
This is the **published version** of the bachelor thesis:

Aranda Salas, Aixa; Spengler, Nick , dir. Blurring the lines : the transmedial construction of Glee's Quinn Fabray. Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2022. 36 pag. (1482 Grau en Estudis Anglesos)

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Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

Blurring the lines: the transmedial construction of

***Glee's* Quinn Fabray**

Treball de Fi de Grau/ BA dissertation

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June 2022

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Acknowledgements

I want to thank Nick, my supervisor, for his infinite patience with my chaotic emails and stress, and for all of his help. I mean it, thank you so much. I also want to thank Dianna: this would not have been possible without you.

Abstract

Glee (2009-2015) was celebrated and kept in popular memory as a revolutionary show for fighting stereotypes and accepting and integrating every identity. A satire at first, it depicted the fight for social justice and mobility against the established oppressive order in the context of a high school, where, through the power of the arts, outcasts proved that every voice was worth listening. This premise was profoundly attractive to its teen audience, resulting in a gigantic fan movement that resonated but also reacted in an unfiltered manner to what the show depicted, producing their own fan-generated materials alongside the show's official run.

The collision between these materials and the show's textual elements, though, rather than conforming to a single understanding, resulted in two utterly different versions of one of the show's villains, Quinn Fabray. The show presented her as a somewhat interesting character but ultimately villainous, whereas a segment of the audience recognized some traits of a marginalized group in her. This TFG aims to uncover, thus, the result of this clash and the consequent transmedial effect of this fan-generated content on the show and how, despite it presenting itself as a premise for social inclusivity, it fails in doing so despite the audience's claims. Nevertheless, this transmedial effect does succeed in generating an impact, although not as expected.

Keywords: *Glee*, Ryan Murphy, transmediality, fan-generated content, queerbaiting, female villainization, "mean girl" trope.

0. Introduction: a transmedial construction

In a current, interconnected cultural panorama where everyone can share and manifest their ideas and opinions, the rate of response to mass media has been profoundly accelerated. Although before the commonization of the internet, audiences could reach studios through phone calls and fan mail, now, due to social networks, the presentation of cultural products has transformed into a space of discussion, creation, and communication between creators/producers and the audience and within the audience itself. This development of fan practices and ways of consumption has established a context of transmediality, in which the lines that separated textual and extratextual (or, as said in fan studies, *canon* and *non-canon*) elements have begun to blur. This phenomenon has affected TV shows greatly; due to their coexistence with the creation of fan-generated content, the number of materials compounding them (regardless of whether they are *canon* or not) has been vastly enlarged. An example of this transmedial phenomenon is the TV series *Glee*, which during its original run (2009-2015) proved to be a juggernaut of entertainment with an enormous legion of followers, both voraciously consuming all of its products and generating their own *non-canon* content.

The series was to present a satire of the average high-school fiction mirroring a functioning society, with its different levels and hierarchies in the form of teenagers and their social groups. The parodic tone, however, was eventually lost to become a heartfelt experience of learning that no matter who they are, everyone is unique and has a value of their own. Nevertheless, every story needs a villain. This dissertation aims, precisely, to analyse the transmedial construction of *Glee*'s Quinn Fabray and how the villainized elements of her character have been defended, celebrated, and subverted by the followers. This character – her presence on the show and her reception – became one of the series' most controversial aspects, leading to a severely different perception of her between the

creators and the fans. Quinn rapidly became a fan favourite despite the writers' attempts to portray her in a bad light.

This TFG begins by analysing the textual presentation of the character, her attributes (particularly the demonized ones), the tropes into which she falls, and how they are dealt with (whether they merely follow the original parodic tone or if they perpetuate certain prejudices instead). Complementing it, actress's Dianna Agron portrayal of the character and how it integrates or alters layers to the character will be analysed as well. The following step consists of analysing the fan response: the reception of the character, its uses, its interpretation, and the vindication of the villainized attributes. Finally, considering a context of transmediality in which fan-generated content and demands end up being as noteworthy as the source itself, the two versions of that same character are to be put together and examined alongside its evolution.

Following the evolution of the character throughout the first season, the result of the audience's input will be questioned examining certain key moments from the later how does the materiality of a parallel (*non-canon*) reality affect the source, what do the elements protested by the audience point out, and how are they responded to by the writers? This dissertation aims to uncover how, despite presenting itself as an advocate for acceptance and inclusivity, the show perpetuates harmful stereotypes and refuses to accept criticism. Nevertheless, the audience's fight succeeds to generate an impact, although not the one intended.

