6) Satisfaction. The five deterioration labels are: (1) Stumbling block; (2) Creation of a giver, (3) Sacrifice; (4) Dealing with an attack; (5) Dealing with punishment.

<sup>5</sup> Relationship between the subject and the object / Statement: actor X who aspires to get object Y / Acting subject (actor) Acting subject(actor) / Table based on Bal's concepts (1990)

In Functional Events, the Intention/Action/Function element is expressed through the verbs want/desire and have which are used as abstractions of the connections between the constitutive elements of Functional Events (Bal 1990). Example: the De la Mora family wants to be keep their facade and be perceived as perfect family. The only Functional Events that pertain to this research are the ones that represent actions related to gender and sexual dissidence in a direct or indirect manner.

**Axiom 2:** fiction narratives may be a social construct based on power discourse and constitute a performative or subversive performance of gender and sexuality (Butler 2007) as gender does not exist on its own right. From this point of view, gender would be a repetitive and mandatory performance that is closely linked to social beliefs that surpass the individual.

Functional events of dissident and non-dissident characters will be performative when the condition of sexual and generic dissidence is rejected, judged, stigmatized, discriminated against or excluded. There may also be performativity within normality. Example: only heterosexual couples are shown, presence of macho rituals, heterosexual weddings, assumed heterosexuality of all the people, bragging about masculine and/or feminine traits, "things must be done in a certain way", not to draw people's attention, are examples of performative acts.

To accomplish the goals of this research, we propose the following classification to analyse the types of subversion that may be presented on the Netflix series:

**a)Quotidian subversion:** gender resignification through daily acts that are not mentioned or acknowledged as such. This subversion may generate new subjectivities. Example: a lesbian couple as part of the plot, they kiss each other, they argue, etc., and there are no mentions or references to the fact they are lesbians.

**b)Speech subversion:** an actor defends their cause as part of a scene (considered a Helper within the Functional Event), support words, invitations to being more tolerant, defending a family member or a situation of dissidence, campaigns, activities, law initiatives, etc. E.g.: a lesbian couple's best friend intervenes to support their friends and advocate for their sexual relationship, an attempt to keep the balance and persuade other people.

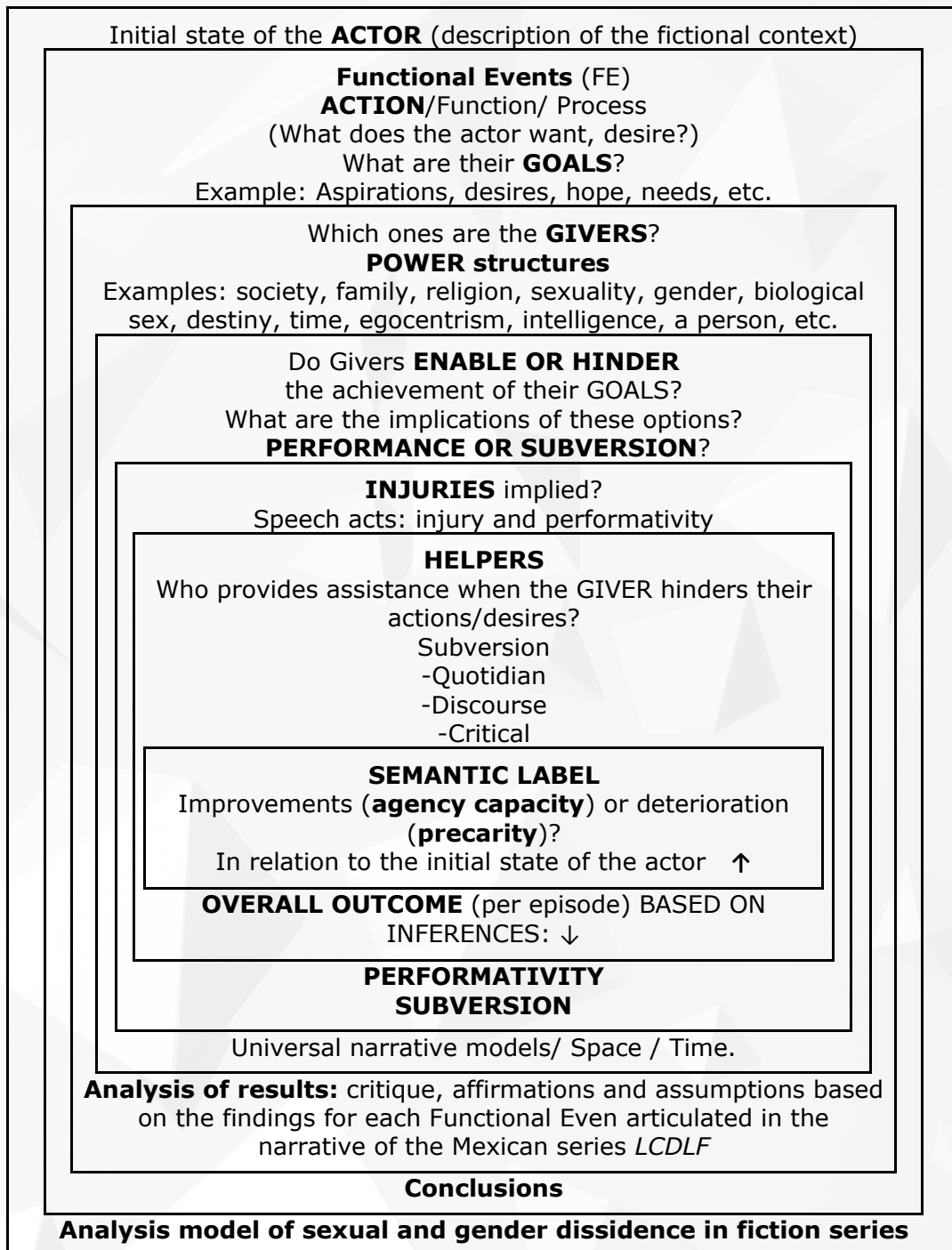
**c)Critical subversion:** dissident characters immersed in their own struggle as dissidents, deep reflection and inner struggles as a journey to self-acceptance, they may be signalled by other people; the viewer witness the struggle of the dissident individual, trying to be part of the group, even trying to be like others and be part of the system. This type of subversion borders non performativity. E.g., the lesbian couple attends a psychoanalysis therapy to accept their lesbian condition. One of them tries to convince the other one to get married, have children and fight for acceptance within their social circle.

The goal of this taxonomy is to carry out a critical reflection to understand the boundaries of injuries and power discourse in line with what Foucault (1984) referred as desubjectification processes. The objective of the model is to understand whether the narrative discourse is part of the performative process or whether or not there are subversive and resistance attempts against basic and normative conventions of gender, individuals, sexuality and desire.

