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**Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona**

**DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA
I DE GERMANÍSTICA**

MA DISSERTATION

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO BISEXUAL ERASURE:
THE (MIS)REPRESENTATIONS OF BISEXUALITY
IN NETFLIX'S *ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK*
AND BBC'S *TORCHWOOD***

Melissa Caro Lancho
Supervised by Dr Sara Martín Alegre
Departament de Filologia Anglesa i Germanística
MA in Advanced English Studies: Literature and Culture
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INTRODUCTION: UNDOING BISEXUAL ERASURE

It has been apparent to me from the several conversations I have had over the years that bisexuality is, to say the least, confusing. Every individual has a say on it, every individual thinks s/he knows more than the next one, and every individual thinks s/he has a right to tell you “it is a phase”, or that “you have to pick a side” or that “you’re just gay”. As Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell comment, “[c]ontemporary culture paints bis as promiscuous, greedy, indecisive, duplicitous, confused, fickle, attention-seeking and, ultimately, closeted gays (or straights)” (2009: 298). Stemming from this personal input, then, I decided to look into two television series I was interested in, in order to analyse how they represent bisexuality.

I decided upon television series, and particularly *Orange is the New Black* and *Torchwood*, for one main reason: television series, particularly the two series chosen, have a large audience and, therefore, the messages they convey reach to a much larger public. This makes issues concerning bisexuality particularly visible. My first surprise came when, while watching both series I realized not only that the representation of bisexuality is stereotyped and flooded with clichés, but also that to a certain extent (and much more prominently in *Orange is the New Black* than in *Torchwood*) the two series refused to acknowledge the existence of bisexuality.

It was then when it first occurred to me that if I intend to criticise what has been wrongly represented, first I have to answer a crucial question: “what is ‘bisexuality’?” In order to discern *what* it is, one has to first take into account that the label itself has meant different things in different points in history, and has been looked at from different perspectives (psychoanalysis, sexology, social sciences and Gender Studies, to name but a few). This means that the meaning of the word has changed dramatically;

and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons that has contributed to the current misunderstanding and confusion surrounding the label.

One of the most useful and often cited explanations of the term, arguably, articulated by Malcolm Bowie in 1992, accounts for the three most common definitions:

As used by Darwin and his contemporaries it presented an exclusively biological notion, synonymous with hermaphroditism, and referred to the presence within an organism of male and female characteristics. This meaning persists (in Hemmings 2002: 23).

There seems to be consensus upon the fact that 19th century scientists “began using this term to refer to the hypothetical capacity of an organism to develop into either a male or a female of its species” (Rapoport 2009: 281); for Darwin, as Bowie points out, bisexuality could also refer to an hermaphrodite, an organism that has both sets of sexual organs. It was due to Ernst Haeckel, who noted that human embryos “were observed to have a period of ‘bisexuality’ in which they were yet undifferentiated into male or female” (Erickson-Scroth and Mitchell 2009: 303), that a term which initially did not refer to human beings was also applied to us (Rapoport 2009: 282). As one can see, initially bisexuality did not apply to the matter of object choice, but just to the identity of the individual based on his/her genitalia: what nowadays we refer to as an intersex individual.

Sigmund Freud also tackled the question of bisexuality but the way in which he understood it relates to Bowie’s second definition of the term, which he describes as “denot[ing] the co-presence in the human individual of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ psychological characteristics” (in Hemmings 2002: 23). Thus, it is clear that albeit Freud had moved the concept of hermaphroditism from biology to psychology, it still referred to having an identity that merged both masculine and feminine sexual features (Rapoport 2009: 282) and not to the object of sexual choice yet.

Bowie's last definition describes bisexuality as "the propensity of certain individuals to be sexually attracted to both men and women" (in Hemmings 2002: 23) and this is, perhaps, the most commonly spread notion. One of the first psychiatrists to hold this view was Wilhelm Stekel, a follower of Freud who took the Austrian neurologist's theories as a starting point from which to explain that bisexuality – understood as desire for both sexes– is the natural state of a human being, and that monosexuality –that is, exclusive homosexuality and exclusive heterosexuality–is a possible cause for neurosis since it is based on the repression of the opposite sexuality (Storr 1999: 29-30).

It was not until 1948 when biologist and sexologist Alfred Kinsey, along with other authors, published the study *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*¹, in which he remarks that the term bisexual "should (...) be used with the understanding that it is patterned on the words heterosexual and homosexual and, like them, refers to the sex of the partner, and proves nothing about the constitution of the person who is labelled bisexual" (in Storr 1999: 37). One can clearly see that Kinsey already distinguishes between gender identity and sexual orientation, and he defends that one's own identification as bisexual is not an indication of that individual having both male and female features, neither physiologically nor psychologically (in Storr 2002: 37).

Kinsey's studies are of major importance for various reasons: he was the first one to understand human sexuality "as a continuum running from heterosexuality to homosexuality" (Storr 1999: 32). As Kinsey himself explains:

The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into

¹ See the Kinsey Institute website, where the data from Kinsey's studies can be found: <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/ak-data.html> (Accessed July 2015)

separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex (in Storr 1999: 33).

The Kinsey Scale² is another reason why his studies are extremely significant. This scale was devised in order to, as the Kinsey Institute website claims, “account for research findings that showed people did not fit into neat and exclusive heterosexual or homosexual categories” (website). Kinsey used this scale to allow his interviewees to number their sexual experiences in seven different points, depending on whether they had had exclusively homosexual experiences, heterosexual experiences or anything in between. It is quite remarkable, then, that already in the 1940s as a sexologist Kinsey was defending not the division between two seemingly opposed sexualities, but the existence of a spectrum or, as he calls it, the ‘continuum’ that sexuality was in his understanding. This will be of exceptional importance in this dissertation, since although the notion of two opposed and mutually exclusive sexualities still prevails today, as will be discussed further on, yet I wish to place bisexuality within the continuum Kinsey first described.

There have been a number of other psychiatrists and sex researchers interested in bisexuality, such as Fritz Klein, who used a scale similar to Kinsey’s Scale named the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid³ (1978) but which differentiated between past experiences, present experiences (in the last 12 months) and ideal experiences. Klein’s study also was different from Kinsey’s study because while Kinsey’s Scale only took into account sexual experiences, Klein’s grid included different variables such as sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, lifestyle preference, sexual identity and political identity. To put it differently, Klein’s

² See Kinsey’s Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale: <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/ak-hhscale.html> (Accessed July 2015)

³ See the website of the American Institute of Bisexuality: <http://www.americaninstituteofbisexuality.org/thekleingrid/> (Accessed July 2015)

study took into account sexual identity as well as sexual practices, while Kinsey's study only focused on sexual practices.

Both Kinsey and Klein's studies share two aspects: the first one is the notion of sexuality as a continuum with bisexuality placed on it. The second one is that both authors claim bisexuality as another form of sexuality. In Klein's words, "bisexuality is not disguised homosexuality, nor is it disguised heterosexuality. It is another way of sexual expression" (in Storr 1999: 41). According to Hall, it should be taken into account that "nineteenth-century sexologists began to construct elaborate theories detailing 'normal' and 'abnormal' sexualities" (Hall 2003: 31). Michel Foucault, a major author in the field, commented on this division:

Through the various discourses, legal sanctions against minor perversions were multiplied; sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness; from childhood to old age, a norm of sexual development was defined and all the possible deviations were carefully described; pedagogical controls and medical treatments were organized; around the least fantasies, moralists, but especially doctors, brandished the whole emphatic vocabulary of abomination (Foucault 1979: 36).

In other words, the aim of these studies was to differentiate normal behaviour from abnormal behaviour, and both Klein and Kinsey claimed that bisexuality was not an abnormal behaviour, contrary to what was thought. This division between the normal and the abnormal is what Kinsey and Klein are accounting for and ultimately rejecting (Callis 2009: 222).

The appearance of publications such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, and Diana Fuss's *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* in the 1990s, among others, contributed to the development of the field we now know as Queer Studies. One cannot dismiss the great importance these texts had for a new

understanding of sexuality, yet the fact is that they do not actually deal with bisexuality. In Butler's *Gender Trouble* it is mentioned, but Callis complains that in Butler's volume "bisexuality is only present in laundry list style, somewhere between gay, lesbian and heterosexuality. It is never articulated apart from these other sexualities, and never developed in any way" (2009: 226). Thus, if we limit ourselves to bisexuality, we come to a paradox. It would seem that, since many of these texts, particularly Sedgwick's, attempted to fight against the system of dichotomies sexuality was hemmed in, these authors would, therefore, have been of major importance to the development of a body of theory concerning bisexuality. This would be further reinforced by what bisexuality seems to fight against: a binary system of polar opposites homosexual/heterosexual. Yet, these authors did not actually concern themselves with bisexuality in length, and the outcome is a striking silence around the issue. As Callis criticizes:

Queer theory has ignored, and continues to ignore, questions of bisexuality and bisexual identity. It seems a curious gap, keeping in mind the aim of most queer theorists: the destabilization of gender and sexual binaries. Bisexuality, which cannot help but be uniquely placed inside/outside of the binary of heterosexuality/homosexuality, seems to be an ideal starting place for deconstruction (2014: 219).

Paradoxically, then, even though the category of bisexuality would serve perfectly one of the main purposes of Queer Theory, that is, to break the binary system of polar opposites that divides individuals according to our sexuality, it ignores bisexual issues. It is obvious to the reader, then, that bisexuality is misunderstood from two main fronts: on the one hand, audiences who rely on media representations receive a distorted image of bisexuality, since many of these media representations actually are misrepresentations, as this dissertation will attempt to prove. On the other hand, theorists and scholars do not seem to agree on what bisexuality consists of and they defend views which are sometimes opposite, albeit they may share diverse concerns.

For instance, every scholar attempting to comment on bisexuality has to provide a definition of what s/he understands for bisexuality, which this dissertation will provide in the first chapter. Taking into account that bisexuality does not have a single, straight-forward definition, Du Plessis comments that when providing with an explanation one runs the risk of:

[m]aking bisexuality be only a single thing and therefore simply promoting one of the many well-worn versions of bisexuality as the only one that all bisexuals should embrace (...) Whatever we do, we should, I think, avoid the temptation to have the last word on bisexuality, but without throwing caution to the wind and uncritically embracing every stereotype of bisexuality that has ever existed (1999: 20).

Bearing Du Plessis's words in mind, therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to compare how both *Orange is the New Black* and *Torchwood* represent bisexuality and bisexual characters. I do not claim to have the definite answer as to how bisexuality *should* be represented, rather I am criticising its available representation for one reason in particular: although it is not their primary theme, neither series hides the issue of sexuality, presenting it in what attempts to be a normalized, open way. Taking this openness into account, it is striking, to say the least, that particularly *Orange is the New Black* refuses to tackle or even acknowledge bisexuality.

My argument, therefore, is that, despite its depiction of a central bisexual relationship, in *Orange is the New Black* the idea of a binary system of gay/straight is reinforced, not defied. Bisexuality is actually erased from the series to the point that the characters hardly ever mention it, as bisexual erasure prevents them from showing a truthful representation; thus, the series ends up offering, in fact, a misrepresentation of this sexuality. On the other hand, *Torchwood* indeed succeeds in presenting a set of characters that knock down the barriers *Orange is the New Black* only attempt to reinforce. However, the drawback in *Torchwood* stems directly from its writer Russell

T. Davies (commonly known as T. Davies) and what he considers important to emphasize: this collapse of barriers is reinforced in detriment of the representation of bisexuality, which is given too little screen-time and not quite fully explored.

This dissertation is divided into two main chapters, which are in turn structured differently. The first chapter analyzes Piper Chapman from Netflix's *Orange is the New Black* as a bisexual character. The first section of the chapter consists of a brief context of the television series, including different issues it tackles and questions it raises. Since none of the characters of the series consider her bisexual, the second section is devoted to a justification of why Piper can be read as such, applying Kenji Yoshino's views in his article "The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure" (2000). The last part of this chapter is devoted to examining the instances in which Piper's bisexuality is erased, by whom and what strategies they apply.

Similarly, the first section of the second chapter provides a context for the television series *Torchwood*. However, as explained further on, in this chapter there is no need to justify my reading of the characters as bisexual since it was the writer's primary intention to present these characters as such. Therefore, both sections 2.2 and 2.3 analyze different characters: the former is devoted to the minor characters who are members of the Torchwood team, whereas the latter analyzes the two most important characters in the series in terms of sexuality: Ianto Jones and Captain Jack Harkness.

The thesis I am to prove by considering these two series is that on the one hand, *Orange is the New Black* displays different strategies which cause the reinforcement of the stereotypes mentioned and of the paradigm of an 'either/or' system, instead of breaking away from stereotypes and depicting a bisexuality as a stable sexual identity in its own right. On the other hand, *Torchwood* succeeds in providing a set of characters

that do not behave as they are supposed to do according to their self-identity, and, most importantly, do not question those desires: they simply enact on them. However, their enactment is limited to what the writers decide to reinforce or focus on, thus providing a biased representation of the bisexuality the series conveys.

CHAPTER 1. " I (/ Ž ŮRANGE IS THE NEW BLACKANALYSING

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My aim in this first chapter is to highlight the ways by which the American TV series *Orange is the New Black* (2013) puts forward a seemingly progressive view on sexuality. First impressions about this series may be misleading, since although the first episodes seem to provide a progressive and open minded view regarding all matters of sexuality, it can be argued that, in fact, the series erases the possibility for Piper Chapman's bisexuality to exist.

To explain how this erasure works in reference to *Orange is the New Black* I will first provide the context for this television series. Then, taking into account the historical overview offered in the Introduction, I will provide a definition of bisexuality that will justify why Piper Chapman, who does not explicitly self-identify as bisexual, can be read as such. Finally I will apply Kenji Yoshino's views in the article "The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure" (2000), along with the article "Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations" published by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission in 2010, to prove my thesis that Piper's bisexuality is misrepresented.

1.1. From Piper Kerman to Piper Chapman: The Context of *Orange is the New Black*

Created in 2013 by Jenji Kohan, this TV series is based on an autobiographical novel written by Piper Kerman, titled *Orange is the New Black: My Prison* (2010). There are a few differences between the book and the television series which have to be taken into account, since the present dissertation will exclusively

focus on the TV series. An example, for instance, is that Piper Kerman and Catherine Cleary-Wolters (Kerman's ex-lover, re-named Alex Vause in the television series) do not serve their time at the same prison. In the book Cleary-Wolters is sent to Federal Correction Institution in Dublin, California, while Kerman is sent to FCI Danbury, in Connecticut⁴, and they see each other during a brief time in a Chicago detention centre. In the television series they are both sent to Litchfield Correctional Facility, which is a fictional prison but is, nevertheless, based both upon the prison Kerman was sent to and the real Litchfield County Jail in Connecticut, no longer operative. This is one of the most important differences between the book and the series, especially because while the author Piper Kerman considers herself bisexual and has stated so in an interview⁵, the book's Piper does not resume her love relationship with Cleary-Wolters once in prison, contrary to what happens in the series⁶. The fact that in the television series Piper and Alex recommence their love story despite Piper's engagement to a man, along with other facts that will be discussed further on, allows us to read Piper as a bisexual character; a reading that clashes with how the rest of the characters see her.