1. The canon and “the canon”: presence of literary canonical elements in the show’s presentation of the character

In order to understand Quinn’s character as a stereotypical female villain, we must consider the mythical foundations of female villainy. In what could be considered one of the first cases of transmediality, as developed by Thompson in her *The Wandering Womb: A Cultural History of Outrageous Beliefs About Women*, she argues that “creation myths, those metaphoric or symbolic stories that explain how people account for their existence, codify their relationships, and establish order” (Thompson 2). These ideas imbued in these myths have perpetuated themselves over time, jumping from artistic discipline to artistic discipline, consolidating themselves eventually into the canon as motifs, themes, etc., and, consequentially, into the general social ideology. An example of it would be what Haralu defines as the “dangerous woman” in her “Madwomen and Mad Women: an Analysis of the Use of Female Insanity and Anger in Narrative Fiction, from Vilification to Validation.” According to Haralu, the early myths set two possibilities for female villainy. The first one, exemplified by the myths of Pandora and Eve, presents a danger to the world for their “feminine nature”: being curious, weak, easily influenced, and tempting to men. On the other hand, the figure representing the opposite end of female villainy would be the “Lilith” model, who is considered a villain for possessing masculine qualities: independence, ambition, dominance, and sexual freedom. However, regardless of the model of female villainy, both bring the same result; the introduction of chaos and destruction into the world of men with their actions, presenting the cause for all their frustrations and temptations. As Thompson further develops:

The blame assigned to Eve for tempting Adam with forbidden fruit lies at the core of many assumptions about women’s psychological nature. Medical decisions, especially ones related to childbirth, reproduction, and sexuality, have been shaded by this prejudice throughout the ages. (Thompson 2)

Translating all these canonical and perpetuated villainized female features them into current understandings and combining them, we encounter the stereotype of the “mean girl”. Defined as “tyrannical, bullying and devote to the caste system” (Behm-Morawitz, Mastro, Zinoman, 132), mean girls feature all the aforementioned attributes villainized in women: even while possessing the tempting and hyper-feminine beautiful look of the “Eve” model, they also use the characteristics of the “Lilith” type, such as the aggressiveness and merciless determination. Ambitious, clever, and ruthless in her means of achieving her ends and weaponizing her beauty and femininity to do so, a “mean girl” is but the updated version of the canonical female villainy. Even though the lenses of social advance and consciousness make it obvious that all of its constituting elements are rooted in misogyny, the trope of the “mean girl” persists in contemporary and popular media culture.

The object of focus of this TFG, *Glee*, has been accused of trafficking in tropes instead of presenting the subversive representation of gender it is claimed to offer (Doty 2011; Meyer 2010), and the show’s treatment of the trope of the mean girl, especially in the character of Quinn Fabray, has been the object of debate and controversy over the past decade. The following analysis of the show’s first presentation of Quinn’s characterization throughout season one will identify traces of these canonical elements of female villainy, or, in other words, the primary influence on the transmedial creation of the character. This first analysis will be limited to the first season due to it being the only one exempted from the audience’s impact, although the second and third seasons will be considered to examine the transmedial result.

1.1 Analysis of the show's depiction of villainy

The show's pilot begins with an immediate introduction to the top of the high school's social system, which presents its functioning core: the sports field and the cheerleading team. That social system based on popularity, shallowness, and repressive appearances, is seconds later put to work with a glimpse of how the top of its pyramid feeds upon the oppression of the inferior social strata. In a situation that presents itself as a daily activity, the pilot depicts how a group of popular jocks throw a student into a dumpster. Finn, their leader, commands this, and in what appears to be a moment of self-reflection, a brief first image of his girlfriend Quinn is displayed, hinting that she is on his mind at that current moment and thus the cause of his misdoings. That concept is reinforced with a subsequent shot of Finn with a facial expression hinting numbness and idleness (see Figure 2 for clarity) followed in the same manner by another image of the alleged cause of his misery: the cheerleading team, still on his mind. The show thus hints again that Finn is a good person, trapped performing the role of a bully solely because he is socially expected to play it, exempting him from the responsibility for his actions. The element at fault for both his crimes and misery is thus the social order and, commanding it, the cheerleading team and its leader, Quinn.



Figure 1. An image of Quinn, which lasts for only a single second, is displayed immediately after Finn bullies a fellow student. (“Pilot”, 1:14).



Figure 2. Finn, barely pronouncing properly in class, not content with the life he is being forced to lead. (“Pilot”, 1:55).

The second character presented is the show’s heroine, Rachel. Following the show’s parodic tone, she receives a fairy-tale princess-like entrance, only to be shattered seconds later: she represents an egotistical, selfish, ruthless diva aggressively determined to succeed. Her characterization is objectively similar to that of the stereotype of the “mean girl,” having only one difference: Rachel is an outcast and, consequentially, not successful in her goals, and thus, she is not demonized.

Despite having relatively similar personalities, Rachel and Quinn represent (and are depicted as) the two ends of a spectrum: one constituting the archetypical “wallflower” struggling on the margins of society, and the other, a “mean girl” positioned as the key figure to the functioning of that oppressive and discriminating society. Despite having shown several instances of Quinn bullying Rachel before, the season’s conflict is unleashed when Rachel falls in love with Quinn’s boyfriend, Finn. Their respective relationships with him are alike in their depictions as individuals. Quinn mainly bosses him around and lets on several times that she only uses him for social status, even refusing sexual advances from him under the excuse of maintaining celibacy as demanded by her religion. On the other hand, Rachel appears to care about him, support him and accept

him, and she represents the polar opposite on the sexual terrain too, presenting herself empowered, liberated and sex positive.

The show thus places us in favor of Rachel over Quinn and her relationship with Finn. The conflict's highest point, though, arises when Quinn is revealed to be pregnant and claims that Finn is the father, binding him to remain in a relationship with her. With this lie, her villainy evolves from her merely being a mean girl to impeding the couple's happy ending.

