

Stalking Narratives in American Popular Culture

Perković, Dolores

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2019

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:824154>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-07-31**



Sveučilište u Zadru
Universitas Studiorum
Jadertina | 1396 | 2002 |

Repository / Repozitorij:

[University of Zadar Institutional Repository](#)



zir.nsk.hr



DIGITALNI AKADEMSKI ARHIVI I REPOZITORIJ

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski i sveučilišni studij anglistike (dvopredmetni)

Dolores Perković

Stalking Narratives in American Popular Culture

Završni rad

Zadar, 2019.

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku
Preddiplomski i sveučilišni studij anglistike (dvopredmetni)

Stalking Narratives in American Popular Culture

Završni rad

Student/ica:

Dolores Perković

Mentor/ica:

Dr. sc. Zlatko Bukač

Zadar, 2019.



Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Dolores Perković**, ovime izjavljujem da je moj **završni** rad pod naslovom **Stalking Narratives in American Popular Culture** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

Izjavljujem da ni jedan dio ovoga rada nije iskorišten u kojem drugom radu pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj, obrazovnoj ili inoj ustanovi.

Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 26. lipnja 2019.

Table of contents:

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Stalking.....	6
2.1. What is stalking?.....	7
2.2. Modern stalking.....	8
2.3. The Stalker.....	9
2.4. The victim.....	11
2.5. Patriarchy in American popular culture.....	12
3. Stalking in American popular culture.....	14
3.1. Comedic representation of stalking.....	14
3.1.1 <i>Chuck</i>	15
3.1.2 <i>The Big Bang Theory</i>	16
3.1.3 <i>Tag</i>	17
3.1.4 <i>That 70's Show</i>	17
3.1.5 <i>Two and a Half Men</i>	17
3.2. Romanticized representation of stalking.....	19
3.2.1 <i>There's Something about Mary</i>	19
3.2.2 <i>Dumb and Dumber</i>	20
3.2.3 <i>She's All That</i>	21
3.2.4 <i>10 Things I Hate About You</i>	22
3.2.5 <i>Twilight</i>	23
4. The analysis of stalking behaviours in American popular culture.....	24
5. Conclusion.....	27
Works cited.....	29
6. Stalking Narratives in American Popular Culture: Summary and key words.....	31
7. Uhođenje u Američkoj Popularnoj Kulturi: Sažetak i ključne riječi.....	31

1. Introduction

Stalking, even though not a modern phenomenon; is a part of modern society which is characterised by technological development. This development has allowed the limitation of privacy to emerge. Because of social media and the advanced technological system that is present, humans can be easily tracked down. Beside the data that the government can collect about people in a very discrete way, certain personal information are available to complete strangers. To know one's name and certain characteristic is enough for someone to be found. Social media such as Facebook has personal data on display and Snapchat has an option to track your friends on a map (if they have enabled that option). Once information gets on the internet, it is almost impossible for it to be removed. This can represent a problem if this information is compromising in a way; for example, the employer can research their possible employees and decide about their future on account of their social media. People have given themselves the right to poke into the lives of others which are conveniently on display. One can certainly find out a lot about a person without even knowing them and can track their movements quite easily. It is no question that the technological advancement of the modern world has a possibility in being an aid in the crime of stalking, but the question remains where the right place to draw a line between normal behaviour is and what actions can be characterized as stalking. Thus, the importance of the investigation of stalking is crucial in today's society.

With the rise of American popular culture¹, which according to Storey is a result of "industrialization and urbanization" (12), our concepts about everyday phenomena have been dictated by its movies, music, ideologies. How it affects our points-of-view about numerous concepts? As of a very young age we are susceptible to various influences, in fact in our youngest days our identity is being formed. Therefore, it is of extreme importance that the content to which we are being subjected is of high quality and in correspondence with the actual facts. Sometimes, this is not the case. Reasons for this are numerous. Whether this oversight is being made purposely or not is not important. The importance lays in messages that come across, which can be misinterpretations of certain life features. Among them is the concept and expectations of love presented in American popular culture. Love, as "an emotion that motivates an individual to establish and maintain an exclusive and mutual emotional

¹ Storey in his book 'Cultural Theory and Popular Culture - An Introduction' puts forward six different definitions of popular culture, some of them are; "culture that is widely favoured by many people ... mass culture ... the culture that originates from 'the people.'" (6-12).

relationship - based on gender - with another person.” (Grodal 28) has become important element in popular culture around the world. It has been incorporated into movies, music, commercials, even when it does not belong there. It is being presented as the most important element that exists; we are all familiar with the saying “love can conquer all”, in reality it cannot. We are being taught that we alone are not enough and that the only way to be complete is to find our significant other. This notion is closely connected with the representation of stalking in American popular culture. Stalking is in reality a very serious crime, but it has been made benign by its representation in various television series and movies.

This paper intends to reveal certain possible factors influencing such misinterpretation of this crime through the analysis of various television series – primarily sit-coms, and movies – mostly comedies and romantic comedies. These examples will be further categorized into two groups: comedic representation of stalking and romanticized representation of stalking. The first group will contain the following television series and a movie: *Chuck*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *That 70s Show* and *Two and a Half Men* and *Tag*, while the latter will present the analysis of these movies: *There’s Something about Mary*, *Dumb and Dumber*, *She’s All That*, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Twilight*. The main aim of this paper will be to investigate the gender differences between male and female stalkers and to try to determine the reasons behind them. To do that, this paper will first cover the sole definition of stalking; its evolution, the relationship of stalker and the victim and the connection of it with patriarchy. Afterwards, the examples from popular culture will be analysed.

2. Stalking

Stalking is a criminal behaviour with an extremely complex nature that is characterised by the repetition of actions which one may deem as normal. It can also have possibly dangerous outcomes; According to Mullen and Pathé, “From the outset the media linked stalking to violence.” (273).

what makes stalking violent is that one person attempts to coerce another to establish or maintain a relationship against his or her will, in a manner that results in physical injury or fear of physical injury. (Storey, Hart, Meloy and Reavis, 238, according to Kropp et al., 2008)

Moreover, this behaviour is primarily pathological because of its repetitiveness. For example: calling a person is considered to be a normal behaviour, but if one calls an individual fifteen, twenty or fifty times in half an hour, then such behaviour can be seen as abnormal. On account of this, stalking was not considered a crime for extremely long time. It is not a surprise that there were no laws concerning stalking as a crime until the nineties. At that time, the celebrity culture was rising and accordingly a number of stalkers who preyed on famous people grew. TV actress Rebecca Schaeffer was murdered in 1989 by a derranged fan. She was not the first celebrity to be killed or injured in such a way, but to this case an extensive media attention was given. Thus, this crime has been marked in literature as the beginning of the stalking as it is known to the public. Mullen and Pathé state that the term stalking previously referred only to celebrities, but the term quickly started to refer to everyone (273-274). It would be a false assumption that ‘ordinary’ people were not the victims of such deranged individuals, but the cases in which the celebrities where preyed upon received greater media coverage. This resulted in a variety of different films depicting such crimes, which ultimately contributed to the recognition of this pathological behaviour.

