

**Weird Fictions  
Research Group**

# **WEIRD TV**

**Zine Vol. 1 (2026)**



HIHIHI!

and pictures



BOOM BOOM BOOM

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# WEIRD TV. WELCOME

The Weird Fictions Research Group crawled out of the W.E.I.R.D. Students' Reading Group in 2018 and officially mutated into its current form in early 2020. We're a loose collective of students and early career researchers based at the American Studies Center (University of Warsaw) and we are all obsessed with the weird and the eerie in all its forms: science fiction, horror, fantasy, weird fiction, and the messy hybrids in between. If it's disturbing, speculative, cult-ish, or hard to pin down, we're probably into it.

Over the years, we've chased the weird wherever it leaks through culture: cyberpunk futures and posthuman bodies, body horror, monsters old and new, EcoGothic landscapes, haunted soundtracks, biomedical nightmares, and corrupt(ing) mythologies. Most recently, we've turned our attention to Weird TV: streaming and broadcast, analog and VHS horror, glitchy 80s and 90s nostalgia,





haunted screens, and television as both cultural memory and a ghostly machine. We meet, we watch, we argue, we theorize, we obsess. This zine comes out of that energy: it's a place to think about television that's somewhat warped, broken, excessive, and deeply weird.

We asked, you delivered. Here's our very first WFRG Zine - full of collages, photos, word/image performances, interviews and textual explorations of Weird TV. Inside, you'll find **visual memories of TV-trances and TV-dreams, TV-visions and TV-nightmares**. Let the soft-edged nostalgia for the VHS static freely mingle with sharp futuristic yearnings for a fully embodied TV experience. Dig into the margins of television programming and cut through all the bingeing, hate-watching, ironic watching, campy watching, bored watching and feel-good watching. Let's wallow together in the soft-glow affects of a late-night TV screen.

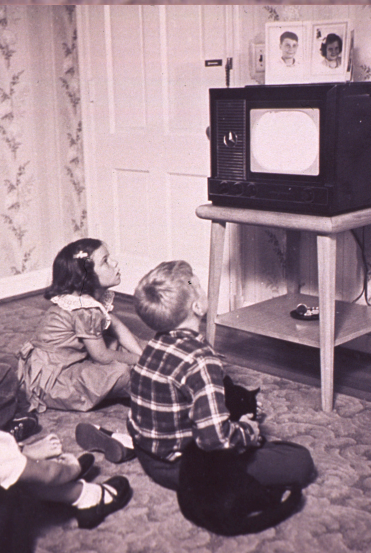
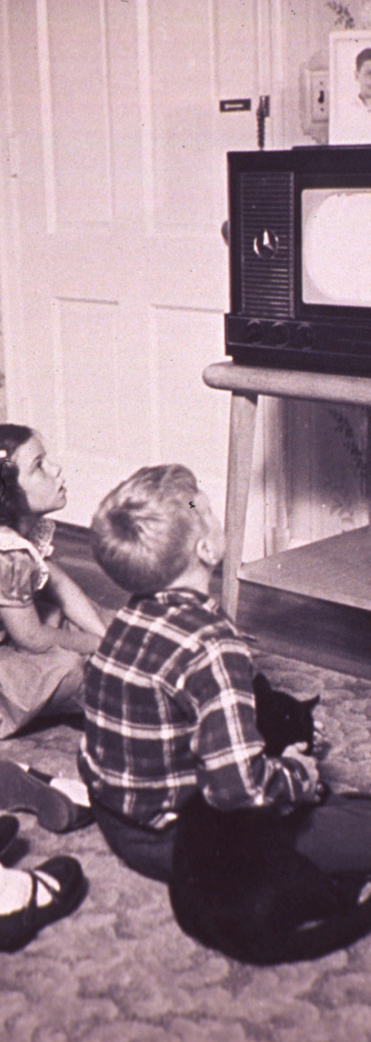
Nic dziwnego zatem,

A M E R Y K A

Najlepiej odpoczywa



Na jakich zasadach, według jakich kryteriów?



## Malevolent Mirrors, Dark Doppelgängers and Corrupt Copies Represented in Children's Television Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Adventure Television