Reminiscent of the previously mentioned succubus-like figure of Lilith, Quinn traps a good man with the excuse of carrying his child, which turns out to be that of his best friend, Puck. Despite the fact that Puck's betrayal of Finn is just as bad as Quinn's, the moral responsibility of that infidelity seems to only fall upon her, as he is depicted as a carefree but lovable rebel. Furthermore, her deeds are presented to be even more deplorable to the audience as she rejects him, claiming to love Finn and leaving Puck brokenhearted and therefore easy to sympathize with. Moreover, Finn's infidelity with Rachel is also morally ignored, as it is excused as true love.

Another element of Quinn's characterization that sees itself vilified is that of her pregnancy. While claiming that the only reason she had intercourse with Puck that resulted in her pregnancy was that ““you got me drunk on wine coolers, and I slept with you because I felt fat that day” (“Preggers”, 29:02), she does not even consider the option of abortion due to her Christian background. Nevertheless, she does not feel fit to raise a baby and, consequentially, she decides to give it up for adoption, which is also frowned upon by her two male counterparts (especially the biological father) who want to keep the baby. Although the show does not actively depict that decision in a bad light, it does make the audience empathize with Puck, adding this inadvertent selfishness on her behalf to her already established villainy. However, the show does begin to demonstrate part of her

fear and vulnerability in front of the situation, even if presented in the form of aggressivity on her behalf when amid a discussion with Finn, she says: “you’re not the one whose parents will burn her like a witch when they find out” (“Throwdown”, 19:29).

This process of humanization is completed by the destruction of her life. She is expelled from the cheerleading team due to her pregnancy, and Finn reveals it too to her parents, who throw her out of her house immediately. Her infidelity is eventually discovered, and she loses Finn as well, seeing herself trapped in a horrible relationship with Puck as her only option for shelter. Finally, when her pregnancy begins to show, she is deprived of her so carefully guarded social status. Only then, when she has lost everything except the glee club she used to torment, she ceases to be presented as a villain and becomes likable.

Despite her downfall being necessary for her to become a non-villainous character, Quinn is the only character who appears to require redemption to gain forgiveness. Rachel’s selfishness and bullying of the rest of the glee club seem to be forgotten, alongside Finn’s infidelity, his bullying, and his eventual manipulation of Rachel to achieve his ends in episode five, “The Rhodes Not Taken” (which is indirectly blamed on Quinn). Puck’s actions are also ignored: his background of bullying and his sleeping with his best friend’s girlfriend are not even held as something inherently wrong, since he is presented as a rebellious and ambiguous character who operates on the margins of morality. Furthermore, when it is revealed in a flashback scene portraying the moment of the infidelity that Puck lied to Quinn about using protection (which, from a legal standpoint could even be considered sexual abuse) (“Journey to Regionals”, 2:30), the show downplays this stance as mere mischief and a funny anecdote with it being explained by Quinn in a merely resigned voice tone in a humorous context (“Funk”, 6:21)

Quinn's villainization, thus, is entirely placed upon her ambition and desire for success; her male counterparts, who are propelled by the same motivation, are not considered as such in the slightest. Forgiving Quinn for these "unfeminine" attributes, by the show's standard, demands a redemptive and shameful destruction of her life by a pregnancy imposed on her. And only when she has nothing to reap from what she has been sowing with hard work is she seen as a sympathetic character. In opposition to this, Rachel, the other female character with the same "mean girl" traits, is considered sympathetic only because she also lacks that social power and success; when she begins to achieve it, it is by following the lead of her male counterpart, Finn.

1.2 The second influence: the actress's input

The second element in the transmedial creation of Quinn we encounter, still within the "canon" (meaning textual) material, is the actress's input. As demonstrated in the previous section, Quinn was written following the trope of the "mean girl," possessing canonically villainized elements in female characters, such as selfishness, inability to care about others, and tendencies to manipulate and abuse those around her. After undergoing certain events, she slightly redeems herself and appears to present feelings such as empathy and kindness. However, she remains an antagonist among the other characters and is only redeemed through punishment. However, this satiric and punitive presentation was complicated by the actress's acting. Quinn was supposed to be a calculating, cold and selfish character, but the final delivery conveyed in the show was different. Dianna Agron's performance gave another dimension to Quinn's characterization; in some cases, the textual lines delivered could be transmitted, understood, and accepted in another tone or way, which would have completely altered the reception of the character.

The first obvious example is found in episode two, in a scene in which, after scheming a plan to destroy the newly established glee club, Quinn concludes by saying: “and I’m gonna get my boyfriend back” (“Showmance”, 37:40) (referring to Finn). In a cold reading of the script, considering the context, following the tone of the rest of the characters and the idea under which Quinn was written, this line could easily be understood as Quinn merely calculating ways to maintain her carefully kept social status. As she has made known several times, that is apparently the only reason for her being in a relationship with him. However, the way in which Argon finally delivers it, with a rather sweet voice tone and facial expression, gives a feeling of Quinn actually caring about her relationship and loving Finn.





Figures 3, 4, and 5. Rather than scheming the aforementioned plan with a malicious facial expression like her peers, who then celebrate with a high-five, Quinn reacts with a sweet smile, which broadens up when talking about Finn. (“Showmance”, 37:40).