Orange is the New Black is produced by the Internet streaming media Netflix, which is based on subscription and works to satisfy clients' demand. This translates as a different broadcasting schedule for the series: the entire season is released in one go instead of in weekly episodes, as is usually done. According to bloggers such as Nora Grenfell, this type of release and the choice of network has had two consequences: on the one hand, the series confronts uncomfortable issues, such as mental-health, class,

⁴ For more information about the real penitentiary Kerman was sent to see: <http://www.bustle.com/articles/27129-orange-is-the-new-blacks-prison-location-isnt-real-but-its-not-entirely-fictional-either> (Accessed: 18th June 2015)

⁵ Interview on the Red Carpet of the Emmy Awards 2014, the Youtube video is available here: <https://youtu.be/rk2gUAWCQjg?t=2m40s> (Accessed: 15th March 2015)

⁶ For the top 5 differences between *Orange is the New Black* book and series see: <https://whatspoppininpopculture.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/top-5-biggest-differences-between-the-orange-is-the-new-black-book-and-movie-spoiler-alert/> (Accessed: 18th June 2015)

race and criminal justice system issues to name but a few, and Grenfell argues that perhaps its approach to these topics would have been toned down had it been released on a “traditional” television channel. On the other hand, Grenfell claims that it would have been very difficult to keep *Orange is the New Black* in production competing against already settled television series such as *NCIS* or *Modern Family* (Grenfell 2013: website). Consider, for instance, NBC’s *Hannibal* (2013), which although much acclaimed by the critics, has been cancelled on its third season due to its consistent yet low audience ratings.

It is difficult to say who the target audience is for *Orange is the New Black* and whether it has achieved the audience ratings Netflix wanted, since these ratings are not made public. However, one can take into account how the series increased in popularity: it was mainly by word of mouth and, especially, via social media. *Orange is the New Black* has Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook accounts, all of which help to promote the series. This, added to the several advertising gimmicks used –such as a green lorry which sold pies in New York city⁷– and the network itself where it is broadcast, suggests that it is targeted mainly to a technologically advanced audience yet old enough to understand the mature and irksome issues it tackles.

Orange is the New Black focuses on Piper Chapman, a woman engaged to be married to her fiancé Larry Bloom, who is sentenced to fifteen months at Litchfield Correctional Facility in the state of New York. Her crime, which had happened ten years prior to the start of the series, had been smuggling drug money into Europe persuaded by her girlfriend at that time, Alex Vause, an international drug dealer. Once

⁷ The lorry featured the slogan “Crazy Pies” along with an image of Suzanne “Crazy Eyes” Warren, who threw pie at one of the inmates to defend Piper and then told her “I threw pie for you”, which is a message also posted on the lorry. For an image see: <http://blog.fiestah.com/2014/06/13/orange-is-the-new-black-awesomeness-get-your-crazy-on/> [Accessed: 2th July 2015]

in prison Alex and Piper are reunited, and in the course of two seasons (season three premiered in June 2015 on Netflix and cannot be analysed in the present dissertation) the series shows how their relationship, which had gone through a ten year hiatus, is recommenced once again. Piper and Alex have to navigate through the differences developed in those ten years they have spent apart in order to reconsider their renewed relationship, particularly taking into account Piper's engagement to Larry.

The spectator is shown through 26 episodes how their relationship progresses from hatred towards one another (especially on Piper's side) to renewed love, completing it with flashbacks that explain what their relationship was like before their breakup and before both Piper and Alex were caught and sentenced to prison. A central aspect to my dissertation, which will be taken into account further on, is the series' ability to pinpoint how difficult and confusing sexuality can be, especially if one regards sexuality as fluid –as Piper seems to do– and what this understanding of sexuality causes when it clashes with the paradigm of sexuality understood as two mutually exclusive categories of heterosexual/homosexual.

Since this chapter will be criticizing the series' portrayal of sexuality, focusing particularly on bisexuality, I think it is important to first mention the progressive views *Orange is the New Black* has generated –some of which have been contested– and particularly the capacity it has to prompt critical thinking both for and against these opinions. It is important to place my criticism in its context and state that, although my argument confronts its portrayal of bisexuality, the series in general has been much acclaimed for several other aspects it depicts.

For instance, there is a wide range of depictions of women, and their representation fights against the stereotypical sexualisation of white women. Piper's

fellow inmates at Litchfield Correctional Facility give dynamism to the show and provide a panoramic view of women of all ages, sexualities and races. As an example of progressiveness it is worth mentioning one of the most praised performances in *Orange is the New Black* by Laverne Cox, a real transgender woman who with “her absolutely fantastic portrayal of Sophia, a trans woman in prison, (...) is breaking new ground of trans representation” (Kessock 2014: website). The wide-ranging representation of women does not stop there, as it also includes aging women such as the Russian cook Red, a group of strong Latinas including Dayanara Diaz (who enjoys a forbidden love with Correctional Officer John Bennet); and a wide variety of African-American women such as Taystee, who although “often on the receiving end of jokes about her weight on the show, (...) is proud about her body” (Kessock 2014: website).

Furthermore, it is important to mention the clashes that occur at Litchfield prison due to race and class. Piper is a white middle-class woman who pursued higher education and these three aspects of her life make her an outsider since many of her fellow inmates are mostly low-class, uneducated women. Also, issues such as race have much importance inside prison, since women at Litchfield are distributed in their bunks and sit at lunchtime according to their race, which also marks how they relate to each other. These representations have been equally acclaimed and criticized, particularly because Piper enjoys certain privilege when she enters prison, especially from the counsellor, Sam Healy. Charlton, for instance, comments that “the paternalistic, bigoted preferential treatment Piper gets from white male prison counselor Healy (...) point[s] to the ways in which mundane interpersonal bigotry supports and perpetuates structural inequity” (2013: website). This preferential treatment Piper receives once in prison⁸ is clearly seen in the second season, when Healy provides her with a furlough –an

⁸ Healy’s treatment will be discussed further on in this chapter.

otherwise arduous licence to achieve– to visit her sick grandmother, and the rest of the inmates, particularly the Latinas and the African American, are vocal about “white privilege” (2x08 “Appropriately Sized Pots”: 43:50).

Having said that, there are a number of reasons which have prompted me to focus on the topic of bisexuality in *Orange is the New Black*. Firstly, sexuality is a major topic in this show. Piper’s sexuality is discussed a number of times throughout the episodes and the characters’ views on Piper’s sexuality –including her own view– play a dominant role. An added aspect that interests me is that even though this is a TV series that shows how complicated one’s sexuality can be and it does not avoid the topic, it still is unable to depict bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation, as valid as homosexuality or heterosexuality. By erasing bisexuality not only is *Orange is the New Black* denying that bisexual people exist, it is also perpetuating this image of bisexuals as stereotyped characters and, most importantly, it is upholding the sexual binary that categorizes people as either straight or gay, without the possibility of falling in between these opposites unless it is a ‘phase’ or the individual is ‘confused’ or ‘pretending’.

This point of view, although shared by many viewers, some of them bloggers, is not incontestable. As Angel Cornelia McLay, for instance, points out:

The imperfections in how the characters deal with their sexualities don’t have anything to do with problematic writing and everything to do with the characters themselves. Writers aren’t usually interested in pushing agendas as they are in staying true to their characters. That also means, of course, that Piper might never explicitly identify herself as ‘bisexual’, and I think that’s a point that tends to fly right over the heads of many bi viewers/activists who are trying to analyze how this or that show deals with bisexuality (in Walkley 2014: website).

While it is true that one cannot “push an agenda” onto a television series or onto characters it is acceptable and even recommendable to analyse those portrayals. The media, particularly the audio-visual media, are a huge device by which minorities –

whether gender, class, sexual or religious minorities, among others— are shown to the world. If those representations are not faithful, if they solely rely on stereotypes, then we will never be able to overcome those stereotypes and learn the true reality of these minorities. In the case that concerns this dissertation, it is important to point at what is being wrongly represented so that, in the near future, bisexuality is more fairly and realistically represented and the stereotypes are, once and for all, forgotten.

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Reading sexuality in *Orange is the New Black*, and especially Piper’s sexuality, is an arduous task for several reasons, one of the most noticeable is that, as noted in the Introduction, the term ‘bisexuality’ does not have a single, straightforward definition. We have seen a historical overview of the label, and now a working definition of bisexuality is needed, a definition which I will then apply to read Piper’s sexuality.

The different meanings the term ‘bisexual’ has “overlap with one another and are sometimes used interchangeably” (Callis 2014: 217), and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons why it is so complex to describe. Callis points out, for instance, that the term can be used to refer to “any individual who falls on the continuum between the polar oppositionals of heterosexual and homosexual” (217), in other words, it can simply refer to the sexual behaviour. However, it can also refer to a political or sexual identity, or to both (217). These different usages of the term ‘bisexual’ are indeed problematic, since they give cause for an individual not to identify as bisexual even though his/her behaviour can be considered bisexual, or vice versa.

Another problem one faces when dealing with bisexuality, due to the different and sometimes opposite definitions and understandings of the label, is the amount of negative stereotypes associated with the bisexual individual. These stereotypes are “negative images of bisexuals as fence-sitters, traitors, cop-outs, closet cases, people whose primary goal in life is to retain ‘heterosexual privilege’ [or] power-hungry seducers who use and discard their same-sex lovers” (Orlando 1999, in Yoshino 2000: 399). From theorists who claim that “bisexuality just *is* a sexual orientation” (Storr 1999, in Erickson-Schroth and Jennifer Mitchell 2009: 300, original emphasis) to theorists who believe that “everyone is bisexual” (Garber 1995, in Yoshino 2000: 370), the mere nature of bisexuality, which clashes with the understanding of sexuality as static and stable, gives cause to people to distrust bisexuals. These stereotypes are one of the main causes for bisexual erasure and one has to fight against them to achieve a fair understanding and visibility of bisexuality (Yoshino 2000).

At this point, then, I face the same problem other theorists have faced: defining the term that will be applied to my reading of bisexuality. Yoshino refers to three axes that define sexual orientation: desire, conduct and self-identification (2000: 371). The choice of axes is crucial, since the ratio of population that would be considered bisexual changes depending on the axis one chooses. There are different types of bisexuality depending on the circumstances and the individual who enacts it, such as “defense bisexuality”, used as a defence system “against homosexuality in societies where it is stigmatized” (Yoshino 2000: 371), among several other types. A particularly interesting definition as it makes an appearance in *Orange is the New Black* is one that Yoshino refers to as “secondary homosexuality”, or more frequently called “situational bisexuality”, in which an individual has sex with “same-sex partners in prisons or other single-sex institutions” (371). In *Orange is the New Black* an interesting character

appears: Yvonne Parker, commonly known as Vee, who was a former drug dealer and a mother figure to Taystee when she was younger. When Vee is imprisoned at Litchfield in the second season she attempts to manipulate Taystee into not having a relationship with Poussey, who is obviously in love with her, and refers to this type of bisexuality as “gay for the stay” (2x04 “A Whole Other Hole”).

If one chooses the axis of conduct, individuals who enact these types of bisexuality would be considered bisexual. However, if the axis changes from conduct to one of self-identification, the number of bisexuals would be reduced drastically, since according to Yoshino it is unlikely that most of these individuals would consider themselves anything but straight (371-372). In order to be as accurate as possible, therefore, the chosen definition of bisexuality which will be applied to the text concerning this chapter is going to take into account all three axes of desire, conduct and self-identification, and will attempt to discern whether Piper Chapman fulfils the requirements to be considered bisexual following these three axes.

Regarding desire as the first axis, Piper Chapman is able to feel desire for both men and women. This desire can be seen in a large number of episodes, starting from the first scene of the first episode, when Piper is shown in flashbacks both with Alex Vause, her former girlfriend, and with Larry Bloom, her fiancé at the start of the series. (1x01 “I Wasn’t Ready: 0:05-0:30). In this first scene Piper’s own voiceover tells the audience how much she loves taking baths or showers, and the images show clearly Piper showering with Alex and bathing with Larry. The aim of this scene is to compare the pleasant showers Piper had, when she was in her “happy place” as she describes it, to how she has to shower at the start of the series while in prison, which is the complete opposite. How the scene is built is an interesting point, particularly regarding the issue that concerns this dissertation: both scenes with Alex and Larry are very similar, which

gives cause to think that Piper is able to feel and express equal desire both for a woman and for a man⁹.

As for conduct, several episodes of the series show how Piper has had sexual relationships both with Alex and with Larry. It has been already mentioned that the episodes are built upon scenes that happen in the present time mixed with flashbacks that give a better understanding of the present events; flashbacks showing both relationships Piper had with Alex and with Larry are recurrent in a number of the episodes. For instance, the first episode shows a flashback of Larry and Piper's last night before Piper goes to prison, when they have sex to "make some memories" (1x01 "I Wasn't Ready": 4:30-7:30). Still in the same episode, there is another flashback that shows Alex and Piper having sex as well (1x01 "I Wasn't Ready": 15:00-16:00). Therefore, it is seen throughout the series that Piper expresses a sexual desire for both Larry and Alex, and acts on this desire accordingly.

There is one possible counter-argument to my statement above, which is that while Piper admits having had a relationship with Alex at the time she committed the crime, this relationship happened ten years prior to the series. This could give cause to thinking that perhaps Piper's bisexuality was a phase, a belief that could be further reinforced by Piper's assertion in a flashback when she explains to Larry her crime and why she has to go to prison: "what was I supposed to say? It was... it was a phase. It was my lost soul, post-college adventure phase" (1x01 "I Wasn't Ready": 29:35-28:48, original ellipsis). This is also crucial because it seems to emphasise that it is accepted that an otherwise "heterosexual" woman may have "lesbian" relationships, if and only if she is experimenting and as long as it is a phase. This condition is explained by Hemmings:

⁹ For more visual information of this scene see the Appendix, images 1 and 2.

One is allowed to make mistakes as long as they are seen *as mistakes*, as mere interruption to the narrative of one's true sexual identity. The crucial factor here is that the moments (or years) one disowns from the past must be differentiated from those one claims: the latter are authentic, the former inauthentic (Hemmings 2002: 25-25, original emphasis).

Hemming's argument points directly at a justification of relationships that an individual may want to invalidate. If this argument is applied to Piper, one could claim that she might want to consider her relationship with Alex as a mistake, an inauthentic past that is different from her present with Larry, which would also link with her words "it was a phase". Therefore, she is allowed to have this past with Alex as long as she considers it a mistake. Piper's confession could be stretched even further into a flashback conversation with her friend Polly Harper during her relationship with Alex, when Piper admits she is not gay and that she's "just experimenting" (2x10 "Little Mustachioed Shit": 37:26-37:45).

However, this confession seems to be contested throughout the two seasons, since it is clearly shown that what Piper felt for Alex is still alive, and very much so. If one takes into account these two aspects, then the argument that Piper's bisexuality is a phase of her youth is not valid. Here is the conversation Piper has with Polly on Polly's wedding day:

PIPER: I can't even begin to imagine 'forever' with somebody.

POLLY: Well, surprise, surprise, considering the kind of girls you date...

PIPER: The kind of girls I date?

POLLY: Hot girls that make you crazy?

