A Corpus-stylistic approach to the language of fantasy TV series.

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Abstract

The language of literary fantasy has been amply studied, with extensive research on authors such as JR Tolkien or CS Lewis. However, the study of television language has now become a trend (Bednarek et al., 2021), though the scope of such research often encompasses a single TV show or does not focus on a genre alone. Given the renewed interest in all things fantasy, this paper is an attempt at analyzing the telecinematic language of fantasy from a stylistic perspective. First, I depart from a methodological and theoretical distinction that relies on Mandala (2010) and James & Mendlesohn's (2012) definitions and put forward a series of aspects that are to distinguish the genre of fantasy from others, especially science fiction. On the basis of this, I design my own corpus by sampling three episodes from eighteen fantasy TV shows. I use Wmatrix and consider both the POS (part-of-speech) and semantic components of the corpus. In doing so, I aim to determine whether fantasy TV series are characterized by particular linguistic features.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I study the language of fantasy television series from a corpus stylistic perspective to provide an initial description of the language and style employed in such artifacts. Television series have been defined as social and psychological phenomena (Bednarek, 2018), whereas telecinematic discourse has been acknowledged to provide us with a number of insights into society's shifting values over time and its perspectives on different issues (Csomay and Young, 2021). Likewise, fantasy has been considered by many as a genre for testing the limits of society and bringing otherness to the front (Adams, 2017), as well as 'the perfect literary mode in which to explore (and explode) our assumptions about "innate" values and "natural" social arrangements' (Lefanu, 1989: 13). Despite this, it has long been ignored by or considered an inappropriate object of study in academia (Mandala, 2010).

Specifically, I compare the language of 15 fantasy TV series against Davies' TV Corpus (2021). In doing so, I focus both on the parts-of-speech components and semantic categories to address the idiosyncratic characteristics of the genre when compared against general TV discourse. I use Wmatrix (Rayson, 2009) for this purpose and support my results by implementing different statistical measures, such as Log-likelihood (Dunning, 1993) and Log Ratio (Hardie, 2014). The Fantasy TV Corpus has been personally designed and compiled following the guidelines of different researchers of TV language and corpora such as Bednarek (2019), Veirano (2018), and Egbert and Baker (2021). I pay special attention to the findings of Bednarek (2018), since she puts forward one of the most detailed description of US TV dialogue up to date. However, instead of focusing on keyword lists as Bednarek (2018) does, I look at POS and semantic categories. My study is exploratory in nature and builds on what previous scholars have said with regard to the genre of fantasy or telecinematic discourse in general. I use such studies to further investigate their claims and so provide a preliminary description of the language of fantasy TV series as a whole.

2. The fantasy genre and TV language

A broad, generally accepted definition of fantasy as a genre simply does not exist despite many attempts. A number of authors, scholars, and critics have shared their views on what

it is that makes fantasy fantasy or which works belong to the genre. It is precisely this resistance to any definition that has caught the attention of theorists in the field such as Jackson, who considers that the value of fantasy resides precisely on its 'free-floating and escapist qualities' (Jackson, 1981: 1). Thus, it seems as if variability and heterogeneity are salient characteristics of the genre of fantasy.

I here turn to some of the major theorists in the field such as Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson, and Colin Manlove, who all agree that fantasy is 'about the construction of the impossible' (James and Mendlesohn, 2012: 1). Fantasy is a narrative that relies on the manifest violation of what is often considered or accepted as possible and, critically, fantasy has been a term applied to any kind of literature that does not prioritize realistic representation (Jackson, 1981). The fantastic is always a disruption in the acknowledged order and plays with the notion of estrangement and, even if a simple explanation of the phenomena can be provided, such explanation is fruitless within the frame of the fantastic. As argued by Todorov (1973), a tale that exhibits *strange* events does not allow for an internal explanation of that strangeness. When I refer to the impossible, I refer to a full degree of separation from the possible that literally estranges the narrative from reality. These ideas are core to my work as they are the main criterion for the selection of my data.