Based on the previous theoretical and methodological premises presented in the two previous axioms, the following analysis model has been designed.



**Table 2: Analysis model of sexual and generic dissidence in Spanish fiction series**



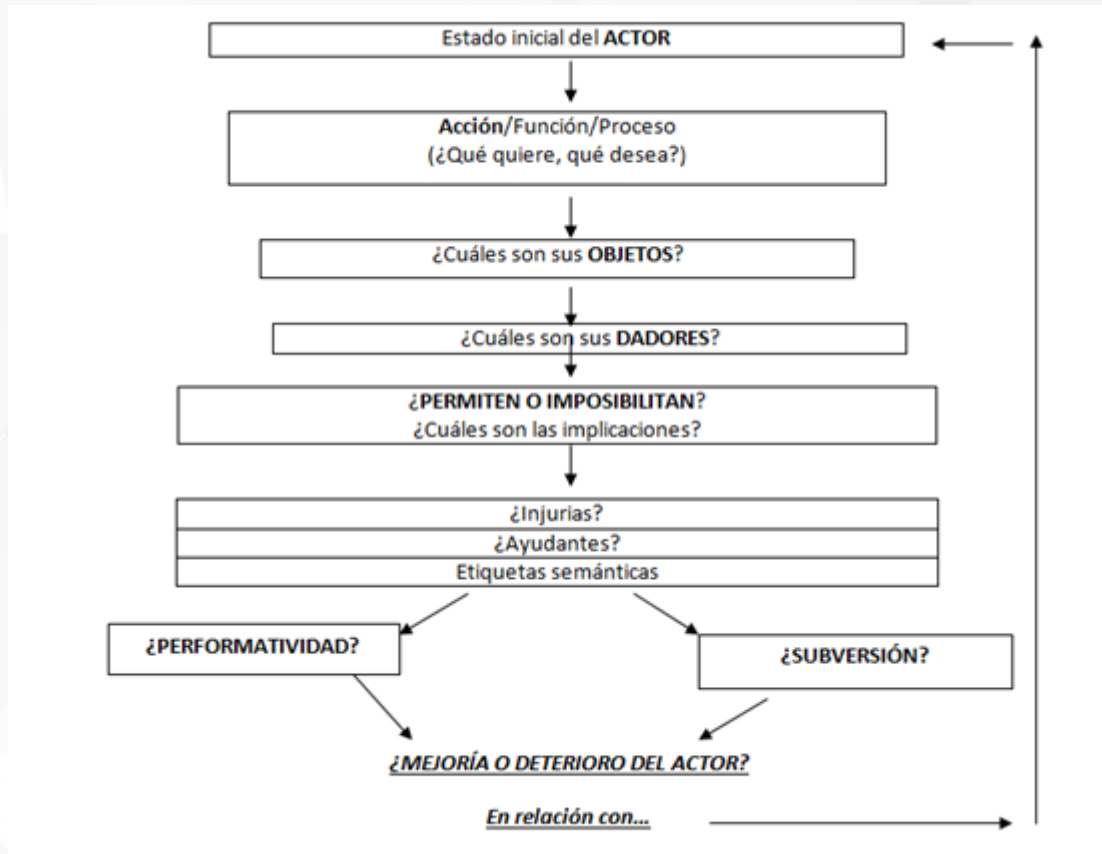
Source: own elaboration

### 3. FIELDWORK AND DATA ANALYSIS

13 episodes of the first season of *La Casa de las Flores* (LCDLF) were carefully viewed to identify different Functional Events (FE) following the criteria explained in the previous section. A selection of FE related to sexual and gender dissidence was carried out, i.e., two functional events were included as part of our analysis corpus: 1) based on the actions carried out by sexual and

gender dissident characters and 2) based on actions performed by non-dissident characters that have an impact on dissident characters. Each FE was analysed following the Analysis model of sexual and gender dissidence in Spanish fiction series made up by the elements represented in the following simplified illustration (own elaboration) and that has been based on the sources previously mentioned:

**Table 3. Simplified scheme of the analysis model of sexual and gender dissidence in fiction series**



**Source: own elaboration**

This model implies a continuous analysis of the Functional Events presented in the narrative (fable). The previous diagram illustrates the inductive analysis that has been carried out. By analysing the initial state of the actor, their actions, objectives pursued, the givers that allow for or constrain their actions, Helpers, the presence of injuries and semantic labels, we will be able to determine if Functional Events present a narrative that sustains performativity or elements of subversion in the representation of sexual dissidence in *La Casa de las Flores*.

The characters that belong to the sex and gender dissidence category and that were carefully analysed are:

- 1.- Julián de la Mora (gay/ bisexual)
- 2.- Diego Olvera (gay)
- 3.- José María/María José Riquelme (trans woman)
- 4.- Travestis/Drag Queens in the cabaret (La Yuri, Amanda Miguel, La Pau, La Gloria)



“Other” characters that are not classified as sexual and gender dissidents who have a close bond with them are:

- 1.- Virginia de la Mora, Julián, Paulina and Elena’s mother (Heterosexual)
- 2.- Ernesto de la Mora, the family’s father (Heterosexual)
- 3.- Paulina de la Mora, oldest sister (Heterosexual/Pansexual)
- 4.- Elena de la Mora, a sister who comes back from New York (Heterosexual)
- 5.- Bruno Riquelme de la Mora, Paulina and María José’s son (Heterosexual)
- 6.- Dr. Salomón Cohen, family psychologist and Virginia’s ex-husband (Heterosexual)
- 7.- Carmela Villalobos, a neighbour (Heterosexual)
- 8.- Roberta Sánchez, Ernesto’s suicidal mistress (Heterosexual)
- 9.- Lucía, Julián’s girlfriend (Heterosexual)
- 10.- Micaela, Bruno and Roberta’s illegitimate daughter.

In order to analyse the presentation of gender and sex dissidence in *La Casa de las Flores* the following questions were posed:

- 1) What are the functional events that structure the narrative proposed in LCDLF?
- 2) What are the performative acts articulated in the Functional Events in LCDLF?
- 3) What are the subversive acts articulated in the Functional Events presented in the LCDLF?
- 4) What are the injury utterances presented in the representation of sexual dissidence?
- 5) What are the power structures that determine the sexuality and morality within the diagnosis of LCDLF?

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. FUNCTIONAL EVENTS

In order to describe the main results and answers to question 1, a list of the Functional Events (FE) selected in different episodes is presented indicating whether they correspond to performativity or gender subversion. All episodes in bold correspond to subversive events.