2.1. What is stalking?

In order to investigate the nature of stalking or in an attempt to provide a definition of it, one must reach for an interdisciplinary approach. Many explanations of this term can be found in a variety of different sources, for example Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “the crime of illegally following and watching someone over a period of time”. Meloy focused his work in stalking on its psychological aspects, in accordance to this he explains stalking

as the defence mechanism of the pathological narcissistic personality, a way of dominating an object that promised to gratify the stalker but instead has hurt and shamed him or her. (Nicol 34)

It is questionable if a single definition can encompass the entire complex nature of this crime. Nevertheless, certain characteristics are attributed to this criminal behaviour which makes it recognizable; the most important one is that it is characterized by the repetitiveness of certain actions committed by the culprit. These actions do not necessarily need to be disturbing on their own, for example a phone call or sending somebody flowers, but if they are continuously repeated, they become frightening. Moreover, another definition is put forward by forensic psychologists who cover this aspect of stalking as such; they define it “as a constellation of

behaviours in which one individual inflicts on another repeated unwanted intrusions and communications.” (Nicol, according to Pathé and Mullen 15) This definition is better in terms of directly defining the crime. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, none of the existent definitions is sufficient in describing the actual criminal activity of stalking. These loose boundaries between actions which can be seen as a crime and those which are normal contribute to the overall misrepresentations of disturbing behaviours present in American popular culture.

The term ‘stalking’ was a part of the hunting jargon and in modern times it has acquired a metaphorical meaning – it was used when predatory animals or human hunters would hunt their prey, and in the same manner, the culprits – stalkers – prey on their victims in modern times. Through years this term has had a variety of different definitions and it has formed the present meaning in the 1970s – it began to be mostly used when talking about preying of individuals on other people.

Celebrities were a big reason why stalking has become recognized as a crime, and in that process, certain professions have contributed greatly to the crime, for example, paparazzi. Photographers would literally stalk their prey (celebrities), but their behaviour was somewhat justified because it was their job. Nevertheless, some of them would intrude into the lives of people, in a rather cruel manner – this is evident in the example of Ted Leyson and Greta Garbo. According to Nicol this is “perhaps the most disturbing example of paparazzo-as-stalker” (18). The reason why this case is so famous is the fact that he pursued Garbo 48 years after she retired. In this photograph one can see that Garbo is highly upset and genuinely surprised by the occurrence of paparazzi. Another chilling fact is that she died only a week after a picture by Leyson was taken. (Nicol 18)

2.2. Modern stalking

As is mentioned before the new pattern of stalking has begun with the murder of an actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1989. The murderer, Robert John Bardo, was completely smitten by the actress, until the movie *Class Struggle in Beverly Hills*. The reason why Bardo murdered Schaeffer is because the movie depicts her in a bed together with another actor. According to him “Schaeffer had become ‘one more of the bitches of Hollywood’ and ought to be punished for her loose morals.” (Nicol 20) He prepared himself by drawing her body on a piece of paper and sketching the places of her body where he will shoot her. Her murder was

not the first case of stalking and murder of celebrities, but it was the first one to which a name has been given. Other examples include John Lennon's murder (1980), President Reagan's attempted murder (1981), Teresa Saldana's murder (1982). Schaeffer's murder represented a cumulative effect of all the previous stalking cases which resulted in tragic deaths. Also, interesting fact that caught the eye of the public was that among Bardo's possessions was a book – *The Catcher in The Rye* – the same book that served as a motive to Mark Chapman for the murder of John Lennon. Such cases began to be featured in various magazines and newspapers. It started to caught public's attention which resulted in the creation of new laws – according to Nicol “the state of California passed the first anti-stalking law” (21) in 1990. This is a point in which stalking as a crime had become official. In the next couple of years other states of the USA followed the same example and in 1997 the United Kingdom passed a similar law.

There is no mental disorder by which stalking can be completely explained by. Nevertheless, according to Nicol psychiatrists interested in this crime have associated it with pathological narcissism (23). What has been highlighted by the experts is that stalking, in order for it to be recognized as something pathological, has to be a behaviour – an individual has to produce some sort of action towards its victim.

According to a research conducted in the United States there are certain characteristics that can be found in all cases of stalking:

1. “Course of conduct - actions” – more precisely, repeated actions (phone calls, letters);
2. A violation of “an individual's personal right to privacy” according to the laws of the United States an individual has the right to privacy even in the public spaces;
3. “There must be evidence of a threat and/or fear having been caused”
4. “It does not have to be directed towards the target of communications” – it can be directed to the members of one's family, colleagues, and friends.” (Nicol 24)

2.3. The Stalker

According to Nicol, there are three characteristics which turn a person into a stalker and these are: “desire, fantasy and symptom.” (28) They are mutually connected and if an individual possess only one or two of these characteristics he or she would not become a stalker. A stalker is a person who desires love and acceptance; he/she fantasizes about a real, loving relationship with somebody who actually exists. The culprit forms a picture of this

person in his/hers mind and if the object of his/hers desire turns out to deviate from this image, the stalker becomes frustrated. The perpetrator exhibits symptoms of stalking – the repetitive behaviour which over time becomes disturbing. In these individuals a sense of inadequacy is rooted. They want love, but because of certain problematic relationships they have experienced in the past, they do not know how to maintain a normal relationship with another person, especially when that person refused his/her request. They become possessive. Sometimes, they can believe that the victim actually owes them something – for example: in the nineties, a person called Kenneth Gause stalked Johnny Garson, who was a part of television chat-show. The culprit believed that Garson owed him six million dollars (Nicol 30). Thus, the stalker can feel as if something material or emotional has been denied to him/her. Therefore, a feeling of frustration occurs which can lead to physical and psychological violence towards the victim.

In the root of stalking one can find a narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). Individuals who suffer from this disorder cannot sympathise with others – they see others as a part of themselves. This is the reason why they are extremely possessive and why they take rejection very personally. When their feelings have not been reciprocated, they become frustrated and feelings of fear and hate emerge. As a consequence of this, the image they had about their prey becomes shattered. This happens because the rejection they have experienced reminds them of their own extreme lack of self-confidence and feelings of insignificance.

With regard to certain researches in the field of stalking, Reid Meloy has constructed a pattern which includes six phases showing how stalking behaviour occurs;

1. “Existence of ‘narcissistic linking fantasy’” – this phase is characterized only by thoughts – fantasies, in which the perpetrator pictures himself being loved by someone. Nevertheless, such fantasies, according to Meloy, are perfectly normal part of human consciousness.
2. “Acute or chronic rejection by desired object” – this phase is also perfectly normal part of human life; everybody has been rejected at some point. According to Meloy, most people will, after such event, return to their everyday life and after some time try again with another person.
3. “Feelings of shame/humiliation” – as mentioned before, when the culprit is rejected, because of the feeling of inadequacy that is deeply rooted in his or her mind, one feels shame and humiliation.