When I employ the term 'fantasy' henceforth I specifically refer to those works that thematically rely heavily on the general idea of the impossible, be it magic abilities, fantastical creatures, worlds detached from our own or resurrection. In addition to this, I also propose a distinction within the genre of fantasy itself, which seeks to account for the different degrees of connection between the worlds portrayed in the fantastic and our own world. For this purpose, I consider Wolf's (2012) claims, which take into account the relationship between our actual world, as it were, and the secondary fantastic world(s), an unusual concept before Tolkien that he normalized (James, 2012). Wolf proposes that there are different types of secondary worlds depending on how detached they are from the primary/actual world. For instance, the planets that appear in *Star Trek* are more secondary than Jeff Davis' *Beacon Hills* (from *Teen Wolf)*. However, Wolf also declares that for a world to be considered secondary, it must have a distinct border of some type that sets it apart from the primary world. I, on the other hand, propose a three-fold

distinction according to how 'merged' both worlds are (depicted in Figure 1). This distinction is intended as a road map rather than as prescription, though it is useful in that it helps separate closely related genres that make use of similar thematic and structural devices.

My distinction considers first, secondary worlds that are completely detached from our world and thus have their own timeline, geography and laws. Next, secondary worlds that are somehow linked to the primary world or contained within it. For instance, a secondary world that is reached through a portal or some sort of incantation. This sort of world contained within the primary world may function according to its own laws and follow its own timeline or simply mimic those of the primary world. Finally, secondary worlds which are totally merged with our world; that is, the fantastic occurs in a well-known location of our geography. In this last category, however, there is also an element of disruption that functions as the catalyst that introduces estrangement. If mimetic fiction serves as a mirror to our world, fantasy lives within the cracks of that broken mirror, drawing on estrangement to adopt different shapes.
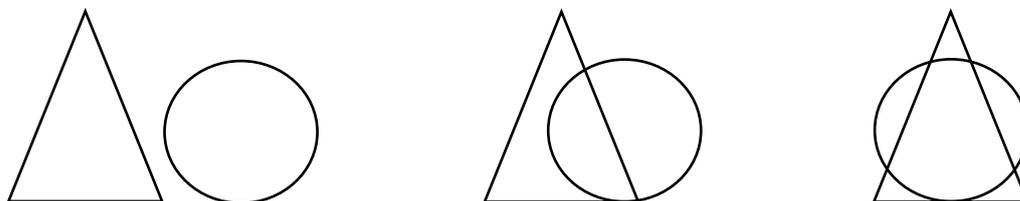

Figure 1. Completely separated worlds, partially merged worlds, and fully merged worlds, respectively.

This distinction accounts for more traditional works of fantasy such as LOTR or *The Dark Crystal,* as well as for more peripheral ones like *Teen Wolf*. As will be seen in Section 4, this distinction also has effects on the kind of language that is used by the characters, since a fully or partially merged fantastic world requires more realism to keep the events and language grounded in the everyday lives of the characters and not fully distorted. The theoretical distinction I propose here is also to be understood as a contribution to the study of fantasy in TV, which, relying on general criteria, is able to provide wide enough categories for different works of fantasy to be classified as such.

Finally, several authors point out how the study of fantasy is mostly restricted to metaphorical and thematic elements (Mendlesohn, 2008) and that there is 'nothing dealing with the language of the fantastic that goes beyond aesthetic preference' (Mendlesohn, 2008: 1). Mandala (2010), being one of the very few studies which specifically deals with language and style in the genre of fantasy, highlights the fact that the study of style in fantasy literature has fossilized. This seems strange given the fact that fantasy can be all-pervasive, 'infiltrating other genres, the literary mainstream, otherwise conventional movies and TV programs, commercial art and advertising, music, theatre, design.' (Wolfe, 2002: 27). As concerns a more general vision of fantasy language, Mandala (2010) argues that comments on style suggest that the language avoids complexity and instead tends to make use of 'staid, unadorned prose' (Mandala, 2010: 18). The same critique was issued by Irwin as far back as 1976, which contended that fantasy is by definition stylistically plain. This contrasts with the findings by Montoro (2018) who, on the basis of a number of linguistic features and variables, concludes that fantasy is 'more syntactically complex' at the specific level of the Noun Phrase than other sub-genres of popular fiction, such as crime fiction, chick lit, and thriller. This contradiction in terms of simplicity/complexity is discussed more in depth in Section 4 alongside the results of my analysis.