PIPER: I like hot girls. And I like hot boys. I like hot people. What can I say? I'm shallow...

POLLY: That's not what I mean. You keep looking for people you have that chemical thing with, but that's not the whole package. You have to find someone you can spend two weeks with in a cramped timeshare in Montauk in the rain, and not want to kill (1x10 "Bora Bora Bora": 13:35-14:05).

This dialogue offers two crucial aspects. The first one is that Piper clearly states she likes "hot girls" and "hot boys", and finishes up generalizing and stating "hot people". This could be taken as a sign that Piper indeed likes both genders equally. The second

important aspect is Polly's comment on Piper's relationships. When Polly says "the kind of girls [she] date[s]" and "hot girls that make [her] crazy", the word 'girls' is in the plural form. Since this is never explained nor shown, we do not know whether Polly is referring only to romantic relationships as her relationship with Alex was, or to sexual affairs (which seems more plausible given Piper's answer "I'm shallow", perhaps hinting that she has only had sexual affairs). Either way, this could be taken as a hint that her relationship with Alex was not incidental but quite the opposite, that after their breakup there had been other women in Piper's life or bed.

On the other hand, we need to consider that, despite being engaged to Larry and despite having claimed that her relationship with Alex was a phase, Piper returns to Alex and starts a relationship with her while in prison. This relationship suffers several ups and downs, particularly because Piper seems to desire both Larry and Alex but she cannot have both at the same time. During the course of the first season Piper is at a crossroads and seems unable to choose. This indecision is carried on during the second season, when after Larry has broken up with Piper she receives furlough to attend her grandmother's funeral, and they have sex. Piper finds herself emotionally drawn to both Larry and Alex, yet does not seem to make up her mind. Therefore, the hypotheses of Piper's bisexuality being a phase should be discarded.

Finally, self-identification is, perhaps, the most complicated aspect to tackle in relation to Piper. The most obvious reason is that Piper never clearly states she is bisexual, never self-identifies as such and never even utters the word. However, there are several points one has to take into account before discarding her self-identifying at all as bisexual. For instance, she denies several times that she is gay. One of the instances is at the beginning of the tenth episode "Bora Bora Bora", when after having sex with Alex for the first time while in prison the other inmates try to persuade her into

admitting their sexual encounter. So, Piper herself denies being gay to state that she has not had sexual relationships with Alex. (1x10 “Bora Bora Bora”: 1:10-1:30). She is not heterosexual either, both because she has admitted it herself –the conversation above with Polly– and because she is seen having sexual encounters with both Alex and Larry. Her refusal to be labelled as gay is crucial, for she is showing resistance to a system of labels that only thinks in terms of ‘either/or’, not as a continuum.

Regarding this idea of the continuum, there is a crucial scene between Larry, Piper and Polly. This dialogue shows Larry and Polly visiting Piper in prison. Piper does not want to tell Larry that Alex is in Litchfield as well, but she slips and Larry realizes she has been keeping this from him:

LARRY: Hold up... what, she's in here with you?

PIPER: Yes...

LARRY: Why didn't you tell me? You lied to me?

PIPER: Honey, I didn't lie to you. I just failed to mention. I didn't want you to worry...

LARRY: Worry? Worry about what?

POLLY: That she'd turn gay again.

PIPER: Whoa, that's not happening. And you don't just turn gay. You fall somewhere on a spectrum. Like, on a Kinsey scale. (1x05 “The Chickening”: 17:50-18:20, original ellipses).

We have seen that Kinsey believed sexuality was a continuum, not a binary system of two polar opposites, and in this scene, even though Piper does not use the word ‘bisexual’ she is defending her position against this binary ‘either/or’ system in which one is either gay or straight. Polly’s words “turn gay again” are self-explanatory, and in this conversation the two systems collide. Piper does not identify as bisexual herself, but since she does not identify as either straight or gay is cause enough to believe that she is against this system of binary opposition.

Therefore and after having seen all three axes Yoshino points out, Piper is, for the purposes of this dissertation, bisexual. Yoshino’s article “The Epistemic Contract of

Bisexual Erasure”, along with the article “Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations” published by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, will hopefully shed some light on how Piper’s bisexuality is not recognized in *Orange is the New Black*.

1.3. Not

At this point, in order to understand how bisexual erasure functions, two crucial concepts must be clarified: bisexual erasure on the one hand, and monosexuality on the other hand, the latter already mentioned but not fully explained. Yoshino defines bisexual erasure or invisibility as “that social invisibility that affects only bisexuals” (368). This denial of the existence of bisexuality, or the attempt to hide and silence it, is the result of an internalized biphobia both by homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. According to Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell, “we do not allow each other the freedom to take interest in both sexes because we mistakenly believe that a bisexual person cannot commit to just one partner, and therefore cannot fit into our traditional notions of monogamy and family” (2009: 304). Monogamy and family are strictly linked to stability, and since both concepts are still crucial to how we understand sexuality, this may be one of the reasons why heterosexuals suffer from an internalized biphobia.

What is most surprising, though, is that bisexuals receive the same treatment even within the LGBTIQ community, as those who have suffered under oppression seemingly become the oppressors towards other minorities in the community. To understand why homosexuals also erase bisexual identity Ochs argues that “[t]hey fear that these ‘marginal people’ will give all gays and lesbians an even worse image than that which they already hold in the eyes the dominant culture, further impeding gays’

and lesbians' struggle for acceptance" (2005: website). In other words, homosexuals might not accept bisexuals because their mere existence could endanger their own political struggles for recognition in the eyes of heteronormativity. Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell also comment that "bisexuality challenges gays' defense of their sexuality in essentialist terms because it allows for the possibility that at least some of them are not 'forced' to be gay, but instead choose it" (2009: 302). In short, bisexuals are made invisible both by straights and by the LGBTIQ community, who give a major importance to stability, and who rely on a sexual identity understood in essentialist terms instead of an enactment or performativity of one's sexuality which can vary over a lifetime. According to Ochs:

A primary manifestation of biphobia is the denial of the very existence of bisexual people, attributable to the fact that many cultures think in binary categories, with each category having its mutually exclusive opposite. This is powerfully evident in the areas of sex and gender. Male and female, and heterosexuality and homosexuality are seen as 'opposite categories'. Those whose sexual orientation defies simple labeling or those whose sex or gender is ambiguous may make us profoundly uncomfortable. (2005: website)

It is this belief in binary categories which makes it impossible for bisexuality to exist as a clearly distinct sexual orientation, different from homosexuality and heterosexuality. This belief is also one of the reasons that make bisexuality an uncomfortable sexual orientation, difficult to conceive within this binary. We see, then, that this belief in two binary, opposite and mutually exclusive categories is a paradigm, understood as "a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them" according to the Free Online Dictionary¹⁰. This paradigm is currently dominant, and a clash between those who believe in it and those who do not is obvious on *Orange is the New Black*, as exemplified not only by how Piper sees herself, but also by how others such as Polly read her.

¹⁰ Free Online Dictionary: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/paradigm>

Monosexuality is, within this paradigm, one of those assumptions. Shiri Eisner, author of the book *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* (2013), defines ‘monosexual’ as “any person attracted to people of no more than one gender and who identifies as such” (2011: website). Loraine Hutchins and Lani Ka’ahumanu go even further and define monosexual as “a term used for both heterosexuals and homosexuals –i.e., all people who love only one gender and take for granted the sexual dichotomy set up by patriarchy. Bisexuality calls this system of categories and divisions into question” (1991: 370). Following this argument, then, both homosexuals and heterosexuals assume that all individuals are monosexual, and bisexuality, by its mere nature, calls into question this assumption. According to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, this assumed monosexuality is one of the manifestations of biphobia (San Francisco Human Rights Commission 2010: 8). To give a clear example, Robyn Ochs argues that while it is possible to “suspend the general presumption that all individuals are straight”, for instance in a gay bar, “the presumption that replaces it is that all individuals within the context are gay” (in Yoshino 2000: 369). Although monosexuality can also be used as a subversive concept by implying that it is a restrictive view on sexuality and thus, non-monosexuals have advantage in that respect, the reality is that not many would presume any of those individuals in that gay bar are bisexual. It is precisely this assumption, the need of having to state or stress that bisexual individuals *exist* despite the misconceptions what makes bisexual invisibility obvious.

Bearing bisexual erasure and monosexuality as two key concepts in mind, let us proceed into how bisexual erasure is displayed according to Yoshino. He claims that both straights and gays deploy three different strategies to achieve bisexual erasure,

albeit for different reasons: class erasure (as a community, not to confuse with social class), individual erasure, and delegitimation.

According to Yoshino, “[c]lass erasure occurs when straights deny the existence of the entire bisexual category” (395). He also points out that although a few decades ago the explicit class erasure was more common even among theorists, who denied the existence of bisexuality altogether, currently the implicit erasure is more common, which “often occurs through the use of the straight/gay binary as a complete means of describing all individuals” (395). I have already pointed out that this use of the straight/gay binary is very common in *Orange is the New Black* as the paradigm under which most characters understand sexuality. Not only are there no discussions of bisexuals as a community, but a very important aspect that clearly shows class erasure in this series is that the word ‘bi’ is only mentioned once in the course of 26 episodes.

The way the word is referred to is even quite disrespectful towards bisexuals, since it is Larry who comments on it and not particularly in a positive way. Towards the end of the first season Piper has recommenced her relationship with Alex, and has already hinted that she is unable to choose between Larry and her. Larry, attempting to stop Piper from continuing her relationship with Alex and attempting to ensure his relationship with her, asks her to choose: either she marries him, or she stays with Alex and, therefore, loses him. Piper finally chooses him and Larry visits Alex to warn her to stay away from Piper. It is in this conversation with Alex when he finds out that it was Piper who started their renewed relationship at Litchfield (1x12 “Can’t Fix Crazy”: 31:50-34:45). Larry believed Alex started it and Piper had simply followed, but finding out that it was Piper causes Larry to definitely break up with her. At the beginning of the second season, Larry’s father, Howard Bloom, takes him to a bathhouse to chat and

relax, after he has broken up with Piper, and tries to convince him to have sex with other people. Larry at first admits he is not ready, but afterwards he reconsiders:

LARRY: You're right. No, you're right. She cheated, right? I mean... she lied, why am I holding on? Prison changed her, it changes people.

HOWARD: I heard that.

LARRY: I mean, she was not a lesbian anymore, not with me. You know? Then she's in prison, what? A few weeks... BAM! Lesbian again. Or, or, or... bi? I don't even know (2x02 "Looks Blue, Tastes Red": 26:30-27:05, original ellipses).

Larry's confusion is apparent in his not knowing what label to attach to Piper, and in his attempting to do so regardless. It seems that his inability to fit Piper into two of the categories existent for him, either heterosexual or homosexual, is confusing and even annoying for him. Like Polly, Larry cannot see sexuality as fluid as Piper seems to do, and Piper's continually moving to and fro between him and Alex is enraging to him. Related to this, another noteworthy aspect regarding Larry's impossibility to understand Piper is, as already mentioned, stability. Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell point out that "[i]t is interesting to note how much importance we place on stability, even though for many people sexual preference changes a great deal over a lifetime" (2009: 301), since this is precisely Larry's difficulty: bisexuality, by its mere nature, is fluid and changeable, and it can vary over time precisely because it is a nonmonosexual sexuality. This does not mean that the individual who is bisexual is unstable, but since Larry's understanding of sexuality is so different from Piper's, he is unable to see anything but an individual who changes sexuality as convenient. And it is the way Larry refers to Piper's sexuality, and the way he says "or... bi? I don't even know", almost dismissing the thought as soon as it comes to his mind, that evidences this class erasure Yoshino pointed out.

Although class erasure is clearly seen, if there is one deployment of erasure that is evident in *Orange is the New Black* that is, without a doubt, individual erasure. Yoshino explains this deployment used by straights:

Individual erasure recognizes that bisexuals exist as a class, but contests that a particular individual is bisexual. Such challenges by straights often arise when a self-identified bisexual is accused of being a duplicitous or nascent homosexual. In either case, the bisexual self-ascription is seen as a ‘phase’ from which an individual will ultimately emerge [...]. Self-described bisexuality is thus seen not as a stable individual identity but a place from which a stable monosexual identity is acknowledged or chosen (396).

I have already commented on how Piper’s sexuality cannot be seen as a phase, and this is precisely the deployment used by straights that surround her to deny her bisexuality as a stable sexuality, either friends or family. They all think that bisexuality is simply nonexistent, that it necessarily is a transitional phase, and that monosexuality is the ideal identity one should have and, even more importantly, one should strive for. A clear example that shows this erasure is in the first episode “I Wasn’t Ready”, which shows a flashback scene when Piper is telling her family (including her grandmother Celeste, her parents Carol and Bill Chapman, her brother Cal, and Larry) about her crime and about her relationship with Alex:

PIPER: So, I never carried drugs, just... money.

CAROL: You were a lesbian?

PIPER: At the time.

CAL: Are you still a lesbian?

PIPER: No, I’m not still a lesbian.

LARRY: You sure?

CELESTE: I once kissed Mary Straley when I was at Ms Porter’s school. But it wasn’t for me.

CAL: Wow...

BILL [to Larry]: Do you know about all this?

LARRY: No... No, I didn’t. I mean, she told me how she travelled after college, but she failed to mention the lesbian lover who ran an international drug smuggling ring. Imagine my surprise.

CELESTE: What on earth did you do with the money?

PIPER: Well, grandmother, I wasn’t really in it for the money.

CELESTE: Oh Piper, for heaven’s sake. (1x01 “I Wasn’t Ready” 10:50-11:40, original ellipses)

This moment is crucial for two reasons. On the one hand, it sets the course for the rest of the series, and as it progresses it is evident that other characters such as Polly will continue erasing Piper's bisexuality using the same strategy. On the other hand, this dialogue shows precisely what Piper's family seems to have a problem with: Piper is explaining to them that she smuggled drug money into Europe and that she is going to prison for more than a year as a consequence of that, which is a serious issue; yet, what seems to worry her family most is that she was having a relationship with a woman. Probably the most significant word is "still" a subtlety which makes it impossible for Piper to fall in between the binary straight or gay.

The way Piper, her mother and Cal talk about "still being a lesbian" connects with one of the stereotypes of bisexual people's going through a phase that Yoshino was referring to; also, it makes the audience wonder why the word "bisexual" is so frightful. The article "Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations" published by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, points out that "[w]hile bisexuality has often been considered merely a 'phase' en route to a stable gay or lesbian orientation, it is also a stable sexual orientation in itself" (San Francisco Human Rights Commission 2010: 3). It is striking that not even Piper contradicts her family's perspective in this scene.

To complicate things further, not only is this individual erasure deployed by straights, but also by gays. Yoshino also explains:

Like straights, gays can often engage in this kind of erasure by characterizing individuals who self-describe as bisexual as going through a 'phase' that will end in monosexuality. The belief that bisexuals are protohomosexuals is a particularly prevalent one among gays. The greater force with which this belief is expressed in the gay community may be partially explained by experimental skepticism. Like straights, gays have observed 'bisexuals' subsequently come out as gay (...). This experience may lead them to be suspicious of those who claim bisexuality as a stable identity (398-399).