Rob McLaughlin

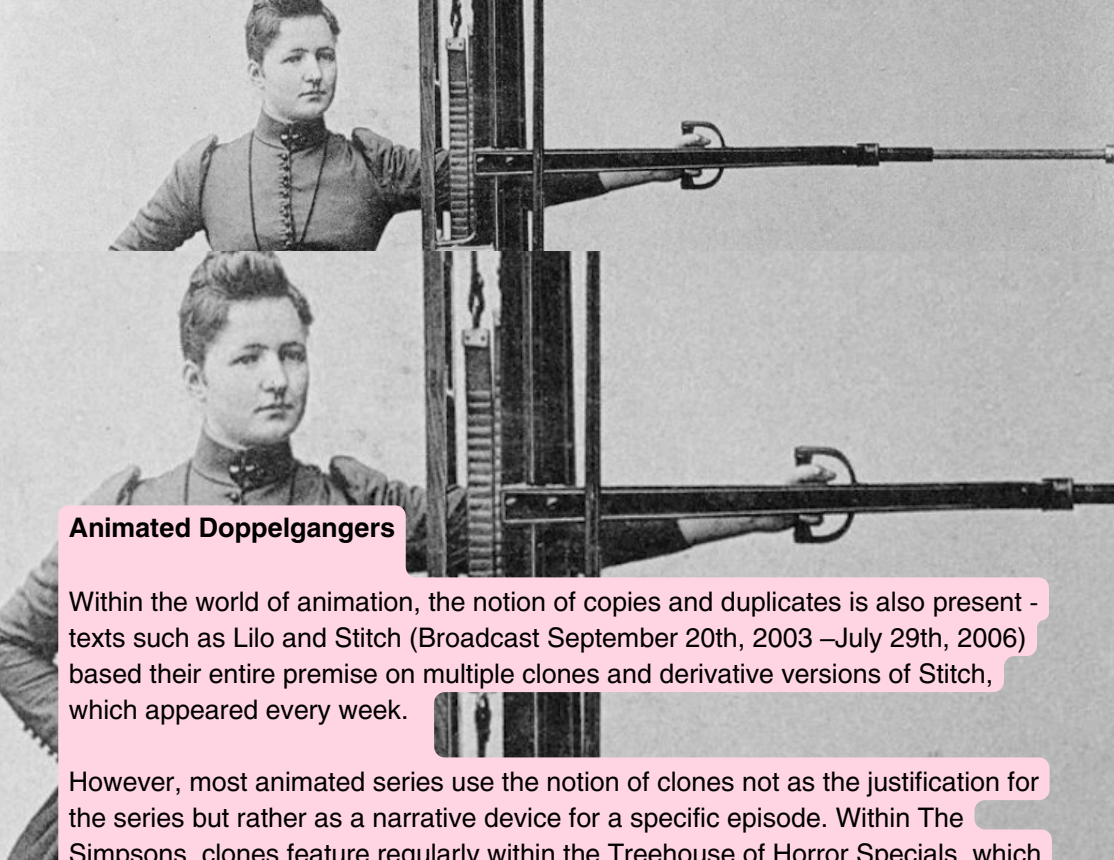
Looking in the mirror at your reflection, an image you have seen countless times stares back at you and smiles. But then you didn't smile, but the thing in the mirror did. All by itself.

Welcome to the strange occurrences of duplicates and doppelgängers, a notion that appears regularly within weird fiction and fantasy and one that is infinitely eerie. Doppelgängers are unnerving, encompassing the notion of subjectivity and, as (Boss, 1989 pp. 98) notes, the concepts of one's identity. In the viewing of a simulation or simulacra of oneself and in the replication of you as an individual (Humann, 2018 pp. 89) suggests creates a psychological threat which triggers notions of fear and mistrust of this, your duplicate body image.

The prevalence of uncanny doubles, which map to these fears, appears in 'weird fiction' encompassing murderous alter egos, maniacal twins, and malevolent clones, testifying to their psychic resonance in their ability to create a sense of unease (Schneider, 2001 pp.51).

In this context, clones, and copies within narratives such as 'Star Trek' (Broadcast US September 8th, 1966 – June 3rd, 1969) presented evil mirror image copies of the show's protagonists and began a trend that appeared with regularity in television during the 1980s. In the range of Glen A Larson and Donald P. Bellisario's action-adventure shows of the 1980s (in which the characters of the shows often came secondary to the motorbikes, cars and helicopters highlighted within the show). Within Knight Rider (September 26, 1982 – April 4, 1986), for example, viewers had the benevolent KITT but also the dangerous Doppelganger for KITT KARR (Knight Automated Roving Robot). To continue the evil doubling motif, KARR was driven by Garth Knight, the son of Knight Industries founder Wilton Knight, who, in a traditional soap opera trope, was the estranged 'evil' son.

Of course, both characters were played by David Hasselhoff; however, Garth showed his evil nature by sporting the Star Trek 'Mirror Mirror' trope of having a goatee beard.



### Animated Doppelgangers

Within the world of animation, the notion of copies and duplicates is also present - texts such as Lilo and Stitch (Broadcast September 20th, 2003 – July 29th, 2006) based their entire premise on multiple clones and derivative versions of Stitch, which appeared every week.

However, most animated series use the notion of clones not as the justification for the series but rather as a narrative device for a specific episode. Within The Simpsons, clones feature regularly within the Treehouse of Horror Specials, which include Homer getting cloned in the story 'Clones, Clones Clones' as part of the episode 'Treehouse of Horror XIII (Broadcast US. November 19, 1993).

It is not only The Simpsons that has taken the concept of twinning, within South Park Matt Stone and Trey Parker use this narrative trope within the episode "Spookyfish" (Broadcast US, October 28th, 1998) and present a Star Trek concept of 'evil' twins from an alternative universe. However, within the mirror universe, we see a 'good' version of Eric Cartman who is so benevolent that the rest of the South Park children much prefer this version of the character compared to the manipulative, vindictive, self-absorbed version they are 'friends' with in the regular South Park universe.

A good/evil version of a character even appears via the hapless Mr Bean (Broadcast UK 5th January 2002 – present) in the episode 'Wanted' (Broadcast UK, 5 April 2003) where he is mistaken for an escaped convict. The two animated characters even end up switching places for a short time, with the convict eventually deciding to return to prison due to the overbearing nature of Beans' landlady, Mrs Wicket.

## Cloning conclusions

The notion of replication, copies, and clones is often used as a quick narrative device to allow for the development of an 'evil twin' or derivative story of a copy of a character by writers of children's television (and in a wider context television genre writers) for high volume scripts for a multi-part show and while these 'copy' episodes and often played via a comedic trope in which the multiplication or the cause/effect of the clones or copies existence becomes a light-hearted affair and with no real consequence to the context of the show the notion of replicas does trigger intriguing deeper contexts for debate such as the concepts of subjugation, imprisonment and social standing of a clone in the context of the narrative.