If the study of style in literary fantasy is fossilized or stagnated, an analysis of these characteristics has never been implemented in the case of fantasy in television. There are surveys and descriptive studies that focus on TV language and specific shows but generalizable claims valid for whole genres are difficult to find given that studies tend to be based on limited data, as noted in Bednarek (2020). When I speak of telecinematic language, I refer to Piazza et al.'s (2011) concept of telecinematic discourse, which encompasses both television and cinema dialogue, though due to space constraints I can only address TV dialogue in this study. Analyzing dialogue in TV series takes on a new relevance when one realizes that, as a part of mass media, television can shape our sociolinguistic environment to varying degrees (Coupland, 2007: 185). Bednarek (2018), for instance, claims that television series are a significant social phenomenon given their cultural impact and their artistic value.

As per the analysis of TV dialogue, the same scholar uses the Sydney Corpus of Television Dialogue (SydTV), which contains around 275,000 words from sixty-six different TV series first broadcasted between 2000 and 2012. Among the most salient characteristics of US TV dialogue, Bednarek highlights (and confirms findings from previous research such as that of Quaglio (2009)) that TV dialogue selectively imitates unscripted language and includes features associated with spontaneous conversation. For instance, the SydTV corpus shares around 1,003 word-forms with the Longman Spoken American Corpus (Bednarek, 2018). In addition, the TV dialogue places emphasis on the here-and-now on the basis of personal pronouns, (in)formal terms of address, or discourse markers. Colloquial and informal language also features in the list and Bednarek argues that the use of such a register 'may contribute to the "willing suspension of disbelief" on the part of audiences', something vital in fantasy. 'Emotionality' or 'expressivity' are, too, key features of TV dialogue, regardless of series or genre according to Bednarek. It comes as no surprise to find expressivity or emotionality as a key feature across all genres or series given that this is one of the main resources for entertainment and engagement, keeping audiences interested by exploiting emotional or dramatic tension.

3. Methodology

The Fantasy TV Corpus has been designed with the specific purpose of being representative of the language used in contemporary fantasy series. It comprises a total of 149,221 words from 15 different TV shows (2011-2021), so that the focus is on contemporary data and allowing me to tackle the issue of diachronicity. In order to avoid the circularity problem, the shows were chosen on the basis of their classification in IMdB and whether or not they had been nominated for an award, such as an Emmy, or by the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films. Despite trying to remain as objective as possible, there is still an element of subjectivity left in the choice of the series due to the fact that I had to restrict the number of items to something manageable by one person. Three episodes were randomly chosen from each show, all of which comply with the criteria described in section 2. Due to the fact that I attempt to make my claims as generalizable as possible, some TV shows can be considered closer to traditional fantasy TV shows, whereas others are more peripheral with the aim of demonstrating the variability of the genre. That is, some shows fall under the scope of the more traditional,

medieval fantastic setting, for instance, whereas others are set in a less fantastical setting such as a birthday party in New York. The full list of shows, as well as the episodes selected for the corpus can be seen below in Table 1.

Table 1. Fantasy TV Corpus Composition.

TV Show	Episodes
American Horror Story: Coven	S03E01, S03E05, S03E08
Carnival Row	S01E01, S01E06, S01E07
Castlevania	S01E04, S02E03, S03E06
Fate: The Winx Saga	S01E02, S01E03, S01E04
Locke & Key	S01E04, S01E08, S02E06
Over the Garden Wall	S01E01, S01E05, S01E10
Russian Doll	S01E01, S01E05, S01E07
Shadow & Bone	S01E01, S01E03, S01E08
Stranger Things	S01E06, S01E07, S02E08
Teen Wolf	S01E01, S02E07, S04E02
The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina	S01E01, S02E06, S04E01
The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance	S01E01, S01E05, S01E10
The Shannara Chronicles	S01E01, S01E10, S02E06
The Wheel of Time	S01E01, S01E03, S01E06
The Witcher	S01E01, S01E05, S01E08

My corpus has been compiled following Bednarek's (2018) guide to the *SydTV Corpus.* This guide offers a comprehensive list of conventions and variables to take into account when building corpora to explore TV language. For instance, it offers suggestions related to punctuation, off-voices, noises such as laughter or grunts, and filled pauses or discourse markers. However, one of the limitations of creating TV corpora regardless of the method – as is often the case with spoken corpora – is the inability to make contextual information explicit. This potentially leads to valuable information being ignored because it is not linguistically marked, e.g., flashbacks, flashforwards, or conversations taking place in alternate realities or by means of telepathy, phenomena that take place commonly in science fiction and fantasy. Despite these drawbacks, Bednarek's guide is the most comprehensive and functional to date so I have adopted it for the creation of the Fantasy TV Corpus.