There is no possible way of knowing for sure without the original scripts and directions of how this scene was supposed to work, but another possible example would be the scene in which Finn reveals to her parents her pregnancy. As stated in the previous section, Quinn is terrified of their finding out and reacts violently to the possibility of Finn letting them know; however, in the actual scene in which he does reveal that she is pregnant, her visible reaction is entirely different. In the purest *Glee*-like style, Finn lets out the secret in the form of a song for Quinn (“Having my baby” by Paul Anka) in front of her parents. Following her character’s tendencies and situation, it would be comprehensible and expected for her to get furious at him, but, instead, she looks at him sweetly and lovingly throughout the musical number.



Figure 6. Instead of being angry or even frustrated by what she knows will result in her parents throwing her out of her house, she exchanges sweet and loving smiles and looks throughout the scene with him. (“Ballad”, 31:01).

While we can only speculate about the original scripting and blocking of these scenes, there was a confirmation by show creator Ryan Murphy of Agron’s alteration of the character. In an interview with *Rolling Stone Magazine*, he stated:

“When we cast Dianna as Quinn, she ruined the part for me,” Murphy says. “She was supposed to be the Cybill Shepherd, *Last Picture Show* c-nt so to speak, but she humanized it. She can cry at the drop of a hat. So now her character has a conscience, a soul and great vulnerability.” (Murphy, 2011)

The actress’s influence, thus, was progressively mixed with the character’s nature, resulting in a multidimensional and unexpected version of Quinn Fabray, deviating from the merely villainous firstly conceived version.

2. The third influence: the audience’s version

Contemporary TV media generates a universe of its own. Despite world-making being a general process in all types of narratives, it takes on an additional ‘transmedial’ dimension in this particular case. As stated by Re in her chapter “The Monster at the End of This Book”,

In addition to being related to serial and long-term storytelling devices that enable the development of increasingly complex and detailed narrative worlds, this

amplification of TV series' world-building activity appears as one of the main features of the contemporary media landscape and can be explained on the basis of various interconnected factors. (Re 2017, 321)

These factors, which Re subsequently develops, are the possibility of developing transmedia storytelling, which leads to a broader narrative complexity and culminates in what she describes as a “narrative ecosystem” (Re 2017, 322). The term, coined by Pescatore, Innocenti, and Brembilla, describes that result as an open system, resilient both in space and time, which combines and integrates narratives in a particular media space. It is even compared to that of a natural environment, which adopts and adapts its surrounding elements to evolve into an even larger habitat. This newly-created environment is thus formed by the presence of every single media element related to that world. Therefore, the completeness of a narrative does not depend solely on the information presented in the text anymore. According to Hills, this leads to “the creation of a vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text, but which nevertheless appears to operate according to principles of internal logic and extension” (Hills 2002, 104).

The following step in this analysis is, thus, to investigate the fans' reception and understanding of Quinn to unveil the third step in the transmedial construction of the character. This central question in this part of the TFG is: how has the audience interpreted this villainized “mean girl,” interested only in success, trapping good men, and the frustration of happy endings? The answer, as I will show, is: quite differently than intended by the show's writers and creators. The largest part of the online fan base has decided that, other than a man-eater, Quinn Fabray is a lesbian, and that her keenness in keeping Finn and Rachel apart is not due to her wanting him but rather to Quinn wanting her.

This understanding of a villainous character as a closeted teenager merely trying to comprehend her emotions quickly spread throughout a large part of the fanbase. Taken as a premise and introduction to the fans' reception of the character, the tweet by user @laynemorgan effectively sums up the whole constructed fan theory: "*Glee's* Quinn Fabray was a lesbian whose aggressive behavior stemmed from self-hatred and repression not only because she loved girls but because she loved Rachel Berry" (Morgan, 2018). While this tweet might appear as a misreading of Quinn's character or as merely wishful thinking on the part of the audience, *Glee* is certainly not averse to queer plotlines. In fact, in season 2, Karofsky, an antagonistic and somewhat villainous character, underwent that same exact storyline: he relentlessly chastised Kurt because of his homosexuality only to reveal later on his own repressed attraction towards him.

This fan movement, called "faberry" (the product of mixing Quinn's and Rachel's surnames) after the name of the "*ship*" (meaning, relationship) it defends, and the theory it proclaims can be exemplified in a post by Tumblr user @favberrys, which exposes the declared reasons for Quinn's lesbianism. Firstly, the author denies any interest by Quinn in men, addressing with actual examples for the show how she merely used them for status. The post denies her attraction to Puck, noting that, as quoted above, Quinn states that she only did it because she was drunk and feeling insecure. Furthermore, user @skywarrior108 highlights how Quinn became president of the celibacy club, which gave her a usable excuse to avoid intercourse with men. Finally, supporting once again the theory, @favberrys states that she only dated boys because she was supposed to:

She dated boys also because that's what her family expects her to do. It's canon that Quinn was raised in a bigoted and religious family (...) they kicked her out when she got pregnant, imagine how they would react if she was gay. (favberrys, 2020)

Regarding her attraction to women and, especially, towards Rachel, the author states:

It's canon that in season one she drew pornographic pictures of Rachel in the bathroom's walls and she also drew a grotesque caricature of Rachel surrounded with hearts. In this kind of art she probably expresses her contrasting feelings of attraction towards Rachel: she likes her but she CAN'T like her because she isn't allowed to like girls. (favberrys, 2020)

This idea behind her treatment of Rachel is supported by LiveJournal user @skywarrior108 in a deep and thorough analysis of Quinn and her presence on the show. The author claims that part of Quinn's insults to Rachel is an attempt to defeminize her to be able to like her. Quoting from the show "getting ready for the tranny prom, Rachel?" (Skywarrior108, 2011), the user discusses that: "If she makes Rachel seem less feminine and more masculine, on an unconscious level, it's easier for her to reconcile her attraction to Rachel" (Skywarrior108, 2011). Furthermore, the fan theory claims that the jealousy Quinn feels towards the relationship between Finn and Rachel would be due to her interest in her rather than the one she has in him:

“Quinn: I know some guys cheat on their wives or pregnant girlfriends. Just don't do it with [Rachel].” the way she says that line quoted above, it sounds like she really doesn't care if Finn cheats on her, so long as it isn't with Rachel. This leads me to believe that Quinn is harboring some feelings for Rachel, and whatever it is, it is stronger than what she feels for Finn. (Skywarrior108, 2011).

Along with some scenes in which Quinn's eyes appear to drift towards Rachel or other girls in compromised positions, this represents a turning point for them; about a scene in which Santana is dancing around in a miniskirt, @skywarrior writes.

The celibacy club meeting is one of my favorite scenes in this episode, and here's why:

Quinn: *God bless the perv who invented these.*

Amen, Quinn. She certainly seems to enjoy watching Santana twirl around in that skirt. It does make me wonder just why she's having Santana do this though. I mean, the Cheerios wear this every day, so they're well aware of the fact that their skirts are crunchy toast. But I guess Quinn will use any excuse she can to admire how the girls look in them (Skywarrior108, 2011).

Finally, referring to a song sung by Quinn in a dream sequence surrounded by female background dancers, in a now-deleted post, Tumblr-user @unlikely-course comments: "THIS IS THE INSIDE OF QUINN FABRAY'S HEAD. I appreciate that the

number was about her feeling trapped by social expectations and I felt it extremely well done, but even the inside of my head isn't this gay!" (unlikely-course, deleted post, referred to by Skywarrior108).

These comments by viewers of *Glee* represent the extent to which fans play an active role creating new understandings of characters, particularly in terms of gender and sexuality, fan activity, creation and understandings have often been an object of study for many academics, commonly intertwining fandom with gender and sexuality studies. Both elements are frequently misrepresented, either intentionally or not, and fans decide to take matters into their own hands after recognizing some elements in the narrative that they might identify with these problematics. The fans claim those elements of the "canon" object of consumption and build their own theories and stories outside the official source. (Re, 2017).

Far from remaining a fan-only-background event, these activities are motivated and encouraged. This last decade has witnessed a shift in industrial practice that has increased the fans' value and their social activity on social platforms, to the extent that they are now considered integral to industrial strategies (Ballinger; Busse; Russo). Now, networks and producers watch and expect the viewers' reactions to discovering their preferences and dislikes (Andrejevic). This encouragement might even be direct, as, for instance, with *Glee*'s very own case of "the Biggest Gleek challenge" on Facebook, rewarding whoever posted more about the show (Stork), or it might be merely an observation, but it happening is a well-known fact. Quoting Navar-Gil and Stanfl's article "'We Shouldn't Have to Trend to Make You Listen': Queer Fan Hashtag Campaigns as Production Interventions", in the current model of television, the best tool for the audience to express their opinions and for the industry to receive that feedback is Twitter: "For audiences, Twitter's initial affordance of brief messages that are easy to send from mobile devices and the

supplemental user-created features later adopted by the platform, such as hashtags and retweets, support the formation of ephemeral second-screen communities” (Navar-Gill and Stanfill, 86). But just as they are facilitating the network’s ability to know its audience’s opinions, they are aware of their power and visibility:

Media workers and institutions are frequently the targets of such campaigns as Twitter users operate with the knowledge that these culturally powerful sectors are aware of and attuned to social media activity. (Navar-Gill and Stanfill 2018, 86)

So where do fan reception and the show’s officiality meet? Quoting Le, in her “The Monster at the End of This Book Metalepsis, Fandom, and World Making in Contemporary TV Series” Werner Wolf defines metalepsis as “a usually intentional paradoxical transgression of, or confusion between, (onto-)logically distinct (sub)worlds and/or levels” (Wolf 2005, 91). Developing this, Turk states that “ Participatory culture is inherently, if metaphorically, metaleptic; the transgressive impulse that it represents is being effectively mainstreamed” (Turk 2011, 96 -100). Fandom and fan culture are thus both participatory and metaleptic: by a sort of unspecified consensus, fans agree on some aspect of the object of their entertainment (such as, in our particular case, Quinn’s lesbianism), establishing a sort of *canon* of their own. These elements evolve from what might seem an inside joke to a general understanding and knowledge spread throughout the fandom, unified by the same theory to be championed and defended. Considering this idea of fan-generated content resulting metaleptic and keeping in mind Navar-Gil and Stanfil’s investigation on how fans proceed on causing it to be so, Quinn’s case is bound to result, somehow, manifested on the show. In a further analysis of the implemented feedback to the one received of the firstly presented product (that is, Quinn Fabray), the following step in the transmedial creation of the character will be examined.