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MY

DREAMS

ARE

CELLULOSE

MADE

OF

HALF

BURN

FADED



ALL

SMOKE

and

MIRRORS

# Interview with Sherryl Vint

**What's your earliest memory of watching TV? What was the program? Do you remember it fondly, or is it more of a mixed bag kind of memory?**

My earliest memories of watching tv are watching reruns on broadcast tv in Canada. My first sf memory is watching reruns of *The Jetsons* which was part of an after-school line-up available around 4 pm. But earlier than that, I remember watching reruns of a 1950s show, *The Lone Ranger*, which I loved because of his horse, Silver. I can even still remember the Timex advert that always ran with the show. I have fond memories of watching both, but I doubt they would hold up to reviewing today. I don't really recall any first-run shows from that time and I suspect that the times for children's viewings were heavily reliant on reruns. There were only three channels available in Canada at the time.

**During our Weird TV meeting, you talked about *Severance*. Why is this show such a zeitgeist moment for Western audiences? Do you think it's more of a dystopia, a heterotopia, or a skewed utopia from the audience's perspective?**

I think *Severance* is such a zeitgeist show largely for reasons of people's alienation from work. There are a wide range of reasons for that alienation, but key to the appeal of *Severance*, I think, is the fact that today most people work at a range of jobs over their careers instead of having one long-term employer, including that often people work in gig work contexts in which they don't really have an employer since they are technically independent contractors. Even those who work for an employer such as Amazon are increasingly working in isolated warehouses or driving alone, and so opportunities to get to know one's colleagues are minimized. This intersects in an interesting way with *Severance* in the sense that it shows employers to be exploitative, dehumanizing workers to a literal degree, but at the same time the actual context of the work is weirdly anachronistic.

The office cubicle and the close bond that forms among the innies offer human community as a counterpoint to this work alienation, and also evoke a long history of tv workplace series (dramas and comedies alike) that constitute one's coworkers as a kind of family. So the workplace situation is a dystopia, but the way that the innies band together has elements of utopianism (striving for a better world). So I guess in the end it's a heterotopia, as perhaps watching only the dystopian plot lines would be too unbearable.

### **Why is retrofuturism such an appealing aesthetic for many creators and viewers?**

I have two theories about why retrofuturism is an appealing aesthetic. One has to do with the way that earlier eras of design were more elaborate than the sleek mirrored design of contemporary technology, which is minimalist and doesn't really show any working parts. I think the idea of more elaborate designs with physically moving parts, etc. connects to the same kind of aesthetic design to see how the pieces fit together and can be made into elaborate art that we see in a practice such as steampunk (as a show such as *Nautilus* demonstrates). But in the case of IT technology specifically, which *Severance* draws upon more than on the biotech that underpins its actual technology, I think the reason has to do with the fact that we have lost the sense of utopian promise that were attached to these technologies when they emerged, especially the utopianism that was attached to the idea of "The Internet" as some kind of leveling technology of freedom. Today we see more and more the damage done by the predatory tactics of social media companies, the spread of disinformation, what Cory Doctorow calls the "enshittification" that comes with monopoly power, and especially the ways that tech companies are now using their economic power to pursue authoritarian political ends. So I think we long for a time when technology = the future = progress and since our current technologies lead to a show such as *Black Mirror*, if we want any sense of utopianism we need to embrace retro aesthetics. Another show which I think does this brilliantly, while also commenting on the tech dystopia of today, is *Hello Tomorrow*.

Like *Severance*, it shows that things were always trending toward the dystopian, but both acknowledge that we \*want\* technology to serve us better and deliver the promised utopia, although it never does. And this desire is strong, allowing people such as Elon Musk to manipulate markets and consumers by promising how "abundant" everything will be once we reach AGI [Artificial General Intelligence], for example, even though companies pursuing AGI are currently making everything worse. Someone this utopian promise that was once attached to technology as the future is so powerful that we can still believe it will magically transmute into beneficence once some threshold is crossed.

### **Are we able to imagine a new futuristic aesthetic? What contemporary TV shows achieve this (if any)?**

I think we do imagine new futuristic aesthetics, but mostly they are dystopian rather than utopian, and to a degree the outie work of *Severance* offers an example of this. I think *Foundation* offers some interesting visual aesthetics of the future, and it clearly sees this future as one dominated by empires and their power struggles. *The Last of Us* offers a new kind of aesthetic that doesn't rely on a lot of tech in the future, and that's not exactly new, but it is becoming more prevalent once again. For example, there was recently a television adaptation of *Earth Abides* which also draws on the idea that the future will be low-tech and sustainable.