4. “Rage-fuelled defence against these feelings” – extreme shame and humiliation which occur when the culprit is rejected lead to rage with which an individual protects himself.
5. “Behavioural pursuit, intended to hurt, control, damage, or destroy previously desired object” – repetitive behaviours with which stalker tries to hurt person that has rejected him.
6. “Restoration of narcissistic linking fantasy” – the end of this cycle leads the perpetrator to its beginning. Even though, one’s idea about an idealized person has been crushed and replaced by a real individual, and the image they had about their prey no longer exists, in order for them to function properly, once again they form another ideal image in their minds. This is the reason why the cases of stalking last for so long. (Nicol 33-35).

2.4. The victim

According to Nicol, stalking, unlike other crimes which are based on criminals, is based on the effect it has on the victim. Every person can become a prey for a stalker. With regard to celebrities, there are no other risk groups which are more likely to become victims of this crime. With other crimes, such as robbery, the victims of it are subjected to a traumatic event. But this event has happened only once, and the probability that a person will experience such trauma again is very unlikely. On the other hand, stalking is a crime which is characterized by the repetitiveness of certain behaviours which may or may not be pathological. Therefore, the victim of stalking starts to live in a state of constant fear. The victims lose a sense of control over the world and the events in their own lives. Also, they lose a sense of self - they start to question everything they know about themselves. The victim starts to take on the characteristics of the stalker – he or she becomes alienated from the outside world, and as it is mentioned, becomes self-conscious. The victim, in a way, becomes the mirrored version of the culprit. According to some psychologists, stalking has been called ‘interpersonal terrorism’. It is connected to terrorism because on some level it actually is quite similar to it. According to Nicol it is enough for the perpetrator to utter a threat on which he or she does not have to act on, for the victim to start feeling unsure of her own identity. (38)

Ten per cent of victims are men, the rest are women (Nicol 39). One must take into consideration this fact when analysing stalking as a crime. There must be something in our

society that pushes men to act upon their thoughts. American popular culture is a big influence on everything, thus it must also have a part in this.

2.5. Patriarchy in American popular culture

In order to discuss the gender differences which occur in the representation of stalkers in American popular culture, one must analyse more closely years of patriarchy and the representation of gender roles in various movies and television shows. Walby highlights the fact that through the years many theories and definitions of patriarchy have emerged. Each definition needs to be seen through the social group in which it was created. However, she offers a basic, neutral definition of patriarchy which follows; “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.” (214); this system has been present in the popular culture since the beginnings - “motion pictures had their first première on 9 May 1893.” (Musser 389) Since then women were constantly represented as weak housewives that often need to be saved by men. They would take care of the children and are here for men to have something to look at - this correlates to Laura Mulvey’s theory, presented in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. In contrast to men, women are observed in sexualised way, which is promoted through various sources of media. In her paper, Mulvey presented an idea of ‘male gaze’; that is, in various series and movies, women are sexualised and objectified in order for men to enjoy what they see. Therefore, one can find various examples in which the movie would represent woman’s act of dressing or walking in slow-motion with slow music playing in the background. On the other hand, men are represented as if they

“cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification... Hence, the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man’s role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen.” (838)

This notion has an important role in defining the gender representation in American popular culture. Also, it provides with an explanation for the greater number of male stalkers in contrast to female stalkers. Nevertheless, such patterns need to change because they have severe consequences in real life. As the society and the roles of men and women in it change, so does its representation in popular culture. Nevertheless, these misrepresentations, even though they are no longer as evident as they were in the past, they are not completely eradicated from the popular culture. Recently, there have been many strong female characters

featured in various movies, such as in Marvel Cinematic Universe's on-screen portrayal of Marvel's comics. For example: Black Widow who is featured in many MCU's movies and is played by Scarlett Johansson and Shuri in *Black Panther* (2018) who is played by Letitia Wright. Even though one can find strong female characters who will not succumb to the men's will, there are still patriarchal representations of women who may seem, at first sight, strong and independent. One instance of this is Harley Queen as represented in *Suicide Squad* (2016).

Harley Quinn is extremely capable protagonist. Her strength, agility and combat powers are more than sufficient. David Ayer represented her as a strong woman, in every part of the movie except in the scenes with Joker - the relationship which has been romanticized by Hollywood and is not in correspondence with their psychopathic affair present in the comic books. The patriarchy dictates dominance of man over woman, which is present in this movie. The problem is that Harley became an admired character. She is not a weak woman, does not need a prince charming to rescue her. Nevertheless, Joker is her weakness. The romanticized dynamic of their relationship represented in the movie makes it perfectly permitted for her weakness to be the Joker.

Moreover, Disney's cartoons are still a big influence over children all over the world. Their movies are often filled with stereotypical representations of various life features. Thus, one can find a similar story to that of Harley Quinn in the Disney's classic *Beauty and the Beast*. *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) is an animated movie loved by children around the world. The love story of Belle and the Beast may seem harmless at first, but analysing it more, one may come to a realization that the sublime messages hidden in the movie could potentially be harmful to children without previous knowledge of the concept of healthy relationship. The Prince is cursed by enchantress for being shallow. Now he lives his life as a beast. Shameful of his appearance, he hides in his castle dehumanizing and alienating himself from the society. One night, the Beast takes Belle's father as his prisoner, after which she comes into the dark castle offering herself in exchange for her father. Thus, one may conclude that, just as Harley, Belle is a strong, independent character; coming to an unknown territory in the dark in order to save her father. After which, Belle is taken against her will as his prisoner. Firstly, said notion is extremely dangerous – the humorous take on the concept of kidnapping, inhuman deprivation of one's freedom is sending an alarming and threatening message to little girls. Belle develops deep feelings for the man that imprisons her, almost as if she develops the Stockholm syndrome. The Beast is violent, rash, tempered creature. He directs

this behaviour towards her. For example, when Belle did not want to eat with him, mainly because she feared him, he came to her room, terrifyingly raising his voice and ordering servants: “If she doesn’t eat with me, she doesn’t eat at all!” (00:42:07 – 00:42:12)

In these examples the message transmitted is the one of the approval of abusive behaviour towards women. Such representations are extremely dangerous on account of the fact that these female characters actually appear to be strong, but in the end succumb to male’s desires. Therefore, young girls may understand that such behaviour is normal because it has been permitted by such women. Girls should not be taught that love is equal to abuse. With the existing problem of male dominance over females as a result of centuries of patriarchy and the high numbers of abusive households, this messages coming from widely accepted and spread movies should not be taken lightly. Grodal states: “If we follow the logic of mainstream academic film criticism, love relationships are based mainly on male patriarchal desires for domination.” (30). The majority of stalking victims are females and the perpetrators are mainly males. This is reflected in Grodal’s notion; women are seen as passive agents, while men as the doers who are entitled to dominate females. In a culture which promotes these views throughout a variety of different sources, such notions are difficult to change.

3. Stalking in American popular culture

Stalking in American popular culture is often romanticized and represented in a humorous way. When stalking behaviour is romanticized it is often implicit, i.e. it is represented as a normal behaviour. On the other hand, when it is represented in a humorous way it is made completely explicit for the comedic purposes. In the following subchapters the examples of both comedic and romanticized representation of stalking will be analysed.