3. The transmedial result

What situation arises when a character designed to be hated results in one of the audience's favorites? Furthermore, their perception and understanding of the character result in a completely different one than intended. Participatory culture in fandom has been known to, as stated before, sometimes reach the object of their entertainment and make its presence to be manifested in it. Quinn's case is no different than the rest, although it does remain peculiar, as it will be demonstrated.

In the case of other kinds of media, where the audience's reception is not parallel to the product's creation and release, this can be dismissed as a purely anecdotal case of popular culture. However, a television show, which advances alongside and because of its audience, cannot afford to ignore its viewers' opinions and demands. Opposite to that, there are numerous cases of shows that have been kept on air solely because of their audience much longer than intended or have even gone to develop a spin-off around some of their popular characters.

Far from being an exception to this transmedial phenomenon, *Glee*'s case is one of the most notorious examples, since it has been known to have many of its plotlines, characters' depictions, and storylines determined by both its actors and its audience. From the creation of a new character, Kurt, specifically because of the actor's audition for another character, to the relationship between Brittany and Santana, *Glee* was, according to one of its former actors, a huge and expensive show but they managed to make it flexible (McHale & Ushkowitz, 2019, 19:49). It would therefore be reasonable to expect that a show this "flexible" would accept and accommodate Quinn's changing character, born out of the merger between its original conception and its reception, but instead, the show seems to move on largely without her.

Despite being, even if not one of the protagonists, one of the key characters in season one – and a character with a somewhat redemptive arc and development of her own – Quinn’s presence in *Glee*’s season 2 is relegated to that of a mere plot device. Even though she appears, at first, to be somewhat reluctant to re-enter the romantic terrain once again due to her recent traumatizing experience, that determination and fear are soon forgotten to set herself in a brand-new relationship with one of *Glee*’s newest members, Sam. Not only that, but her humility lesson learned thoroughly and painfully throughout season 1 is forgotten in the very first episode, when she betrays one of her best friends to become a cheerleader once again.

Far from that being a sort of restitution of her character, even if in a villainous way once again, Quinn remains a plot device hidden in the background of some scenes until the need for conflict in the main heterosexual couple arises. Her only agency of the whole of season two, in the purest Quinn Fabray style, solely consists in being popular, using men selfishly, and being superficial, despite having overcome every single one of those issues in the previous season. Despite this lack of development, since she no longer poses a threat to the main heterosexual couple (even though she briefly dates Finn again, it is only for allowing him to rediscover his true feelings for Rachel), she is no longer presented as the show’s villain.

Subsequently, in season 3, despite regaining some screen-time, her character growth, development and logic are once again left unseen. In what is popularly considered the show’s most hectic and illogical writing, for some unspecified reason, Quinn becomes a rebel, abandons everything that she once cared about, and is obsessed with the baby she gave up for adoption two seasons ago. She even goes as far as attempting to steal it away, and when she’s unsuccessful, she attempts to get pregnant once again by Puck, despite her pregnancy having been presented as the most traumatizing experience of her life. At

some point, she almost even dies in a car accident but has no visible injuries except limited mobility in the immediately following episodes. After the end of the third season, the character leaves the show and only returns for a few cameos in the later seasons.

Nevertheless, the rest of the characters' plots remain progressive and logical, which may hint that the issue at hand was predominantly with the character of Quinn. Whether it was due to some bizarre creative decisions, problems with the actress, or a mere coincidence will remain unknown. For much of the online fan community, though, the source of this dilemma is clear: show creator Ryan Murphy hated actress Dianna Agron and her portrayal of Quinn because it had the potential of ruining his favorite show's relationship, Rachel and Finn, amongst the audience's interest.

Amongst *Glee*'s most popular "urban legends", Murphy's feud with Agron remains one of the most notorious ones even a decade later, and, with it, the ship "Faberry". Murphy is commonly accused by its fans of being homophobic (despite him being overtly homosexual) and, most of all, misogynistic, for, among many others, his treatment of Quinn and "Faberry". However, what is the legitimacy behind this claim and the alleged cause of Quinn's apparent neglect? Aside from that segment of the audience's interpretation, there is no apparent trace of either queerness or a romantic relationship between Rachel and Quinn in the released materials of the first three seasons. Yet still, that appears to be the key element to unveil the issue at hand: the show has been accused of queerbaiting its audience with scenes and images featured in promotional content but not in the actual show.

Queerbaiting is commonly defined as "a marketing technique for fiction and entertainment in which creators hint at, but then do not actually depict, same-sex romance or other LGBT representation. They do so to attract ("bait") a queer or straight ally audience with the suggestion of relationships or characters that appeal to them" (Harrad,

2018, Fathallah, 2014). The accusations regarding *Glee*'s queerbaiting with "Faberry" thus refer to the material used in promotions, commercials, and "sneak peeks" between Rachel and Quinn which are later omitted or deleted in the actual show.