**Table 4. List of Functional Events featured in the episodes of *La Casa de las Flores* and identification (performativity or gender subversion)**

Episode <i>Flower</i> (Symbol)	Functional Events (FE)		Performativity (P) Subversion (S)	
Episode 1 <i>Narciso</i> (Lie)	FE1	De la Mora family wants to keep up the appearances of social perfection.	P	
Episode 2 <i>Chrysanthemum</i> (Pain)	FE2	Julián wants to define their sexuality.	P	
	FE3	The travesties at The House of Flowers bar want greater life and emotional balance.	P	
Episode 3 <i>Lily</i> (Freedom)	FE4	Julián wants to come out of the closet and be accepted by his family.	P	
Episode 4 <i>Petunia</i> (Resent)	FE5	Julián wants a normal life.	P	

Episode 5 <i>Dahlia</i> (Gratitude)	FE6	Julián wants Diego to attend and participate in family events	P	
Episode 6 <i>Magnolia</i> (Dignity)	<b>FE7</b>	Paulina wants to understand the changes José María (now María José) has gone through.		<b>S</b>
	FE8	Diego wants Julián out of their apartment	P	
	<b>FE9</b>	Julián wants an open relationship with Diego.		<b>S</b>
	<b>FE10</b>	Travestis want to keep their prime time and protagonist role at the bar.		<b>S</b>
Episode 7 <i>Peony</i> (Shame)	FE11	Julián wants to be accepted	P	
	<b>FE12</b>	Paulina wants to integrate María José into the La Mora family		<b>S</b>
	FE13	Lucía wants to take revenge from Julián for leaving her for Diego.	P	
	FE14	Virginia wants Diego and Julián (her son) to stay together		<b>S</b>
Episode 8 <i>Bromelia</i> (Resistance)	FE15	Virginia wants to destroy Lucía (Julián 's ex-girlfriend) for publicly sharing a video featuring homosexual content and Julián and Diego in a <i>threesome</i> .	P	
	FE16	Virginia wants to untarnish Julián 's name.	P	
	FE17	Virginia wants to support her children.		<b>S</b>
Episode 9 <i>Tulips</i> (Hope)	FE18	Julián wants to better himself through work		<b>S</b>
	FE19	Julián wants to claim his sexuality and face society		<b>S</b>
Episode 10 <i>Tussilago</i> (Concern)	FE20	Juliego/Dielián want to have children	P	
	FE21	María José wants to exercise his transsexual paternity.		<b>S</b>
Episode 11 <i>Orchid</i> (Lust)	FE22	Julián wants to have sex with a woman again.	P	
Episode 12 <i>Erisimo</i> (Adversity)	FE23	Virginia wants to stand up and face society.	P	

Source: own elaboration

Of a total of 23 FE, 14 are performative and 9 are subversive. Overall, the representation of sexual and gender dissidence en LCDLF is largely based on performative acts. The actions presented in the 13 episodes analysed show subjection to historical and socially established constructs related to sexuality, morality and gender as it will explained below.

## 4.2. PERFORMATIVE ACTS

In order to present our results related to performative acts, we will use a simulation in which sexually dissident actors (characters) directly express and explain how they are represented in fiction to respond to research question 2.

The performative acts presented in the different FE are:

### 4.2.1. Julián de la Mora, gay/bisexual man

**I desperately need a label, I urgently need acceptance.** One of the main goals of the sexually dissident star of the series – Julián - is the urgent need to define his sexuality using a label (gay or bisexual) and a profound need for acceptance. His real sexual desires prevent him from complying with society demands which generates a state of depression and neurosis. He feels embarrassed and compares himself against his heterosexual father. This reinforces the



idea that gender is a historical and social construct. Whilst it is a subjective burden, it carries a heavy weight for Julián.

**I can only kiss someone else if we hide.** In LCDLF, hidden spaces become an option to experience sexual dissidence. Julián and Diego have never kissed in public without fear. Physical contact among men is always shown in hidden areas, spaces for the abject, for everything that has to be avoided to comply with the multiple prohibitions of heterosexual families. Julián does not restrain in private but is very unhappy in public situations. In one scene, the couple tries to kiss at a sport clothing store and they are spotted as a threat to heteropatriarchal and binary systems, a situation that went beyond the screen<sup>6</sup>. This also has an impact on other affectionate expressions or physical contact. Sex among dissidents is largely characterized by concealment. Not only there are rules in terms of who can have sex, but also how and where.

**Society is my worst enemy.** Julián disowns his own sexual dissidence- He believes things would be easier if it was not part of him. The mandatory heterosexual system crushes him driving him to inhospitable places. Fixed genders imposed by society become the constraint giver par excellence: society has driven Julián to confront an underlying threat and through the use of reiterative words and concepts has set the boundaries of their own existence. In his longing for normality (heterosexuality), Julian faces a terrible confrontation with his own words and multiple demands.

**Being bisexual has saved me.** The bisexual label in LCDLF is presented as a closet within a closet. Having the overrated masculine features and being able to have sexual intercourse with a woman becomes a licence for a homosexual. Being bisexual is "less evil". Julián and Lucía become the corporal materialization of this condition showing the complicity between two people who are willing to self-sacrifice and repress their identities in exchange for social prestige. Also, for some characters in this narrative, bisexuality is hilarious, almost a joke, something that does not even exist. Being bisexual generates confusion: someone who is almost heterosexual and almost homosexual, a body that resembles a pastiche and who, as a result, does not count.

**With money I can buy a false integration.** A narrative that indicates that being bisexual works for Julián: money is his ticket to subjective normality. The weight of one's "social position" achieved through money is presented. In the narrative world of LCDLF a character may be homosexual, but not poor. They may even marry a woman who condones his sexual dissidence for money. The engagement ring symbol is important as an attempt to achieve normalization due to the assumption that the matrimonial institution can only apply to a woman and a man. As a result, traditional marriage continues to be a powerful tool to achieve legitimacy within these narratives. In a matrimony, bodies become part of the world of discipline and power as Givers who have the power to determine what to do, think and feel.

**I need a shrink and electroshocks.** Virginia, the matriarch, makes an association between homosexuality and a psychiatric disease, a clear example of injury. "Julián needs professional help", this is as serious utterance that has a negative impact on his son which is perceived as an insane person. Speech has a productive nature and creates realities. The idea that sexual dissidence has a cure has considerably grown creating spaces where the alleged sick person is

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<sup>6</sup> This scene was filmed at Innovasport as this was rejected by an Adidas store.

injured placing them as a person with a contagious disease, someone who is judged and rejected. According to Virginia, homosexuality is also a source of suffering.