3.1. Comedic representation of stalking

Comedic representation of stalking is a big part of American popular culture, it can primarily be found in many humoristic series and sit-coms such as *The Big Bang Theory* and *Two and a Half Men*. It is explicit for the purposes of humour and the jokes made on the basis of stalking are almost always represented as benign. The following examples in which comedic representation of stalking can be found will be analysed and it consists of television

series: *Chuck*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *That 70s Show* and *Two and a Half Men* and of a movie *Tag*.

3.1.1 *Chuck*

One can find many examples of stalking in *Chuck* (2017 - 2012). *Chuck* is a television show which features Zachery Levi, Yvonne Strahovski, Joshua Gomez and others. The series is based on a computer nerd called Chuck. One day, his college roommate sends him a computer programme called Intersect which Chuck accidentally downloads inside his head. Now, all of the government secrets are stored in his brain making him an important asset for the US. On account of this, two government agents Casey of the CIA (Adam Baldwin) and Sarah of the NSA (Yvonne Strahovski) are now in charge of Chuck. He works in Buymore with his best friend Morgan (Joshua Gomez), and their other colleagues, Jeff (Scott Krinsky) and Lester (Vik Sahay). One can find instances of stalking in their behaviour; to be more exact, the whole humorous characteristic of Jeff and Lester is based on their stalking actions. Because of the humour which surrounds these disturbing examples of such behaviour, these instances have been made benign. But, once the humour is eradicated; they actually present a disturbingly strange group. This is evident in the following examples. In season 2 episode 14, *Chuck Verses the Best Friend*, Jeff utters “Does it surprise you that eighty per cent of my encounters with women were without their knowledge?” (00:01:24-00:01:30) At the beginning of the episode, the director brings the audience back a couple of decades when Chuck and Morgan were still in school; Morgan got attacked by a girl on whom he spied earlier. Moreover, the story continues by Morgan’s creepy presentation of his ex-girlfriend Anna filled with her pictures during which he utters various information regarding her life. He asks his friends, Chuck, Lester and Jeff to join him on a ‘mission’ – to stalk Anna during her meeting. ‘The reason for this ‘mission’ is the possibility that “Anna may be seeing a new guy.” (00:01:14-00:01:16); such behaviour is disturbing and possessive. Chuck has some hesitations regarding the whole situation saying “I don’t feel comfortable stalking another human being.” (00:01:36-00:01:39) to which Morgan replies with “dude it’s not stalking, it’s caring enough about someone to learn things about them they won’t tell you themselves.” (00:01:40-00:01:43) at the end Chuck caves and they stalk Anna in a fully equipped ‘stalking’ van. The fact that nobody perceives this act as something disturbing, not even Chuck’s caretakers Sarah and Casey, is contributing to the overall approval of this crime.

3.1.2. *The Big Bang Theory*

Another example of stalking which has been downplayed is Howard's (Simon Helberg) behaviour in *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-). His behaviour is disturbing from the very beginning. His whole character is based on his creepiness and stalk-like actions. During the series, Wolowitz tones down his disturbing behaviour in the presence of his wife Bernadette (Melissa Rauch). Nevertheless, weird comments, and the reminiscing about his disturbing past remain. The show is based on four friends and colleagues, Sheldon (Jim Parsons), Leonard (Johnny Galecki), Raj (Kunal Nayyar) and Howard, who have troubles in their love life. On account of this, they sometimes resort to certain actions which are made more benign on the show than they would be in real life, especially those actions of Howard and Raj. In season 2, episode 7 *The Panty Piñata Polarization*, their neighbour Penny (Kaley Cuoco) introduces the guys into the world of *America's Next Top Model*. Howard immediately 'falls in love' with most of the girls in the house saying "Oh, look, there's the future missis Wolowitz" (00:01:39-00:01:41) for every woman he sees. When Penny announces that all the girls live together in a house in Los Angeles, he is amazed: "Wait! You're telling me that I'm within a driving distance of a house filled with aspiring supermodels? ... And they live together and shower together and have naked pillow fights?" (00:02:24-00:02:41) says Howard. In the continuation of the episode Howard and Raj can be seen tracking down the house in which the models live. When Leonard asks them about their actions, Raj explains that they are "Marking the star position and physical landmarks so we could find the house of the supermodels." (00:03:38-00:04:02) - the explanation for this behaviour is provided by Howard saying: "Every week they kick out a beautiful girl making her feel unwanted and without self-esteem." (00:04:06-00:04:14) Later, Howard and Raj actually do manage to find the house with the help of a spy drone. Leonard shows a surprising answer to Howard and Raj's actions, but even though he says: "Hey, for the record, what you guys are doing is really creepy" (00:17:45-00:17:48) he does not seem to actually condemn their behaviour in any way, if anything; he seems amused by the disturbing actions of his friends. At the end of the show the two friends can be seen disguised as repairmen who finally manage to enter the house.

3.1.3. *Tag*

Similar example, where stalking has been presented in a humorous way, can be found in the 2018 movie *Tag*. This movie is based on a real story of five men who have been playing the same game of tag for the last thirty years during the month of May. The group consists of Hogan who is best known for his nickname ‘Hoagie’ (Ed Helms), Bob (Jon Hamm), Randy who is best known for his nickname ‘Chilli’ (Jake Johnson), Kevin Sable (Hannibal Buress) and Jerry (Jeremy Renner). In thirty years, Jerry has never been tagged, now the rest of the friends join forces in order to tag him. They all live in different cities. Hoagie starts to gather his friends by various creative ways of tagging them. Hogan, Bob and Chilli have all met and they go to Portland in order to meet with Sable who they find in his psychiatrist’s office. They hide in the closet and listen on to Sable’s session. He talks about his stalking behaviour: “I know you think she’s not cheating on me, but what about the possibility of her knowing that I’m following her to Pilate’s class?” (00:15:03-00:15:11). His actions have never been condemned by anybody and this part has attributed to the overall humorous tone of the movie.

3.1.4. *That 70’s Show*

The television series *That 70’s Show* has also represented stalking humorously – in the season 5, episode 18, *Hey, Hey What Can I Do*, Hyde is being employed by his old friend Roy who is comically depicted as a weak, strange man. In describing what has been happening with his life Roy says that he has “moved in with a wonderful woman”, and to answer Hyde’s question concerning his return to Point Place, Roy answers: “She found out I was living there.” (00:14:30-00:14:35).