### **What's been haunting your TV lately?**

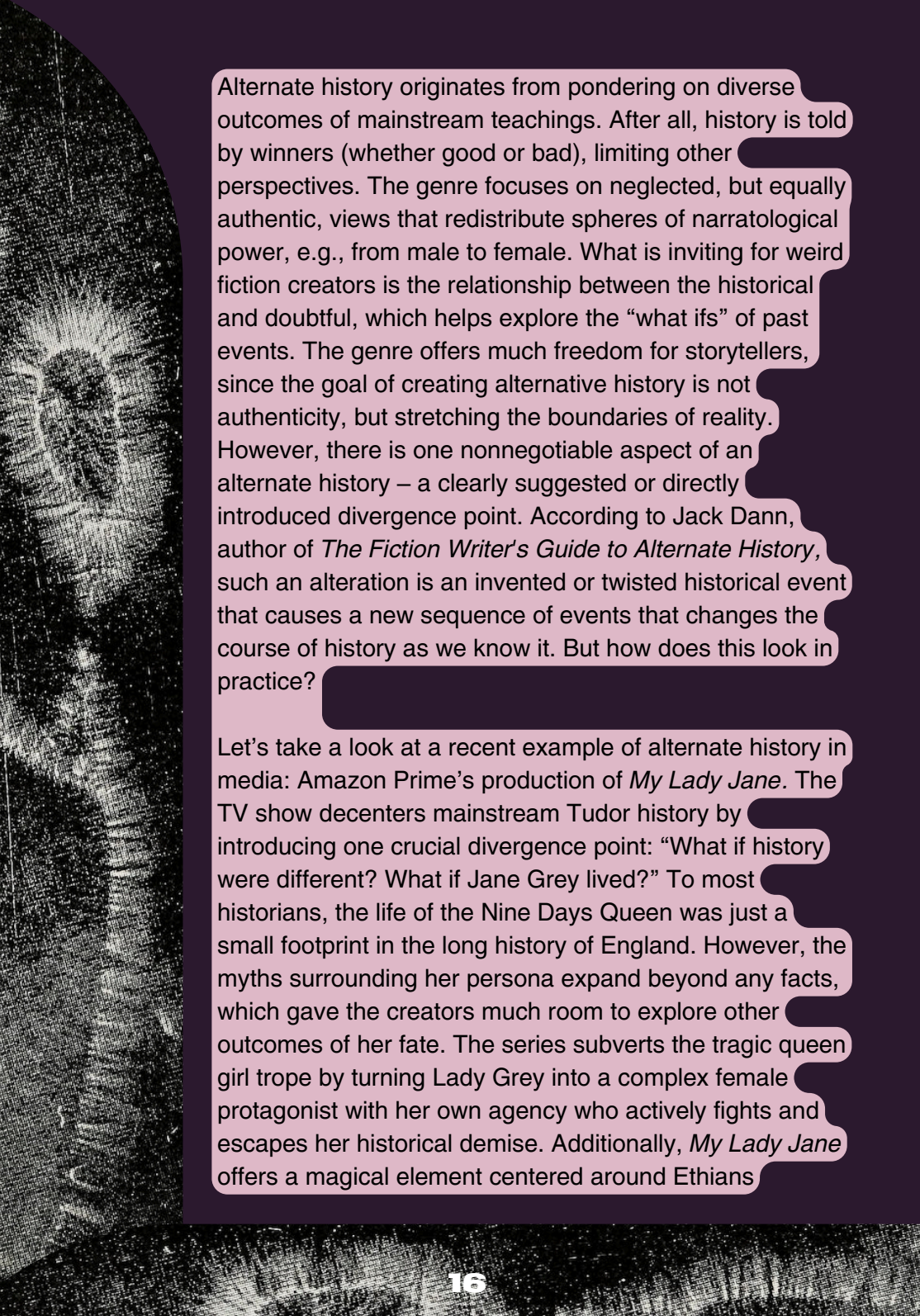
For whatever reason, I always enjoy Stephen King adaptations and so I've been watching *The Institute*, which is yet another example of the macabre lengths people will go to when they rationalize that their long-term project is for the good. I'm looking forward to *Alien Earth* but haven't found time for it yet. Much of what I have been watching lately isn't sf television. Probably the thing that I've most enjoyed that I've watched recently has been *Adolescence* on Netflix, which both addresses an important topic and also pushes into new territory for the visual aesthetics of television.



## History with a Twist: Exploring Fantasy and Alternate Realities in *My Lady Jane*

Nicole Bryjka

Questioning the “what ifs” is an ever-present part of all individuals' lives. Sometimes, it encourages us to reach beyond our own experiences and explore the possibilities of the grand scheme of history. What if the Nazis won World War II? What if John F. Kennedy wasn't assassinated? What if the French Revolution didn't happen? Such wonderings and alternate scenarios inspire fiction authors to construct counterfactual narratives based on historical characters or incidents. Next, creators revisit neglected or even forgotten stories by introducing their own concepts of said facts, which results in shaping alternative realities. Said dimensions are directly linked to our own and often come with the history-changing presence of magic. The goal is to encourage the audience to engage with these alternative narratives and also gain interest in the already existing historical knowledge and political dilemmas. Therefore, creating alternative realities has become a part of the fantasy genre and a new subcategory of fiction called alternate history, which presents accounts of our past as it otherwise might have been.



Alternate history originates from pondering on diverse outcomes of mainstream teachings. After all, history is told by winners (whether good or bad), limiting other perspectives. The genre focuses on neglected, but equally authentic, views that redistribute spheres of narratological power, e.g., from male to female. What is inviting for weird fiction creators is the relationship between the historical and doubtful, which helps explore the “what ifs” of past events. The genre offers much freedom for storytellers, since the goal of creating alternative history is not authenticity, but stretching the boundaries of reality. However, there is one nonnegotiable aspect of an alternate history – a clearly suggested or directly introduced divergence point. According to Jack Dann, author of *The Fiction Writer's Guide to Alternate History*, such an alteration is an invented or twisted historical event that causes a new sequence of events that changes the course of history as we know it. But how does this look in practice?

Let's take a look at a recent example of alternate history in media: Amazon Prime's production of *My Lady Jane*. The TV show decenters mainstream Tudor history by introducing one crucial divergence point: “What if history were different? What if Jane Grey lived?” To most historians, the life of the Nine Days Queen was just a small footprint in the long history of England. However, the myths surrounding her persona expand beyond any facts, which gave the creators much room to explore other outcomes of her fate. The series subverts the tragic queen girl trope by turning Lady Grey into a complex female protagonist with her own agency who actively fights and escapes her historical demise. Additionally, *My Lady Jane* offers a magical element centered around Ethians

(humans with animalistic shapeshifting abilities) and Verities (ordinary civilians), which is meant to mimic the ongoing Protestant and Catholic tensions in British history as well as the marginalization of minority perspectives.