**If I am homosexual or bisexual, I must be feminine.** In an effort to accept his sexual dissidence, Julián uses a performative representation of the feminine gender. He moves and dances around to the sound of "A quién le importa" flowing the style of the cabaret travesties, to whom he asks for advice on how to declare himself as homosexual/bisexual (indecision). In this sequence, the narration of this confession shows how the public and private dimension of the individual simultaneously alternates between a feminine and masculine. By using an imitation of gender which is a parody of transvestite imitations (Virginia's behaviour shows some mockery as she does not take Julián's imitation seriously), this imitation of an imitation is key to have an instant definition of the body and gender of the character through the imitation of an assumed original gender. He moves around and dances like a woman confessing he is not heterosexual trying to connect the representation of a feminine gender with a specific sexual orientation. Julián momentarily forgets about masculine performative acts to execute feminine acts which suggest the weakness of imitations.

**I am addicted to sex.** Julián appears to be vulnerable and prey of his sexual desires as he's always connected to a sexual situation (Lucía, Diego, Willy, a threesome, an open relationship, strippers at the bar, the search for sex without commitment, #LordDámeloTodo, etc.). His gender is in dispute through diverse and recurrent sexual practices. Sexuality is produced through discursive and non-discursive practices that are subjective to human beings penetrating in his most profound corporality influencing his thoughts, actions and self-perception. LCDLF, through Julián, presents the idea that sexual dissidence is constantly linked to a disease, confusion and a tendency towards unhealthy sexual excesses.

**Am I in odds with my gender or my narrative is stuck?** Julian's story is circular and repetitive and he seems to live in a continuous and almost absurd contradiction which is not clear and does not seem to sustain. It might be interpreted as instability due to the lack of narrative arguments or a critical subversion which implies the fight against imposed practices, expectations and artefacts used to control his existence. There is a possibility that LCDLF is trying to show the hard though necessary dispute the character has with his gender to destabilize and fight against normativity. Through the redundancy of his representation, Julián unveils his sexual dissidence in his lack of stability, dissatisfaction, melancholy; sexual dissidents face contradictions in a time and space of aggravation; they are disoriented

**If I am masculine I am active; if I am feminine I am passive.** Bodies are presented as spaces where discipline is exercised. Julián's father is proud to see that his sexually dissident son is the one in control of the homosexual act, bringing into scene the masculine active trait which downplays their homosexuality, which pleases his father: if his son had a more passive role he would be leaning towards femininity. Homosexuality is adjusted to the binary model: man/woman/active-passive<sup>7</sup>; both conceptions and correlations become performative acts as they have historically and systematically formed the objects named, bodies as modes of discipline are a

<sup>7</sup> Terms used by sexual and gender dissident to specify the role they have in the sexual act. LCDLF suggests that "doing" is a posture in the sexual act which is related to a masculine (active role in the penetration) or feminine role (passive who is penetrated).



parody of an ideal that does not exist; there is no extra linguistic, autonomous reality, only the reality created by language.

#### 4.2.2. Diego, the gay man

**My parents stopped talking to me.** His family was the first one to expel the narrative of sexual and gender dissidence. This is what happened to Diego: 15 years ago his parents learned he was homosexual and they stopped talking to him. The character seems emotionally stricken by this situation: he has been injured and positioned in a place that, according to Butler (2007), does not exist. Diego lives in a world of permanent gender melancholy. The exclusion experienced has caused an immense sadness for what he is and what he is not and his desires. Diego may represent an act of critical subversion that borders performativity but the narration does not go beyond even though he is an important character in the story. Julián is presented in very few scenes; it is also very repetitive and he is always shown as a victim of neurosis trying to defend his homosexuality and trying to be part of the heterosexual system.

**I perceive the love of a couple as possession, fidelity and jealousy.** Another Giver that prevents Diego from being happy is his own perception of love and having a partner, a number of expectations that are more in line with Mexican machismo and that Julián will never be able to meet. Diego is prey of social patterns that force him to expect and reject some situations.

**I make drama and take revenge.** Very much in line with the melodramatic Mexican pattern, Diego decides to take revenge from Julian for not loving him back. He steals the family money and runs away. Before leaving, he talks to Julián saying he has broken his heart and he will never be able to meet so many slaving expectations which, in turn, are emotional and affectionate obligations for Diego. Trapped by his sadness and melancholy, he runs away from his own truth.

#### 4.2.3. Juliego/Dielián gay couple

**Yearning to be like Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.** They represent the melancholy of a gender and sexuality that have been denied. In the brief moments that they experience some stability as a couple, Julián and Diego yearn for the stability of a socially accepted heterosexual couple. They project themselves waking up in the morning together experimenting both happiness and nostalgia for not being what they are. They even label their couple using an acronym trying to emulate Hollywood's unreachable glory to pursue a normalization of homosexuality whose only goal is to be integrated in the current order or things but that is not signified. At times they are Juliego, others Dielián, based on their neurosis experienced by some of them.

**We need to form a family.** In LCDLF, the concept of "ideal heterosexual family" is the great motif of regulation and action. Julián would like Diego to attend family events as their partner. Diego wants to adopt children. Their relationship, when stable, focuses on the search for meaning and being able to get married, live together, have children, a dog, organize social gatherings, etc. The Dielián couple can be seen trying to insert their bodies in some performative utterances to be able to survive.

**Our friends are effeminate.** In the scenes featuring Dielián/Juliego's friends, the series shows a careful representation of performative acts featuring incidental characters. The cha-

acters present forced gestures imitating feminine gestures. They are also shown as privileged individuals who are in love and who are parents: the model followed from Juliego/Dielián. This ridiculed image of masculine effeminacy contributes to maintain the stability of heterosexuality and the power of the heterosexual family as a regulating mechanism.

#### 4.2.4. Travestis/Drag Queens

**Us, the poor.** Sex and gender dissidence in media narrative is also characterized by different social levels. Not all sex-dissidents are equal and not all of them are part of the liberal capitalist heteropatriarchal model. This leads to a dual or triple marginality. We have those individuals who “dress up” and who are discriminated against even in the LCDLF narrative: characters such as La Yuri, Amanda Miguel, La Pau, La Gloria are not shown many times and do not constitute a meaningful narrative. We do not know anything about them and there are no clear references to their sexual orientation, gender identity or lives besides imitation; they are only a pastiche of what’s feminine /masculine that is casually shown, always at the bar, at night. They are the counterpart of the bourgeois sexuality represented by Julián and Diego. Characters with very few or no possibilities for inclusion or normalization. They do not have money as they make a living imitating popular Mexican singers, a salary they do not receive on time. Performance drag queens may represent a subversive and dissident gender act but it is also normative as it is an imitation. One could argue that what sex and gender dissidence needs is the awareness and total respect of their social configuration as it will always represent an escape from sexual norms.