3.1.5. *Two and a Half Men*

One of the rare examples where stalking has been presented humorously and in which the stalker is a woman is Rose (Melanie Lynskey) from *Two and a Half Men* (2003-2015). The difference between Rose and other characters who exhibit stalk-like behaviour and who have been mentioned in this paper is that Rose actually is regarded as a stalker. Her role throughout the series is to entertain viewers with her creepy behaviour which has actually had

severe consequences for both Charlie (Charlie Sheen) and Alan (Jon Cryer). Charlie and Alan Harper are two brothers. Charlie is rich and has a mansion in which Alan moves into after his divorce. At the beginning of the show Rose stalks Charlie on a daily basis. He is not worried about her intrusion onto his property basically every single day. Charlie is a so-called 'womanizer' and has slept one night with Rose after which she became obsessed with him. As the sit-com progresses they all become good friends. With this, her deeds from the past which are psychopathic seem to not matter; according to the show, she tattooed Charlie's face on her body and glued her photograph from high-school graduation on Charlie. In season three Charlie is shortly engaged to Mia (Emmanuelle Vaugier) and he has to break the news to Rose. At the beginning of their conversation which took place on his balcony in season 3 episode 24 *That Pistol-Packin' Hermaphrodite*. Rose came for comfort because her boyfriend (whose existence is questionable) ended their relationship. Charlie even consolidates her; he hugs her and comforts her – as if she has never done anything bad to him. After he told her he is marrying Mia, her face suddenly lost emotions and she started speaking in a rather robotic manner and after Charlie said: "I was afraid the news might come as a bit of a shock to you." (00:04:46-00:04:50) she answered in a creepy tone: "Afraid? There's nothing to be afraid of, Charlie. You're my friend." (00:04:51-00:04:56) In order to answer Charlie's question about where she was going, Rose said: "I've got things to do." (00:05:02-00:05:04). Later she appeared at Mia's doorstep dressed in a wedding dress with a bouquet and a veil. Her voice was still chilling as she greeted Charlie's fiancé who was surprised and scared by the sight. Later, Mia angrily came to Charlie's house retelling him the events that occurred with Rose: "She was wearing a bridal gown, planning on wearing it to our wedding. She wanted me to know so we wouldn't clash ... She wanted to give me a shower ... An actual soap and water shower. I don't want her at my wedding." To which Charlie jokingly said: "Hey, I don't want her in my zip code. But she's a close friend." (00:14:19-00:14:43). In the continuation of the series Rose and Alan form a romantic relationship despite Charlie's warnings to Alan and later, Charlie proposes to Rose. Even though, her stalking behaviour is represented humorously, unlike other characters – male characters – she actually is regarded as a psychopathic stalker.

3.2. Romanticized representation of stalking

Romanticized representation of stalking is also a big part of American popular culture. One can primarily find examples of it in the romantic comedies, especially those made in the 1990s and early 2000s. More often than not, stalking behaviour is not accounted for as stalking in such examples and women are viewed in a way which suits the patriarchal image. On account of this various misrepresentations can be created concerning various life aspects. The following examples in which romanticized representation of stalking can be found will be analysed and it consists of the movies: *There's Something about Mary*, *Dumb and Dumber*, *She's All That*, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Twilight*.

3.2.1. *There's Something about Mary*

Probably one of the most well-known and most written about example of romanticized stalking behaviours is the one which can be found in the movie *There's Something about Mary* (1998). The main protagonist and the narrator of this movie, Ted (Ben Stiller) is actually a stalker. He fell in love with Mary (Cameron Diaz) in high school, right before their prom. Unfortunate event prevented him from going to the dance with Mary and since then he has been obsessed with her. The story fast-forwards thirteen years. Ted is still infatuated with Mary. His friend Dom persuades him to look her up and discover where she is. At first, Ted is reluctant to do so, he says: "after thirteen years she's probably going to think I'm a stalker or something," to which Dom replies "you know what you should do? You should hire a private investigator to find her, follow her around. She won't know anything." Ted opposes the proposition: "No way, that's way too creepy!" (00:24:21-00:24:32). Nevertheless, he finally agrees to let Dom's colleague, Healy, search for her. Healy also becomes obsessed with Mary who now lives in Miami. He can be seen sitting in his car while observing Mary getting dressed. This movie, as it had a role in normalizing stalking it also sexualized and objectified women as is evident in the before mentioned situation. Healy deceives Ted into believing that Mary has become fat and in wheelchairs so he would lose interest in her. As the movie progresses more stalkers are becoming evident: Tucker whose real name is Norm and at the very end Dom. According to Anderson and Accomando the movie has "three central themes:

1. The normalization of stalking – pursuit and deception as appropriate heterosexual ritual

2. The undermining women's resistance to stalking
3. The assignment of blame to the target of the stalking.” (24)

Because the main protagonist is a stalker and the viewers are offered a look into his perspective which has been disturbingly romanticized, they can sympathize with him and root for him. Nevertheless, his behaviour is disturbing and unfortunately normalized in this movie. Moreover, even though Healy's lies are obvious, Mary seems oblivious to them. Also, at the end of the movie she goes back to Ted, even though he has been revealed as one of the culprits, only because he has professed his love for her. Thus, it must be highlighted that the representation of Ted as a stalker is probably the most dangerous because it was not only represented in a humorous way; it has been romanticized and perceived as the most benign. Therefore, young people watching may perceive such behaviour in real life as normal. Lastly, at the end of the movie Healy basically blames Mary for all of this, even though she has hardly been an active agent throughout the entire movie. He proposes that none of the disturbed individuals “leaves the room until our young Mary stops jerking us around and decides once and for all who she really wants.” (01:58:29-01:58:37). A woman has been blamed for the crimes done against her, even though she has been escaping the possessive relationship for a long time – she has changed her last name and moved to Miami to run away from her ex-boyfriend who turned out to be Dom.

3.2.2. *Dumb and Dumber*

A famous and beloved nineties comedy, *Dumb and Dumber* (1994) has also, through humour and in a relatively romanticized manner produced a stalk-like behaviour. The movie features two friends, Lloyd (Jim Carrey) and Harry (Jeff Daniels) who set out to find Lloyd's crush. He is a limousine driver who has fallen in love with a client, he describes their encounter to his friend in a completely distorted way saying: “I drove her to the airport. Sparks flew, emotions ran high. She actually talked to me, man.” (00:12:20-00:12:29) However, she has been in the middle of kidnapping incident in which she had to leave ransom money in a suitcase for the kidnappers to collect. Lloyd took that money because he thought she accidentally left her bag, and here their adventures began. The fact that they have crossed an entire country in order to find a girl they do not know is extremely concerning and can be characterized as stalking. Such representations, often presented as big romantic gestures, are in reality extremely disturbing. In the continuation of the movie Lloyd can be seen fantasizing

about their life together. In this fantasy everybody praises him. This can be connected to the ‘narcissistic linking fantasy’. Even though this phase is benign in the process of stalking, because of the fact that he is acting upon it, his behaviour becomes disturbing. Moreover, the danger lurks in the fact that nobody recognized their behaviour as strange or disturbing; at the end they were even praised for helping to catch the criminals – kidnappers.