For the actual transcription of the TV dialogue, I have considered the threefold distinction of methods for designing film and TV series corpora made by Veirano (2018),

i.e., scripts, subtitles, and transcriptions. In creating the Fantasy TV Corpus, I relied on a combination of these methods, which make the resulting data more robust and trustworthy than just using one of them. This is commonly known as triangulation, which in research is considered as a strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different data sources, theories, or methods (Egbert and Baker, 2021). However, and given that the Fantasy TV Corpus has been personally and manually transcribed, human error is still a possibility despite having revised the transcriptions carefully and thoroughly for spelling mistakes and typos.

The reference corpus I use in this study is a sub-sample of roughly three million words from Davies' (2021) TV Corpus. The full version contains subtitles from 75,000 episodes (1950s-2010s), amounting to a total of 325 million words. I compare both corpora using Wmatrix (Rayson, 2009), a software tool widely used for linguistic – and especially stylistic – research. The choice of statistical measures is constrained by those available in Wmatrix, namely, log-likelihood (LL henceforth) (Dunning, 1993) and log ratio (LR henceforth) (Hardie, 2014), among others. Whereas LL is a statistical significance measure based on the chance that 'the outcomes of the comparison are brought about by error or chance' (Rayson, 2009), LR is an exponential effect size measure that considers the size of the difference of an item in the target corpus when compared to the reference corpus (Gabrielatos, 2018).

4. Results and discussion

The following is the result of comparing the Fantasy TV Corpus against the TV Corpus (Davies, 2021) using Wmatrix. As mentioned earlier, I undertake two sorts of intertextual analyses in which I pay attention both to the POS and semantic categories above the cut-off values established for the different statistical measures (see above). In looking at both sets of tags, it is my goal to unveil the linguistic patterns underlying fantasy TV series. It should also be borne in mind that my corpus is larger than others used in previous studies so I am quietly confident to possibly extrapolate results and make generalizable claims about the genre in this medium.

4.1. POS analysis

Table 2. Over-used POS categories.

POS COMPONENTS		Fantasy TV Corpus against TV Corpus	
	Wmatrix tags	*LR value*	*LL value*
PNQO	Objective wh-pronoun (whom)	1.36	4.89
ND1	Singular noun of direction	1.36	41.44
VVGK	-ing participle catenative (be going to)	1.35	190.65

The first category to which I turn is 'ND1' (singular noun of direction). As suggested by various scholars (Hynes, 2018a, 2018b; Robertson, 2018a), estrangement in terms of space and time is a recurrent motif in fantasy literature. Deictic oddity is at the core of fantasy works, whether in literature or television, since the genre must tell us about a *never* that suddenly is. Stories usually come alive with a *where* and a *when* but in fantasy, there is not a *when* and a *where* that we can use as reference because these never existed in the first place. Secondary/alternative worlds created anew place special emphasis on the locations and geography of the world itself. Explicitly mentioning locations and directions appears to have a function in the fantasy genre as readers and audiences can have a sense of the distance between different places or follow the developments of the geopolitics of the world. That is, language is used so that the audience can become acquainted with and navigate the geography of the fantasy world in order to understand important events and facts related to the narrative.

> *(1) ... they've headed east, towards the White Tower.*
> *(2) Arathim have been sighted as far south as the Great Sog.*
> *(3) ... not to be caught. They fled as far south as they could.*
> *(4) They've tracked it 40 kilometers north of here.*
>
> (Fantasy TV Corpus)

In the Fantasy TV Corpus, both kinds of resources (cardinal directions and place names) appear combined as in (1) and (2). These examples are taken from secondary worlds completely detached from what we know; thus, it is important for the language of the series to explicitly mention directions and place names. With this linguistic aid, the audience may begin to establish connections between different locations in the secondary world and why they may be important for the development of the narrative. The White Tower, for instance, is one of the most important centers of activity in Tar Valon, a region

of the secondary world of *The Wheel of Time*, since the powerful organization of the Aes Sedai operates from within its walls.

