

Political ideologies and dystopian fiction: a content analysis proposal to conduct a systematic study.

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Abstract

The study of ideology in television series is a field that mainly uses qualitative research techniques such as discourse analysis. The main objective of this study is to fill the gap in methodology by designing a quantitative data collection tool that will allow authors to carry out systematic studies on the presence of political ideologies on films and television series. To this end, we have designed a content analysis for the study of political ideologies from the viewpoint of communication by developing an analysis framework that includes, among other items, the various ideologemes that comprise the ideological spectrum. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection technique in order for it to be replicated in subsequent research, the template has been evaluated by experts and subjected to an intercoder test. Specifically, the analysis sheet is focused on one of the preeminent ideological genres, the dystopia, and has been tested with the tv-show *The Purge*. However, we would like to point out the possibility of extrapolating the analysis framework to other genres as well.

Keywords: Television, Cinema, methodology, television series, quantitative.

Introduction

Content analysis is an approach that is commonly used in studies related to social networks or the press, in addition to being a traditional data collection technique in the communication realm. However, in the field of television fiction, qualitative analysis dominates, examples of which include the work of Ribke (2019), Lorié (2011), and Stratton (2016), although some studies have used content analysis to examine television series, such as research on individualism by Chesebro (2003), or on selfishness by Bilandzic, Hastall and Sukalla (2017). In terms of political ideologies, there are no quantitative studies that examine the entire ideological spectrum, yet we have found some studies on feminism, examples of which include analyses of stereotyped portrayals of women in fiction (Glascok and Ruggiero, 2004; Kharroub and Weaver, 2014; Parrott and Titcomb Parrott, 2015; Galán Fajardo, 2017; González-de-Garay, Marcos-Ramos and Portillo-Delgado, 2019; Marcos Ramos, González de Garay and Portillo Delgado, 2019). To conclude this brief review, other studies have taken a quantitative approach to television messages without using content analysis, such as the work of Grandío (2011) on the threatening messages in the series known as *Héroes*, or that of Tous (2019), who has analysed the conservatism of Spanish crime series.

This paper is organised within this framework, and the main objective is to fill the gap in methodology in terms of systematic studies of dystopias and political ideologies, and to propose an analysis template that can be replicated in future research. To this end, we have developed a codebook and analysis sheet with the relevant variables to detect the ideological background of the narratives under study. Before doing so, we will briefly outline the origins of the dystopian genre, which will allow us to offer an analysis framework. This work is organised within this framework, and the main objective is to fill the gap in methodology in terms of systematic studies of dystopias and political ideologies, and to propose an analysis template that can be replicated in future research. To this end, we have developed a codebook and analysis sheet with the relevant variables to detect the ideological background of the narratives under study. In this study we have exemplified the code sheet with a dystopian narrative. The television series in question is part of a larger film franchise of the same name, called *The Purge* (Amazon Prime: 2018-2019). To offer a brief description, the series envisions the United States ruled by The New Founding Fathers, a political organisation that has legally stipulated that one night per year all crime, including murder, is allowed. The series was selected based on the relevance of the socio-political issues it addresses in its narrative, as populism and its use of propaganda, which can be extrapolated to other European contexts, such as neoliberalism (Sánchez-Gutiérrez and Pineda, 2021). Before doing so, we will briefly outline the origins of the dystopian genre, which will allow us to offer an analysis framework.

Background

Due to space limitations, we will briefly describe the dystopian genre in this section. Trotta and Sadri define this genre "as fiction that explores social or political struggle" (2020: 4). They point out that in these stories, power structures continue to operate. At times they seem to work in an orderly and efficient manner, but on other occasions they are portrayed as being on the verge of collapse. Thus, as explained by Levitas (2011) and Rosenfeld (2020), there are dystopias of different political ideologies. Therefore, the unwanted power structures, or lack thereof, will vary according to each author's values. In the same vein, Tower Sargent defines the dystopia as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail, and normally located in a time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (1994: 9). Likewise, Suvin describes the dystopia in the following way:

A community where socio-political institutions, norms, and relationships between its individuals are organized in a significantly less perfect way than in the author's community [...] as seen by a representative of a discontented social class or fraction, whose value-system defines perfection (1998: 170).

As noted by Moylan (2000), the definitions offered by Sargent (1994) and Suvin (1998) build upon the author's intention. However, according to Suvin (1998), placing the focus on the opposing agent "leads to a direct linkage with a potentially readerly stance. Thus, some texts intended (and internally marked) as

utopian or dystopian can be received by readers as utopian or dystopian according to their own aesthetic and political judgments" (2000: 155). Thus, in the author's view, we can examine a dystopia in terms of its narrative and counter-narrative structure, with the latter referring to the opposing discourse, in order to track how its textual *novum* "generates internal innovation in and through its narrative trajectories and ending" (2000: 156). Along these lines, another compelling definition of dystopia in analytical terms was set forth by Claeys (2017). This author defines a dystopia "as primarily concerned with portraying societies where a substantial majority suffer slavery and/or oppression as a result of human action" (2017: 290).

The term dystopia has traditionally been attributed to John Stuart Mill (1868), yet the notion had already appeared in a letter to the editor in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in September of 1748, when the word was coined to suggest the inverted and negative meaning of utopia in a poem praising Chesterfield's administration in Ireland, and warning about the imminent socio-political disorder that would follow his departure (Budakov, 2010). Along these lines, dystopian fiction envisions an uncertain future based on contemporary events: "dystopian narratives are also historically aware, responding to present conditions and informed by knowledge of historical events and traumas" (Stock, 2019: 2). In the author's view, dystopian narratives are politicised discourses which, as rhetorical structures, can help readers contemplate the political issues of their time: "grounded in anxieties of their present, these political engaged narratives mobilise knowledge of historic events and traumas to speculate upon consequences of current trends and actions for the future" (2019: 3). Specifically, Rosenfeld (2021) notes that the values denied by dystopias are the humanistic precepts of reason and debate.