3.2.3. *She’s All That*

A romanticized example of stalking can be found in a cringe nineties romantic comedy – *She’s All That* (1999). Its plot revolves around a love that emerged from a bet. Popular jock has made a bet with his friends that he can make the ugliest girl in school prom queen. The movie is filled with degrading comments and jokes about women and the main idea of this movie is humiliating and degrading on itself – he even calls her a “project” (00:14:58-00:15:00). In the beginning of the movie, he has to make an angry ‘misfit’ to go out with him – this is only one of the many problems hiding in the movie. After she rejects him multiple times he finds it perfectly appropriate to harass her on her job and her own property by coming to her house. This is perceived as something perfectly normal, and she is perceived as weird for rejecting him. This is presented in a romanticized way in many romantic comedies, a guy making an effort over a girl – when in reality this is just a guy who does not know what ‘no’ means. This notion is extremely dangerous, because such movies create generations of guys who will develop pathological impulses and will act upon them because the popular culture approves such behaviour. His sister encourages him to “make a little effort... Find out where she hangs out. Find out what she likes.” (00:15:19-00:15:28). Moreover, the notion that girl needs to change in order to fit into a popular world of high school and to be good enough for a guy who has basically harassed her is absurd. The fact that he has actually fallen in love with her is unrealistic. Moreover, when she finds out about the bet she manages to forgive him and he finds excuses by saying “You know I made that bet before I knew you, before I really knew me.” (01:28:14-01:28:18), such representations create a world where women are not the active agent in their stories and such representations may transmit into real life.

3.2.4. *10 Things I Hate About You*

10 Things I Hate About You (1999) is a romantic comedy the plot of which is based on Shakespeare's famous play *Taming of the Shrew*. The story revolves around two sisters, Katarina (Julia Stiles) and Bianca (Bianca Stratford), whose father keeps strict rules that they must obey. He is mostly concerned with their love lives and does not want them to date. This does not represent a big problem to the older sister – Kat, but the younger one is completely enraged by his involvement in her romantic affairs. She continuously persuades him to loosen up a bit until he finally does. The new rule states that Bianca can go on dates if Kat does as well. This created a bit of a problem, but one of Bianca's wooers, Cameron (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) has come up with an idea to trick another, more popular and perhaps more intellectually challenged, teenager – Joey (Andrew Keegan) into paying somebody to go on a date with the scary sister Katarina. The person for the job is Patrick Verona (Heath Ledger). Patrick is a high school rebel, an outlaw and the only one who is not scared by Kat. After she courteously declined his offer for them to go out, Joey and his friend Michael (Andrew Keegan) had to interfere – because an absurd notion exists in romantic comedies that no never means no. They offered their help in gathering information about Kat, to what Patrick replied with a smug smile on his face as he compared his future love interest to a wild animal: “So, you two are gonna help me tame the wild beast” (00:30:00-00:30:32). In accordance with the established gender roles, if a woman does not succumb to the patriarchal picture of her painted by men, there must be something wrong with her, even though she has not said a single rude word to anyone who did not deserve it with their chauvinistic behaviour. With the help of Bianca, Cameron investigated Kat's interests in various ways - one of which included their intrusion into her bedroom and into her underwear drawer. Such behaviour is concerning and it obviously includes an invasion of her privacy in order to deceive her to go out with Patrick. Moreover, as he tries to woo Kat, he mysteriously knows where she is and they magically bump into each other on various occasions – it seems as if he is following her. As the plot continues, Patrick actually falls in love with Kat – which is completely unrealistic scenario and in real life such outcome is highly unlikely. He even said in one point that he's only “in it for the cash” (00:29:40-00:29:42). Furthermore, one must reflect on the image of Kat – she is represented as a strong, independent woman, but is she really? She fell for the man who was paid to take her out. He apologized and made a big romantic gesture which erased all of his devious and questionable actions. Therefore, once again the representation of

a strong woman is implausible and is transmitting mix-messages to the young minds who are watching the movie.

3.2.5. *Twilight*

Twilight (2008) is a movie adaptation of the Stephenie Meyer's books. It is divided into four parts: *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn*. It follows the love relationship of a sparkling vampire Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson) with an extremely melancholic high school student Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart). The story features several questionable ideas about love and relationships. Firstly, Edward was born in 1901 which would make him hundred and seven years old at the time the movie was made and Bella is only seventeen. At the beginning of their affair she is still a minor which is extremely disturbing. Moreover, because Edward does not sleep, he develops a new hobby during his relationship with Bella – he would climb up her window without her previous knowledge of it and would watch her sleep, every night. Moreover, one afternoon she went with her friends to shop for prom dresses – she joined only to go to a bookstore near the shop with the dresses. This was before they even knew each other. At that point, the relationship of the pair could only be described as acquaintances from school that have seen each other only a couple of times. Bella separated from her friends and as she was coming back she went through some creepy dark street and the night suddenly came – some guys started following her and all at once she found herself surrounded by a large group of men who wanted to harass and abuse her. Luckily, Edward was 'around', he stormed in and saved the damsel in distress. But, how did he find her? Especially because he claims that she is the only one whose thoughts he cannot hear. She actually asks him "Did you follow me?" to what he replies: "I feel very protective of you... I was trying to keep a distance unless you needed my help." (00:42:36-00:42:52) His explanation of his actions is represented as heroic. Why is the concept that a woman is extremely weak and therefore needs a 'bodyguard' – who is in this example an un-living thing, perceived as normal and represented as such in numerous movies? His actions are in reality more dangerous than anything else present in this adaptation. Moreover, such representation of a woman whose life comes down to her sparkling boyfriend and literally nothing else is absurd – the whole plot of the second movie *New Moon* is their break-up after which Bella becomes severely depressed and exhibits actions which are on the borderline of suicide attempts. Bella is obviously not represented as a strong character; she is extremely

flawed, but still everyone like her. Because of this, she is relatable, i.e., young girls may see themselves in her and connect to her character on a deeper level which is potentially dangerous given all the misrepresentations of love present in the movie. The notion that the targeted audience of these movies and books are children is even more disturbing. If one looks past the romantic cringe, what is left after is a paedophilic sparkling vampire who constantly decides for his under-aged girlfriend while the main characteristic of their relationship is his possessiveness towards her.

4. The analysis of stalking behaviours in American popular culture

This paper has presented ten examples of stalking behaviours in American popular culture through various movies and television series. The examples have been categorized into two groups: the comedic representation of stalking and the romanticized representation of stalking. Significant differences are evident between these two groups. Firstly, when stalking is used for the humorous purposes, it is made explicit – it is evident to the public that the person is uttering or performing an action which is usually quite disturbing. Nevertheless, the audience understands it as a joke even when a possibility exists that the behaviour is true as it can be seen in the example of *That 70s Show* – an actual possibility exists that Roy is serious in his claims about his living arrangements, or when it goes further than words and becomes an action as it can be seen in *The Big Bang Theory* – Howard and Raj can be seen entering the house filled with models in disguise. The characters which are the culprits in such examples are usually men, who are represented as weak and therefore benign. However, such comedic representations of stalking contribute to the overall alleviation of a very serious crime. Because of this, the boundaries between normal actions and stalking which are already loose become almost none existent which can result in serious consequences in real life. Moreover, the representation of male stalkers as weak and pathetic, but ultimately benign can be quite dangerous because in reality such men are far from benevolent. In real life, male stalkers, more often than female stalkers, become violent towards their prey. But, the examples given prove a completely different pattern present in the American popular culture. Very rarely is a female stalker represented humorously. The only one in our list is Rose from *Two and a Half Men*. Even though her representation truly is humorous, it is evident that she is a stalker. Her actions prove that she actually is a perpetrator who invades the house and lives of Charlie and other characters. One can describe her as dangerous on account of the fact that throughout the

series Charlie mentions how she physically hurt him and can be seen hurting Alan in a very similar way. In that respect she can be distinguished from other characters on this list who have exhibited such behaviour. The said notion is interesting considering the fact that she is one of the rare examples of comedic representation of stalking in American popular culture.