In other words, both straights and gays may accept bisexuality exists but they may also contest that an individual is bisexual by assuming s/he is going through a phase, most specifically from heterosexuality to homosexuality. The coming out of gays or lesbians first as bisexuals is not an uncommon experience, particularly if those individuals have had heterosexual experiences or desires in the past and later in their life they realize that they are having these same experiences and/or desires with same-sex individuals. Ann Kaloski also refers to bisexuality in coming-out fiction as a phase, and states that “bisexuals are that which must be transcended or rejected in order for a lesbian to become herself” (in Hemmings 2002: 36). However, this life experience cannot be generalized, since this generalization causes an erasure of bisexuality as a stable identity, as Yoshino warns. Ochs points out that when it comes to its representation, bisexuality is often “portrayed as a transitional category, an interim stage in an original or subsequent coming-out process, usually from heterosexual to homosexual. This has the effect of associating bisexuality in many people’s minds with conflict and impermanence” (Ochs 2005: website).

This assumption of bisexuality as a transitional category is fairly obvious in *Orange is the New Black*. For instance, Nicky Nichols, a lesbian and former drug addict who befriends both Piper and Alex in prison, is very outspoken when it comes to Piper’s conflicted relationship with her fiancé and her ex-girlfriend, and does not shy away when calling Piper names referring to her sexuality, such as “not-lesbian” (1x11 “Tall Men with Feelings”: 46:03). It is fairly obvious that these names are not uttered as a means of humiliating Piper; they rather seem friendly ways of calling her, but they are present nonetheless, and they are one more symptom that Piper’s sexuality is not understood or even recognized.

Alex, for the obvious reason of having a history with Piper, is perhaps one of the characters that most deeply attacks Piper's sexuality. A scene worth mentioning between Alex and Piper occurs in this same episode, showing a flashback of the time when their relationship was no longer working for Piper. Alex had previously asked Piper to smuggle drug money into Europe and she had accepted to do it once, but had stated she would never do it again. In this flashback Alex asks if Piper would be willing to go to Istanbul, Piper agrees thinking she meant a holiday trip, but refuses when she realizes Alex means Piper to travel alone to smuggle money:

PIPER: I am done. I can't do this anymore. I can't be with you.

ALEX: Are you serious? Where are you gonna go?

PIPER: I don't know where I'm gonna go, I'm gonna go back to the States, where I'm not your errand girl.

ALEX: I can't believe I didn't see this coming. How did I not see this... you know what, I did see this coming, years ago. Rule number one; don't ever fall in love with a straight girl!

PIPER: Is that what you think this is about? That I like dick? You know, I guess that's easier than the fact that you are a drug dealer and it's ruining everything good in your life. Don't you dare push this on me (1x11 "Tall Men with Feelings" 17:30-18:20, original ellipsis).

The fact that Alex would use Piper's sexuality as a means to hurting her and protecting herself is particularly significant here. It seems that, for Alex, the inconsistency of Piper's sexuality compared to her own is a point of conflict; and she uses what she considers an unstable sexuality to defend her position in the relationship. Ault comments that there is an undeniable "lesbian insistence that bisexual women will unfailingly leave a lesbian for a man" (in Hemmings 2002: 36), and it is this insistence which causes Alex to snap and abuse Piper's open sexuality: she is terrified Piper will leave her for a man. It is important to note that at this stage Piper has not met Larry yet and, thus, Piper's anger is obvious and understandable, as she retorts that the problem is not that she is bisexual and she is going "back to boys" (1x03 "Lesbian Request

Denied”: 12:55), as Alex thinks, but that Alex is a drug dealer and that is precisely what is destroying their relationship.

Yoshino explains yet another case of bisexual erasure by delegitimation, and even though it is less evident and it happens less often, I have also found evidence of this strategy in *Orange is the New Black*. Yoshino claims that “simple denigration” can be used as means of delegitimation, such as using negative images such as “fence-sitters, traitors, cop-outs [or], closet cases” (399), to name but a few. The only two characters that, either directly or indirectly, attack Piper due to her sexuality are Tiffany ‘Pennsatucky’ Dogget, a homophobic devout Christian; and counsellor Sam Healy. In fact, in episode nine “Fucksgiving” Pennsatucky sees both Alex and Piper dancing. She takes advantage of Healy’s compound homophobia and lesbophobia to inform him of what Piper and Alex are doing, which causes Piper’s internment in SHU (Special Housing Confinement, i.e. a solitary confinement):

PENNSATUCKY: They sexing, Mr. Healy, I seen it. This morning, in the bathroom, one girl’s face was all up in the other one’s whoo-ha. It’s so nasty! It’s an abomination!

HEALY: Okay, enough!

PENNSATUCKY: They moaning and everything, speaking in tongues, like it’s some kind of revival.

HEALY: Who? Who are you talking about?

PENNSATUCKY: Vause and Chapman.

HEALY: Chapman...?

PENNSATUCKY: Mmm, Chapman. She a lesbian. They lesbianing together. They’re in there right now, in front of everyone, dancing all up on each other. (1x09 “Fucksgiving”: 12:25 – 13:05).

It is no accident that Pennsatucky is the character who informs Healy of Alex and Piper “lesbianing”, since she is the main antagonist in the first season (she is replaced by Vee in the second). There are other issues which increase Pennsatucky’s animosity towards Piper, but the crucial issue in this scene is that Pennsatucky maliciously uses her sexuality to manipulate Healy into confining Piper at SHU. A second important aspect is that Piper’s bisexuality is not even contemplated. We do not know to what extent

Pennsatucky is aware of Piper's life outside Litchfield; one could argue that she only knows her story with Alex, thus assuming –in yet another case of bisexual invisibility, since no one assumes Piper could be bisexual– that she is lesbian. I must also add, at this point, that the dancing scene between Alex and Piper is sensual but it is, by no means, as Healy comments, “attempted rape” (1x09 “Fucksgiving”: 13:35), which evidences his “weird lesbian obsession” (1x09 “Fucksgiving”: 28:35)¹¹.

Healy's reaction is more problematic, since a number of aspects converge in his relationship with Piper. From the first episode it is obvious he is a homophobe, as he warns Piper that in prison “there are lesbians. They're not gonna bother you; they'll try to be your friend, just stay away from them. I want you to understand: you do not have to have lesbian sex” (1x01 “I Wasn't Ready”: 27:35- 27:55). Initially, one could think that Healy is warning Piper that sexual harassment in prison is not uncommon, and that, if she is harassed, she can trust him and tell him. However, the development of the first season reveals that Healy was not opening up for Piper to trust him; his words translate as “if you have lesbian sex I will punish you”.

As I have noted, Charlton comments on the preferential treatment Piper receives from Healy when she enters prison. It is worth mentioning that there is one main reason for this treatment: her class and background. As noted, Piper is an educated white, middle-class woman; she explains several times that she went to college and in fact, she met Alex at a bar after her graduation, when she spends an unknown length of time travelling. Healy's animosity towards lesbianism is seen in a number of scenes, including one in episode “Bora Bora Bora” when, after the death of one of the inmates by overdose, the rest of the inmates are hugging each other while seeing her body being taken, and Healy whispers “there's a lot of touching going on down there” (1x10 “Bora

¹¹ For more visual information of this scene see the Appendix, images 3 and 4.

Bora Bora” 48:38). After Healy sends Piper to SHU he goes to visit her and comments that she “needed a little time-out to think about [her] behaviour” since she was dancing “gay sexually” and “provocatively”. The conversation is as follows:

PIPER: This is illegal; you can't keep me in here.

HEALY: See, there's where you're wrong. Chapman, I tried to be nice to you because I understand where you come from.

PIPER: You don't know me.

HEALY: I thought we could be friends. You're not yourself lately. You're acting out.

PIPER: So you're teaching me a lesson?

HEALY: You should be thanking me. Alex Vause is sick. I get you! You're not like her.

PIPER: The only sicko here is you. (...) Wake up, Healy! Girls like me? We don't fuck ignorant, pretentious old men with weird lesbian obsessions. We go for tall, hot girls and we fucking love it. So that leaves you on the outside, living your sad, sad little life (1x09 “Fucksgiving”: 27:15-29:10).

Healy's words “I understand where you come from” state clearly that he was behaving nicely towards Piper due to her social background, an aspect he often refers to when talking to Piper and which could also be applied to his words “I get you”. However, when he states that “[Piper is] not like her” he is comparing Alex to Piper, more specifically their sexualities, and while Healy knows Alex is a lesbian, as far as Healy is concerned Piper is not. One has to remember that Piper told him the day she arrived at Litchfield that she was engaged to Larry and therefore, it is obvious that Healy did not consider Piper a lesbian until this point. This is clear in his words “you're not yourself lately. You're acting out”. In this scene, Healy does not seem to know how to react before Piper's “acting out” and this, added to the fact that the dancing scene with Alex was, according to his view, provocative and sexual, leads Healy to punish Piper at SHU. He does not seem to know that Piper does not identify as lesbian, but after this conversation, Piper's self-identification loses importance to him. Healy's preferential treatment towards Piper is withheld, and he turns against her. So much so that, when Larry asks Piper to marry him and she accepts, she needs a marriage request form which has to be obtained through Healy. When Piper asks him, he answers:

HEALY: You need a form *and* my approval, which you don't have.

PIPER: Please, Mr. Healy.

HEALY: Marriage is a privilege. You are not entitled to it. And to use one of your own delightful phrases: "go fuck yourself". (1x13 "Can't Fix Crazy": 4:45-5:10, original emphasis and italics)

During the first season, Healy's treatment of Piper passes from deferential to consciously disrespectful. This same episode "Can't Fix Crazy" is set during Christmas, and the inmates have prepared a Christmas pageant. At this point Piper has been rejected by Larry after he has found out she started the renewed relationship with Alex and not vice versa, as Larry had believed. She has also been rejected by Alex, who felt betrayed and hurt by Piper's return to Larry and even more so when, after Larry definitely breaks up with her, she attempts to return to Alex. Piper, then, being and feeling alone at Litchfield for the first time, leaves the room in the middle of the show. Pennsatucky, who is herself acting on stage, follows her and attacks her with a handmade cross with a sharp end. Piper sees Healy behind them and warns Pennsatucky to be careful, since the counsellor is watching them. However, Pennsatucky screams "hi Mr. Healy!" without looking back, therefore Piper realizes he is allowing Pennsatucky's violent outburst. Both Piper and the audience see how Healy is watching the fight without interceding even when Piper desperately screams "she's trying to kill me!", and he leaves afterwards without having stopped the fight (1x13 "Can't Fix Crazy": 56:30-58:45)¹².

It is clear; therefore, that Pennsatucky and Healy's homophobia affect how they see Piper and their relationship with her. Not only is their view of Piper's sexuality erroneous, invalidating Piper's bisexuality, but they also use their homophobia to denigrate her or even physically attack her, as in Pennsatucky's case. It would be incorrect to label Pennsatucky's reaction as biphobic, since we assume she does not

¹² For more visual information of this scene see the Appendix, image 5.

know what Piper's true sexuality is. Healy's reaction erases Piper's individual bisexuality, since he does not acknowledge it even though he knows Piper has had sexual history with both Alex and Larry. As I understand it, however, Healy's change of treatment towards Piper does not stem from an internalized biphobia but from his already noted homophobia. Healy's deferential treatment towards Piper, which stemmed from her class and background, is turned against her due to Piper's sexuality. His reaction causes this denigration and ultimately, allows Pennsatucky's physical violence to be directed towards Piper.

After having seen these enactments of bisexual erasure performed by various and different characters, it would seem that *Orange is the New Black* is definitely approaching the topic in a misguided and inaccurate manner. And while it is true that the treatment given to bisexuality is far from ideal, particularly if the show wanted to portray bisexuality in a realistic manner free from stereotypes and misconceptions, at least one character gives us comfort and solace: Piper's brother, Cal.

Cal Chapman is Piper's younger brother. He has a reserved character and lives in a trailer in the middle of the forest; yet, he has a very good relationship with Piper and with Larry, to the point that Larry visits him often. In the twelfth episode "Fool Me Once", after Larry has found out Piper has had sex with Alex at Litchfield, their conversation turns into a discussion of the state of affairs with her. Carl's view is that Piper's having sex with a girl was not really "cheating":

LARRY: That's the bigger problem with this whole thing. She fucked a woman. So what, is she... is she gay now?

CAL: I don't know about 'now,' I just think that she is what she is, man.

LARRY: Which is what, exactly?

CAL: I'm gonna go ahead and guess that one of the issues here is your need to say that a person is exactly anything. (1x12 "Fool Me Once": 14:10-15:15).

This conversation is crucial for three main reasons. The first one is that Piper's relationship with Alex while being engaged to Larry seems to point directly towards one of the main manifestations of biphobia: "[a]ssuming bisexuals are incapable of monogamy" (San Francisco Human Rights Commission 2010: 9). Piper's inability to resist Alex, even when she states that she "hate[s] that she has this hold on [her]" (2x10 "Little Mustachioed Shit" 13:10-13:15) is attributed to her sexuality rather than her relationship with Alex at a personal level. The second one is the erroneous conception Cal has about sex between two women: it is clear that for him it is not real enough, as expressed by his words "I'm just saying that this someone was a girl, which isn't really cheating". This aspect of female sexuality will be discussed more in depth in the second chapter of this dissertation, but it could be argued that for Cal, sex between two women is not real enough to consider this sexual encounter as an infidelity. The final aspect, already mentioned, is Larry's confusion and need to attach a label to Piper. He appears to need a name to refer to Piper's changing sexuality, now that she has a renewed relationship with Alex at the same time she was having a relationship with him. It is worth recalling that Larry told his father "she was not a lesbian anymore, not with me. Then she's in prison, what? A few weeks... BAM! Lesbian again".

Jennifer Baumgardner, in her book *Look Both Ways: Bisexual Politics* (2007) comments on the stereotypical male fantasy of lesbian sex: "It's unthreatening because it is perceived as either 'for' the man's benefit or fundamentally dissatisfying, and thus could never replace intercourse. In another way, it plays into the virgin/whore dichotomy: she's so sexed up, she'll have sex with other women, but there is still that one man for her" (2007: 144). In other words, sex between two women is seen as not real enough, which agrees with Cal's view of lesbian sexuality. It can also be seen as "fundamentally dissatisfying", which translates as the need to add a penis for it to be

completely satisfactory i.e if there is no penetration it is not considered “real sex”. Larry’s reaction, however, is surprising precisely because it stays away from this male fantasy. Baumgardner herself points at one of the plausible reasons by pointing out that “her Sapphic past can challenge the male ego (Is he man enough to woo her from her lesbian life?)” (Baumgardner 2007: 143). Therefore, one can argue that Larry does not see Piper’s relationship with Alex as a possible realization of the male fantasy because his male ego has been challenged and threatened. In other words, what concerns Larry is that Alex can provide Piper with a sexual experience he cannot provide, and while he contented himself by thinking that Piper was no longer attracted to Alex, his theory has been proved wrong once Piper is at Litchfield.