Along the same lines as Stock (2019), the most relevant feature of dystopia, according to Moylan (2000b), lies in its ability to make us reflect on the causes of wrongdoing: "Crucial to dystopian vision in all its manifestations is this ability to register the impact of an unseen and unexamined social system on the everyday lives" (2010: xiii). In short, dystopian narratives are an outgrowth of the terrors of the 20th century (Moylan, 2000a: xi): "exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination" (Moylan, 2000a: xi). Dystopia is presented as the result of human wrongdoing (Tower Sargent, 2013). However, although the images of the future presented in dystopias can lead the reader to despair, the main purpose of this genre is didactic and moralistic. In the same vein, Stock (2019) argues that dystopias are politically engaged narratives and "mobilise knowledge of historic events and traumas to speculate upon consequences of current trends and actions for the future" (2019: 3). The future society is presented as a real possibility because the aim of a dystopia is to frighten the reader and make them understand that things can go well or badly depending on the moral, social and civic responsibility of the citizens (Viera, 2010): "these are not just ways of imagining the future (or the past) but can also be understood as concrete practices through which historically situated actors seek to reimagine their present and transform it into a plausible future" (Gordin, Tilley y Prakash, 2010: 3).

Thus, the authors reviewed agree in pointing out the socio-political, speculative, and ideological components of dystopias. In particular, Trotta and Sadri define the genre "as fiction that explores social or political struggle" (2020: 4). These authors note that the power structures in these stories continue to function, at times in a way that seems orderly and efficient, yet at times they appear to be on the verge of collapse.

According to Levitas (2011) and Rosenfeld (2020), there are dystopias of various political ideologies. Therefore, the undesirable power structure (or lack thereof) will vary according to the author's values.

In this vein, the definition or description of utopias and dystopias has generated widespread academic discussion, due to the fact that what is considered socially optimistic or disastrous may vary according to the socio-cultural context, as well as the different ideologies of the individuals in question (Claeys, 2022). Therefore, utopia may refer to an ideal society, as an example, yet the features that comprise such a society is still a point of disagreement (Greene, 2011). According to Sargisson (2011), as these are hermeneutical texts, both utopian and dystopian texts are useful for political workings, as they are realms in which we can envision alternative solutions to problems of the present: "The negative criticizes while the positive creates or imagines something new" (2011: 41-42).

Continuing this line of thought, Sargisson (2011) and Levitas (2011) argue that dystopian narratives are linked to political ideology, because they help us shape our hopes for the future, which occurs with utopian texts as well: "socialism contains utopias of egalitarianism and liberalism seeks various (economic, social, and political) utopias of freedom. This aspect of utopianism (and this aspect of ideology) brings hope to politics: the hope and desire that things can be different" (2011: 42). Thus, there are utopias and dystopias of different political ideologies, such as the extreme right, socialists, and feminists (Levitas, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2020). In a utopia we make the correct political and ideological choices and create a free and prosperous society, while in a dystopia we are deprived of these benefits (Claeys, 2013).

In summary, what is striking is the overtly ideological nature of this genre, as well as the importance of the different roles involved in the narrative, which will be addressed in the proposed analysis template.

Objectives

Having mentioned the main precepts of the genre, we will now develop the objectives of this study:

- O1. Develop an analytical tool to systematically study the presence of ideologemes in television and film dystopias.
 - O1.1. Identify the main dystopian topics.
 - O1.2. Determine the main opinions of the characters regarding the dystopia.
 - O1.3. Identify the main ideologemes of the core ideology.

Methodology

Before presenting our research design, we believe it is important to offer a precise definition of content analysis and the essential features it must have in order to be used properly. Berelson (1949) defines content analysis as a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication content; Ole R. Holsti (1968) describes it as a method for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specific characteristics of messages; Fred N. Kerlinger (1986) sees it as a tool for studying and analysing communication systematically, quantitatively and objectively in order to measure the variables of a message. As such, these definitions highlight the exhaustive, objective, and quantitative nature of content analysis (Lasswell, 1949; Berelson, 1949; Holsti; 1968; Kerlinger, 1986; Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2005).

In short, as stated by Krippendorff (1990), content analysis is a quantitative data collection technique that aims to make an objective and exhaustive measurement of a fragment of reality selected by the researcher, which allows inferences and generalisations to be made from the data through statistical techniques. Now that this technique has been defined and its main characteristics clarified, we will offer details regarding an essential part of this research: the design.

In the case at hand, which is the presence of political ideologies in television dystopias, the language of the data must enable us to detect the ideologemes or, in other words, the ideological values embedded in the thematic units collected, and the dystopian aspects of the narrative, based on the topics of the genre and the actions of the characters. To understand the themes of the dystopia, the topics that permeate the scenes analysed should be pointed out, an example of which is totalitarianism. Moreover, the stance taken by the characters in this regard should also be considered, in order to identify the type of dystopia in question within which the object of study is located. Specifically, the dystopian themes and stances of the characters proposed in the analysis sheet belong to benchmark literature regarding the genre, including the following: *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Thomas Moylan, 2000); *The Dystopian Imagination in contemporary Spanish Literature and Film* (Diana Q. Palardy, 2018); *Dystopian Visions and Utopian Anticipation: Terry Bisson's Pirates of the Universe as Critical Dystopia* (Peter G. Stillman, 2001); *Handmaids, Tributes and Careers: Dystopian Females' Roles and Goals* (edited by Myrna Santos, 2018); and *Dystopia: a Natural History* (Gregory Claeys, 2018).