Following the old-fashioned weekly promotion of subsequently released episodes (now mostly lost due to the current streaming form of consumption), *Glee* used new promotional material related to the show's plot each week that was not necessarily released afterward as part of the episode. This situation affected most characters of the show, but none of them presented any imagery that could suggest a switch in their narratives. The content promoted depicting Quinn and Rachel, however, did hint at certain intimacy between them that was never later depicted on the show.

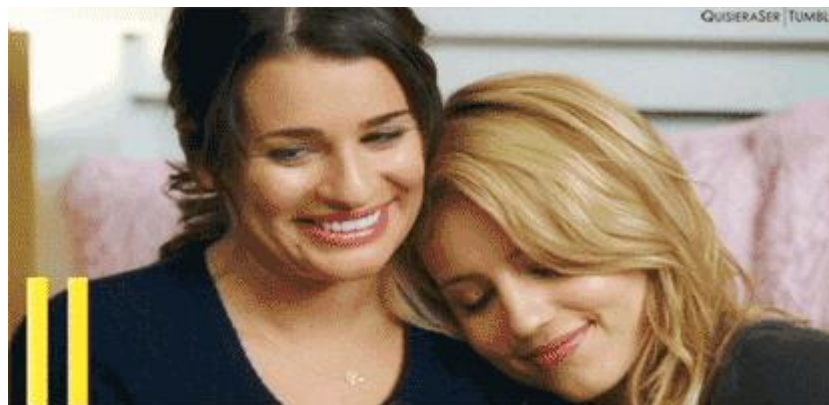


Figure 7. Brief scene used for the promotion of episode 2x16. The actual episode, however, only depicted them fighting over Finn. (Original song, promotional image).

The most obvious example is that of a promotional clip depicting Quinn confronting Rachel, who is in a wedding dress, saying "I'm not going to let you ruin your life marrying Finn Hudson" (which was expected to happen in the episode) followed by the lines "plans change" and "people change". Despite all of it leaving room for interpretation, it did however ignite a conversation around the show's deleted scenes, which was eventually taken to the show's cast and writers in *Glee*'s 2012 Comic Con

panel. In it, creator Brad Falchuk and Lea Michelle commented and joked about how the scenes that were surely going to be cut were those featuring Rachel and Quinn together.

“Michelle: Every time we do a Rachel and Quinn scene, we do this scene, and we’re like, “This is going to get cut.”

Falchuk: It’s cut. We cut it every time. It’s the same dialog. It’s great dialog!

Michelle: We’ve had like ten scenes together that have gotten cut.

Falchuk: Yeah, that’s always the one to get cut” (Falchuk, Michelle)

As years passed, some of those deleted scenes were either leaked or released and, as many fans suspected, some of them deepened into Quinn and Rachel’s relationship which, although remained canonically platonic, did allow for queer interpretation.

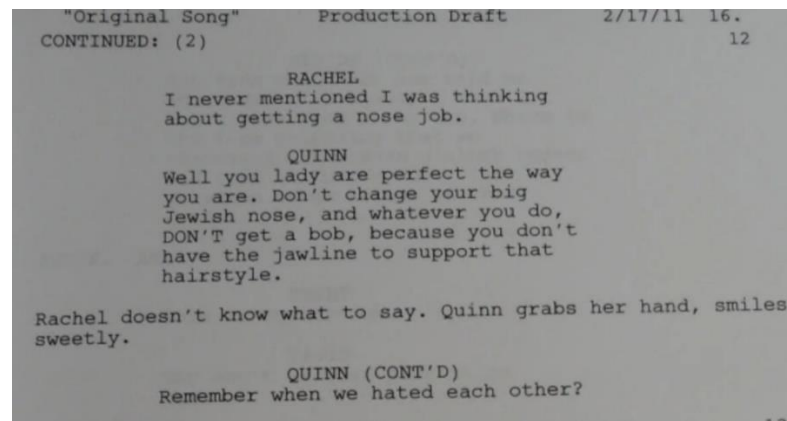


Figure 8. Leaked scene from episode 2x16. The actual episode, however, only depicted them fighting over Finn. (Original Song, leaked script).

Furthermore, most of these deleted scenes, some not even featuring Rachel, deepened Quinn’s development and actions, giving her the logic and profundity that she was deprived of. The official explanation for their omission was, once again, that it got in the way of Finn and Rachel’s relationship:

“The episode’s first cut was 20 minutes long so we had to cut it down to really make it work. That episode was really about these kids and seeing them really out of their league and putting them in a big city and really wanting to get that Rachel/Finn thing going. I think a lot of people were let down by like, What happened to Will and Emma? What happened to Brittany and Santana? What happened to Quinn?” (Falchuk, 2011).

Despite this specific interview referring to a particular episode, this type of explanation was given many times referring to many others.

However, despite the erasure of her relationship with Rachel and part of her development, Quinn's queerness did eventually become canon in the show. In episode 14 of season 4, Quinn has an encounter with a canonically lesbian character, Santana. Nevertheless, this is dismissed by having Quinn declare it as a "one-time thing" (although it ends up being a "two-time thing" by Santana's suggestion), which has been commonly read and understood as a "token representation" in an (unsuccessful) attempt to silence the demanding fans.

4. Conclusion: a transmedial destruction

The transmedial case of Quinn Fabray could be thus considered more of a transmedial destruction than a construction. Nonetheless, the case indeed exists.