Based on *My Lady Jane*, there are noticeable elements of the alternate history genre that fit within weird fiction. The very world-building reflects a radically different England that ridicules and exposes patriarchal power dynamics. Here, real events become adventures where characters explore their identity, agency, and magical abilities, all of which aren't manipulated by historians. This leads to the countering of conventional male-centered narratives and instead favoring a personal viewpoint through Jane, a young woman capable of taking matters into her own hands. Next, the show is self-aware thanks to its narrator, who breaks the fourth wall, admits twisting historical facts, and emphasizes the use of fictional elements.

Overall, *My Lady Jane* embodies a tonal mash-up by combining genres like period drama, historical fiction, fantasy, comedy, romance, and action. The unique humor serves as a political commentary to expose the unjust system of our reality (both the past and present). Last but not least, the show plays with modern dialogue and music, creating a surreal period setting to the tune of, for instance, "Rebel Rebel" by David Bowie. In short, *My Lady Jane*, although set in the Tudor era, flips history, adds magic, and creates a tonal mash-up from the opening scene, allowing the series to become a compelling example of alternate history that challenges all expectations.

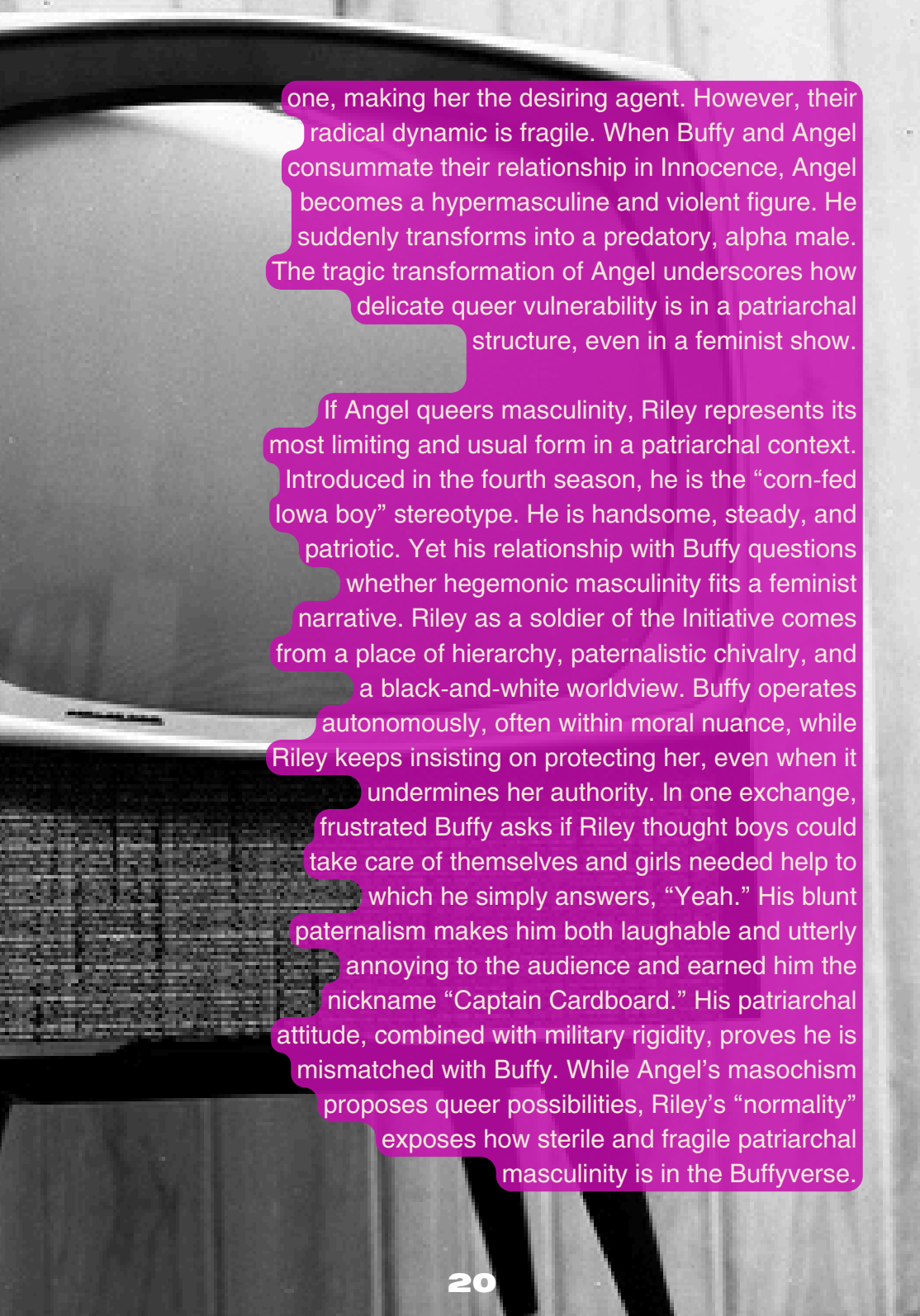


## Not Your Average Boyfriend: Queer and Patriarchal Masculinities in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*