Once we ascertained the theme and the character's position regarding the dystopia, we were especially interested in knowing the ideologeme that pervades the scene, such as individualism, tradition, etc. Next, the quantification of this data provided information regarding the inclination of the ideological content of the story. Each political ideology consists of a series of ideologemes. For example, the ecological ideology can be broken down into the ideologemes of sustainability, holism, and environmental ethics, and the reiteration of values allows us to know the ideology of each character, as long as the dystopia makes a coherent ideological description of the characters. In other words, following the logic of Krippendorff (1990), the frequency with which the ideologemes appear is useful in ascertaining the consequent ideology. The ideologemes that support the analysis sheet and the coding book have been taken from the following works: *Ideologías y movimientos políticos contemporáneos* [contemporary ideologies and political movements] (ed. by Antón Mellón and Torres, 2008; 2020); *Political Ideologies: an Introduction* (Heywood, 2012); and *Feminismos: la historia* [the history of feminism] (Moreno Balaguer, 2019). On the other hand, on some occasions more specific bibliographic material has been used to define the ideologemes, including the following: *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism* (Rottenberg, 2020), which is useful for certain ideologemes of post-feminist liberalism; "Patriotism as Fundamental Beliefs of Group Members", which is an article regarding nationalism (Bar-Tal, 1993); and *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind* (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), which pertains to the ideologeme of liberal individualism.

Before detailing the codebook, we should mention the reliability and validity of the instrument, which are requirements for replicating the content analysis. To this end, two experts in this technique were asked to validate the instrument. Secondly, the purpose of intercoder reliability is to achieve a high level of agreement between two coders who were provided with the measuring instrument and instructions for coding the same number of analysis units. To check the level of agreement obtained from the coded sample, we have chosen to use Cohen's Kappa index from among other options, as it allows for randomness. The final results obtained

from the formula range from 0 (no agreement) to 1 (maximum agreement), with a minimum of 0.81 (nearly perfect) (Abraira, 2000), which is necessary for the variables to be considered valid. Two external researchers who were not part of the study were asked to collaborate on the test as well.

The results of the two tests validated the proposed analysis sheet. In order for the experts to make a sound judgment, the evaluation template developed by Escobar-Pérez and Cuervo-Martínez (2008) was adapted for this purpose. In this case, most of the items received the highest possible score, which is four. Items that were marked at the intermediate level were reworked, and some suggestions from the experts were added. Once the template was corrected, it was sent to the coders for the second test. In this test, the reliability percentages were as follows: character role (0.93), theme (1), character stance (0.72) and ideologemes (0.81). Thus, the only variable that failed the test was character stance. In order to solve this dilemma, the principal investigator met with the coders of the test and proceeded to combine the two items that had caused problems due to their strong similarity.

Having presented the theoretical arguments and methodological soundness of the analytical instrument, we proceeded to explain how the codebook could be used to systematically examine television dystopias. In the last section of results, we have applied the coding sheet proposed to the show *The Purge*.

Results

Using the codebook to analyse dystopias

- *Role of the character (the person who performs the action in the scene)*

Oppressed: the character who participates in the narrative as an individual without power.

Opressor: the character who exercises power.

Undefined. The role of the character in the scene cannot be determined.

- *The person involved in the scene*

1. The oppressed
2. The oppressor
3. Undefined

- *Character code*

Code designation of the main characters involved in the narrative. For example:

1. Wilson
2. Julia
3. Others. Characters who do not appear regularly

Dystopian theme of the scene

Based on the dystopian thematic blocks, it is important to ascertain whether the scenes analysed contain any of the following features:

1. Totalitarianism: a repressive and authoritarian government that controls all aspects of citizens' private and public lives.

2. Free market capitalism: In this dystopian world, society is controlled by large corporations, which run business conglomerates and control the government by essentially owning both legislators and regulatory agencies. Here, big business often engages in mass manipulation of the population.
3. Economic austerity: governmental policies that focus on reducing public spending, or in other words, phasing out public services such as health care and education. Austerity could lead to privatisation, which might result in the weakening or dissolution of the state, or a situation in which the remains of the state is controlled by political parties.
4. Excess consumption: compulsive spending on unnecessary products.
5. Militarisation: the military, or military-industrial complex of a country, controls the nation.
6. Imperialism: the domination of territory, carried out by foreign governments, through aggressive conquest.
7. Environmental damage: the uncontrolled exploitation of the earth's natural resources has resulted in destruction of the ecosystem, and humanity is in danger of extinction.
8. Socio-economic inequality: the population is divided into stratified social classes. The class to which an individual belongs, whether segregated by gender, profession or ethnicity, determines their economic potential, and there is considerable inequality between the classes.
9. Precariousness: the lack of resources prevents people from having a comfortable and stable life; for example, they might have to sleep outdoors or sell their own body as a service. Although these actions are degrading for the individuals, they are portrayed as resulting from free choice, or in other words, the actions of these people are allegedly not imposed by some higher authority.
10. Corruption: members of public institutions sell favours in exchange for material goods, money, or other benefits for themselves.
11. Exploitation: the use of people for personal gain. Similar to slavery, exploitation is any type of abuse that debilitates the abused person for the sole benefit of the perpetrator.
12. Technological advance: development of technological science. In short, new technologies threaten not only the social fabric and ecological stability, but also the very meaning and existence of human life on earth.
13. Other: any additional dystopia not covered in the previous points.
14. No dystopian theme was identified.

Character stance

In this section, the character's stance regarding the above dystopian theme is noted:

1. Gratitude toward the dominant system: the character feels proud or happy about the current situation and, most importantly, expresses this attitude through his or her speech and actions.
2. Criticism of the dominant system: the character feels displeased or upset with the government, yet does not want to actively participate in overthrowing the regime.
3. Conformance to the ruling structure: the character is indifferent and conforms to the purge and the current system of government. In other words, he or she neither argues in favour of nor against the power structure.

4. Search for alternatives to the ruling system: there is resistance to the system, and the character actively searches for ways to overthrow it by engaging in activism to criticize the establishment. In this situation, the individual tries to fight against his or her oppressors.
5. Despair: this feeling results from a desire to overthrow the dominant regime, but the character has stopped trying, as he or she considers it impossible.
6. Peer support networks: associations of ordinary people comprised of citizens not belonging to the ruling class, who try to support each other in overcoming oppression. In this case, the character does not try to overthrow the system, nor criticise it, but simply tries to survive.
7. Positive personal experiences within the dominant system: more than general support for the system, they draw on past experiences to defend it (e.g. upward social mobility is mentioned as an example).
8. Negative personal experiences within the ruling structure: the character does not support the system because of past experiences; for example, the death of a loved one during the purge.
9. Undetermined: no definite stance on the dystopia can be observed.
10. Other: specify in "remarks".