**We are “a whorehouse”.** Travestis or Drags queens are a synonym of a “whorehouse” (a non-legitimate space), a place of darkness, instability. In the series, the abject and grotesque quality of the characters in the lowest socioeconomic level is underlined. In all the episodes of the series they are shown within the boundaries of a bar where they are merely used as an attraction. They are emotionally unstable and live in precarious conditions; this mode of existence is normalized assuming there is no alternative existence mode if you make a living as a “cabaret artist”. By using these characters, the series shows a violent heteronormative and classist power of post-colonial Mexico that has created barriers among people and social groups. Whilst Julián and Diego are excluded by society, travesties are invisibles, even in the narrative.

**We are a laughable pastiche, the imitation of a non-existent imitation.** The hilarious manifestation of a non-existent original. Drag queens represent the exaltation of feminine qualities tied to masculinity. Travestis are not really a subversion mechanism as they are an imitation of an imitation; they reproduce, exalt and reinforce a femininity that has been construed through performativity. Being a woman is not looking like a woman; it is about doing, mobilizing a whole arsenal of social obligations, expectations, practices and artefacts that contribute to their creation as social subjects with a sexual identity. LCDLF is not a subversive narrative with the integration and representation of drags queens.

**We are a synonym of prostitution.** The brothel, the whorehouse, an embarrassing cabaret are injurious terms automatically uttered by Julián, Virginia and Elena to refer to the bar where imitators work. Performative acts represent an action: as such, the pejorative expressions used to refer to the bar dig a hole from which nothing legitimate or acceptable comes out. Despite being the main source of income for the family, the bar has always been hidden and kept in



secret while the floristry became a space the family can brag about in Las Lomas colony, one of the most exclusive neighbourhoods in Ciudad de México. A performative act requires the use of a number of linguistic conventions, in this case injury and subordination language, that traditionally has worked to have this type of impact.

**We are at odds with masculinity.** Within the LCDLF fable, we witness a clash among the actors: a feminine scene at odds with a masculine scene: binaries in action. When muscular and manly strippers come to the bar as an imposition of Julián, there is a conflict among the travesties as the only space they have to shine has been taken away from them. They also know how to discriminate as they believe masculine characters have no talent. This juxtaposition shown on the screen represents a conflict between what is feminine and masculine while also presenting the imitators as a source of conflict as there is no aggressive response from nudists.

#### 4.2.5. María José/José María, the trans woman

**I am not intelligible and I am scared.** María José (formerly José María) talks about her biggest fear: Paulina's family finding out what she is now. From a semantic point of view, transsexual would be anti-natural, it is judged and firmly rejected in the LCDLF narrative. Characters look at her as a strange person, with the exception of Bruno, her son. The feeling fear as she is trapped by normative speech (as all words and thought categories) that creates order in the world creating limitations and makes her feel trapped by the institutional construction of morality

**The letters in an identification are more important than me.** Besides the fact that a credential serves as an identification for José María, there is some masculine performativity in his body movements. He is threatened by a security guard and María José feels like a crazy person who is dressed up. There is gender narration as a result of linguistic performative practices, it is a sociolinguist construction tied to a historical and performative repetition María José cannot escape from despite feeling, behaving and dressing like a woman. The power of language crushes her every time she is treated like a man even though she says she is a woman facing the legal and political structure of language and the manifestation of power where nothing else exists outside its domain and legitimation. Gender at odds with sex and the initial of an official identification.

**I am in a costume.** "This is not a costume, Ernesto!". A statement that needs to be repeated many times in different situations. Transsexuality is represented in the middle of confusion and restlessness. The narrative questions the voluntarily nature of gender. In LCDLF, performative forces prevail over José María's willingness to opt for a transition process. Gender is regulated by society and some garments on our body will not make a difference.

**In Spain it is easier to be myself.** María José repeatedly mentions that it would be easier to experience his process in Spain, his home country and he wants to leave Mexico. LCDLF presents the idea that Mexico, as a geographical space, presents greater and more complex challenges and a huge resistance to experience and live non-normative subjectivities. This also applies to Mexican imitators who are shown in very precarious conditions. However, the narrative does not offer reliable data to affirm that Spain offers a more flexible space for sexual dissidence or this is merely a cliché.

**Bathrooms and changing rooms are violent spaces.** In LCDLF, gender fiction presented in bathrooms and changing rooms goes off limits. The scenes viewed show the highest level of violence and verbal injuries towards María José through repetitive narratives. It could be argued that historically, entering a bathroom with the “men” label has generated big sexogeneric hopes. A label at the entrance has triggered a masculine imagery that eventually gets destabilized when María José goes inside as a transsexual individual. The narrative does not consider the possibility of transgender bathrooms or changing rooms. The mocking compliments represent a gap between heteronormativity and other dissident genders that are perceived as fake. Once they collide in private where nakedness and shyness (morality), put pressure on characters they are finally expressed in the form of mockery, catcalls and injury.

### 4.3. SUBVERSIVE ACTS

Performativity theory highlights the idea of performance of every gender, a “real fiction” which is the result of a performative act. The journey to resignification can only be driven by subversion. We now present a reflection on moments of LCDLF where subversion is presented.

#### 4.3.1. Actresses Veronica Castro/ Virginia: debut and farewell

Mexican actress Verónica Castro became a vehicle of subversion when she accepted the character of Virginia as she had to move away from a stereotype she had built herself after so many years. Her leap from traditional melodrama to new melodrama on Netflix highlights the urgent renovation of content and narrative approaches. The steps given by the actress meant a shift from traditional Mexican TV to Netflix on demand. This had some implications including the actress’s sudden change of mind and cancellation of her participation in the show.

[...] when Manolo Caro offered me this series, I loved the idea as she was a mom and a saleswoman. However, when I had the script in my hand I asked myself lots of questions. Will the audience like it?, will I look good? I spent several weeks wondering, I have never smoked pot, I was very concerned about the reaction of the audience. (Ramírez Maya, 2018)

She would not be the typical mother again. In LCDLF, the actress gave life to a mother who, besides smoking pot, had to confront sexual and gender dissidence and had to react in a way that was new for her and Televisa (TV producer she worked for several years). The audience saw Virginia as Verónica Castro, the actress. This mix of fiction and reality resignifies the way in which a Mexican mother can be and face sexual dissidence. This reaffirms the idea that the series is an intangible fiction space which mirrors social changes

#### 4.3.2. ACTRESS CECILIA SUÁREZ/PAULINA DE LA MORA AS SUBVERSIVE DRIVERS

Starting with the series *Capadocia* (2008) and together with director Manolo Caro, Cecilia Suárez has focused her career in the representation of characters who are more in line with subversion and resignification of women. In LCDLF the actress represents Paulina de la Mora.