Perhaps his need to label Piper’s sexual behaviour at this point stems from a combination of two reasons: firstly, as noted with Polly and other characters, his understanding of sexuality as two binary, mutually exclusive categories instead of a continuum of sexualities, which causes uneasiness in not knowing how to read Piper, since she has proven she is neither gay nor straight. Secondly, from this threat to his masculinity. His attempt to attach a label to Piper could be understood as a projection of his fear and as an attempt to distance himself from the threat. On the more positive side, Cal does express a remarkable understanding of human nature –despite living “110 miles away from civilization” because “[he’s] allergic to other people’s drama” (1x12 “Fool Me Once” 15:25)– and, particularly, of Larry’s psychology. Cal’s words in response to Larry’s need to categorize Piper brings us to question to what extent categories and labels are really necessary, as he says “one of the issues here is your need to say that a person is exactly anything”.

In this chapter I have been considering Piper as bisexual and I have been criticizing how Piper’s bisexuality is not considered real, as it is read as a phase or as an

inability to “choose a side”, although her failure to choose seems to stem from her feelings for both Larry and Alex as individuals, instead of their genders. Cal’s statement seems to question even my own discussion of the topic, as I have been reaffirming Piper’s bisexuality and claiming that it is not truthfully portrayed. And one cannot reduce the importance of Cal’s statement: in a society so conscious about labels, a character questioning to what extent these labels are as fundamental as we consider them to be is a huge step towards a more egalitarian society.

However, one has to take into account that, as life at Litchfield Correctional Facility clearly shows, issues on sexuality are not so simple. Our society, and more specifically the society portrayed at Litchfield, is very self-conscious about labels and it functions according to these labels: race, class, sexuality, etc. these categories serve to divide women and to identify those who you do not want to have business with. While Cal’s statement is an ideal of what an egalitarian society should be, where our sexuality is of no importance to how we relate to others, it seems to me that it refers to a utopia. Piper’s case is particularly irksome, since it brings us to a paradox: in order to denounce how Piper is discriminated against, first one has to be vocal about her sexuality, for which a label is needed.

Scholars such as Clare Hemmings have already pointed out that “negative stereotypes of bisexuality need to be replaced with more positive and therefore truer depictions of bisexual realities” (2002: 30). Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell also comment on the future of bisexuality as they claim that “[t]he existence of bisexuality and bisexuals virtually demands a reconfiguration of the ways in which we define our desired-object-choice, diffusing outward from a monosexual paradigm into significantly more open-ended categories” (2009: 313). Therefore, what Cal seems to be pointing at

is what scholars are already referring to, a change of paradigm in which monosexuality is not the norm and categories are much more open to change and variability.

I will end this chapter, then, by concluding that as we have seen, it is obvious that Piper's sexuality is clearly not well represented. Her bisexuality is flooded with negative stereotypes that bisexuals have always been accused of, and the characters surrounding her are either incapable or unwilling to understand that Piper's sexuality is a stable, completely valid identity which is far from being a phase. Her bisexuality is denied by both gays and straights, who deploy different strategies in order to make her bisexuality invisible. The only positive factor one can highlight regarding *Orange is the New Black's* portrayal of bisexuality is how Piper's brother Cal sees the world, as a utopia where labels are not needed to categorize people.

CHAPTER 2. KNOCKING DOWN THE BARRIERS OF SEXUALITY:

“ ” , TORCHWOOD

As seen in the previous chapter, bisexuality is dismissed as a valid sexual orientation in *Orange is the New Black*, as the characters consider sexuality on the basis of two polar opposites. Bisexuality is either not contemplated or, if at all, it is understood as a bridge between both opposites “rather than a sexuality in its own right” (Hemmings 2002: 3). As both Hemmings explains and the previous chapter argues, “a bridge reproduces rather than challenges existing perceptions of bisexuality as either abstract or as a passing phase” (3). We have also seen how the stereotypes attached to the category of ‘bisexual’ are reinforced by most of the characters in the series, making it impossible for Piper’s fluid sexuality to exist and be fully acknowledged as a possibility on equal terms to heterosexuality and homosexuality. The intention of this chapter is to shed some light upon the same aspects dealt with in *Orange is the New Black* but now focusing on the BBC series *Torchwood*.

However, a few aspects of my analysis must change in order to evaluate bisexuality in this series, particularly the approach to the characters, for I am going to focus on the entire Torchwood team. I have divided the chapter according to the importance these characters have, inasmuch as the depiction of Ianto Jones and Captain Jack Harkness needs a more in depth analysis, whereas Owen Harper, Gwen Cooper and Toshiko Sato’s depiction is limited as they occupy much less screen-time. The reason for this change of perspective is that in *Orange is the New Black* the only character that can be considered bisexual is Piper, but no other character seems to consider her as bisexual. Therefore, a justification of my reading was needed. Contrarily, in *Torchwood* such justification is not required considering that, as will be

pointed out later, presenting these characters as bisexual was the writer's primary intention.

A second aspect which this chapter will consider but that was not fundamental in the first one, is the abundance of labels. As previously noted, bisexuality can be limited to only describing sexual behavior, but it can also include sexual identity. Thus, the label can be broadened or narrowed depending on how the individual perceives the label and whether s/he finds it suitable for his/her identity. So far, this dissertation has only considered the label of bisexuality, but there are a number of others which must also be present in this chapter. Particularly, these labels will be presented when dealing with Captain Jack Harkness, as the label of bisexuality seems quite limited in his case. The line of argument in this chapter moves, therefore, away from the previous one. In this case, my aim is to argue that *Torchwood* succeeds in breaking down the barriers of labeling and the assumptions that are inevitably attached to these labels. Thus, the characters it presents are seemingly bisexual, and they are placed within a society where restraints on sexual behavior and sexual identification are not so strict.

However, I also argue that the series does not entirely succeed in truthfully representing bisexuality, as this representation is reduced by limited screen-time or by what writer Russell T. Davies considered more important to emphasize. I will also defend that while Captain Jack Harkness's on-screen sexuality is not fully explored, seeing that it is limited to only explicitly showing him with men, it is a remarkable step forward in terms of sexual representation. Jack's portrayal seems to be the closest one can get to a character with a fluid sexuality in its own right.

2.1. From the Universe to Cardiff: The Context of *Torchwood*

Russell T. Davies, head-writer of the long-running British sci-fi series *Doctor Who* from its revival in 2005 until the end of the fourth season in 2010, created the name of “Torchwood” initially as an anagram of “Doctor Who”¹³. This anagram, created to avoid rumours spreading from the sets of *Doctor Who*, would later become the name of the spin-off series derived from the sci-fi series. *Torchwood* was then created to provide a background story for Captain Jack Harkness, who was first introduced in the first season of the 2005 edition of *Doctor Who*.

The Torchwood Institute is an organization created in 1879 by Queen Victoria, as revealed in the *Doctor Who* episode “Tooth and Claw”. There are several Torchwood teams based on different locations, including London, Glasgow, etc. but Torchwood Three, which will be the focus of this chapter, is based on Cardiff (Wales). The team is lead by Captain Jack Harkness, followed by technological expert Toshiko Sato, Doctor Owen Harper, general assistant Ianto Jones and police officer Gwen Cooper.

“The Unquiet Dead”, an episode of the first season of *Doctor Who*, is set in Cardiff in 1869. In this episode it is discovered that there is a rift in time and space that runs through the middle of the city. The reason why this rift opened is unknown, but it is explained that it works as a portal between dimensions: one end of this portal is located in Cardiff Bay while the other is supposed to float freely through space and time. In this episode the Gelth –gaseous alien creatures– use the rift as a gateway to reach the Earth with the aim of using dead human bodies as hosts. However, a woman

¹³ Information available on the Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0485301/faq>

named Gwyneth¹⁴ sacrifices herself to cause a gas explosion which closes the rift. As Captain Jack explains, “closing a rift always leaves a scar” (1x11 “Boom Town”: 4:50), and this scar is one of the central concepts of *Torchwood*: Torchwood Three’s mission is to monitor the rift activity, fight against any alien threats that come through the rift, and prepare for a possible alien invasion.

According to the British Board of Film Classification, the rating system in the UK is as follows: U as universal or suitable for all, PG for parental guidance, 12 and 12A suitable for 12 years or over, 15 suitable only for 15 years or over, 18 suitable only for adults and, finally, R18 for specially licensed cinemas and to adults only¹⁵. Although the plot of *Torchwood* might not appear to be remotely related to sexuality, one must take into account that while *Doctor Who* is rated U and is, therefore, suitable to all audiences, *Torchwood* is rated 15; this is not surprising as it was already conceived for a more adult audience. This means that while *Doctor Who* pays more attention to the adventures of travelling through space and time rather than to sexuality –which is downplayed– sex and sexual relationships receive far more attention and screen time on *Torchwood*. Relationship development has a major role in this series and the alien-contact theme is intertwined with the sexual issue.

James Chapman devotes one chapter of his book *Inside the TARDIS: The Worlds of Doctor Who* (2013) to *Torchwood* and he points out that writer Russell T. Davies commented on *Gay Magazine* that he planned to “knock down the barriers” of sexual identity:

¹⁴ Later discovered to be an ancestor of Gwen Cooper, both played by actress Eve Myles in yet another link between *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood*.

¹⁵ Information taken from the BBFC Guidelines, available on: http://www.bbfc.co.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/BBFC%20Classification%20Guidelines%202014_0.pdf

Without making it political or dull, this is going to be a very bisexual programme, I want to knock down the barriers so we can't define which of the characters is gay. We need to start mixing things up, rather than thinking 'This is a gay character and he'll only ever go off with men' (in Chapman 2013: 247).

T. Davies's statement can be divided into two main arguments, which complement each other. On the one hand, *Torchwood's* reason to exist and its intention: to knock down the barriers so that it is impossible to classify the characters it is presenting into categories of sexual identity. On the other hand, the way by which this aim intends to be fulfilled: by presenting this series as a "very bisexual program" and, thus, blurring the divisions between categories themselves. I will keep referring to Davies' statement to argue that, indeed, *Torchwood's* aim is fulfilled, as it knocks down barriers and breaks away from a number of clichés and stereotypes attached to bisexuality. However, it is in the way this intention is carried out that *Torchwood* fails to completely succeed in presenting a truthful, complete representation of bisexuality.

Harper, Gwen Cooper and Toshiko Sato

Torchwood's first episode "Everything Changes" starts with police officer Gwen Cooper witnessing the Torchwood team using an alien glove to bring back to life a murdered character. When Gwen has found the location of the Hub, Torchwood's team base, Jack explains it is forbidden to withdraw any alien technology from the base, since they could cause harm were they to fall in the wrong hands (1x01 "Everything Changes" 30:15). The episode, however, shows that Toshiko and Owen have not followed Jack's orders and have stolen alien artefacts. The scene shifts to Owen Harper, who had stolen a perfume which seems to alter one's reaction to a person. We witness Owen going to a club and attempting to seduce a woman named Linda quite

unsuccessfully, until he sprays some of this perfume onto himself, causing the woman to be sexually aroused in a matter of seconds. When they are out of the club they come across the woman's boyfriend, Colin, who attempts to prevent Owen from taking his girlfriend. Owen then sprays some more perfume and Colin also reacts to it, kissing him and stating "I'm so having you!" Owen then, proceeds to call a taxi to take them, presumably, to his house (1x01 "Everything Changes" 34:30-36:50).

A disturbing aspect in this scene is that the perfume takes the characters' self-control from both Colin and Linda, and leaves only purely physical desire for Owen, which is not genuine but induced. However, there is one crucial aspect that one has to take into account when analysing this scene, which is, precisely, that Owen makes a choice. While it might be argued that taking Colin to his bed was not Owen's primary intention, and it is true that the perfume is used to seduce Colin only because he is preventing him from having sex with Linda, the crucial factor is that Owen sprays perfume onto himself. He is neither induced nor coerced, but *decides* to do so: when Colin attempts to prevent him from taking his girlfriend, his reaction is far from hesitant. This links with T. Davies's statement, since Owen is breaking away from restraints, labels and categories. Owen's action, then, follows the premise of *Torchwood* of knocking down barriers.

However, there is one negative aspect in the portrayal of Owen's sexuality. Clare Hemmings discusses the requirements and difficulties in the formation of a sexual identity, as she claims that for it to be considered an identity it has to be "consistent over time", as it requires "not only that one make a particular gendered and sexed object choice but that one *continues* to make that choice" (Hemmings 2002: 25, original emphasis). Of course, as Hemmings explains, the difficulty with bisexuality comes

when this diversity in object choice is precisely what allows them to self-identify as bisexuals:

Bisexual subjects cannot display the requisite consistency of object choice to become recognizable sexual objects in their own right. For bisexuals, the different sexual object choices they have made are precisely what allow them to occupy bisexual subject positions, and to imagine themselves continuing to do so (26).

If one applies Hemmings' argument to Owen's behaviour, it is clear that he neither considers himself bisexual nor is he considered as such by any of the characters. Bradford comments that even though "[t]he end result is sex, or so the audience is led to believe; that doesn't have a thing to do with Owen's sexual orientation" (2014: website). This statement would be further reinforced as the series goes on, since Owen is not shown to have any other relationship or even interest, either sexual or romantic, with another man. Therefore, Owen made a choice once, shown in this scene, but for him to be considered bisexual he should continue to make that choice, which he does not.

Despite this aforementioned exception, throughout the series his object choices continue to be women. As a matter of fact, he appears to be a womanizer and has several sexual affairs with several women who include Diane Holmes –a character inspired in real pilot Amelia Earhart– and even a long-term sexual affair with Gwen. Yet, he never shows any interest in other men. Moreover, the twelfth episode of the second season "Fragments" shows a back-story for Owen that provides an explanation for his job at Torchwood: the episode shows he was engaged to a woman before she passed away, and he turned into the cynical and womanizer doctor we know only after his fiancée's death.

Taking all these aspects into account, then, one can conclude that while Owen indeed breaks down barriers of labels and what these categories entail, Owen cannot be

identified as bisexual. Therefore, albeit his presentation and this scene may lead the audience to believe he is, it is the issue of repeatedly making the choice of women instead of men that prevents his portrayal from being a complete representation of bisexuality.

Let us move on now to Gwen Cooper, who joins the *Torchwood* team at the end of the first episode. Gwen worked as a police officer when the audience meets her, and she is the focalizer through whom the narrative is presented. She is on a long-term relationship with a man named Rhys Williams, whom she marries towards the end of the second season and has a daughter named Anwen before the beginning of the fourth *Torchwood: Miracle Day*.

Gwen's first and only same-sex encounter happens in the second episode of the first season "Day One", on her first day working for Torchwood. In this episode an alien presence takes the body of a human girl named Carys as a host. The alien living in Carys's body seeks out sex and when men achieve orgasm the alien takes out their energy, leaving them crushed into a pile of ash. The Torchwood team is able to reduce Carys and take her to one of the cells at the Hub, but Gwen ends up caged in the cell with her and, quite surprisingly, both end up kissing passionately. However, when the alien in Carys's body attempts to undress Gwen, it realises she is a woman and screams "no! It's no good. It's got to be a man" (1x02 "Day One" 22:33-22:45).