- *Ideologemes*

These are coded for cases in which the character contemplates, guides, or takes action based on one of the following principles:

(Progressive liberalism)

1. Individualism: In operational terms, the distinction made by Hofstede (2005) between individual and collective cultures is useful. Individualism can be defined as people caring only for themselves and their immediate family. In such cultures people rely on themselves without depending on the community, and self-actualisation is important. Individualism is the cornerstone of progressive liberalism, but with the understanding that public support networks exist to address social inequalities.
2. Freedom: the right of every individual to pursue their own interests (choice of religious belief, profession, etc.) without being persecuted (Heywood, 2012).
3. Rationality: the ability of human beings to define their own interests rationally and successfully (Heywood, 2012). In liberalism, rationality gives priority to the value of education, and conflicts are resolved through dialogue and the rejection of violence (Rivero, 2008).
4. Legal justice and equality: This consists of equality and meritocracy. It implies that in a welfare state, all individuals in a society must have equal opportunity to develop their abilities, which are rewarded based on their effort and worth (Heywood, 2012). In addition, regulatory laws of a country are also essential, which are epitomised in the Constitution (Rivero, 2008).
5. Tolerance and diversity: the willingness to accept views and actions with which a person does not agree (Heywood, 2012).

(Conservatism)

6. Tradition: this either refers to religious beliefs or to accumulated knowledge from the past. The institutions and customs of the past have stood the test of time and should therefore be preserved for the benefit of future generations (Heywood, 2012).

7. Human imperfection: human beings are psychologically limited and dependent; therefore, hierarchies and traditions are important in society, where rules and laws are not intended to suppress freedom, but to guarantee public order (Rivero, 2008).

8. Organic society: this concept states that society, which offers security to dependent individuals, is similar to a living organism where each part fulfils an unchanging and hierarchical role. If society is organic, its structures and institutions have been shaped by forces beyond human control and understanding; therefore, they must be preserved by those who live within it (Rivero, 2008).

9. Hierarchy and authority: Conservatives argue that society is hierarchical and unequal. In conservatism, as inequalities are organic, authority and discipline necessarily become part of the organism: "Leadership is a vital component of any society, since it provides direction and offers inspiration for others" (Heywood, 2012: 76). As humans are imperfect and dependent, they need authority to guide them.

10. Private property: as an extension of individuals themselves, property is a human achievement. Private property is synonymous with respect and social status (Heywood, 2012).

(Nationalism)

11. Ethnic nationality: This refers to the importance of ethnic unity and a shared history, implying that nations are characterised by a common ancestry that forges powerful bonds among their citizens. The inhabitants of a nation share a set of values that differentiate them from people of other nations, such as a common language, religion, or other traditions (Heywood, 2012).

12. Civic nation: implies the importance of civic consciousness and patriotic loyalty. From this perspective, nations can be multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, etc. What is important is the loyalty of their citizens. Moreover, they blur the distinction between nation and state, and between nationality and citizenship (Heywood, 2012).

13. Natural division between nations: Humanity is naturally subdivided into a set of nations, each of which possesses a distinctive character and a separate identity (Anton, 2008).

14. Patriotism: emotional attachment to the nation based on a sense of belonging and love of country; for example, this might be reflected in positive feelings toward the country's flag or anthem (Bar-Tal, 1993).

15. Sovereignty and self-determination: This indicates popular sovereignty. In other words, the principle that people have the power to choose their government, which is expressed in an unchanging legal authority, or as unquestionable political power (Heywood, 2012).

16. Militarism: the need for armed forces with an efficient hierarchical organisation to defend a country's sovereignty against potential external threats, thereby resolving the conflicts inherent in human nature (Enloe, 2004). Contemplating the words of Heywood (2012) regarding the fine line that separates nationalism and ultra-nationalism from fascism, it should be noted that nationalistic militarism does not advocate the militarisation of the civilian population, as sometimes occurs in fascism, but rather the usefulness of the institution in safeguarding national interests.

(Socialism)

17. Working-class community: the idea of the collective is embodied in a unified vision of human beings as having a social nature, capable of overcoming their problems by relying on the strength of the community rather than solely on individual effort (Heywood, 2012).

18. Cooperation from the bottom up: as opposed to competition, the desire to contribute to the common good compels individuals to make a strong effort, developing a sense of solidarity and responsibility toward others, especially those in need (Heywood, 2012). This point does not take into account those who carry out this system without bureaucracy or political parties, which would be anarchism.

19. Social equality: this implies both economic and social equality, or in other words, a fair arrangement that fosters solidarity and cooperation, which is the basis of self-actualisation of the individual (Heywood, 2012). "A truly free society would imply not only legal and political equality, but would also require a certain level of economic and social equality" (Sotelo, 2008: 80).

20. Class consciousness: in this aspect, the interests of the working class are important, as they engage in a political struggle through association in order to achieve human emancipation (Heywood, 2012).

21. Collective property: private property is considered unjust and is seen as the cause of competition and inequality among humans. Regarding the solution, within socialism there are different approaches to property, ranging from its total eradication, as anarchism recommends (Taibo, 2013), to the nationalisation of property proposed by communism (Heywood, 2012).

(Anarchism)

22. Rejection of all forms of authority and exploitation: Taibo (2013) lists the main institutions that anarchism rejects, such as state, church, capitalism, inequality, patriarchal society, war, militarism, etc. In short, anarchism is a "political and ideological expression of marginalised social sectors" (Botella, Ángels Rodríguez and Luján, 2020: 100) within the existing establishment.

23. Defence of a society based on equality and freedom: human beings are naturally good, yet they are defiled by the corruption and exploitation of the aforementioned institutions. However, when there is neither a state nor oppressive economic structures, and people live in a situation of freedom, "these undesirable elements will disappear, and the sociability inherent in human nature will be fully manifested" (Botella, Ángels Rodríguez and Luján, 2020: 101).