Agata Zygardowicz

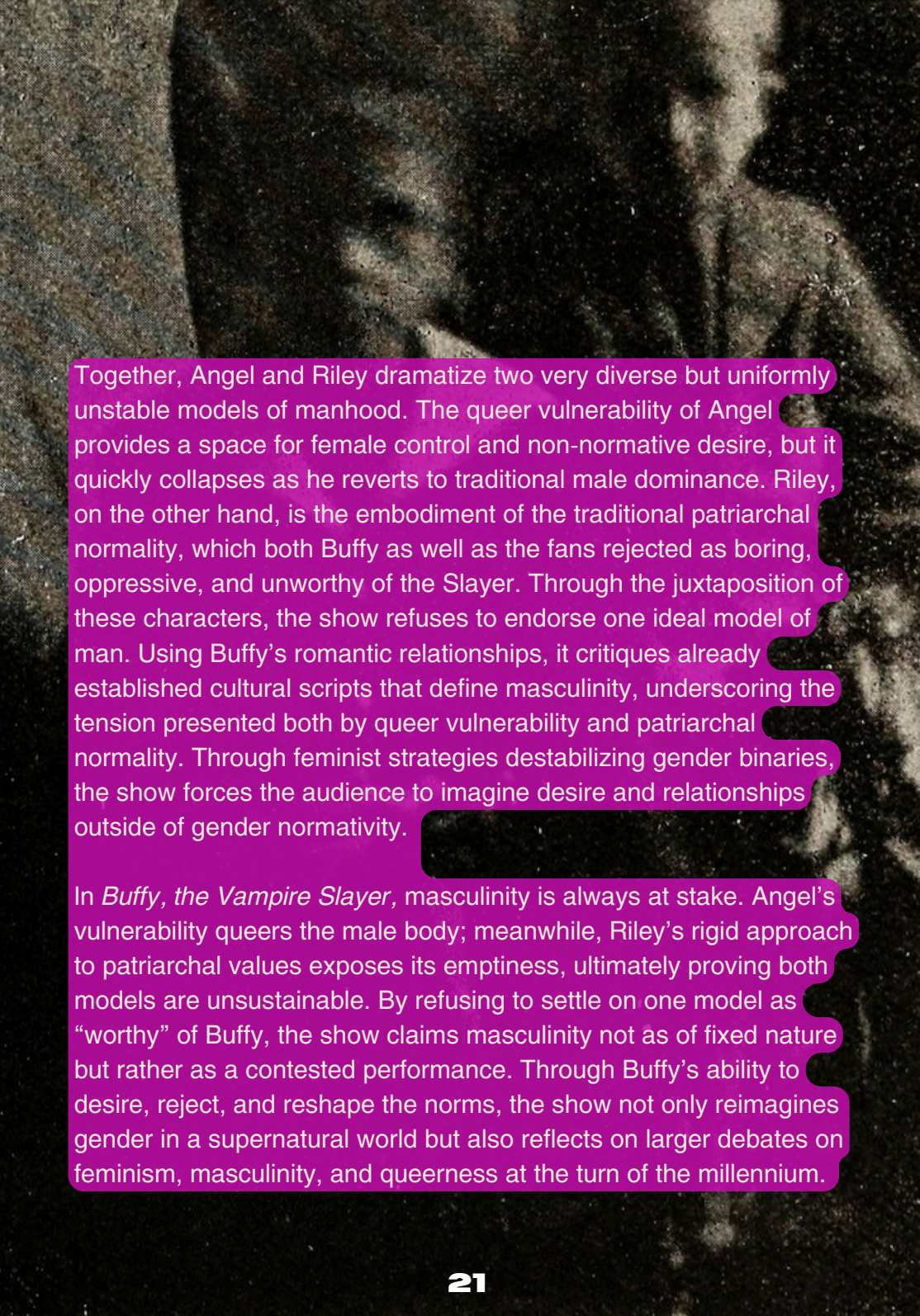
Since the premiere of *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* in 1997, the show has been praised for its subversion of genre conventions. It challenges cultural norms and representations of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. This innovation appears not only through Buffy herself, but also through its portrayal of masculinity. Two of Buffy's most significant love interests give the viewer strikingly different depictions of manhood. Angel, the vampire who is cursed with having a soul, personifies queer, vulnerable masculinity. He distorts established gender roles. Riley, on the other hand, performs the conventional, patriarchal masculinity that the show subverts. By presenting these two contrasting male models, the show asks: What kind of man could ever be "worthy" of the Slayer?

The role of Angel in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* is exceptional. He transforms the usual male hero into a queer and masochistic figure of desire. His body is often displayed on screen, usually wounded and penetrated. This diverts the suffering from the female figure and creates the space for Buffy's empowerment. Angel is far from the typical "bad boy" representation. His hypermasculinity is distorted by continuous vulnerability, making him a depiction of feminist, queer fantasies. In episodes such as *The Wish*, where he is chained and tortured by Vampire Willow, he becomes an erotic spectacle. His body is available for female control through pain and submission. This rewriting of masculinity akes his relationship with Buffy unconventional. Instead of Buffy being passive, Angel becomes the penetrated and spectacularized



one, making her the desiring agent. However, their radical dynamic is fragile. When Buffy and Angel consummate their relationship in Innocence, Angel becomes a hypermasculine and violent figure. He suddenly transforms into a predatory, alpha male. The tragic transformation of Angel underscores how delicate queer vulnerability is in a patriarchal structure, even in a feminist show.