On the other hand the romanticized representation of stalking in American popular culture is often implicit – the behaviour of the characters that is in reality disturbing is represented as normal. Thus, the popular culture distorts the image of the audience about love. In most of the examples given the characters are not represented as stalkers and their actions are represented as normal. The only exception can be found in the movie *There's Something About Mary* in which the behaviour of four men is obviously disturbing and is overtly represented as stalking. Nevertheless, the actions of one of them have been normalized and romanticized on account of 'love'. He did it because he loves her, therefore all is forgiven. Such absurd notions unfortunately shape the minds of generations of humans. Moreover, the romanticized stalking behaviour in romantic comedies, more often than comedic representation in various sit-coms, demeans women. It represents them as passive agents – they are submissive to the men's will. For example, the movie *She's All That* features an extremely weak female character. Firstly, she refused his offer to take her out and she really meant it. But, because of the notion that men need to be persistent in order to 'get a girl' he would not take no for an answer until she finally caved to his desires. Moreover, he deceived her and she forgave him as if it was nothing. Also, in movies such as *10 Things I Hate About You*, the female protagonists are being represented as strong characters which makes them a good role models for the young girls who look up to them. But, how strong are they really? They give up everything they have believed in because of a man. Strong female characters are often represented as shrews who 'act' in a certain rude way just to avoid the emotional burden the relationships have or perhaps they have been hurt in the past and now a man has to save them. Disregarding the fact that men act in such a way constantly, but when a woman does it she is a 'shrew'. Thus, once again a woman cannot do or act in a certain way without everything revolving around men. This notion might be the most dangerous one because it really seems as if these women are tenacious. Romantic comedies and the romanticized representation of stalking, in a greater extent than it is present in comedies, support the existing misrepresentations of gender roles – therefore they continuously influence and shape the young minds in such a distorted way. It has been mentioned previously that the pattern of gender roles have started to change, but it is not changing fast enough or it is changing only at

first sight – which can be evident with the before mentioned examples of seemingly strong female characters. Also, some classics – such as Disney’s cartoons will be watched by children for the generations to come regardless of their questionable moral standards.

One must note the existence of psychological thrillers and horror movies in which the nature of stalking is accurately represented or the most severe possible consequences are depicted, for example in the movie *The Fan* (1996) and in television shows such as *You* (2018-) where the entire plot of the show revolves around the psychopathic tendencies of the stalker and of the romantic relationship the protagonist achieves with his ‘prey’. Also, in *One Tree Hill* (2003-2012) Peyton’s stalker attacks her. He represents himself as her long lost brother in the interest of coming closer to her after a period of following her on her internet account. His feelings are pathologically strong, and he is depicted as a psychopath. Such representations are in correspondence with the true nature of this crime, but even though the pathological actions of these characters are present and evident, people, because of the before mentioned misinterpretations of romantic behaviours, may replace them with ‘love’. This can be seen in the recent statement made by Millie Bobbie Brown (aged 14) on the nature of the Joe Goldberg’s (Penn Badgley – actor in the television show *You*) behaviour:

So I just started that new show *You*, He’s not creepy. He’s in love with her, and it’s okay. So I’m obsessed with it, I’m binge-watching it... I know everybody’s going to say, ‘Uh, he’s a stalker, why would you support that?’ No, like, he’s in love with her.”
(Millie Bobby Brown Receives Huge Backlash For Her Opinion On *You*)

Such quotation coming from a relatively young girl is quite disturbing. Examples similar to this are a sign that popular culture must change its means of representing love because the consequences are too severe.

Moreover, in thrillers and in horrors, more often than in examples presented in this paper, a woman can be represented as a psychopathic villain. Such representations are present in the movies *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *Misery* (1990) and *Obsessed* (2009). A question arises, why is a female stalker usually featured only in thrillers and horrors? Rose from *Two and a Half Men* is a part of a sit-com, but even in such context it is obvious that she is quite insane. Therefore, one can conclude that a certain pattern exists in American popular culture regarding stalkers and people exhibiting stalk-like behaviour: women are rarely depicted in the same way the men are, i.e. if such actions emerge men are rarely called out because of them, while a woman hardly ever displays this sort of behaviour and if she does, the chances are that she will be judged for them. The way male stalkers are depicted in American movies

and television shows is often humorous. On the other hand, women as stalkers are rarely depicted in popular culture, and if they are, they are more often depicted as psychopaths, that is, they are rarely depicted in humorous or romanticized way – this represents a problem. In real life, when a male is a stalker he is more likely to act physically violent towards his ‘prey’ – a woman, than females are. This pattern may have roots in the representations and roles of males and females that have been a part of our cultures for a very long time and have been represented as such in American popular culture. The root of this pattern probably lies in the centuries of patriarchy and the misrepresentation of gender roles which have been presented in this paper.

5. Conclusion

This paper intended to represent the sublime messages sent through movies and television series, which have its admirers all around the world, and the dangerous consequences produced by the depiction of love in American popular culture. It should be noted that representations of healthy romantic affairs could also be found in popular culture. But, because of the said dangers, more important is to look into such distorted depictions of relationships. Where does love stop and psychopathy begin? With the blurred lines created by popular culture between love and violence, it is hard to estimate. Consequences of abusive relationships are severe, and are not to be taken lightly. Because of the notion of ‘significant other’ and traditional values of marriage with patriarchy still in power, one is pressured into finding suitable match. Popular culture inserts into people’s subconscious concepts about the said relationships. If those concepts are pathological, one is more likely to develop such relationships with others.

Stalking as a crime is a disturbing reality of modern world, but it has been present since the dawn of time. Its nature is very complex and hard to define. The dangers lurking within stalking are numerous. There is a fine line between verbal and physical violence and stalkers often cross this line, and the most extreme cases may end up in murder. With the change in human’s consciousness and development in technology the idea of stalking has become more frightening than ever. People, without paying attention, allow strangers inside their lives through social media. American popular culture stretches the lines of normal behaviour so that many pathological actions done by the characters of many movies and television series are deemed as regular. Such notions may prove dangerous, especially on

account of the fact that such oversight is offered usually to men and the majority of stalkers in real life are male.