24. Free association from below: anarchism defends direct action, or "the actions we take to lead ourselves without outside intervention from political parties, bureaucracy and governments, the aim of which is to manage and control our own lives" (Taibo, 2013: 58). On this point, it should be kept in mind that this association does not struggle against a specific law or proposal. Rather, it is a way of life that advocates permanent self-management or, in other words, it searches for structure and organisation outside of capitalism and the state.

(Radical feminism)

25. Patriarchy: Feminists use the concept of patriarchy to describe the unequal power relationship between men and women due to the roles imposed on the female gender. The patriarchal regime refers to the dominance of the father within the family and symbolises male supremacy in all other institutions, including both physical and symbolic violence. Radical feminism aims to overthrow the system and organise a new one that eliminates gender (Moreno Balaguer, 2019).

26. Sorority: radical feminism is a collective based on networks of support and understanding among women to combat social injustice, including inequality linked to the patriarchal capitalist system (Moreno Balaguer, 2019).

27. The myth of romantic love: like gender, the way a person should love and maintain sentimental relationships is a cultural construct that has varied according to each era, which has been described as one of the main roles of women's lives, but much less so for men. The current concept of romantic love is "a set of beliefs that help reinforce dependent and abusive relationships from the perspective that a couple must stay together in the name of love, even if there is violent behaviour present" (Moreno Balaguer, 2019: 15). Radical feminism criticises this type of emotional relationship; therefore, this category will be codified when a critical assessment is made of romantic love.

(Liberal feminism)

28. Legal and political equality between men and women: Like liberalism, liberal feminism is content with the capitalist system. Nevertheless, it seeks to rectify the system through legal means to achieve gender equality. With an individualist point of view, "The common theme of liberal feminism is a denial of the need for militant resistance to an oppressive system. We don't need to fight men, only our conditioning. We don't need to attack the economic system; we too can make it" (Willis, 1978: 170). According to Rottenberg (2020), legal and political equality is evolving within neoliberal feminism toward the idea of finding contentment in the balance between family and work, and the defence of these assumptions by upper-class women: "According to this approach, by rejecting the socio-economic and cultural structures that shape their lives, feminists accept full responsibility for their own well-being based on their ability to create a balance between work and family" (2020: 51).

29. Sexual liberation: liberal feminism is associated with consumerism and women's sexualisation, or in other words, the importance of choosing freely without experiencing social bias (Moreno Balaguer, 2019).

(Fascism)

30. Anti-rationalism: opposed to ideas of the Enlightenment, fascism appeals to emotion, discipline and primal instincts (Heywood, 2012).

31. Social Darwinism: the idea that life is a permanent conflict in which the weak must be eliminated (Heywood, 2012).

32. Charismatic leadership: human beings are by nature unequal and fulfil different roles in society; the most important is the leader, who is designated according to his or her nearly superhuman qualities and unquestionable nature (Heywood, 2012).

33. Ultra-nationalism: Fascism is chauvinistic and expansionist imperialism, which uses its ideal of nationhood to justify any actions against those who might harm or endanger its interests (Heywood, 2012).

(Neoliberalism)

34. Wage reduction: Neoliberalism has a fundamental belief in the free market: If you want to maximise social welfare, you must increase trade and finance. In other words, the market is the backbone for achieving social welfare (Harvey, 2007: 10). In the same vein, defenders of neoliberalism assert that entrepreneurial growth is linked to improvements for employees as well, and that the maximum freedom of both will have a positive impact on individuals as a whole. Thus, in order to create employment, wages must be reduced to encourage employers to create more jobs (Antón, 2020).

35. Reduction of social benefits: There is a quote from former Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher, who was an early advocate of neoliberalism together with US President Ronald Reagan. The quote encapsulates the essence of the neoliberal spirit as follows: "You know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first" (*The Guardian*, 2013: n.p). As an advocate of extreme individualism, neoliberalism foments the dismantling of the welfare state: individuals must fulfil their needs by themselves, regardless of their circumstances.

36. Fiscal counter-reform: linked to the foregoing, neoliberalism advocates the elimination of taxes. The economy progresses efficiently when citizens have more money in their pockets to spend in the private market and, as a result, society advances (Antón, 2020).

37. Deregulation and the free market: To increase economic growth, there should be no state intervention in the private market, as entrepreneurs are fully capable of regulating themselves and benefiting the economy (Antón, 2020).

38. Privatisation: In keeping with its faith in the market, neoliberalism supports privatisation, or the dismantling of the public sector (Antón, 2020).

(Environmentalism)

39. Sustainability: consumption of the Earth's natural resources must be balanced and responsible for the people who inhabit it (Tello, 2008).

40. Holism: environmentalism implies defending the well-being of all species that inhabit the planet and sends the message that humans should care for and respect the Earth (Heywood, 2012).

41. Environmental ethics: in the interest of creating a better world for the future, environmentalism proposes current moral obligations that emphasise the need to make sacrifices in the present (Heywood, 2012).

(Religious fundamentalism)

42. Religion as politics: In the most general sense, a religion is an organised community of people united by a set of shared beliefs concerning some kind of spiritual reality. In religious fundamentalism, the result of these mutual convictions is to reject the separation between church and state. Proponents believe that religious principles should not be limited to private life, but instead should be used to organise a collective public life, which would include the judicial system, social conduct, and political organisation (Heywood, 2012).

43. Dogmatic fundamentalist beliefs: Fundamentalism is an ideology in which certain principles are recognised as essential truths that have unquestioned authority, regardless of their content. Religious scriptures are read and interpreted rigidly, which conveys reassurance to followers by providing perfect solutions to their problems (Heywood, 2012).

44. Anti-modernism: Although they are not reluctant to use new technology to expand their ideology, fundamentalism supports a traditional and moralistic view of human existence. To achieve the desired level of piety, the group must reject carnal or worldly sin, such as greed and avarice. Although their advocacy of a traditional way of life is similar to that of conservatism, the difference is that fundamentalism rejects social hierarchies (Heywood, 2012).