One of the problematic issues in this scene is that sex between two women is, once again, not considered satisfactory enough. I'm recalling Baumgardner, whom I already mentioned in the first chapter, when she points out the basis for this belief: it is thought that sex between two women is "fundamentally dissatisfying, and thus could

never replace intercourse” (2007: 144). Following this vein, Bradford comments on this scene and states:

According to script writer Chris Chibnall, sex between two women isn’t real enough for this alien. It’s just not real sex. Cary needs to have sex with men, and any man will do. At the end of the episode she goes on a sexual rampage through a sperm donation center. One of the men she encounters tells her that he’s gay, yet he still ends up as a pile of post-orgasm ash. Sex with an unwilling (and presumably limp) man is realer than what two women can get up according to the show (2014: website).

According to Bradford, then, it is clear that sex between two women is not considered satisfactory enough. If an alien which requires orgasmic energy to survive refuses to take said energy if it comes from a woman, presumably because it is not authentic enough, it seems to fail in adequately executing *Torchwood*’s main premise.

However, Gwen’s reaction to her kiss with Carys is a crucial aspect worth mentioning. Later on in the episode Toshiko is checking the chemical composition of the air in the cells of the Hub. Comparing the normal levels to the readings the computer shows while Carys is in the room, the team realizes that the alien is “secreting a powerful blend of airborne pheromones” (1x02 “Day One” 29:15-29:25). Gwen, then, justifies her reaction to Carys: “I did wonder why I... [whispering] actually, I sort of snogged her...” (1x02 “Day One” 29:27-29:33, original ellipses). Gwen, therefore, justifies her kiss with Carys through the pheromones. Going even further, it has been noted that for a time she has a sexual affair with Owen. Gwen justifies this relationship with Owen as follows:

I had a good job before this. I thought in a year or two perhaps a baby and Rhys would be a good dad, and I could try for desk sergeant, and... well, it was all sorting into place. And then I met you lot. All these things, all these things are changing me. Changing how I see the world, and I can’t share them with anyone (1x06 “Countrycide”: 44:29-45:10).

The crucial aspect in Gwen’s depiction is that she is not in a dichotomy between men and women where the important aspect is what choice she will eventually make. The

core idea in her characterization is that she is in a monogamous long-term relationship with Rhys. Therefore, the dichotomy is between the person she loves and has promised to be with for the rest of her life, and the people she has had sexual encounters with, being it a kiss or a sexual affair.

Furthermore, it is clear that Bradford's reading of the scene is erroneous for one main reason: one could argue that the writers are expressing their opinion on sex between two women through the alien's perspective, and that this point of view is outrageous because sex is not considered real or satisfactory enough. However, what this episode seems to be stressing is the fact that Gwen regards this kiss as a major offense to Rhys. In fact, she considers having sex with a man (Owen) and kissing a woman (Carys) an equal offense; therefore, both sexual encounters are at the same level. As a general rule, a kiss and a long-term sexual affair do not have the same importance. Yet, this balance in importance and Gwen's justification for both actions do not come from what they meant to her or if they were more or less intimate, but from Gwen's personal point of view: she is in a relationship with Rhys and, therefore, the importance is displaced from the gender spectrum towards her relationship status: she is in a long-term relationship, therefore, any encounter with another individual should be unacceptable.

Referring back to T. Davies's statement, then, it is clear that her characterization knocks down the barriers: Gwen is presented kissing passionately a woman, and her reaction and justification is the same when she has a sexual affair with a man; therefore breaking away from the restraints of categorizations. However, this is as far as Gwen's positive characterization goes.

On the one hand, one must bear in mind that while Owen ultimately decided to take a step forward and spray some perfume onto himself in order to have sex with both Colin and Linda, Gwen does not have a choice. Her passionate kiss is induced by the powerful pheromones the alien is pumping, and she is defenceless against their potency. On the other hand, there is the same problematic issue as with Owen: Gwen continues to make the choice of a heterosexual relationship. We never see Gwen in the series expressing any interest in women, and not long after her sexual affair with Owen finishes, she thinks of herself as definitely in a monogamous and committed relationship with Rhys. Therefore, she does not make a conscious choice of a non-heterosexual experience, and afterwards she “*continues* to make that choice” (Hemmings 2002: 25, original emphasis) of a heterosexual, long-term relationship with Rhys, so much so that she marries him and has a child with him. Therefore, while her same-sex encounter and her reaction to it allow the series to present a subversive character, since she consciously chooses to be with Rhys, Gwen’s bisexuality is bound to be made invisible.

Let us now analyse Toshiko Sato, the technological expert of the Torchwood team. In several episodes Toshiko shows a romantic interest for Owen but we are made to believe, particularly in episode seven of the first season “Greeks Bearing Gifts”, that she is bisexual. In this episode she is given an alien pendant by Mary, a woman who claims to know about the Torchwood team. Toshiko discovers that this pendant allows anyone who uses it to listen to other people’s thoughts and by using it she realizes Mary has sexual desires for her. She gives in, and their relationship goes on for most of the episode, only ending when it is discovered that Mary is, in fact, an alien dissident attempting to use one of Torchwood’s devices to escape the Earth, having used Toshiko to get access to the Torchwood’s base.

This relationship shows that Toshiko is apparently able to feel sexual desires for both men –Owen and Tommy, a cryogenically frozen soldier from 1918 with whom she has a brief but intense relationship (2003 “To The Last Man”)– and women: Mary. Taking Yoshino’s article as a basis once more to determine whether Toshiko could be considered bisexual or not, she fulfils the axis of desire. Albeit she discovers Mary’s desire for her through the alien pendant, it is made obvious that Toshiko’s desire for her is genuine and not induced by the pendant. Therefore, since she is able to express desire for both men and women one can conclude that at least this desire is present. Going even further, Toshiko has enacted on these desires both for men and women, therefore the axis of conduct would also be fulfilled (Yoshino 2000: 371).

One can clearly see, therefore, that T. Davies’s intention is, once again, undoubtedly fulfilled. Toshiko’s relationships and how she behaves clearly are causing the barriers of categorization to collapse. Her sexuality seems to be fluid as she does not question the reasons why she feels attraction to Mary: she simply does. A further positive aspect about this relationship is that it is treated no different than if it was with a man, particularly taking into account that this aspect of Toshiko’s personal life is given a full episode to be explored. The rest of the Torchwood team do not seem to treat her relationship differently because it is with a woman, and this is a symptom that the series is normalizing a homosexual relationship between two women, one of whom has shown interest in men as well.

It is important to point out at this stage that I am not considering as bisexuals only those who are able to feel the exact amount of desire for men and women equally. In 2005 a study was published by the Northwestern University in Illinois entitled “Straight, Gay or Lying? Bisexuality Revisited”, which analysed sexual responses in males who self-identified as heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual; the final

conclusion was that “with respect to sexual arousal and attraction, it remains to be shown that male bisexuality exists” (Carey 2005: website) since researchers argued that they “failed to find physical evidence of pure bisexuality among the male volunteers” (OutFront: website). This was a much publicized and criticized study, both for the methodology used and for the impression it gave that bisexuals are, as one of the already mentioned stereotypes, closeted homosexuals. In 2011 this study was contested by researchers of the same university, who “found evidence that at least some men who identify themselves as bisexual are, in fact, sexually aroused by both women and men” (Tuller 2011: website). While it is true that both studies only took into account bisexual men and not bisexual women, it is noteworthy that there are fairly recent studies which attempt to disclose whether bisexuality exists at all.

Shortly after the results of the last study were made public Ellyn Ruthstrom, president of the Bisexual Resource Center in Boston, lamented that such studies attempt to prove what the LGBTIQ community already knows, and she adds that “[r]esearchers want to fit bi attraction into a little box —you have to be exactly the same, attracted to men and women, and you’re bisexual. That’s nonsense. What I love is that people express their bisexuality in so many different ways” (in Tuller 2011: website). Erickson-Schroth and Mitchell point out that “the argument that ‘opposite’ attractions are not possible in one person rests on our fundamental need for stability” (2009: 304), which perhaps is one of the reasons why the scholars who carry these studies out attempt to typecast bisexuals as only those individuals able to feel attraction to both genders equally, otherwise it is not considered *real* bisexuality. Ruthstrom comments that it is a nonsensical response to a sexuality that, by its mere nature, is changeable. This argument can be directly linked to the representation of Toshiko’s sexuality, which

seems to lean more towards the men side and not so much to the women side but which, in any case, could be considered bisexuality.

Furthermore, one can also take into account the statements surrounding the series. Throughout this chapter I have been referring to T. Davies's statement, and quite interestingly actress Naoko Mori commented on *IF Magazine* on the aspect of Toshiko's sexuality and the aforementioned episode:

For Tosh, I wouldn't say that she has any kind of label. The minute "Greeks Bearing Gifts" happened everyone assumed she was a lesbian or bisexual. It has nothing to do with that. She just happens to come across as someone she connects to and she just happens to be a woman. (...) I've always tried to not put a label on her. She's not gay, not that I'm condoning it or condemning it either way. It's just not an issue (in Bradford 2014: website).

This statement refers directly to the *Torchwood* premise. There is no question as to why Toshiko feels attracted to Mary, nor is the series attempting to label her under any category. She, simply, feels attracted to a person "she connects to", regardless of the gender, and this is the major concern both for the creator and for the actress who plays Toshiko.

There is a possible counter-argument to this line of thinking, as stated by Bradford:

What I see going on here is a strange hesitation to put a label on Toshiko concurrent with a sensitivity that just adding "lesbian" sexual content could be construed as something cheap (...) and that being a lesbian isn't an "issue" meaning that it isn't a bad thing. But if it isn't a bad thing, why did Mori repeatedly and explicitly remove that label from her character? (2014: website).

What seems to be troubling Bradford and, therefore, the issue she places more importance on, is that neither the characters in *Torchwood* nor the actress who plays Toshiko seem to believe that Toshiko's categorization is important. Perhaps neither Mori nor the writers of the television series wanted the series to be too similar to other LGBTIQ series such as *The L Word* (2004-2009) or *Queer as Folk* (1999-2000), which

Russell T. Davies himself masterminded, and they attempted to distance themselves by not labelling this scene or the characters as ‘too gay’. Indeed, by refusing to label her, the barriers are knocked down and her sexuality is seen as fluid, changeable and not dependant on categories or restraints. What Bradford fails to see is that it is precisely Mori’s claim that Toshiko’s sexuality is “not an issue” –when the TV series places sexuality as a major topic in a large number of episodes– that allows *Torchwood* to display an image of progressiveness and subversion: in a society that places sexual identity as the core concept to define any individual, the key message the series conveys is precisely that how these characters define their sexuality is not important.

However, the consequences of this refusal made themselves evident if one takes into account the two seasons Toshiko is present in *Torchwood*: while her sexuality is given an entire episode to be explored, there is no other mention of it. Her case differs from Gwen and Owen’s and, in this sense, Toshiko’s portrayal has moved forward. Yet, the absence of any further exploration of Toshiko’s sexuality results in this message of subversion to be limited to only one episode. Therefore, the conclusion one can draw is that due to both the restricted time her bisexuality is given and this hesitation by the writers in showing more of Toshiko’s sexual encounters with women, Toshiko’s bisexuality is bound to be invisible during the rest of the series.

2.3. Bisexuality VS Pansexuality: Exploring the Sexualities of Captain Jack Harkness and Ianto Jones

So far I have been discussing Gwen, Owen and Tosh’s sexual identity and behaviours, and how their bisexuality seems to be only partially present. In terms of

sexuality, since Ianto Jones and Captain Jack Harkness's sexuality receives more screen time, they are arguably the most important characters in the series.

Ianto Jones is a general assistant from Cardiff who worked on Torchwood One – also known as Torchwood London– before it was destroyed at the battle of Canary Wharf (as seen on *Doctor Who*'s episodes 2x12 “Army of Ghosts” and 2x13 “Doomsday”). Not much is known about Ianto's life as he is not an extroverted character, and he starts by being a secondary character who only “cleans up after [them] and gets [them] everywhere on time” (1x01 “Everything Changes” 25:20-25:30); nonetheless, towards the end of the second season and particularly in the third one he has a much more prominent role.

An aspect of his life that the fourth episode of the first season “Cyberwoman” deals with is that while working on Torchwood London he had a long-term relationship with a woman named Lisa Hallet, who worked at the same place. During the battle of Canary Wharf she was almost transformed –upgraded– into an alien robot named Cyberman, but Ianto was able to rescue her before the transformation process was complete. The episode shows the large amount of difficulties Ianto endures to ensure the safety of his girlfriend taking her to the Torchwood base, keeping her a secret from the rest of the team and bringing experts who attempt to reverse the transformation and return her to her fully human form, without realizing that hiding a Cyberwoman at the base might jeopardize the team's mission and even their safety, as evidenced during the episode.

Unlike Toshiko and Gwen, whose heterosexual affairs receive much more on-screen time than their same-sex encounters, Ianto's on-screen appearances related to sexuality are almost entirely devoted to how his relationship with Jack Harkness

develops. At the end of this episode Lisa Hallet –or rather, an already upgraded Cyberwoman– is killed. Jack had always flirted with Ianto, as seen in the first episode when Jack introduces the team to Gwen and Jack mentions he “looks good in a suit” (1x01 “Everything Changes”: 25:19-25:35). After Lisa’s death, and even when Ianto makes evident his anger and loneliness in the subsequent episodes, he finally gives in to Jack’s advances.

One of the first signs of their rapport is shown in the episode “They Keep Killing Suzie”. During the entire episode the team has been working with an alien glove with the capacity to bring people back to life for one or two minutes, and they have been using a stopwatch to control exactly how much time they have left. At the end of the episode Jack and Ianto have the following conversation:

IANTO: If you’re interested, I’ve still got that stopwatch...

JACK: So...?

IANTO: Well... think about it. Lots of things you can do with a stopwatch.

JACK: Oh, yeah! I can think of a few.

IANTO: There’s quite a list.

JACK: I’ll send the others home early, see you in my office in... ten.

IANTO: That’s ten minutes, and counting (1x08 “They Keep Killing Suzie”: 50:05-50:40, original ellipses).

While this scene is not particularly explicit, it does show that Ianto is finally giving in to Jack’s advances. It is important to mention that the incident with Lisa Hallet, Ianto’s former girlfriend, had occurred only four episodes earlier; and it is surprising that it is Ianto who takes the initiative.

A much more explicit scene occurs in the first season finale. In the twelfth episode the rift is opened by Owen, causing a creature named Abbadon –who feeds off people’s lives– to come through. Jack faces the creature, which dies attempting to feed off Jack’s immortal life, causing Jack’s death as well. While throughout the first season Jack had been seen surviving gunshots and other type of injuries, the team does not

know the reasons why Jack is, apparently, immortal. After three days of waiting the team is convinced that Jack is not returning, and while Gwen is saying goodbye we see Ianto in Jack's office organizing paperwork and hugging Jack's coat, visibly affected (1x13 "End of Days" 40:30-41:00). On Jack's return, he is greeted by his team suffering from quite an emotional breakdown. When it is Ianto's turn he is unsure of how to react and offers his hand, but Jack hugs him and then proceeds to kiss him. This is the first kiss we see between Jack and Ianto, and it evidences that their relationship has grown from their first encounter in episode eight, probably enhanced by Jack's almost-death experience.