Starting as a superficial, average depiction of a villainous mean girl, Quinn still somehow managed to be likable enough for a segment of the audience to claim her. Whether it was the first season's clever writing that, though merely in a satiric tone, both challenged and perpetuated the stereotype, or if it was the actress's vulnerable portrayal, Quinn was championed by the audience, rather than despised as intended.

However, the identification and further association with queer subtext and representation might have been the cause of her demise. Despite having always been the queen of her environment, she remains neglected and largely abandoned by the show's writing. Not only that but her growth and development are forgotten or omitted at almost every turn. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that, far from ignoring its audience's reaction and response, the show's creators use them as a marketing stunt to get viewers' attention, even though it just results in an empty promise afterward.

Despite the show's apparent dismissal of that response for anything other than mere publicity, though, the materials considered queer enough by its angry audience were

at some point written, shot, and edited. That could hint at an initial attempt of doing justice to both the character and the audience, but it was, nonetheless, lost in translation. As previously explained, many other scenes featuring the rest of the characters were cut too, but they did not add nor take from their narratives and depth, as was the case with Quinn. If this analysis and the fandom's voice are considered, the presence of a parallel understanding and conception of the characters through fan-generated materials resulted, instead of in an expected transmedial construction, in transmedial destruction.

It is, perhaps, somewhat rather odd that the presence of an element (being, in this case, the effect on Quinn's characterization by its reception) should be demonstrated by a total absence of in-text material. It is, of course, rather common in serialized fiction that viewers alter the fate of a character, such as the case of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*'s Spike, who became a series regular uniquely because of the audience's response, or even of entire shows, such as the case of *Supernatural*, which, far from keeping to its original 5-season run, remained on air for a total of 15. As a matter of fact, as stated before, *Glee* itself was no exception for this phenomenon: Santana was written as a lesbian from the second season onwards due to the audience's reaction to a joke involving her and the character that would eventually become her wife, Brittany. The only visible differences between them and Quinn that could advocate for one's alteration and the other's obliteration is, aside from race, Quinn's status as a main character. Compared to hers, Santana and Brittany's background appearances as her minions would not alter the show's main plot. In other words, they wouldn't present a nuisance to the fulfilling of heterosexual happiness, nor it would still the thunder from them, so they were allowed to exist.

The hatred towards female villainous or antagonistic characters for aspects immediately forgiven if presented in their male counterparts is too a rather common

phenomenon in serialized fiction (such as the case of *Game of Thrones*'s Cersei or *Breaking Bad*'s Skyler), but in most cases, this experience arises on the audience's side, not in the writing's. That's why the celebration of *Glee* for portraying a heartfelt environment of positivity, encouraging self-worth, self-expression, and most importantly, celebrating diversity might then strike us as ironic when, in the case of Quinn Fabray, it fails to do the very thing it proclaims. Perhaps this is intended to be in line with the show's initial and intended parodic tone, but it somehow transforms itself into the bullies it denounces through mockery. Rather than feeling like a reclamation or celebration of everyone who has been treated as an outcast, it rather feels like a vengeance against anyone who might present an obstacle for them.

Despite those villains becoming outcasts themselves, no element whatsoever that could add to Quinn's humanization is accepted. And despite some of those suppressed elements reaching the surface and having a slight integration at some point, such as her sexual encounter with Santana, it appears to be nothing but a dismissive attempt to silence the demanding fans. Even if it was to be considered without a queer context, it has been stated that content that would add to her humanization is immediately discarded.

As a conclusion, thus, despite it being (or appearing to be) a victory claim by everyone who has ever been marginalized, *Glee* is as discriminating as the social order it claims to fight. Regardless of if this discrimination against Quinn is truly rooted in homophobia or if it is merely another product of misogyny, her character is treated by the show's writing as what the show claims to denounce. The established order that it was to revolutionarily break (her hegemonic rule of the high-school and heterosexual relationship with Finn) is replaced by one that looks exactly the same but with Rachel in her former position. The actual marginalized voices of the audience are immediately silenced and discarded, leaving no trace of the alleged motto of "everyone is special and

deserves to be heard”, and Quinn’s and even Santana’s cases (including their dismissive encounter in the later seasons) clarifies the show’s message for those who do not fit their newly established narrative and social rule: they are only allowed to be as long as they don’t pose a nuisance to the ones on top, even if they were outcasts themselves once.

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Image Credits

Figure 1. “Pilot.” *Glee*, created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan, season 1, episode 1, 20th Century Fox Television, 2009.

Figure 2. “Pilot.” *Glee*, created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan, season 1, episode 1, 20th Century Fox Television, 2009.

Figures 3, 4, and 5. “Showmance.” *Glee*, created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan, season 1, episode 2, 20th Century Fox Television, 2009.

Figure 6. “Ballad”, *Glee*, created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Ian Brennan, season 1, episode 10, 20th Century Fox Television, 2009.

Figure 7. Brief scene used for the promotion of episode 2x16. (Original song, promotional image).

Figure 8. Leaked scene from episode 2x16. (Original Song, leaked script, retrieved from: <https://agronnews.tumblr.com/post/30187404063/quinn-fabrays-cut-scenes>)