45. Militancy: Being rooted in their religious community and having faith in their beliefs gives fundamentalists a strong sense of belonging, which leads the believers to see themselves as proud militants with a purpose: to help others find the sacred path of scripture (Heywood, 2012).

(Other)

46. When no ideologeme is detected: Sometimes the character does not display any ideological attitude in the scene.

Coding sheet

Having presented the theoretical arguments of the analytical instrument, we exemplified the coding sheet as follows in attachment 1.

Discussion

The Purge as a case study

The television series in question is part of a larger film franchise of the same name, called *The Purge* (Amazon Prime: 2018-2019). To offer a brief description, the series envisions the United States ruled by The New Founding Fathers, a political organisation that has legally stipulated that one night per year all crime, including murder, is allowed. Due to limited space, we will summarize the content analysis applied of 1169 units of analysis (two seasons) on three tables, which are explained below.

According to the results of the study, the ideologemes that have obtained a greater presence in the role of the oppressed in the first season are those related to liberalism - Rationality and individualism primarily - with patriarchy and sorority of radical feminism. In the second season, the values of liberalism - Rationality and individualism - have prevailed, followed by the ideologemes of socialism, class consciousness and working-class community. Thus, in the second season the ideologemes of radical feminism have disappeared while those associated with socialism have acquired greater prominence. However, what the two ideologies share is the emphasis on collaboration to survive the night. In the first season, the ideologeme of sorority stands out, with the Santas Matronas patrolling the night and helping women in danger. In the second, Esme Carmona and Darren rely on the community to uncover the NFFA. On the other hand, both seasons have featured liberalism with economically well-off characters who have maintained an ambivalent relationship towards the Purge. In this vein, although publicly reticent about the event, in the first season the Betancourt couple is tempted to negotiate with the NFFA, and Jane Barbour hires a professional purger, although at the last moment she regrets it. In the second season, the Moore couple doesn't worry about the repercussions of the Purge until it's their turn to suffer them.

If rationality has been one of the predominant ideologemes in the role of the oppressed, the anti-rationalism of fascism has been one of the outstanding values of the oppressor, especially in the second season. Conservatism has been another of the ideologies with prominence in the oppressor narrative, with human imperfection at the forefront in both seasons. Finally, ideologemes of religious fundamentalism - dogmatic fundamentalist beliefs, militancy and religion as politics -, ethnic nationalism and neoliberalism - reduction of social benefits and deregulation and free markets - have been prominent in the first season.

In both seasons, the oppressors of *The Purge* series are characterized by shielding themselves in the value of violence to achieve greater social purity. Anti-rationalism has served the eugenic ends proposed by the NFFA, with the Stantons at the head, a wealthy family that proclaims the Purge as the greatest contemporary liquidator (of unwanted social classes). In the first season it has been seen that the NFFA use different ways to gain the favour of the people, being religious recruitment one of their most appealing proclamations. In this sense, they have convinced a vulnerable sector of the population that surrendering during the night is a guarantee of obtaining eternal happiness. Likewise, in these episodes we meet prominent members of the NFFA, the aforementioned Stanton, who defend neoliberal and conservative values. It is worth remembering another aspect of the Purge, and that is that the message that initiates it already foretells the complete support, with the withdrawal of all social service, of the festivity to the implementation of a neoliberal system.

As for the positions of the characters with respect to the Purge, in the role of the oppressed, criticism of the dominant system has been prevalent in both seasons. In the second season, the second most prominent position has been peer support networks, while in the first season is the search for alternatives to the dominant system, followed closely by negative personal experiences within the system. In the second, the positions are occupied by conformity with respect to the dominant system, negative personal experiences within the system and the search for alternatives to the dominant system. Finally, the most residual values in the first season were conformity to the dominant system, positive personal experiences within the system and hopelessness. In reference to the role of oppressor, the most predominant role in the two seasons has been gratitude to the dominant system.

In consideration of the themes of *The Purge* exploitation has been a prevalent topic through the two seasons. In the first, the following with a higher degree of appearance are precariousness, socioeconomic inequalities, and economic austerity. In the second: totalitarianism, economic austerity, corruption, and socioeconomic inequalities. In this regard, in both seasons the Purge has been characterized as a holiday that exploits the weak, or undesirables of society in the words of the NFFA. In the first season, the prominence of the Stanton family and the Tavis cult is evidence that society is stratified by social classes and that precarity is the hallmark of one of them. The Stantons are strong advocates of the free market and promote a government in which the state intervenes as little as possible to facilitate the movement of private money, promulgating the Purge as a useful tool to eliminate the economically inefficient subjects of society. On the other hand, in the second season we learn how the society works behind the sirens and we discover that the NFFA are watching tightly behind cameras strategically installed throughout society. In this way, free expression is subordinated to the margins imposed by the New Founding Fathers, and criticism of the system is harshly persecuted by extrajudicial means.

To conclude this section of results, we will now present the overall data for the two seasons analysed:

Table 2: Ideologemes

	Oppressed	Oppressor	Undefined	Total number
Individualism	64,71	0,00	35,29	17
Freedom	50,00	33,33	16,67	6