The second season shows a steady progress in their relationship. The first episode "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang" shows how Jack (who at the end of the first season had disappeared with the Doctor without telling his team) returns, and when the team confronts him about disappearing without disclosing his whereabouts he explains he "found [his] Doctor". When Ianto asks if he is leaving with him Jack states "I came back for you... all of you" (2x01 "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang": 4:40-5:13, original emphasis). It is important to note that Jack seems to be telling Ianto he came back for him, and when realizing the rest of the team are still present he adds "all of you", which makes us believe he was primarily thinking of Ianto. Jack seems to be more involved in his relationship with Ianto, as evidenced by their conversation in this same episode:

JACK: How are you, Ianto?

IANTO: All the better for having you back, sir.

JACK: Can we maybe drop the 'sir' now? I mean, while I was away I was thinking, maybe we could... you know, when this is all done... dinner, a movie...?

IANTO: Are you asking me out on a date?

JACK: Interested?

IANTO: Well... as long as it's not in an office.

(...)

JACK: By the way, was that a yes?

IANTO: Yes, yes. (2x01 "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang": 26:15-27:55)

The subsequent episodes show encounters between Jack and Ianto, including a passionate kiss on the fourth episode “To The Last Man”, already mentioned¹⁶. The second series also provides the audience with a particularly humorous scene when Gwen enters Jack’s office unannounced and interrupts Jack and Ianto while they were having sex (2x11 “Adrift”: 20:50). Having seen these positive aspects of Ianto’s depiction in his relationship both with his girlfriend and with Jack, one could argue that he is close to what one would categorize as bisexual: he had a girlfriend he deeply loved, and afterwards he gives in to Jack’s constant advances. Bradford notes: “On the positive side, Jack and Ianto’s love story isn’t portrayed differently than other complex office relationships would be. Plus, the fact that he was in love with a woman and then falls in love with a man isn’t presented as the most trying aspect of what’s going on between them” (2014: website). Therefore, following Yoshino’s axis of desire and conduct, Ianto fulfils them both. If one compares Ianto’s case to the previously analysed ones, Ianto becomes even more crucial for the *Torchwood* premise: not only does he knock down the barriers T. Davies’s stated and I have been referring to, but he also is able to do it for a season and a half. Therefore, his portrayal is not limited to one episode or one scene, but it expands to almost two complete seasons.

Despite this positive and progressive aspect in Ianto’s portrayal, however, there is one downside which challenges the second reading of T. Davies’s statement. Ianto’s bisexuality is seen only over the first two seasons, as the third one is marked by a turn of events in Jack and Ianto’s relationship. They are assumed by secondary characters and by members of their team such as Gwen to be an already formal couple, but Ianto seems to be attempting to define their relationship and take the step of making it public. This is seen in one of the first scenes of the third season:

¹⁶ For more visual information of this scene see the Appendix, image 6.

IANTO: He [a doctor at the hospital] thought we were together, like a couple. He said 'you two'. The way he said it, he said [laughs] 'you two'.

JACK: Well, we are, does it matter?

IANTO: I don't know, it's all a bit new to me, that's all (3x01 "Children of Earth: Day One: 6:00-6:15).

As seen in this scene and in the subsequent scenes, Jack disregards all of Ianto's attempts to label their relationship, as he seems to do with his own sexuality. This is seen in the same episode when Gwen complains "never work with a couple, you two talk like twins!" (3x01 "Children of Earth: Day One: 13:17-13:20) and, when commenting on how Gwen called them a couple, Jack states "I hate the word 'couple'" (3x01 "Children of Earth: Day One": 13:45-13:55).

However solid one could consider the portrayal of Ianto's bisexuality, this belief is contested also in this episode, where Ianto's sister reveals that Ianto has been seen having dinner with Jack and attempts to persuade him into explaining. Ianto refuses at first, until he eventually gives in: "[h]e is very handsome. (...) It's weird, it's just different. It's not men, it's just him. It's *only* him, and I don't even know what it is really so I'm not broadcasting it" (3x01 "Children of Earth: Day One" 37:10 - 37:55, original emphasis). One can see, therefore, that there is a clash between how we are allowed to read Ianto during the first two seasons of the TV series and how the writers impose a reading from the third season onwards, where Ianto's bisexuality is dismantled by his own words.

Going even further, this scene evidences that the *Torchwood* premise of both knocking down the barriers and showing a bisexual program, which had been possible in the past, is now conflicted and seemingly irreconcilable. On the one hand, during the first two seasons Ianto was the character that fully embodied T. Davies's statement: he had been in a romantic relationship with Lisa and, afterwards, is capable of having a relationship with Jack without posing questions about his attraction towards him. He

simply accepted he feels this attraction and gives in to it, acting on his desires and thereby knocking down the barriers. On the other hand, through Ianto *Torchwood* does become a bisexual series with a seemingly bisexual character capable of feeling attraction for both men and women. Both the intention and the method used seem to convey the main idea behind *Torchwood*, embodied in Ianto. However, in the third season the previously knocked down barriers are erected once again. Ianto dismisses his identity as a bisexual, which makes the audience think that if Jack was not present, he would not consider another man in his life. We see, therefore, that bisexuality is dismissed and rejected as a character's identity, even when it seemed that the label of bisexual would be the closest to Ianto's sexual identity. By denying Ianto the possibility of feeling attraction to both men and women the writers are preventing him from continuing to make the choice Hemmings was referring to (2002: 25), thus Ianto can only partially be considered a bisexual character.

An aspect that I have not dealt with yet is Ianto's on-screen time. On the one hand, Kregloe argues that "[s]exual tension between the male characters, particularly Captain Jack and Ianto, is standard fare, whereas the women have very few sexual interactions that aren't quickly explained away by alien circumstances" (2007: website), which would also refer to the less on-screen time sexual interactions between women have. Kregloe criticizes that "in a lot of ways, *Torchwood*, though not an explicitly gay series, is falling into the *Queer as Folk* mold" in showing only Jack and Ianto's relationship. Kregloe also argues that even though we see how sexually active they both are, *Torchwood* does not allow Jack and Ianto to have a fully depicted relationship.

Following this argument, Gabriel Novo has also paid attention to a few aspects worth mentioning. He also defends that albeit we are shown how much sexual intercourse Jack and Ianto have, from the early stages to a fully sexual scene interrupted

by Gwen, this is as far as it goes. He argues that “[s]pecifically, the only relationships shown were hetero. We’re not talking about back story or implied through dialogue, we’re talking about relationship interactions that were part of the plot. Gwen and Rhys went on dates, shagged and bickered, like a real relationship” (2010: website). While his argument is difficult to defend, particularly taking into account that this can happen to any relationship depicted on television, there is one aspect to take into account: given the fair amount of time on-screen devoted to show how their relationship develops, it is assumed that the most important relationship over the first three seasons is Jack and Ianto’s, at least until Ianto’s death in episode “Children of Earth: Day Four”. Therefore, it is surprising that the screenwriters fail to show the true reality of their relationship, merely displaying its sexual dimension. Novo argues:

The one thing you can remotely tie to Jack and Ianto being in a real relationship was Ianto’s sister knowing about the dinner they had together. (...) Three seasons and the best we have is a passing comment, not even a flashback of said dinner. (...) The entire Children of Earth Jack spent brushing off Ianto’s attempts to define them as something more or blatantly dismissing any references to being a couple. It wasn’t until Ianto’s dying in Jack’s arms that they’re allowed a moment of love (Novo 2010 website).

Having analysed all these aspects, therefore, the conclusion one can draw is that there seems to be an effort to depict Ianto as a bisexual character who expresses desires for men and women and acts on these desires, with contradictory feelings. However, this depiction collapses and, in a turn of events difficult to grasp by the audience, the writers seem to take a step back in their representation of a serious relationship to show just two men having sexual intercourse, thereby erasing any possibility of reading Ianto as a fully depicted bisexual character.

There is yet another character I have not analyzed; he is the main and arguably most important character in *Torchwood*. Captain Jack Harkness appeared for the first time in the episode “The Empty Child” of *Doctor Who*, and with his vanity, self-

consciousness and audacity, it was clear since his appearance what sort of character he was. Played by John Barrowman, Jack comes from the 51st century, and for an unknown length of time he has worked as a Time Agent with John Hart, a colleague of his who appears in three episodes of *Torchwood* and with whom we learn he had a sexual relationship. He does not possess a time machine as the Doctor does, but nevertheless has a vortex manipulator he can use to travel through time and space. As already mentioned, one of the many characteristic features of Jack is that in his appearance on *Doctor Who*'s episode "The Parting of the Ways" he was shot dead, but brought back to life by the Doctor's companion Rose Tyler, and since then every time he is killed he is brought back to life, and his wounds are healed. He is, as it were, immortal.

Possibly because he comes from the 51st century his view on sexuality is much more open and less reliant on categories than his human counterparts on *Torchwood*, exemplified by his words "you people and your quaint little categories" (1x02 "Day One" 22:00-22:25). At this point it is important to note the time and place *Torchwood* is set, since it helps in breaking the barriers the series intended to destroy. Instead of putting forward a fictitious planet with alien life-forms as *Doctor Who* does, *Torchwood* presents a quite ordinary setting, present-day Cardiff. However, by introducing a character from the future, the series is presenting a clash between how characters from present-day Cardiff understand sexuality, and Jack's own understanding. His sexuality is particularly difficult to describe precisely due to his background –his sexuality has to take into account alien forms of life– and due to his refusal to be labelled.

As already mentioned when introducing this chapter, a number of labels should be taken into account when dealing with Jack's sexual identity. One of the main reasons is that Jack, albeit he never labels himself, both behaves and comments on his sexuality. A clear example of the former happens in the second episode "Day One". In

this episode the team is having lunch together, and as soon as Jack disappears they all ask Gwen what she has been told:

GWEN: You don't know anything?

OWEN: Not who he is, not where he's from... nothing. Except... him being gay.

GWEN: No he's not. Really, do you think? No!

TOSHIKO: Owen does, I don't.

IANTO: And I don't care.

OWEN: Period military is not the dress code of a straight man.

GWEN: I think it suits him. Sort of classic.

TOSHIKO: Exactly! I've watched him in action; he'll shag anything if it's gorgeous enough. (1x02 "Day One" 25:15-26:00, original ellipses).

Toshiko's answer gives us a broad idea of what Jack likes. This "anything if it's gorgeous enough" could be referring to any man or woman. However, one has to take into account that Jack comes from the future, has travelled through space and in time, and has known different alien forms of life, including the Doctor from *Doctor Who* (an alien from the planet Gallifrey). It is clear that this "anything" is not only referring to human beings but also to other life-forms, as seen in episode six "Countrycide", when the team discusses who the last person they kissed for the last time was:

OWEN: Jack?

JACK: Are we including non-human life forms?

GWEN: No, you haven't!

OWEN: You're a sick man, Harkness; that is disgusting (1x06 "Countrycide" 6:15-6:25).

Taking into consideration Jack's answers one can see that he does not restrict himself to the labels we have available, and in fact, never categorizes himself. However, against Jack's wishes and in order to discern if the representation of his sexuality is truthful enough, one has to first attach a label to his sexual behaviour. And it is at this point where the labels such as 'pansexuality' or 'omnisexuality' play a major role. Such labels have already been introduced earlier on in this chapter; let us move on to where they emerge from.

The term ‘bisexuality’ can be understood from two different perspectives. Some theorists believe that the label does not reinforce the sexual binary but on the contrary, that it includes all those individuals which are rejected by the sexual binary such as transgenders, intersex, etc. (D’Augelli and Patterson 1995: 4). This, then, is an all-inclusive way of understanding this sexual identity. If one embraces a bisexual identity understood from this perspective, this self-identification does not imply that the object of his/her desire is either one gender or the other. By extension, this individual is not placed obligatorily within the heterosexual/homosexual binary either.

Other scholars, however, believe that the term ‘bisexual’ “denotes that the person who identifies with this term is attracted to two different things, reinforcing the gender binary and also excluding transgender and intersex people as objects of affection” (Erickson and Mitchell 2009: 304). It is from this latter understanding of the term –as not broad enough to cover the entire gender spectrum– that other labels such as pansexuality and omnisexuality have emerged, as a response to what is believed to be a binary which discriminates against other minorities. Obrador-Campos explains:

The very term *bisexuality* was created at a time when it was believed that human beings were divided in two categories (females and males). At that point, being attracted to females and males meant being attracted to all of humanity. When this gender dichotomy was challenged and more and more people understood that there are more sexes than female and male and that genders were not necessarily ascribed to a particular sex, the very word *bisexuality* started to become unpopular with discriminatory connotations against transgender, genderqueer and intersex persons (2011: 214).

In other words, these new labels emerged since it was believed to discriminate against individuals who could not accept or were not accepted and “ascribed” into the existing binary of categorization. To understand how these labels emerged, Callis comments:

While the sexual binary of heterosexual and homosexual is shifting and becoming less hegemonic, it is still a powerful system of sexual categorization. In light of the continued hold the sexual binary has on constructions of sexuality, non-binary identities are best understood as a sexual borderland. Rather than forming

separately from the binary system, these identities have sprung up from the cracks within it, creating an in-between space that has become wider and more pronounced in recent years (2014: 64).

According to Callis, therefore, all these identities should be considered within the sexual binary instead of outside it, therefore breaking the concept of mutually exclusive polar opposites already discussed.

An important point to make is that it is surprising these labels were starting to be used, since the already existing label 'queer' could be used to refer to the gender spectrum without implying that there are only two possible genders. Hall comments that 'queer' "was reclaimed by Queer Nation and others as an umbrella term to celebrate, rather than castigate, difference from the 'norm' at a time when the oppressiveness and implicit violence of that norm was clear and undeniable" (2003: 53). Following this idea of the umbrella term, Callis names 'queer' a "non-label" (2014: 69), as she points out that "as an identity (...) [it] is an ambiguous, fluid concept that can and does change" (69).

Several of the interviewees in Callis' article self-identified as queer, such as Rosario, "who identified her sexuality solely as queer [and] said that queer meant 'I can be attracted to any gender. I don't believe in the gender binary'" (in Callis 2014: 72). Several interviewees also admitted indentifying as queer after being unable to categorize their "attraction to transpeople into labels like bisexual and homosexual" (Callis: 72). However, as Callis herself points out later in her article, there are individuals who do not feel comfortable using this label, and in fact most of her interviewees did not self-identify as queer precisely because of its "lack of solid definition", and therefore changed their self-identification into a variety of labels which could fit the way they understood their sexuality better (72-73).

Two of these labels available are ‘pansexuality’ or ‘omnisexuality’, which are synonyms since their only differences “lie in the fact that *pansexual* has a Greek prefix whereas *omnisexual* a Latin one” (Obrador-Campos 2011: 214, original italics). The website *Stop Homophobia* defines pansexuals as those who “have the capacity of attraction to others regardless of their gender identity or biological sex. A pansexual could be open to someone who is male, female, transgender, intersex, or agendered/genderqueer”, and the website also emphasizes that this identity does not mean they are attracted to everyone, but that it “is used merely to express the openness and fluidity to people of all genders” (Stop Homophobia: website). If one extrapolates this label and surrounds it by alien life forms –some of which can be very attractive– taking into account the openness and fluidity this label entails, and reflects on how Jack behaves in terms of sexuality and sexual behaviours then it is clear the term ‘pansexual’ would come closest to fit Jack’s sexuality.