Paulina, the Helper par excellence of all the characters primarily sexual and gender dissidents becomes a key ally of Julián, María José and the travesties (in fact, in the narrative she is the only one who is concerned about the salary of the imitators). There are various attempts to build



her subversive speech and there are hints to lesbianism, pan sexuality at times, though there is a greater focus on the idea of a greater love beyond sexual drive: Paulina is in love with María José, regardless of what her body is now, her gender performance or her transition phase towards transexuality.

**Paulina:** (...) I am not telling you to try to live in Mexico again, I am asking you to try again together.

**María José:** Really?

**Paulina:** We are a dysfunctional, weird family but we are a family.

**María José:** I am not sure, if at least you were lesbian (Paulina kisses her).

For Julián, Paulina is the centre of his universe and an authority. From the beginning of the series, Paulina has learned about Julian's sexual dissidence. Whilst she criticizes him a lot, it is not due to this sexuality. Paulina can see beyond the fictitious gender or sex label that are commonly used to refer to human beings.

### 4.3.3. María José's transsexual paternity

This character may have been used as a relevant subversion narrative in the script. However, María José's attempts to provide new meanings to her identity are very limited. She imposes her identity and expects automatic respect.

This character tries to occupy a place in the narrative social structure. Through subversive speech and some criticism, she explores some possibilities with fear. She opens new possibilities when she becomes a successful lawyer, with high purchasing power and stays far from sex, aspects that are commonly linked to sexual dissidence (Julián, Diego, Willy, etc.). Through this character other transsexual roles are explored in the narratives. It is also important to keep in mind that there was some buzz on social media related to María José in this fiction series and the actor that brought him to life (Francisco de León) went beyond the screen through hashtags and memes.

María José also insists on leaving Mexico, presenting the idea that there are other European countries where sex and gender dissidence are better understood. She also confronts one of the Objects that strongly mobilizes her: her son Bruno. Besides her desire to escape from exclusion and injury practices in México, María José would like to exercise her transsexual paternity.

### 4.3.4. Bruno as a big example of quotidian subversion

Bruno is the brave son of María José and Paulina de la Mora. He never mentions any words related to the sexual dissidence of his mom/dad. In fact, he introduces them to others with a smile and the natural expression: "Look, she is my dad".

Bruno constructs an inclusive normality that allows us to observe all dissidents integrated in narrative issues where gender, their representation or their sexual anatomic constitution are not articulated or perceived as abject or victims of the violent power of the heterosexual matrix that univocally determines identity based on the exclusion of people and social groups.

There are few examples of quotidian subversion shown in Mexican media narratives. There has been a few examples of daily subversion in series such as *Capadocia* (2008), *Soy tu fan*

(2010) o *Alguien más* (2013), etc., but none of them are similar to Bruno in LCDLF who besides representing an adolescent whose father is a trans woman, does not question the condition of his father, Julián or the bar travesties or does not reflect on sexuality or morality. Micaela, the illegitimate daughter of Ernesto and Roberta and Julián's, Paulina's and Elena's sister who lives in the LCDLF house, is a girl who can also be positioned in the inclusive normality territory towards sexogeneric dissidence and daily subversion.

#### 4.3.5. Elena, a subversive helper who does not do much

In this narrative, Helpers have a necessary but insufficient role to achieve some goals. Different from Paulina, Elena de la Mora emerges as a helper of sexual dissidence who underlines the semantic and anti-natural characteristics linked to sexual dissidence rather than being a subversive aid. Elena's subversive discourse is somehow empty which is based on a cliché which highlights even more why sexual dissidence is excluded, frowned upon and judged.

Whilst helpers are necessary and useful, Elena does not contribute to give new meaning to sexual dissidence by separating it from sexual drive. E.g. She tells Julián that people in New York can have sexual intercourse with anybody they want and that he can also do it. Characters like Elena are not in line with Bruno's position. Elena, in silence, manifests she does not reject her brother's sexual dissidence.

#### 4.5. INJURY

*La Casa de las Flores* does not constitute a narrative that particularly stands out in terms of injury expressions towards sexual and gender dissidence. However, it would be impossible to separate injury from any performative act. This is the reason why the concept of injury has been analysed from two points of view: 1) the implicit effect of the injury in each of the performative acts. 2) the use of pejorative, derogatory and high-sounding utterances expressed in the dialogues and scenes that harm sexual dissidents.

1) Injury as a performativity tool is present in each performative act of the narrative when a whole arsenal of norms, obligations and cultural prohibitions that cannot be fully or radically contradicted are thrown on those considered abject. They are also condemned to the precarious conditions of invisible and inhospitable spaces. The following injury words and utterances in LCDLF have been collected that have been taken from the performative acts previously presented. These verbal expressions do not need to necessarily be expressed with an intension to harm, subordinate or threaten the body of a sexogeneric dissident in particular: undefinable, misfit, promiscuous, enemy, neurotic, effeminate, passive, sick, suffered, damaged, addicted, satire, imbalanced, egocentric, melancholic, abandoned, precarious, rejected, positive, disloyal, jealous, thief, vindictive, elusive, pretentious, social climber, mistress house, pastiche, prostitute, marginal, excluded, unintelligible, abject, without identity, dressed up, impostor, violent, frightening.

2) Injury materialized through the use of high-sounding, pejorative and derogative language and words pronounced by the characters within the story is minimum and almost imperceptible. Some of these expressions are: faggot, poof, sick pansy, this place is a whorehouse (the bar of imitators).



The use of verbalized injury is minimum and these words were uttered by Carmela, who represents an old and noisy neighbour with double standards and Lucía, Julián's girlfriend who is represented as a shallow woman with vested interests. It is very meaningful that these injuries come from these two women as none of them are symbols of moral values within the story and they have also committed actions that are considered illegitimate by a hypocritical society (lust and infidelity) (Carmela), or marrying a homosexual man with the only intention to climb up the social and economic ladder (Lucía).

#### 4.6. THE POWER STRUCTURES

The main power structures that influence the representation of gender within the diagesis of LCDLF, and that were identified as the Givers narrative category that may hinder or enable are:

**Table 5. Power (Givers) in gender performativity in *La Casa de las Flores***

Sexual desire	The family	Communication media
Society	Prejudice	Double standards
Love/ lack of love	Emotional instability	Selfishness
Fear	Discrimination	Unemployment
Wealth	Secrets	Poverty

**Source: own elaboration**

Prohibitions and moral imperatives emanate from these power structures, and gender performativity is construed based on them. The first three largely determine the performativity of the gender dissidents represents in the LCDLF: sexual desire, the family and communication media. Power discourse, in its different forms, determines what is right and what is wrong, what's reasonable and unreasonable, what's true and false, what's legitimate and illegitimate. Power manifests through categorical actions that only work when placed on bodies: Virginia's excessive obsession and desire to be in the cover of a tabloid magazine that has the power to position her in a privileged position which only lives in her imagination.