As mentioned above, another goal of explicitly mentioning directions and locations is to be able to have a sense of the distance between different places or to follow the developments of the geopolitics of the world, as in (3) and (4). In (4), the life of an instructor depends on finding the creature who hurt him and has now fled as far as 40 kilometers. The distance is crucial here because the window of time to revert the effects of the wound is limited and the farther the creature goes, the harder it will be to apprehend it. When seen together, the types within the ND1 cartography comprise a sort of verbal cartography, e.g., *north, east, south, west, east Ravka, west coast,* among others. Verbal cartography is an essential component of world-building (Hynes, 2018b), especially in the kind of fantasy that creates worlds from the ground up.

The use of the ND1 category is important for an additional reason. It functions as a linguistic anchor that the audience can use to place themselves in the fantasy world. The types within this category show that cardinal directions and locations are useful to deal with the estrangement produced by the story itself. Such an anchorage can be crucial if one takes into consideration that the secondary world can function very different from the reality we are accustomed to. In (5) for instance, the Trollocs could not have arrived from the west had they not used a portal. Thus, spatial information provides audiences with tools to comprehend events, characters, and relations between them within the larger context of the fantastical narrative (Robertson, 2018b), since in addition to following the narrative and the development of events, audiences have also to become acquainted with what a Trolloc is or why it is relevant that the nation of Nilfgaard is trying to move north in (6).

> (5) *But Trollocs invaded from the west…*
> (6) *… but Nilfgaard's trying to go north.*

(Fantasy TV Corpus)

I now turn to the 'VVGK' category (LR=1.35; LL=190.65), which contains different forms of the catenative verb *be going to.* The results of the Fantasy TV Corpus coincide with those reported in Werner (2021), as pertains the use of non-standard variants such

as *gonna* or *gotta*, which are associated with informality. In particular, Werner (2021) highlights the general increase in the use of these forms in TV across time.

Word	POS	Frequency
gon	VVGK	247
going_to	VVGK	71

Figure 2. Types within the category 'VVGK'.

As can be seen from the types, the verb form *gon_na* is much more frequent than its counterpart *going_to*. However, the fact that fantasy overuses this verb form is also telling for a further reason. According to other scholars (Montoro, 2018), the syntactic characteristics of literary fantasy with regard to the NP suggest that the genre is actually more formal than others in popular culture. This apparent clash clearly points towards the need of inspecting the genre further to ascertain at which language level takes place this apparent formality. Since this study deals with TV dialogue, it must be taken into consideration that grammar must remain accessible for the mass market to which such products are targeted. The formality identified by Montoro (2018) with regard to literary fantasy, therefore, appears to combine with the informality of certain other grammatical features (*gonna* in this case) prototypically associated with popular culture and mass market.

As argued by Adams (2017), successful language-based estrangement cannot be over-estrangement. To balance out estrangement and fantasy's apparent formality, screenwriters might resort to a phenomenon in TV dialogue that Heyd (2010) has termed 'staged orality'. The fact that the accessibility of grammar is defined as 'staged' entails that some forms are favored over other choices in television. That is, screenwriters draw on informal conversation structures such as choosing *gonna* over *going to* and other language alternatives to manufacture realism. The issue here remains that such markers of informality are argued to produce realism (Levshina, 2017), which can, at first glance, be considered a counterproductive goal for fantasy.

However, when explored in more detail, the types in 'VVGK' (Figure 3) show that most instances of the non-standard form *gonna* take place in those TV series in which the alternative worlds are not fully separated from our own (202 vs. 45, out of 247), as