Let us move on to analyse the representation of Jack’s pansexuality. When it comes to women, it is clear from the first episodes of *Torchwood* that Jack does not seem to mind what gender his object of desire is. It is fairly clear there is an unresolved sexual tension between Jack and Gwen, particularly during the first episodes and especially in Jack’s body language. There is a particularly telling scene in episode three “Ghost Machine” when Jack is teaching Gwen how to use guns and his body language is very seductive and close, perhaps too much for a boss who has recently hired Gwen¹⁷. In episode five “Small World” we are introduced to an elderly woman named Estelle and we learn that she and Jack were lovers during the Second World War but, since Jack has not aged, he had to lie and tell Estelle that the man she knew was his father. In episode nine of the second season “Something Borrowed” when Gwen marries Rhys,

¹⁷ For more visual information of this scene see the Appendix, images 7 and 8.

we see Jack looking at an old picture of himself and we learn that he was married at least once¹⁸. In the third season *Torchwood: Children of Earth* we get to meet his daughter Alice and his grandson Steven, but we learn he does not see them often and, when Jack asks about her ex-husband she answers “there are worse fathers” (3x01 “Children of Earth: Day One”: 33:30), implying that to her he never was a father. Whenever he has a chance, particularly if it is going to serve his own purposes, he flirts with men and women alike. Jack Harkness, in many respects, seems to be the only character who manages to have sexual relationships with men and still be able to have a past with women. Without disregarding the wide range of characters analysed until this point, Jack’s portrayal is a step forward when it comes to the representation of sexuality.

This, nevertheless, does not mean his portrayal is complete or completely positive. Although these aspects cannot and should not be minimized, as we are shown part of his long life through dialogues or old pictures, it is also true that all sexual scenes Jack is involved in are not with women or alien life-forms, but with men. In episode twelve of the first season “Captain Jack Harkness” we learn that Jack stole the identity of a soldier of the Second World War since he had to go undercover, and he is distressed because he knows the real Jack is going to die on a mission the following day. The entire episode shows Torchwood’s Jack attempting to befriend the real Jack until, at the end of the episode, they have a dance together and say goodbye with a passionate and emotional kiss¹⁹. In the second season a reminder of John’s past, Captain John Hart reappears:

JACK: We go back.

JOHN: Excuse me, we more than go back. We were partners.

¹⁸ For more visual information of this scene see the Appendix, image 9.

¹⁹ For more visual information of this scene see Appendix Image 10

IANTO: In what way?
JOHN: In every way. And then some.
JACK: It was two weeks.
JOHN: Except that two weeks was trapped in a time loop, so we were together for five years. It was like having a wife.
JACK: You were the wife.
JOHN: *You* were the wife.
JACK: No, *you* were the wife.
JACK: Oh, but I was a good wife (2x01 “Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang”: 13:40-13:55, original emphasis).

We never see flashbacks of their relationship but it is clear since the beginning their relationship is based on extremes –they first say hi by kissing passionately, and then begin to fight– and the mockery and sexual innuendo in their jokes and puns states clearly what kind of relationship they had. As for Jack’s relationship with Ianto, as noted, we get a variety of scenes over the whole second and third season.

The fourth season *Torchwood: Miracle Day* entailed several changes for the TV series. Owen, Toshiko and Ianto are dead, and at the end of the third season we see Jack, visibly affected by their deaths along with the death of his grandson Steven caused by himself, disappear leaving a pregnant Gwen behind. *Torchwood: Miracle Day* was co-produced by BBC One, BBC Worldwide Productions and the American pay cable network Starz, and although Cardiff remains an important city to the series, the plot is mostly set in Los Angeles. Therefore, when Jack returns, the Torchwood team –or rather, what is left of it– travels to the United States. The only explanation for this change of location and production is a statement by T. Davies himself, who explained that “[t]here’s no way, in this economic climate, that they [*Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, another *Doctor Who* spin-off] would get commissioned today. So every time a change comes along, you just roll with it” (in Radio Times 2011: website).

Among several changes in the plot, screenwriting, set locations and special effects, *Torchwood: Miracle Day* seems to go deeper into Jack’s sexual relationships

with men. The main plot of the fourth season is a change in humanity's natural life course: suddenly one day no one dies, and Jack, who was immortal, is "plain old human" again (4x01 "The New World": 48:20). Since he is now mortal, in episode three he comments "mortal man, mortal needs" (4x03 "Dead of Night": 22:25) as he goes into what seems to be a gay club. We are shown in this episode an explicit and rather meaningless sexual encounter between him and the bartender of the club (Bradford 2014: website).

The one relationship Jack has and which is given more importance (even more than his relationship with Ianto) is his relationship with Angelo Colasanto. In the seventh episode "Immortal Sins" we are shown a flashback of Jack in New York City in 1927 applying for a Visa, when an Italian man attempts to steal it. Jack discovers this man is Angelo Colasanto, a man from a tiny village in Italy who has gone to New York to start a new life. Jack and Angelo start a sexual relationship which is brought to a halt when Jack has the chance to complete the mission he had come to the US to fulfil: one of the heads of the mafia in the town, Maranzano, has found an alien life-form, which is intended to be used to change the future. Worried that it will be dangerous for Angelo he confronts him and forces him to leave, but Angelo refuses:

JACK: Why, because you wouldn't know how to get another man? Because you're not brave enough?

ANGELO: You think I'm with you because it's easy. It's not easy, trust me.

JACK: I know. I hear the beads clicking every night, Angelo. Everything we do, you ask for forgiveness afterwards. That's just sex, imagine if it was love. What would he say then, your God? What would he say if two men could love? Oh, but no, that's impossible, and if that's impossible then you can't stay with me (4x07 "Immortal Sins" 26:10-26:37).

Even though Jack gives two reasons to convince Angelo to leave, and the most pressing and urgent one is the fact that Maranzano's followers are dangerous and Jack does not want Angelo to be in harm's way, he is implying he is falling in love with him. Never in

the course of the three seasons (except for the emotional scene when Ianto dies in Jack's arms) had Jack opened up his heart. But his words are clear, if according to Angelo two men cannot love, he has to leave. It is important to note that while a number of sexual scenes do not substantially change the plot and seem to be placed there only for the pleasure of the viewers, it seems obvious that Jack is emotionally invested in Angelo, so much so that after Jack has been killed and Angelo is taken to prison for a year, Jack returns to him: "I came back Angelo, I came back for you. Believe me, I have never done that before" (4x07 "Immortal Sins": 38:00-38:15).

In present-day Los Angeles Jack and Gwen, along with the new members of the Torchwood team Rex Matheson (Mekhi Phife) and Esther Drummond (Alexa Havins), have to discover who is behind Miracle Day –the day people on Earth stop dying. By complementing the Torchwood team's investigation with flashbacks that show Angelo and Jack's relationship, one understands why this relationship is at the core of *Torchwood: Miracle Day*. After seeing Jack come back to life Angelo is convinced Jack is the devil and kills him (4x07 "Immortal Sins": 39:27-40:00)²⁰. When he resurrects, he does so in front of the Italian community living in New York, and some of his blood is collected while people scream it is a miracle (4x07 "Immortal Sins": 40:30-41:15). His blood sample, whose access is directly caused by his relationship with Angelo and Angelo's mistrust in Jack, will result in Miracle Day: a pharmaceutical company named Phi-Corp, controlled by the three ancient and powerful families Ablemarch, Costerdane and Frines, bought his blood and caused Miracle Day, and it is the Torchwood's mission to end it. It is seen, therefore, that not only is Angelo's relationship with Jack explicitly portrayed, it is also placed at the centre of the plot and one of the pivotal developments of the season.

²⁰ For more visual information of this scene see the Appendix, image 11.

However, when it comes to alien life, except for the dialogues placed in every other episode Jack's pansexuality is made invisible. He mentions the Doctor quite often, but except for the lines where he comments that "first [he's] going to kiss him, then [he's] going to kill him" (1x12 "Fragments": 5:20-5:25) there is not a scene where this happens. And if one compares the scenes Jack has with women to the same scenes he shares with men, it is evidenced that while Jack's portrayal of his sexuality is more align with T. Davies's initial statement of a "bisexual program", it is also true that his relationships with men are given a more prominent role, as Bradford notes:

For someone who started out as a character that disrupted the heteronormative assumptions of the audience while also getting to be a hero, Jack's ultimate fate as the upholder of a different kind of status quo comes across as a betrayal of the person we met in "The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances" (2014: website).

Bradford's statement is applicable to Jack, but only to a certain extent. By placing a character with such different and disruptive notions of sexuality as the hero of the series, it is feasible that *Torchwood* is giving the audience an idea to long for: a hope that in the future, perhaps, our society will not be ruled over by such limited categories as those we have nowadays. By focusing the action and the drama in a pansexual character, someone who understands sexuality as a fluid concept that does not fit into the categories we attempt to fit it in, there seems to be a projection of a desire for a more open understanding of sexuality, where the barriers T. Davies wanted to knock down stay down.

CONCLUSIONS: MAKING BISEXUALITY VISIBLE

As I have argued in this dissertation, although the character of Piper Chapman in *Orange is the New Black* is portrayed as bisexual, her bisexuality is by no means represented in a normalized, acknowledged manner. The rest of the characters do not consider bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation, since they understand sexuality under the parameters of a binary where the two only possibilities are mutually exclusive, in a paradigm of “either/or” where Piper does not fit. This dismissal of bisexuality as a sexual identity in its own right ultimately displays a clash between the two paradigms: a system of two binary categories and a system of a sexual continuum where each individual falls on a spectrum.

The individuals who believe in the system of two mutually exclusive categories, thus, obey several assumptions which contribute to bisexual invisibility. We have seen, for instance, that these individuals assume everyone is monosexual, since a bisexual identity is dismissed and thus, everyone has to be labelled as either heterosexual or homosexual. Moreover, as Ochs argues, those who defy these labels make us profoundly uncomfortable (2005: website). The consequence of not acknowledging a non-monosexual identity is a stereotyped representation of bisexuality which, in turn, causes bisexuality to be made invisible and erased. This erasure is clearly displayed in the series, as it is evident that Piper’s bisexuality is solely based on stereotypes which are further reinforced by the characters themselves.

On the other hand, the problematic issues have decreased in *Torchwood*. The idea behind the series was to break away from clichés, stereotypes and break barriers of assumptions according to categorizations, and *Torchwood* achieves its purpose. However, the negative aspect in the series is the writers’ decision to limit or reduce the

representation of the characters' sexual expression and identity, which prevents them from continuing to make the choice of a non-heterosexual identity (Hemmings 2002: 25). It has been proved then, that neither Gwen nor Owen can be considered bisexual but the crucial factor in their same-sex encounters is that they break the barriers of what could be expected of them as heterosexuals. Ianto and Toshiko suffer, to more or less degree, the same fate: they are bisexual and enact on their desires. However, either their desire is limited to just one episode (as is Toshiko's case) or, as Ianto's, his self-identification as bisexual is taken back further on in the series.

As for Captain Jack Harkness, he should serve as the ultimate defiance to the binary system under which sexuality is understood by many, and indeed his pansexuality is acknowledged in dialogues with other characters. However, albeit it is acknowledged, his pansexuality is not explored or depicted in an explicit way. By exclusively focusing on Jack's relationships with men and giving them a central role, dismissing his relationships with either women or with aliens, the writers are only partially displaying this pansexuality. Nevertheless, my stance is that we should focus on the more positive aspect and message Jack seems to be sending: hold hope, because in the future sexuality will be lived much more freely and openly.

Ultimately, this dissertation confirms that in one of the two analysed cases, stereotypes are very much alive when it comes to bisexuality and bisexual characters. Instead of breaking away from those stereotypes and depicting bisexuality as a stable sexual identity in its own right, *Orange is the New Black* simply displays different strategies which cause the reinforcement of these stereotypes and of the paradigm of an 'either/or' system. Consequently, there is a prevalence of bisexuality seen as a phase towards a more stable identity –namely homosexuality– or, as Hemmings argues, as simple experimentation or “mistakes” but which only interrupt “the narrative of one's

true sexual identity” (2002: 25). However, this dissertation has also proved that *Torchwood* succeeds in providing a set of characters that do not behave as they are supposed to do according to their self-identity, and the most remarkable aspect of all: they do not protest or question those desires, they simply enact on them.

The implications of these findings go beyond simple television series. Both *Torchwood* and *Orange is the New Black* have had an enormous impact on their audience and their fan bases have grown larger (the case of *Orange is the New Black* is even more notorious due to the release of its third season this June). Stereotypes are common, mistaken beliefs that bisexual individuals have had to refute, but if these series continue portraying bisexuality as those erroneous assumptions, it will be even more difficult for bisexual individuals to refute them. These representations have an impact on their audience, and if they are solely based on stereotypes, as this dissertation has proven to be the case with the majority of the characters analysed; or if their sexuality is only partially represented or acknowledged, as is the case of Ianto Jones and Jack Harkness, then both series are spreading an erroneous view that does not correspond to reality.

It follows, then, that it is crucial for scholars to analyse the representations of bisexuals and bisexual identity in television series, novels and fiction in general; in order to discern whether this identity is truthfully represented. If it is not the case, then it is our responsibility to criticise it and point at the reasons why these works are incorrectly representing bisexual identity. Ultimately, then, and even though plenty of work remains to be done, my dissertation is pointing at what is being wrongly represented, vindicating a bisexual identity that exists and needs to be acknowledged and accurately represented so that, as noted, we are able to overcome those stereotypes and learn the true reality of these minorities. As Eisner complains, “Monosexism kills.

Biphobia kills.” (2013: 64). Bisexual people suffer violence of all kinds: “we are beaten, brutalized, bullied, bashed, raped, and sexually assaulted (...) we get exploited, alienated, marginalized, disempowered, dismissed, erased, derided” (64). And what has concerned me here most “Our experiences, our lives, our pain, and our oppression are written out and wiped clean of history, culture, and community” (64). I hope I have then contributed with this dissertation to undoing, if only a little, bisexual erasure.

APPENDIX: Selected Images from *Orange is the New Black* and *Torchwood*



Image 1 (1x01 “I Wasn’t Ready”: 0:19). Alex and Piper taking a shower.



Image 2 (1x01 “I Wasn’t Ready”: 0:24). Larry and Piper taking a bath.



Image 3 (1x09 “Fucksgiving”: 12:07). Piper and Alex dancing.



Image 4 (1x09 "Fucksgiving": 13:14). Piper and Alex dancing.



Image 5 (1x13 "Can't Fix Crazy": 57:10). Pennsatucky attacking Piper with a handmade cross while Healy, at the back, leaves.



Image 6 (2x03 "To The Last Man": 34:40). Ianto kissing Jack.



Image 7 (1x03 “Ghost Machine”: 19:26). Jack’s seductive body language.



Image 8 (1x03 “Ghost Machine”: 19:39). Jack’s seductive body language.



Image 9 (2x09 “Something Borrowed”: 45:00). Picture of Jack when he got married.



Image 10 (1x12 “Captain Jack Harkness”: 44:15). Both Jacks kissing goodbye.



Image 11 (4x07 “Immortal Sins”: 39:27). Angelo about to kill Jack.

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