If Angel queers masculinity, Riley represents its most limiting and usual form in a patriarchal context. Introduced in the fourth season, he is the “corn-fed Iowa boy” stereotype. He is handsome, steady, and patriotic. Yet his relationship with Buffy questions whether hegemonic masculinity fits a feminist narrative. Riley as a soldier of the Initiative comes from a place of hierarchy, paternalistic chivalry, and a black-and-white worldview. Buffy operates autonomously, often within moral nuance, while Riley keeps insisting on protecting her, even when it undermines her authority. In one exchange, frustrated Buffy asks if Riley thought boys could take care of themselves and girls needed help to which he simply answers, “Yeah.” His blunt paternalism makes him both laughable and utterly annoying to the audience and earned him the nickname “Captain Cardboard.” His patriarchal attitude, combined with military rigidity, proves he is mismatched with Buffy. While Angel’s masochism proposes queer possibilities, Riley’s “normality” exposes how sterile and fragile patriarchal masculinity is in the Buffyverse.



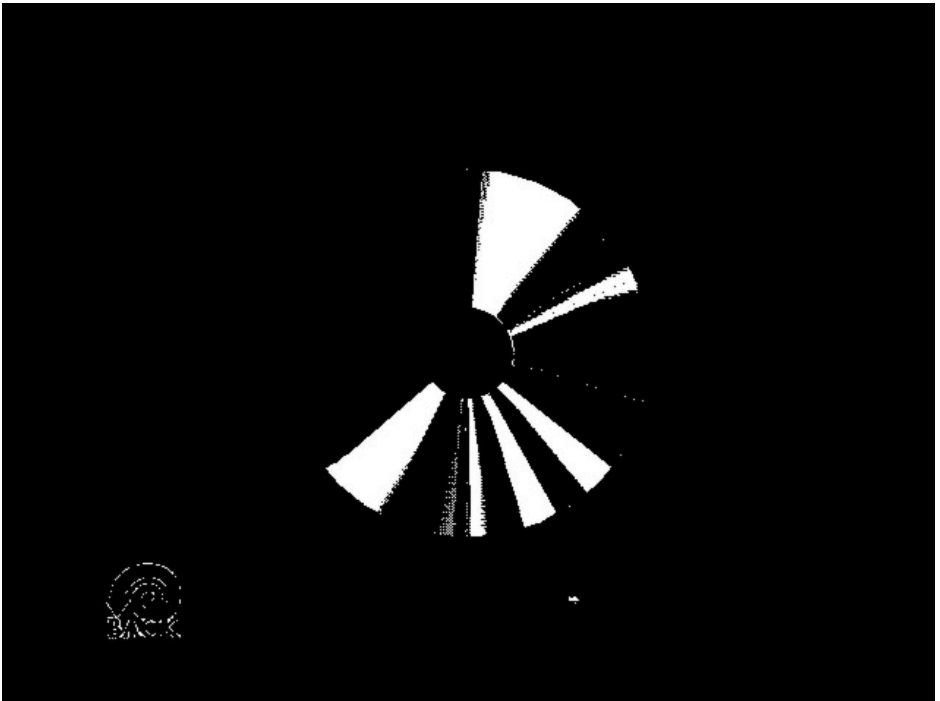
Together, Angel and Riley dramatize two very diverse but uniformly unstable models of manhood. The queer vulnerability of Angel provides a space for female control and non-normative desire, but it quickly collapses as he reverts to traditional male dominance. Riley, on the other hand, is the embodiment of the traditional patriarchal normality, which both Buffy as well as the fans rejected as boring, oppressive, and unworthy of the Slayer. Through the juxtaposition of these characters, the show refuses to endorse one ideal model of man. Using Buffy's romantic relationships, it critiques already established cultural scripts that define masculinity, underscoring the tension presented both by queer vulnerability and patriarchal normality. Through feminist strategies destabilizing gender binaries, the show forces the audience to imagine desire and relationships outside of gender normativity.

In *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, masculinity is always at stake. Angel's vulnerability queers the male body; meanwhile, Riley's rigid approach to patriarchal values exposes its emptiness, ultimately proving both models are unsustainable. By refusing to settle on one model as "worthy" of Buffy, the show claims masculinity not as of fixed nature but rather as a contested performance. Through Buffy's ability to desire, reject, and reshape the norms, the show not only reimagines gender in a supernatural world but also reflects on larger debates on feminism, masculinity, and queerness at the turn of the millennium.



# Dreamcore Britannia

Francis gene-rowe



The viscera of Blenheim Palace  
Its claggy roots gashed open  
Spewing darkness  
Across the land  
Wormed into our eyelids



Run  
Stumbl  
e Run  
Run  
Wheeze  
Run

Run Curse Run Run Run Twist back again and Run Run  
Stop, coughing Run and Run, run and Run and Run, run  
Numb feet Clad in a darkness Swifter than Your field of  
view The fog of war Run Your ankles hurt Your lungs  
burst Into stolen jewels From Golconda And skitter  
across the dark Beneath Run You'd make a great  
skeleton if only you knew how to smile On the job Run,  
gasp, pant Your now-shed jeweled alveoli glimmer  
somewhere But you can't see, the darkness Has sapped  
the idea of a light at the end of This tunnel or corridor or  
whatever it is

Run, for fuck's sake just run! It's  
Not like you have a better idea of what to do,  
Where to go,  
How to survive in this  
Depleted land  
Beyond the darkness (is there a beyond? has there ever been?)  
You're currently mired in, just for now  
And as long as your recent memory  
Just barely retains  
Like a pig's intestine, distended with  
The pus of imperial blood  
And spoiled Guernsey milk  
The darkness is convivial, assured of its own naturalness,  
Its right to belong  
It talks down to you  
Offers bad advice with the confidence of one for whom there  
Are no consequences  
Endless hallways, probably  
Run  
Speed is relative anyway  
The darkness is the most familiar thing there is,  
By virtue of being the only thing there is,  
Which is unbearable. So  
Run, and

a  
bright  
frosted  
cloister.  
so beautiful,  
like a cracked  
dreamcast disc

where did  
the darkness  
go? it's as if  
some long departed  
hobbyist  
on a break between battles  
took the time they had  
to undercoat and time  
paint this space lovingly  
since replaced by more commercially viable  
an aesthetic  
Grimdark stylings  
trillions of dead goblins  
and futures for us all  
oh wait it's  
the end of the cloister, the dark is just