discussed in Section 2. Thus, I argue that whatever realism is derived from the use of non-standard forms in the Fantasy TV Corpus can be attributed to the type of relationship between the primary and secondary worlds. In that sense, realism is brought into fantasy precisely when it is needed, i.e., in alternative worlds that, to a certain extent at least, set part of their history in the 'real' world.
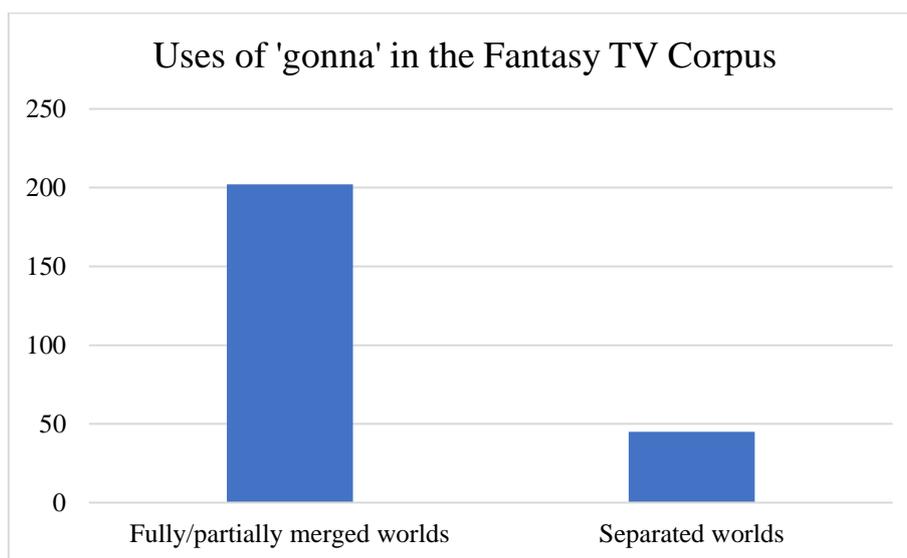
Uses of 'gonna' in the Fantasy TV Corpus

	Fully/partially merged worlds	Separated worlds

Figure 3. Frequencies of *gonna* in different alternative worlds.

Next, I look at the 'PNQO' category (LR=1.36; LL=4.89), which is concerned with the object pronoun *whom*. If informality is a feature associated with non-standard forms, the pronoun *whom* stands on the opposite end. The fact that both linguistic features associated with producing in- and formality are statistically significant at the same time, points at a certain tension or competition in the language of fantasy in television. (In)formality, then, becomes a sort of volume wheel that can be amped up or turn down in accordance with the screenwriters' necessities. In the mass market/popular culture context, formality for instance may be more prominent where estrangement and distance between the audience and the world is established, though toning it down making use of different linguistic resources can also be useful when engagement is desired. Again, of the eight occurrences of *whom* in the Fantasy TV Corpus, all of them take place in secondary worlds completely or partially detached from the real world (*Carnival Row, The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina, The Chronicles of Shannara,* and *The Wheel of Time*).

One must not forget that television series must appeal to the general public and, as mentioned above, grammar must remain accessible (and therefore is influenced by the predominantly spoken medium of television), although the genre of fantasy makes quirky linguistic demands. Most of the uses of *whom* in the Fantasy TV Corpus are used in chants and invocations, which given their ritualistic nature demand a more elaborate and elevated language register. As such, *whom* seems to be the predetermined choice:

(7) Dark Mother, to whom we owe so much, hear our plea…
(8) O, Might Dark Lord, by whom all things are set afire

(Fantasy TV Corpus)

In order to contribute to the audience's willing suspension of disbelief, (7) and (8) make use of formulaic expressions in which *whom* is the expected linguistic form; thus drawing on real-world experiences to assert 'believability'. This tension between accessibility and believability in fantasy exerts additional pressure on language, which is molded to accommodate these clashing factors.

4.2. Semantic analysis

In what follows, I pay attention to the semantic categories listed in Table 3. Although the results from Wmatrix yielded further categories, it is impossible to deal with all of them due to space constraints.

Table 3. Over-used semantic categories.

	SEMANTIC CATEGORIES	TV Fantasy Corpus against TV Corpus	
	Wmatrix tags	*LR value*	*LL value*
W2-	Darkness	3.97	491.56
W2	Light	1.25	57.10

The first category I examine is W2- 'Darkness'. This category displays the highest LR value (3.97), which means its semantic components are used 16 times more in the Fantasy TV Corpus than in the TV Corpus. The types in the W2- 'Darkness', e.g., 'darkness' or 'dark' (and those in W2 'Light') seem to encode one of the broadest patterns in fantasy, that of the villain/threat on the one hand and the hero/savior on the other. It is not

surprising to find that both categories are overused in a fantasy corpus, given that this opposition appears vital for a fantasy world to come alive.