#### 4.7. CONCLUSIONS: THE REPRESENTATION OF DISSIDENCE

Regarding **performative acts** - understood as the discipline and compliance with mandatory heterosexual norms - the narrative of the series foresees a precarious end for gay/bisexual characters and transvestites, though it also hints at the subversive and agency power of a trans woman who is also perceived as abject.

**Julián**, as a gay/bisexual man is in a precarious condition when he says: "I am a selfish dickhead who only has a dog". He has lost everything he loves. He does not have a family and he is rejected by society. Diego, his partner, is gone; his mother is gone, he only has his father who accepts his bisexual condition, a condition who, according to Ernesto, doubles his possibilities to have sexual intercourse. Julián ends up owning what is most important for him in his life. A lot of sex, which coincides with the stereotype of the promiscuous gay person. His journey in the

narrative structure is not very well understood and ends up in the same way, in a time and space of aggravation and disorientation.

**Diego**, a 40 year old gay man, in his last words to Julián, says: “You never thought about me. You will never see me again. You took away my dignity. Julián, go and fuck yourself!”. Diego’s sexual dissident representation borders precarity, the capacity of agency and the effects of performative utterances, that are not innocent and that maintain humans in confrontation against innumerable demands. Diego believes that his life will get better if he moves away from Julián.

**The Juliego/Dielián couple**, as they call it, is destroyed as they want different things. Diego, older, is in search for normative affections linked to a gender, behaviour, body postures, fashion, professional spaces, patriarchal structures fidelity, monogamy, an imitation of the heterosexual couple. Julián is alone, a victim of his own contradictions. He says he is in love with Diego but he feels smothered. Diego’s performativity overwhelms Julián, though Julián is also a slave of his own performativity. The narrative in LCDLF presents the idea of impossibility for homosexual/bisexual/open couples.

Regarding **travesties/Drags Queens**, these characters end up with the label of “The punishment endured”. Their end is similar to their beginning. There are no narrative attempts to use their agency capacity to reinvalidate their social position or situation. They stay where they are, subject to a bar of imitations; the narrative does not provide more information to draw conclusions on their micro stories and they are only momentarily featured in the last episode, only to highlight the fact they do not have a key role in a story in which there are several loose ends or elements that end up in the void. Besides gender, the narrative presents class hierarchy. The invisibility, taboos and prohibitions are linked to the transvestite in a narrative that does not contribute to the destabilization of gender and that leaves them in an opaque and intelligible places.

**María José, the trans woman**, presents an improvement vis-a-vis their beginning. According to our analysis, there may be a subversive attempt towards the end though it is always perceived as an abject character. Trans characters such as María José had the chance to articulate and narrate the intentions and goals of the sex and gender dissidence movements by showing dissident pleasure and sexual/emotional relationships that have radically broken with heteronormativity power dynamics.

It is important to highlight that the subversive attempts identified in LCDLF are not completely bold or concrete and demonstrate that the intention to destabilize the hegemonic discourse and narrative is not completely clear. There has been some progress but there also some setups as some attempts are not credible from a narrative point of view. Regarding the subversive attempts made by Verónica Castro in her interpretation of Virginia, and despite the existence of gender subversions, her attempts fail at the end of the first season after trying to support his sexually dissident son who in the end is devoured by performativity when he sells “*La Casa de las Flores*” (heteropatriarchal and performative symbol) and runs away. In real life, this attempt also failed when the actress decided not to participate in Manolo Caro’s series as she does not agree with several aspects including the treatment of sex and gender dissidence.

Whilst **Paulina** de la Mora’s characters shows some absurd contradictions such as accepting Julián’s homosexuality but suffering due to María’s transexuality, she represents the most accomplished and appropriate subversion attempt in LCDLF, and Mexican TV as it presents the



narrative that sex, sexuality and gender as a discourse that has been heavily influenced by a mandatory system that should be questioned and examined. **Bruno**, Paulina and María José's son, formerly José María, is also a suitable and appropriate subversion that shows the latent and urgent need for respect, even indifference regarding gender, sex and sexuality of other people. This is the type of quotidian subversion exercised by Bruno and Elena

Regarding injury, there are very few offensive words and they are never pronounced by Virginia, Ernesto, Paulina and Elena towards gender and sexual dissidents. This proves the fact that LCDLF has made the attempt to treat gender and sexual dissidence with dignity through the absence of direct verbal insults, though there is some injurious speech as normalized performativity which positions sexual dissident characters as abject (unfaithful, promiscuous, abnormal, thief, neurotic, imbalanced).

Regarding power dynamics in the representation of gender and sexual dissidence, the family emerges as a key source of power in LCDLF: everybody wants a family, they long for a family, the family is taken care of, feared, idealized, they are trapped by melancholy when they do not have it, it's lost and reconfigured. Sexual desire also takes the lead in power dynamism. A narrative that succumbs to the idea that power is exercised through sexuality. Characters are slaves of this sexual drive which stays at home or comes back home

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

There is an increasing number of on-demand series that address the topic of sexual and generic dissidence and that have contributed to give greater visibility to this topic as they have managed to revert its invisibility or the ridicule associated to it. However, it cannot be argued that any type of visibility is positive to fully question assumptions related to gender and sexuality. This is the reason why the *Analysis model of sex and gender dissidence in Spanish fiction series* constitute a valid tool to analyse and question the current and constant presence of gender and sexual dissidence on screen. Even if this topic was addressed by all series, nothing would change if the narrative representation was only articulated through performative acts that continue to sustain the idea of a normality influenced by heterosexuality where gender and sexual dissidence continue to be a source of conflict, ridiculed, judged and rejected and the target of violence, injury, mockery or discipline.

From a thematic point of view, this research and the focus on gender and sexual dissidence is in line with research carried out by Maximiliano Marentes (2017) on gay love narratives in Argentinian TV and research carried out by Zurian (2017a) on LGBTIQ+ representations in Spanish TV fiction. From a methodological and interpretation point of view, it is also in line with the work of Ilana Dann Luna (2018) mentioned in the introduction of this article, essential work that revisits the value of comedy in the deconstruction of gender roles in audio-visual narratives to conclude the perpetuation of hegemonic androcentric structures and enabling endless spaces for resistance. The originality of this research lies in that it positions on demand series as objects of research constituting a critical analysis of the representation of gender and sex dissidence through its own inductive model that may be replicated by in the study of any other series. Regarding the attempt to classify and analyse the subversions to sexogeneric norms, an important contribution of the

model proposed in the present research that is not present in the literature review is the classification of gender and sex subversion in 3 typologies: (1) discourse, (2) critique (3) quotidian.