Rationality	90,91	0,00	9,09	33
Legal justice and equality	44,44	22,22	33,33	9
Tolerance and diversity	57,14	14,29	28,57	7
Tradition	0,00	85,71	14,29	7
Human imperfection	16,00	80,00	4,00	25
Organic society	0,00	100,00	0,00	4
Hierarchy and authority	20,00	80,00	0,00	5
Private property	14,29	71,43	14,29	7
Ethnic nationality	15,38	69,23	15,38	13
Civic nation	100,00	0,00	0,00	3
Natural division between nations	0,00	100,00	0,00	3
Militarism	66,67	0,00	33,33	3
Working-class community	95,00	0,00	5,00	20
Cooperation from the bottom up	100,00	0,00	0,00	1
Class consciousness	85,00	0,00	15,00	20
Patriarchy	90,91	9,09	0,00	11
Sorority	100,00	0,00	0,00	9
The myth of romantic love	55,56	0,00	44,44	9
Legal and political equality between men and women	0,00	20,00	80,00	5
Anti-rationalism	0,00	100,00	0,00	40
Social-darwinism	0,00	100,00	0,00	4
Wage reduction	40,00	20,00	40,00	5
Reduction of social benefits	44,44	33,33	22,22	9
Fiscal counter-reform	0,00	100,00	0,00	1
Deregulation and the free market	0,00	75,00	25,00	4
Religion as politics	0,00	100,00	0,00	1
Dogmatic fundamentalist beliefs	26,67	73,33	0,00	15
Militancy	77,78	11,11	11,11	9
No ideologeme	60,88	22,11	17,01	864
Total	669	314	186	1169

Table 3: character stance

	Oppressed	Oppressor	Undetermined	Total number
Gratitude toward the dominant system	2,06	96,71	1,23	243
Criticism of the dominant system	98,45	0,78	0,78	258
Conformance to the ruling structure	44,57	31,52	23,91	184

Search for alternatives to the ruling system	100,00	0,00	0,00	93
Despair	100,00	0,00	0,00	2
Peer support networks	100,00	0,00	0,00	95
Positive personal experiences within the dominant system	17,65	52,94	29,41	17
Negative personal experiences within the ruling structure	92,86	2,68	4,46	112
Undetermined	19,02	4,29	76,69	163
Other	0,00	0,00	100,00	2
Total	669	314	186	1169

Table 4: dystopia

	Total	Percentage
Totalitarianism	148	12,66
Economic austerity	75	6,42
Excess consumption	23	1,97
Socio-economic inequality	95	8,13
Precariousness	88	7,53
Corruption	56	4,79
Exploitation	429	36,70
No dystopian theme was identified	255	21,81
Total	1169	100

Source: own elaboration

The Purge depicts a fictional United States, not too far from our present, governed by The New Founding Fathers of America (NFFA), a political organization whose main representatives in the series, the Stantons and secondary propagandist Bobby Sheridan, defend neoliberal, conservative, nationalist, fascist and religious fundamentalist ideologies. In this sense, they promulgate that the Purge is a tradition bound to the American dream that reinforces American identity through the healing practice of violence. In practice, as Albert Stanton mentions, the Purge is a social liquidator that removes the economically weaker subjects from the community and, following Pete the cop's claim, saves the state millions in welfare payments. Thus, we can affirm that one of the ideological themes that the series deals with is the fusion of neoliberalism and fascism. This union between these right-wing ideologies leads to the erosion of social democracy; a bankruptcy whose maximum splendour is reached during the night of the Purge with all social services withdrawn.

In our theoretical framework we briefly contextualize social democracy as one of the weakest forms of socialism, an ideology that coexists with capitalism, but palliates the inequalities caused by capitalism with strong state support and social protection. For greater concreteness, Ben Jackson (2013) points out that,

contrary to the advocates of neoliberalism, social democrats oppose the power of unregulated market forces, perceived as values that sweep away community bonds, create inequalities and entrench economic tyranny:

Social democracy can be defined as an ideology which prescribes the uses of democratic collective action to extend the principles of freedom and equality valued by democrats in the political sphere to the organization of the economy and society, chiefly by opposing the inequality and oppression created by laissez-faire capitalism (2013, pp. 348).

In this way, social democracy endorses a watered-down capitalist economy in which state forces possess a great deal of scope for action that can mitigate the social inequalities that the private market can provoke. In *The Purge*, the defence of social democratic ideas is reinforced by the ideologemes defended by the narrative's oppressed. In this sense, the characters framed in the role of the oppressed have only partially defended the ideological values of socialism, as the values associated with the working class community and class consciousness have predominated in the analysis while the ideologeme of common property has not made an appearance. In fact, the ideologemes with a higher percentage of appearance in the role of the oppressed have been those associated with liberalism, individualism and reason. In this sense, the series makes a critique of economic *laissez faire* through the ambiguity of some oppressed characters towards the Purge. For example, in the first season we find the Betancourt couple, young businessmen who decide to ally with the Stantons to move up the social ladder; although with a dramatic ending, the couple was willing to accept the "devil's money" if it helped them achieve their business interests.

The Purge is thus a critique of the out-of-control private market, a statement agreed by several authors who have studied the film saga, such as Armstrong (2019) or Pineda and Sánchez-Gutiérrez (2021), who state that the critique of capitalism and the contrast between rich and poor runs through the entire franchise. Thus, in the opinion of the researchers, and in line with the results of the analysis of the series, The Purge films represent a radicalized neoliberal fictional United States that, on the other hand, is in line with the American political sphere: "it could be said that The Purge is a commentary on the ultra-right and anti-social drift of the Republican Party" (2021: 225). The above also leads us to the origins of neoliberal ideology: the US-British experiment led by economist Milton Friedman and his Chicago Boys in Chile, where the governments supported the coup d'état against Salvador Allende (Harvey, 2007).

Having exposed the overall data regarding the value system that criticizes the series, let us specify the typology of dystopia in which *The Purge* is framed. Claeys defines dystopia "as primarily concerned to a portray societies where a substantial majority suffer slavery and/or oppression as a result of human action" (2017, pp. 290). In *The Purge* there is a clear elitist minority, The New Founding Fathers and donors, who support the Purge as a system of socioeconomic purification. In this regard, it can be stated that the television series *The Purge* is situated within the critical dystopias, with a combination of dystopian themes with an open and militant ending that make the narrative a space of contestation towards the neoliberal ideological system. As its creator, DeMonaco, points out:

I also think that because of the nature of what Purge 4 and 5 became, I was really being inspired by the events of the country when they were written, even more than the previous story. The DNA of the sociopolitical landscape seeped into the writing. It was inevitable. The Purge is a political conceit. Everything that was starting to happen in our country, with the state of discord and dissonance amongst political parties and people seeped its way in (in Radish, 2021. w/p).