(9) *... protect us from the imperial darkness that threatens our soul.*
(10) *... no more light ever again, only perpetual darkness.*

(Fantasy TV Corpus)

Indeed, fantasy worlds to some extent at least depend on a threat, villain or antagonist force of some kind, which is somehow portrayed by darkness. In example (9), for instance, darkness is explicitly linked with a threat, let alone the fact that it is premodified by *imperial*. This allows the audience to actually pinpoint the referent as the kingdom of Nilfgaard, which has launched a conquering campaign over the neighboring lands. Moreover, example (10) refers to 'perpetual darkness', which elevates the character of the threat it poses to humankind. Thus, the obstacle to overcome is amplified by linguistic means, given that the so-called 'perpetual darkness' is never featured on screen. In addition to 'imperial' and 'perpetual', darkness is also pre-modified by 'terrible', 'crushing', and 'suffocating' or described as a 'blanket' that comes to harm people in some way (Figure 4), which is intended to magnify the scale of the threat.

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and the light will chase away the    darkness    . Or at least that 's how I like t
the prophet said , " let there be    darkness    across the land " . <GUS:> Hey , I
ATHA:> Anxiety , loneliness , the    darkness    . I mean , these are frightening t
ieve . For the great and terrible    darkness    is coming once more . And I ask yo
 I ask you , neighbors , when the    darkness    comes , what will protect us ... f
 you , can not save us now . When    darkness    blankets the Earth , and all you h
er these words : Do not fight the    darkness    . Embrace it . Welcome it . For on
ome quickly . There 's a terrible    darkness    in the dormitory . <ZELDA:> See ,
 eldritch terror that killed us .    Darkness    . A crushing darkness . <MAN 2:> A
killed us . Darkness . A crushing    darkness    . <MAN 2:> A suffocating darkness
darkness . <MAN 2:> A suffocating    darkness    . <MAN 3:> A consuming darkness .
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Figure 4. Concordance for 'darkness' in the Fantasy TV Corpus.

The full potential of the 'Darkness' category is realized when its counterpart, the W2 category 'Light' (LR=1.25; LL=57.10), is discussed, which bring to the fore a darkness-light dichotomy. Therefore, the Fantasy TV Corpus draws on the long-standing western tradition of darkness being synonymous with evil or danger and light being synonymous with protection or goodness. This trope and the two antagonist forces may be considered to constitute one the basic pillars of fantasy, which employs different resources to

manifest this duality. In the same way as darkness encodes a threat or a pending doom, light is often considered to be a source of goodness.

(11) *Thank the Light.*
(12) *Light, give me strength.*
(13) *Depart now in the Light.*
(14) *When darkness triumphs, light shall die.*
(15) *... this pool of absolute Darkness that's gonna consume the entire world if we don't stop it with a light bright enough to banish it.*

(Fantasy TV Corpus)

Thus, light fulfills various functions in the series of the Fantasy TV Corpus. Sometimes it is thanked (11), some other times it becomes a beacon of protection and a source of strength and bravery against the dark evil force (12 and 13). More often, light and darkness are two opposing forces stuck in an eternal struggle, as in examples (14) and (15) where it is impossible that they can co-exist. This pattern appears to be pervasive in fantasy, regardless of the actual realization of the hero and the villain.

5. Conclusions

In this study, I have used corpus stylistics techniques to analyze the idiosyncratic characteristics of the fantasy genre in television and contribute to the study of its style. While previous work on the genre of fantasy and science fiction in television has focused on one or few artifacts, this study has incorporated a larger number of TV series so as to make claims as generalizable as possible. In addition to this, I have also focused on a more recent dataset and used different methods of data collection, which makes my corpus more robust and more representative of the language of fantasy TV series.

At first glance, the language of fantasy TV series does not seem so different from general TV language, given the results brought about by the comparison with Davies' TV Corpus. In fact, after applying the established cut-off values, my analysis shows that the genre of fantasy in TV appears to display more similarities than differences with general TV dialogue which, considering the nature of the medium, is not surprising. What my analysis has brought to the fore is the fact that the medium of television (as opposed to literature) seems to exert more pressure on language than the genre of fantasy itself. This is evidenced by some of the features derived from the POS and semantic analyses. For

instance, the tension between (in)formality is a characteristic derived from the medium of television since fantasy literature has been found to be more syntactically complex (Montoro, 2018). Additional characteristics of the language of fantasy in television include a strong emphasis on deictic formulae and a multitude of resources to manifest the struggle between good and evil. The Fantasy TV Corpus also confirms previous claims with respect to the issue of identity and demonstrates that fantasy offers a good canvas for exploring identities deviating from the establishment. However, not all findings can be applied individually to all the items in my corpus, as noted by previous studies that have indicated that there is variation between different TV series (Bednarek, 2018).

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