This model proposes at least 3 types of research that may add greater value: 1) approach audiences made up by gender and sex dissidents to analyse their experience and opinion on the inclusion of gender and sex dissidence in media narratives that move away from heteronormativity. 2) Include interviews with script writers and series producers who have addressed the top of gender and sex dissidence starting with Manolo Caro, and discuss performativity theory with these creators. 3) Complement this Model with visual, sound, graphic, syntactic and time elements beyond the narratives

The findings presented so far reconfigure the starting point of this research and the idea that LCDLF gives a new meaning to sexual dissidence in Mexican fiction. *La Casa de las Flores* constitutes a powerful beginning and cannot be perceived as an example of subversion as gender and sex dissidence is represented with distinct and traditional gender performative hints decorated with more explicit sex scenes, a few high-sounding words and subtle subversive attempts.

Based on our model, LCDLF presents a greater tendency to performativity than subversion. From a subversion point of view, there is greater weight of discourse subversion (1) vs. critical subversion (2) and quotidian subversion (3), as explained now.

Subversion discourse is the most characteristic type of subversion present in LCDLF, i.e., characters who defend their sexual dissidence who lack solid arguments or who only use the argument of tolerance to justify the implicit evil traits of gender and sexual dissidents. As such, sexual dissidence continues to be represented as the abject. However, discourse subversion through the representation of Paulina de la Mora conveys the possibility that the narrative may conceive sex, sexuality and gender as mere constructs influenced by a mandatory system that should be questioned and examined. In this sense, the prestige represented by celebrity Cecilia Suárez as well as her performance is decisive in the subversion processes presented in the narratives. In other words, the power and scope of subversion is greater if actors or actresses that represent it in the fiction (or any type of media) have a very solid and consolidated career and have greater credibility in front of the masses.

Critical subversion constitutes an important resistance if the gender and sex dissident is in dispute with their gender and uses their agency to achieve legitimacy and self-acceptance throughout the narrative. The problem with critical subversion is that many times- at least in LCDLF - the outcome of the narrative is the integration of the dissident in the establish heterosexual order without any type of transformation placing themselves in a generic subjectivity and self-exclusion. In this sense, the narrative in LCDLF condemns Julián, young gay/bisexual man who is sent back to their closet and hidden spaces despite their attempts; back to their egocentrism, incontrollable sexual drive, gender melancholy, abandonment and precarity. It also places Diego, 40 year old gay man, in a place where love is impossible as he is looking for happiness as part of an unreachable pattern of romantic and heterosexual love and his expectations are never met; the impossible success of a homosexual, bisexual or open relationship such as Diego and Julián.

The travesties of the cabaret owned by the family patriarch represent a triple marginality of critical subversion and the cross influence of the class dimension as they cannot purchase any type of civil respect (or narrative), even though underneath their makeup, dresses and wigs they will



continue to shine at the cabaret nights in a night “brothel”. Their bodies and language reveal instability, political imposition and the parody representation of a discourse that limits their bodies to naturalized sexes. Discourse subversion contributes to gender performativity.

María José, as a trans woman, can be placed between the critical subversion and discourse subversion. Transexuality is not intelligible, she is an object being that scares away heteropatriarchal structures, a human being that is afraid of being the victim of the violence of and being crushed by identification letters or a passport. A character who undergoes a difficult transition process who is perceived as a ridiculous pastiche who wears women’s clothes and has a manly voice but who is also viewed by the audience as a subversive and self-confident character who makes the best of his agency capacities.

Quotidian subversion, the core and motor of all the attempts of social resistance in the media is represented by Bruno, Paulina and María José’s teenager son who opens the political and intellectual agenda and the denaturalization of normative heterosexuality helping to unveil its violence and the penalization of other gender and sexual identifies. Bruno may represent the position of new generations on sexual dissidence, the emergence of new relationships with our body and identities. Bruno treats sexual dissidence with the same naturalness he views Elena’s infidelity. The infidelity of heterosexuals does not become a theme as it is assumed as part of normality. However, if Julián does the same thing as a homosexual, he would be perceived as the abject and forbidden. As such, the narrative is performative.

Whilst injury does not largely imply a discipline mechanism through the use of high-sounding language which puts in evidence the recalcitrant views of the people who use them (high society neighbours, Julián’s girlfriend), the concept of heterosexual family is the source of power and regulation embodied in the character of Virginia (interpreted by Verónica Castro) who, despite failed subversive gesture, gives up and goes away. It may be relevant to pose the question and wonder where these positions gender and sexual dissidents who do not have a family who were expelled from their family or who could not form a family due to the inexistence of cultural or legal systems. Another important power element is sexuality in its own right as a body discipline and a source of guilt. However, Bruno and Paulina de la Mora are also part of this family who exerts and are regulated by the family discipline, but who fly the flag of quotidian and discourse subversion.

Bruno’s daily subversion may contribute to reinforce the notion that there is not ruling from nature, or the automatic assignation of gender or sex as these are social constructs that are also revisited by media narratives. Our research indicated that quotidian subversion must always be an element of study in the field of communication and audio-visual narratives.

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APPENDIX<sup>8</sup>

## LA CASA DE LAS FLORES (SEASON 1)

## 1. General information

Premiere date:	August 10, 2018
Country of origin:	Mexico
Official network:	Official Netflix production
Language:	Spanish
Localizations:	Ciudad de México, Mexico
Media:	Netflix

## Technical information

Producer:	Manolo Caro
Director:	Manolo Caro
Script:	Manolo Caro, Monika Revilla, Mara Vargas, Gabriel Nuncio
Production companies:	Netflix; Noc Cinema
Executive production:	Rafael Ley; María José Córdova; Mariana Arredondo

## Crew

Virginia:	Verónica Castro
Paulina de la Mora:	Cecilia Suárez
Elena de la Mora:	Aislinn Derbez
Julián de la Mora:	Darío Yazbek
Diego Olvera:	Juan Pablo Medina
María José:	Paco León
Bruno:	Luis de la Rosa
Ernesto de la Mora:	Arturo Ríos
Lucía:	Sheryl Rubio
Carmen:	Verónica Langer
Delia:	Norma Angélica
Claudio:	Lucas Velázquez
Salomón:	David Ostrosky

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.netflix.com/es/title/80160935>; [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/La\\_Casa\\_de\\_las\\_Flores\\_\(serie\\_de\\_televisi%C3%B3n\)#Temporada\\_\(date\\_of\\_consultation;\\_October\\_10,\\_2022\)](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Casa_de_las_Flores_(serie_de_televisi%C3%B3n)#Temporada_(date_of_consultation;_October_10,_2022)).



Dominique: Sawandi Wilson

Amanda Miguellsmael Rodríguez

La PauPepe Márquez

La GloriaMariana Santos

La YuriKatia Balmori

Roberta: Claudette Maillé

Micaela: Alexa de Landa