This paper analysed two groups of examples containing stalking, or exhibiting instances of stalk-like behaviour. The two groups were: the comedic representation of stalking – consisting of the following television series and a movie: *Chuck*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *That 70s Show* and *Two and a Half Men* and *Tag*; and the romanticized representation of stalking – containing the following examples found in these movies: *There's Something about Mary*, *Dumb and Dumber*, *She's All That*, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Twilight*. The examples from these categories shared some similarities, but were also different in some elements. The first group exhibited explicit stalking behaviours, which was represented as humorous – mostly throughout jokes. On the other hand, the latter group expressed more implicit and discrete forms of such behaviour. Such forms were hidden under the pretences of normal actions. On account of this, such representations may be even more dangerous. Moreover, women were not represented in such ways, with the exception of Rose from *Two and a Half Men*. She certainly is represented humorously, but her representation differs from other examples. People exhibiting such behaviour in this group were not deemed as mentally ill, while Rose was – and this was the main core of her humorous appearance. Other instances of women stalkers can be found in horrors and thrillers where they truly are represented accordingly to the true nature of these culprits in real life. Thus, one may conclude that there is a pattern in American popular culture, where male's pathological behaviour is often normalized. This may ensue from centuries of patriarchy – male's domination over women, which has been reflected in many ways in popular culture. Another dangerous notion, in accordance to the existing chauvinism and patriarchy present in popular culture, is that many women are actually represented as strong – in all aspects, except in their relationship with men, for example the representation of the female protagonist in the movie *10 Things I Hate About You*. These notions are extremely dangerous because such women may become role models for young girls – transferring to them an example of pathological and subordinate relationship to men. Art imitates life, but such forms of art, unfortunately, influence life – creating a vicious cycle, the discontinuation of this cycle may prove to be an extremely difficult task which must first include conscious cognition about the reality of such representations.

Works cited

1. *10 Things I Hate About You*. Directed by Gil Junger, performances by Heath Ledger, Julia Stiles, Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Touchstone Pictures, 1999.
2. Anderson, K. J., Accomando, C. "Madcap misogyny and romanticized victim-blaming: Discourses of stalking in *There's Something About Mary*." *Women and Language: WL; Urbana*, Vol. 22, 1999, pp. 24-28.
3. *Beauty and the Beast*. Directed by Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise, performances by Paige O'Hara, Robby Benson, Walt Disney Pictures, 1991.
4. Cambridge Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stalking> Accessed 18.05.2019.
5. "Chuck Versus The Best Friend." *Chuck*, created by Chris Fedak and Josh Schwartz, performance by Zachery Levi, Yvonne Strahovski, Joshua Gomez, season 2 episode 14, College Hill Pictures Inc. 23 February 2009.
6. *Dumb and Dumber*. Directed by Peter Farrelly and Bobby Farrelly. Performances by Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels, Lauren Holly. New Line Cinema, 1994.
7. Grodal, T. "Love and Desire in the Cinema." *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2004, pp. 26-46.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1225913.pdf?refreqid=excelsior:7f52730ebee989325f0e0e742a3df14a>. Accessed, 24 April 2019.
8. "Hey, Hey What Can I Do." *That 70s show*, created by David Trainer, performance by Danny Masterson and Jim Gaffigan, season 5, episode 18, CBS Studio Center, 12 March 2003.
9. Millie Bobby Brown Receives Huge Backlash For Her Opinion On You
<https://www.unilad.co.uk/film-and-tv/millie-bobby-brown-receives-huge-backlash-for-her-opinion-on-you/> accessed 27. March 2019
10. Mullen, P., Pathé, M. "Stalking" *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 29, 2002, pp. 273-318
11. Mulvey, L. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999: 833-44.
12. Musser, C. "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity." *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Wanda Strauven ed., Amsterdam University Press, 2006, pp. 389-412

13. Nicol, B. (2006). *Stalking*. London, UK Reaktion Books Ltd.
14. *Tag*. Directed by Jeff Tomsic, performances by Jeremy Renner, Ed Helms, Jake Johnson, Hannibal Buress, Jon Hamm. Broken Road Productions, 2018.
15. “That Pistol-Packin' Hermaphrodite.” *Two and a Half Men*, created by Lee Aronsohn and Chuck Lorre, performance by Charlie Sheen, Jon Cryer, Melanie Lynskey, season 3 episode 24, Chuck Lorre Productions, 22 May 2006.
16. “The Panty Piñata Polarization.” *The Big Bang Theory*, created by Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady, performance by Johnny Galecki, Simon Helberg, Kunal Nayyar, season 2 episode 7, Chuck Lorre Productions, 10 November 2008.
17. *There's Something about Mary*. Directed by Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly, performances by Cameron Diaz, Matt Dillon, Ben Stiller. Twentieth Century Fox, 1998.
18. *Twilight*. Directed by Catherine Hardwicke, performances by Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Billy Burke. Summit Entertainment, 2008.
19. *She's All That*. Directed by Robert Iscove. Performances by Freddie Prinze Jr., Rachael Leigh Cook, Matthew Lillard. Miramax, 1999.
20. Storey, Jennifer E., Hart, Stephen D., Meloy, Reid, Reavis, James A., “Psychopathy and Stalking.” *Law and Human Behavior*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2009, pp. 237–246.
21. Storey, J. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture An Introduction*. fifth ed., University of Sunderland, 2009.
22. Walby, S. “Theorising Patriarchy.” *Sociology*, Vol. 23, 1989, pp. 213-234

6. Stalking Narratives in American Popular Culture: Summary and key words

Stalking, on account of technological development, has become a modern crime. The term itself is very hard to define. It is characterized by the repetition of certain acts which otherwise may be deemed as normal (phone calls). This paper was set to examine stalking or stalking-like behaviour which is present in American popular culture but is not regarded as such, or is regarded as more benign than it really is. Ten examples were given, which were further divided into two groups: comedic representation of stalking in American popular culture and romanticized representation of stalking in American popular culture. Throughout these examples, one can notice differences between the two groups; stalking which is represented humorously is more explicit, in contrast to romanticized representation of this behaviour. Moreover, females are rarely represented in the same comedic and romanticized manner in these contexts as men are. The given notion can be explained by the centuries of patriarchy and the established gender roles which deem women to an inferior position in regard to men. The change of the established patterns is difficult, but is necessary.

Key words: stalking, patriarchy, gender roles, romanticized representation of stalking, comedic representation of stalking.

7. Uhođenje u Američkoj Popularnoj Kulturi: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Zbog tehnološkog napretka, uhođenje je postao zločin suvremenog društva. Sam naziv je veoma teško definirati. Karakteriziran je ponavljanjem određenih postupaka koji su inače percipirani normalnima (telefonski pozivi). U ovom radu naglasak je na uhođenju ili sličnim ponašanjima koja nisu percipirana na taj način, ili su percipirana manje opasnima nego što zaista jesu, a prisutna su u američkoj popularnoj kulturi. Deset primjera podijeljena su u dvije grupe te su analizirana: komični prikaz uhođenja u američkoj popularnoj kulturi i romantični prikaz uhođenja u američkoj popularnoj kulturi. Između ove dvije grupe pronađene su određene razlike; humoristični prikaz uhođenja je eksplicitniji u odnosu na romantični prikaz ovog ponašanja. Nadalje, žene su rijetko prikazane na isti komičan i romantičan način kao i što su muškarci. Ovaj fenomen je moguće objasniti kao posljedicu višestoljetne patriarhije i duboko ukorijenjenih rodnih uloga koje svrstavaju žene u inferiornije uloge u odnosu na muškarce. Proces promjene ovog uzorka je težak, no potreban.

Ključne riječi: uhođenje, patrijarhat, rodne uloge, romantični prikaz uhođenja, komični prikaz uhođenja