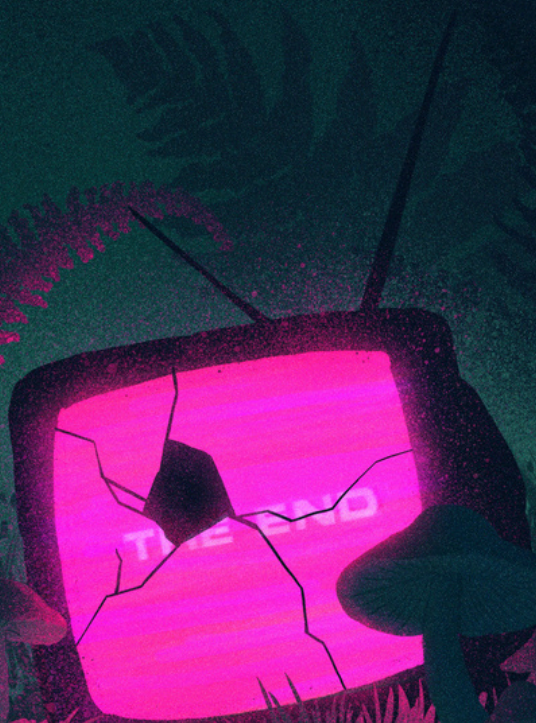
Ahead Run Run The walls scrape Your dry knuckles Run This darkness, Re-establishing its hold over Your body's capacity to imagine S e n s e, Feeling, Experience, Affect Is not grim but warm Like an expensive stove In the winter As the foxhounds snaffle The last of the blood gruel Made from peasants' mashed Fingers Run! The walls Encrusted ever and ever more With plaques, Statues, Faded rosettes An infinite regress Of ever more shadowed throne rooms Silent dusted lintels of power Thresholds into further thresholds The webbed centre of this labyrinth always regressing Further and further into horizontal vertiginous camera sweeps Barely contained in the parameters of the game engine

If game it can be called  
Run  
Just run it  
Run, speedily  
Who needs to work hard if you can just skim past  
These causalities  
In the endlessly looping  
Screensaver maze  
You can always be  
The rat  
Run  
The darkness is getting tired of you  
As you tire of tiredness  
And you're so very tired  
Run  
Keep going! Run,  
And you'll find  
More to run  
Into  
More ways  
To run  
In the same way  
That you have been  
And will always be  
The darkness  
By your side  
Matching your pace  
Your breath  
Your heart rate  
Your dreams  
Just softly encouraging you,  
Assuring you of  
Probable

Eventual victory  
Urging you,  
Invitingly, To  
Run Just A little  
More



# WEIRD TV



FOLLOW US AND CHECK  
FOR EVENTS AT:  
@THEWEIRDDGROUP



UNIVERSITY  
OF WARSAW



American  
Studies  
Center

## ZINE CONTRIBUTORS (in alphabetical order)

- **Nicole Bryjka** is an American Studies graduate. Her current academic interests revolve around film and TV studies.
- **Tomek Czarnoleśny** – a member of Whosome collective and an editor of Mlem! magazine. They write about popculture, write short sf-queer fiction and draw a little.
- **Francis Gene-Rowe** (they/them) writes and designs poems, games, graphics, events, and oracles. They draw a salary teaching media studies and practices in the UK.
- **Emilia Głębocka** – ASC BA's graduate and MA student. Current research interests include theater performance, horror fiction, religion and Victorian women.
- **Joanna Kaniewska** (she/her) is a translator, blogger, and aspiring scholar. Currently, she is working on her PhD project about American witch textualities.
- **Agnieszka Kotwasińska** (she/her) writes about death in horror and SF, and yet is still surprised by her nightmares.
- **Rob McLaughlin** is a Lecturer at Arden University and has written academic papers on VHS Culture, hauntology and children's horror. He has published a monograph though Auteur / Liverpool University Press focusing on Stephen Spielberg and Tobe Hoopers 1982 classic Poltergeist and has written extensively about films animation, horror and cult television having work cited in The Guardian, Daily Express and Forbes on areas to do with the weirder side of film and TV.
- **Patrycja Pergoł.**
- **Charlotte Poitras** is a queer and neurodivergent multidisciplinary artist based in Montreal who bends and reshapes popular culture like modeling clay. Working across literature, visual arts, and performance, she transforms viral imagery, media codes, and collective imaginaries to present a critical reflection of our society.
- **Magdalena Sołodyna** – an illustrator and graphic designer living in Warsaw's Praga district. She creates paintings, stage designs, and electronic music. @lenasol.o
- **Sherryl Vint** is Distinguished Professor of Media & Cultural Studies and of English at the University of California, Riverside. For the 2024-2025 academic year, she was the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Humanities and Social Sciences at the American Studies Center at the University of Warsaw.
- **Agata Zygarowicz** is a third-year American Studies student at the University of Warsaw and an English Philology student at the University SWPS. Her academic interests include American and English literature, pop culture, and history.

Editors, graphic design and typesetting: Joanna Kaniewska, Agnieszka Kotwasińska  
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