Conclusions

This paper has presented and exemplified a content analysis framework that can be replicated for the study of political ideologies in dystopian fiction. As such, the analysis sheet can be used to examine specific dystopias, as well as to carry out longitudinal studies for the purpose of understanding the main characteristics of narratives on certain platforms or from specific decades.

As part of this conclusion, we will suggest certain issues related to narrative theory in order to approach the coding with the best possible guarantee. In the case of television series or films, the units of analysis can be scenes or, in other words, narrative events and conflicts that alter the values in the life of the character in a relatively continuous time and space (McKee, 2009). Narrative theory also helps us distinguish how stories are told, which is especially relevant to our study. Along these lines, depending on how the narrative is expressed and the selection of characters who have their own opinions, the story leads the viewer to feel empathy for some characters, yet not for others. Chatman (1990) distinguishes between three points of view: literal (through someone's gaze); figurative (from someone's ideology or belief system); and transferred (by someone's stance on health, profit, well-being, etc.).

Once the features of a narrative have been explained, along with its fragmentation in the story and the point of view from which it is told, we go on to explain the units that become more prominent in the story: namely, the characters and settings. Casetti and di Chio (1991) define setting as "the collection of all the features in the plot that serves as the background; in other words, it is what designs and fills the scene" (1991: 176). The purpose of setting is to place the characters in a space and time and contextualise their situation. In our study, for example, a depressing setting such as a demolished building, or one that is optimistic such as a flag waving in a lovely neighbourhood, can help us highlight the unique aspects of the social groups in the dystopia analysed. On the other hand, considering the variety of characters that can possibly appear in a television series or film, it is worth noting that scenes can be double coded by following an established numbering system; for example, if the first scene shows two characters with opposing views, that clip will have two analysis cards that allow us to distinguish the position of each one separately. Furthermore, Casetti and di Chio (1999) recommend coding only the characters who contribute content or meaning to the plot, leaving background characters out of the analysis.

Finally, with regard to coding the object of study, there are issues of sampling and Pearson's chi-square test. By using statistical techniques, content analysis enables a finite sample of a universe to be obtained, which can be used to infer information that can be extrapolated to the entire population. However, the researcher must decide whether or not to study all the units that comprise a population which, in our case, are the scenes of the story. The Pearson chi-square test is used to determine whether two categorical or nominal variables may or may not be related. For example, regarding the present study, it would be of interest to discover whether the characters' opinions about the dystopia are related to some of the ideologemes.

In closing, we would like to highlight some important aspects with regard to the application of the analysis sheet. Firstly, although we have pointed out that this type of study can be conducted using television series, the analysis sheet can also be replicated to analyse cinematic and literary narratives. In the case of literature, the units of analysis could be the paragraphs that comprise the book. Furthermore, due to the lack of content

analysis in terms of political ideology, we believe the worksheet could be used to study television series and films from genres other than dystopia. In this regard, the variables corresponding to the dystopian genre could be substituted by the generic features of the object of study. However, these items would have to be tested and validated by a new intercoder test, along with an assessment by experts.

In sum, this paper assumes that television series can be studied under the quantitative paradigm. Thus, as future lines of research we propose the replication of the coding table proposed for longitudinal studies of dystopian television series to know the predominant ideologemes in each historical period. Furthermore, the study of ideologemes can be applied by modifying the features of the dystopian genre by others such as drama or comedy.

Attachment 1 – Coding sheet

Coding sheet	
Date:	
Coder:	
Scene:	
Script:	
Iconography:	
Character´s name:	
Character´s role	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oppressed 2. Oppressor 3. Undefined
Dystopian theme of the scene	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Totalitarianism 2. Free market capitalism 3. Economic austerity 4. Excess consumption 5. Militarisation 6. Imperialism 7. Environmental damage 8. Socio-economic inequality 9. Precariousness 10. Corruption 11. Exploitation 12. Technological advance 13. Other 14. No dystopian theme was identified. 		
Character stance		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gratitude toward the dominant system 2. Criticism of the dominant system 3. Conformance to the ruling structure 4. Search for alternatives to the ruling system 5. Despair 6. Peer support networks 7. Positive personal experiences within the dominant system 8. Negative personal experiences within the ruling structure 9. Undetermined 10. Other 		
Ideologemes		
<p>Progressive liberalism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individualism 2. Freedom 3. Rationality 4. Legal justice and equality 5. Tolerance and diversity 	<p>Conservadurism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Tradition 7. Human imperfection 8. Organic society 9. Hierarchy and authority 10. Private property 	<p>Nationalism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Ethnic nationality 12. Civic nation 13. Natural division between nations 14. Patriotism 15. Sovereignty and self-determination 16. Militarism

<p>Socialism</p> <p>17. Working-class community 18. Cooperation from the bottom up 19. Social equality 20. Class consciousness 21. Collective property</p>	<p>Anarquism</p> <p>22. Rejection of all forms of authority and exploitation 23. Defence of a society based on equality and freedom 24. Free association from below</p>	<p>Radical feminism</p> <p>25. Patriarchy 26. Sorority 27. The myth of romantic love</p>
<p>Liberal feminism</p> <p>28. Legal and political equality between men and women 29. Sexual liberation</p>	<p>Fascism</p> <p>30. Anti-rationalism 31. Social darwinism 32. Charismatic leadership 33. Ultra-nationalism</p>	<p>Neoliberalism</p> <p>34. Wage reduction 35. Reduction of social benefits 36. Fiscal counter-reform 37. Deregulation and the free market 38. Privatisation</p>
<p>Environmentalism</p> <p>39. Sustainability 40. Holism 41. Environmental ethics</p>	<p>Religious fundamentalism</p> <p>42. Religion as politics 43. Dogmatic fundamentalist beliefs 44. Anti-modernism 45. Militancy</p>	<p>Without ideologemes</p> <p>46. When no ideologeme is detected</p>
<p>Remarks</p>		

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